Managing Problematic Classroom Situations

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Planning for Success

- Prevention Psychology
- Be proactive instead of reactive!
Prevention - Expectations

• Student perceptions of an instructor’s expectations
  • Grading schemes that are confusing or arbitrary.
  • Lack of clear grading criteria (rubrics).
  • Unclear course policies (attendance, late work, missed tests, plagiarism etc.).
• How can these issues be prevented?
Prevention - Expectations

- Structure will assuage student (and teacher) anxiety!
  - Thoroughly cover the syllabus.
  - Expectations, assignments, due dates, test study guides, etc.
  - Be faithful to your policies!
- Clear guidelines and rubrics for every assignment.
- Give assignment reminders.
Prevention - Rapport

• Rapport = a sense of connection with the instructor.
  • Students who feel “left-out” are more likely to misbehave (Kearney & Plax, 1992)
  • Students who believe their instructors care are more positively disposed toward the course and the instructor (Feldman, 1989).

• How can we establish rapport and create a positive social environment in our classes?
Prevention - Rapport

- Share appropriate things about yourself.
- Learn student’s names and small details about their lives.
  - A student information card
- Encourage communication throughout the course.
  - Encourage in-class questions.
  - Respond quickly to e-mails and phone calls. Have formal policy for weekends.
- Formal contracts with students (behaviors & grades).
General Strategies

• “SOAR-UP” (CFE,004):
  • Stop the activity or action
  • Think of Outcomes
  • Assess the situation
  • React
  • Use active listening techniques
  • Prepare for next time
• Stop the activity or action
  • Break the pattern of verbal or e-mail disagreements.
  • Calm down and consider alternatives.
SOAR-UP

• Think of **Outcomes**
  • What do you want to achieve?
  • What do you want the student(s) to get out of this situation?
  • What types of accommodations can you make?
• **Assess the situation**
  - What are possible underlying causes?
  - Is the conflict due to a misunderstanding or a disagreement over personal beliefs?
SOAR-UP

React

• Try to consider the issue objectively.
• Be willing to change your position.
• Be willing to agree to disagree and move on.

"Sometimes you need to look at Life from a different perspective."
SOAR-UP

- **Use active listening techniques**
  - Verbally confirm your understanding of the issue.
  - Ask for further clarification.
  - Attend to body language.
SOAR-UP

- **Prepare** for the next time you teach the course
  - Reflect on what you learned from the situation.
  - If necessary, make changes for the future.

Plan A

Plan B
Undermining Authority and Disrespectful Behavior

- Belittling the instructor
- Engaging in a battle of wills.
- Being openly disrespectful.
- Can be especially daunting for first-time instructors.
- How have you dealt with this in the past?
- Was your solution successful?
Course Disruptions

- Leaving class frequently.
- Arriving late.
- Eating food in class.
- Cell phone distractions.
- How have you dealt with this in the past?
- Was your solution successful?
Disinterested and/or Sleeping Students

- “Spacing out” is relatively common.
- Sleeping in class is almost always considered rude.
- How have you dealt with this in the past?
- Was your solution successful?
Monopolizing Discussions

- Highly interested.
- Knowledgeable.
- Excited.
- Crave the limelight.
- **Be delicate:** you don’t want to “turn off” an engaged and excited student!

- How have you dealt with this in the past?
- Was your solution successful?
Questions

• Any challenging classroom issues that we did not cover?
• Any situations that you would like to know more about?
References


