Working with Difficult Students and Building Relationships with Parents: Parts 1 and 2

UEA CONVENTION
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Goals for Today
Increase skill level
Reduce stress
Help students have more success
Have fun

Hands on STRATEGIES
Part 1: How to deal with difficult students
Part 2: How to build relationships with difficult parents
Each session will take about an hour, then have time for questions
Which are you?

Wise = learn from your mistakes

Wiser = learn from mistakes of others

Wisest = learn from successes of others

Seeking Improvement?

OMT: One More Thing

Content Knowledge: Utah Core Standards

Pedagogy Skills: Utah Effective Teaching Standards

Relationships: Professional Learning Communities, Classroom Management, and Stakeholder Rapport
I had to make an ASSUMPTION...

- Know the difference between management and discipline
- Know how to set up your classroom
  - Seating charts, learn names, have class rules
- Have student expectations and procedures posted
- Disclosure statement
- Know your content—Utah Core Standards
- Know instructional strategies

Working with difficult students and building relationships with parents

What do teachers want?

Working with difficult students and building relationships with parents

What do students want?

- Students want to know that teachers:
  - Understand their needs
  - Are the leaders in the classroom
  - Will help them learn
  - Can pass the test
  - Are consistent
  - Care
  - Have procedures and routines to keep order
If students want these things, why are they difficult?

Three major needs of students that make them act difficult:
1. Need extra attention
2. Need firmer limits
3. Need extra motivation

When students are difficult they are attempting to fulfill one of these needs.

They engage because they get something out of it. They misbehave (are disruptive) or they are off task to fulfill the need. HOW?

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Ever had a student misbehave in class? Ever had a difficult student in class?

What are some typical misbehaviors or disruptions?

Examples of students being difficult
- Example: Student comes in late...
- Example: Student slouches in the seat...

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Definition of “Difficult”

A difficult student disrupts the class so learning can’t or isn’t taking place OR is continually off-task

Provide consequences for disruptive or continually off task behavior
Things teachers must be able to do to work with difficult students...

Teachers must
- plan ahead
- work as “Team Players”
- know how to give instructions and directions
- give positive reinforcements and recognitions

*Teachers must use redirecting techniques for non-disruptive (off-task behavior)*

REDIRECTING TECHNIQUES for Non-Disruptive behavior (Off Task)

- Give them the “look”
- Proximity praise
- Scanning
- Names in the sentence while teaching

Increase Your Influence in the Classroom

*Freeze Body*

- Stand still in front of the group in authority position
- Point toes ahead with weight on both feet
- Give brief oral directions
- Move with frozen hand gestures
Use the Influence Approach

**Power Approach**
- Approach from the front
- Make eye contact
- Hold breath
- Stand or sit close

**Influence Approach**
- Approach from the side
- Focus on 3rd object
- Breathe normally
- Leave student personal space

Increase Your Influence in the Classroom

- **De-escalation**
  - I understand
  - I see
  - Uh huh
  - Silence
  - Don't ask why
  - Don't describe behavior while it is happening
  - Walk away and tell them you will talk later

Other techniques for working with difficult students...

- Orchestrate with assistant principal
- Document behaviors and interventions (be specific)
- Develop individual plans for really difficult students
- Plan for having a substitute
- Communicate with parents... Why?
  - To Build Relationships
Perfect transition to Part 2: Building relationships with parents

Working with difficult students...
*Communicate with parents... Why?
To Build Relationships

Part 2:
Building Relationships:
Supporting Parents to Support You!

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Hands on STRATEGIES

Part 1: How to deal with difficult students

Part 2: How to build relationships with difficult parents

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Workig with difficult students and building relationships with parents

What do parents want?

- Parents want to know that teachers:
  - Care
  - Professional
  - Confident
  - Have a plan for improving the behavior
  - Positive
  - Will help
  - Like their students
  - Like their job
  - Will communicate with them

Overcoming roadblocks that keep teachers from initiating communication

Good Teacher Myth: “I’m really sorry to bother you. I know you are busy.”

