We Be Family: Using Culturally Relevant Pedagogy to Build Positive Relationships

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Aiken High School
1. Learning about yourself and understand your experiences

- Know your own background and how your background influences your personality.
- Learn your own biases and recognize them.
- Know that your experiences may differ from the students that you teach.
- Help students learn about themselves and their experiences.
- Realize that teachers have the power to determine whose views and culture is presented and glorified within the classroom.
Mykal’s Experience

- St. Mary’s
  - Only Black Kid
  - Two Types of Teachers
  - Basketball Incident
- CP to Honors
  - High Test Scores
- Blatant Racism
  - Librarian
Kayla’s Experiences

- Moving South
- Ridge Spring Monetta High School
- Shut up and Listen!
- Learning new cultures
  - Attending after-school activities
  - Asking the students
  - Attending community events and churches
  - Read the literature
  - Find experts
  - Asking about language differences
  - Talking to students and obtaining new experiences
  - Coaching
Turn and Talk

- Take five minutes to turn and talk to a neighbor near you, to share your experiences as a high school student and/or as a first year teacher.
- How did teachers treat you? What type of school did you go to? Did you like high school? Why or why not? What did high school teach you? Are there any experiences that stick out in your memory?
2. Build Positive Relationships with Students

- Make an active effort to get to know your students by incorporating their interests into the curriculum.
- Share who you are.
- Prove to them that you care!
Mykal’s Experience with Hostetler’s Classroom

- First Impressions: Tupac Wall and Pictures of Former Students Everywhere
  - Kids that looked like me, showed cared about job.
- Food that represented us, tell the story of our food.
- Personal Narratives
  - Write in our own language
- Honest when asked a question
- Held all students accountable/high expectations for all
  - White girl who did not have her work
- Addressed racism
  - Through literature, allowed us to share our experiences, let us talk openly
Hostetler’s Experience

- Surveys on first day
- Meet kids at the door with a smile/say good morning
- Explain why disciplining a student
- Forgiving
- Communicating with Family
  - Positive Phone Call
- Guest Speakers/Asking Families for Help
  - Grant’s Father, Avery’s Mother, Freedom Writers
- Hand Writing Letters at Christmas
- Plan Field Trips/Experiences
- Monthly Requested Lesson
  - Balancing a checkbook
Teacher to Student: A Family Bond

Yearbook Example: “I don’t need to sign your yearbook, we be family.”
You have five minutes to use the sticky notes at your table to try and cover your entire table.

List as many ideas as you can for ways teachers can build positive classroom relationships.
3. Counter-narratives

- Provide African American students with opportunities to see themselves reflected in literature.
- Examples of counter-narratives
  - The Skin I’m in – Sharron Flake
  - A Long Way Gone – Ishmael Beah
  - A Rose that Grew from Concrete – Tupac Shakur
  - Their Eyes Were Watching God – Zora Hurston
  - The Bluest Eye – Tony Morrison
  - Bronx Masquerade – Nikkie Grimes
  - The Freedom Writers Diary
  - Adolescence on the Edge
  - Farewell to Manzanar
  - The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian
  - Life of Pie
  - Kite Runner
4. Contrastive Analysis/Home Language

- Allow students the opportunities to use their home language within your classroom.
  - Journals, Narratives, and Speaking

- Contrastive analysis involves comparing and contrasting the linguistic structures of two languages or language systems. Don’t pretend to be an expert at a language you do not know.

- After I have gathered student data from my teaching notebook, writing samples and student journals I create mini lessons that compare and contrast African American Language with Standard English. Comparative Analysis when done effectively allows students, like Ramello, to seamlessly go between the two languages.

- It is important to value both languages and talk about the need to switch to Standard English for academic purposes because of how school is structured.
5. Speaking and Collaborative Opportunities

- Discussion
  - Socratic, Jigsaw, fishbowl, debates
- Poetry Memorization
  - Poetry Out Loud
- Partner Work and Small Group Work
- Lip Sync Battles
- Videos/Snapchat/Freeze Frame
What is needed?

- Education for both teachers and students on different cultures and their histories
- Taking a step back and listening to your students and their families
- More experiences getting to really know different cultures

- Coolio’s Gangster’s Paradise
  - “they say I gotta learn, but nobody’s here to teach me. If they can’t understand it, how can they reach me?”
References


