Discussion 4: Creating a positive teaching and learning environment that support all students in health education April 8-15 - last module group 1

1. Describe strategies you use or would consider using that create a safe and positive teaching/learning environment. Consider students as individuals and the diversity they bring to the classroom as well as the skills and content you need to teach.

Smith, Laurie

Apr 4, 2017

At the risk of sounding silly, I'd like to address the question of creating a positive learning environment with an obvious, but under-appreciated, point: the most important strategy I use to build classroom culture is speaking in a kind, friendly, enthusiastic, and supportive manner to every student. I greet students by name and I always tell them how happy I am to be with them again. When we skip a week of health because of an assembly or snow day, I let them know I missed them. I reiterate over and over that I value each students' contributions and appreciate the work of the entire group. When I need to discipline students, I speak in a clear but respectful manner. In short, I make it a priority to be really, really nice to every child!

I draw attention to the role a teacher's tone plays in creating a positive learning environment because I have three children of my own in middle school. My boys have really struggled to adjust to a middle school culture that is simply less kind than what they experienced at the elementary level--they now hear things like "I don't care" and "it's stupid that you missed class for Ski Runner's" from their teachers. While I know that my kids need to learn to deal with all sorts of people, I notice that they are not motivated to do their best work in classes where the teacher seems harsh.

In the realm of health, we have an incredible opportunity to help students make positive changes in their lives! I think the first step in that process comes with a concerted effort to speak with kindness and respect to all of our students, all of the time.

Judith

Apr 4, 2017Local: Apr 4 at 8:43pm
Course: Apr 4 at 6:43pm

- It is both amazing and powerful how much just simple kindness and respect does to make the environment a much healthier and happier place for everyone around you. And, because it is so simple, I think we often underestimate the power of just being nice. "You catch more flies with honey . . . "

Melissa
Apr 5, 2017Local: Apr 5 at 8:30pm
Course: Apr 5 at 6:30pm

- Oh yes...Kindness. I also try to be kind all the time. However sometimes I find myself getting frustrated with a low level of disrespect and have to let the class know that their behavior is not acceptable. I always do this with kindness, but with middle and high school students sometimes they are pushing the limits.   I try to meet with the student after class, before the next class to discuss disrespect and rudeness. This seems to help because I am showing that I care. However, it is tough sometimes to not show frustration to a student. I think of these moments as a great way to show them communication skills. And being kind but assertive is one of those lovely skills that we are teaching our students.

Smith, Laurie
Apr 6, 2017Local: Apr 6 at 1:36pm
Course: Apr 6 at 11:36am

- I agree, Melissa, that student misbehavior provides a great way for us to model communication skills. I get really frustrated, too, but I think communicating that with kindness (as well as firmness, clarity, and respect) can be a wonderful opportunity for students to learn. I always cringe when I hear adults yelling at kids because it often sounds hurtful and humiliating and I find it so counter-productive! Once in a great while, I think it is warranted but, more often than not, dealing with our frustration in a calm and controlled manner is much more effective.