Negative Expectations about Working with Parents: This stops us from acting soon enough. “I’m sorry I didn’t call you sooner.”

Lack of Training in Working with Parents: Working with parents requires special skills. “I’m afraid to make the contact; it’s hard.”
Overcoming roadblocks that keep parents from giving support...

- Parents are overwhelmed: “I’m here to work with you.”

- Parents want to help but don’t know how: These parents are anxious to get involved and learn from you. “Don’t worry I have dealt with these kinds of situations before.”

- Parents have negative feelings about school: “Let’s work together to solve this problem.”

- Parents have negative views of teacher competence: “You are right to want the best for your child.”

Notifying parents is hard work...

- Before the call, have a plan
- Call the parent and say, “I’m calling because your son is very important to me.”
- “I wanted to call before this situation gets too big.”
- Be specific about the behavior
- “Have I explained how important this is?”
- Put together the plan with the parent
- “Tell your son I called.”
- Offer to call back to check on things, “I am looking forward to talking to you again. I will call back next week. Is that okay with you?”
- Overcome the fear
- Do something to build trust with parent by following through with a commitment

When TRUST is involved, then students and parents will have positive relationships

Think about these three things...
1. Often our expectations are unrealistic
2. Not rules or demands, but expectations and intentions
3. Who is in control? Students and Parents respond to what the teacher does. The teacher is the stimulus
   Example: Parent arrives in classroom unannounced...
   Example: Parent dislikes the homework assignment...
Other ideas for building relationships with parents
- Make parent contact as soon as the school year starts
- Focus on the student in a positive way
- Explain that parent support is vital
- Ask for and listen to the parent input
- Let the parent know that you have handled situations like this before
- Believe that the parent is the most important person in the student's life

The BIG THREE! Plus ONE!! Works with both Students and Parents!

1. Fairness
   - Means consistent and predictable
2. Respect
   - Save their dignity and dignify them; like them
3. Loyalty
   - I am here for you and I am glad you (they) are my students
And,
4. Paradoxical Response

Paradoxical Response Works!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REACTIVE RESPONSE</th>
<th>PROACTIVE RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not plan ahead</td>
<td>&quot;I want to listen to you&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional response that blames or criticizes</td>
<td>Use I messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalize their behavior</td>
<td>Plan how to act with the student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal request</td>
<td>&quot;I care&quot; behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>Understand reasons, but no excuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annoy or hostile</td>
<td>Firm and consistent messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove from class</td>
<td>&quot;with it&quot; responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do opposite of what you are inclined to do</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Handling Difficult Situations with Parents

- Effective teachers can deal with problems as they appear.
- Preparation is the key.
- Stand your ground and proceed with confidence.
- Have communication skills for difficult situations.
  - How to disarm criticism:
    - If incorrect, follow steps:
      - Listen, show empathy and concern, refocus the conversation and restate the problem behavior.
      - If parent is still angry, point out that this conflict is harmful to student.
      - If correct, accept your mistake.
      - "You have reason to be angry. I should have contacted you sooner."
      - "I felt you have a right to be upset. I should not have been so harsh."

Be Proactive Working with Difficult Students and Parents...Summary

1. Plan
2. Persist: "I'm not going away"
3. Get assistance from parents and/or assistant principal
4. Advance your skills
5. Care
6. Expectations with structure
7. Respect to get respect

If You Want More DETAIL on:

- Working with parents and how to be professional – have the bag of tricks ready when you call parents.
- Handling severe discipline problems: fighting, overt defiance, vandalism, anti-social behaviors, and students that stop the class from functioning.
- Diagnosing why students misbehave: finding their primary needs.
- School – wide discipline management and team and guidance discipline management plans.
- Understanding the concepts of FEAR, TRUST, and CONNECTION in the classroom.
- Then, contact me and I will be happy to help at the district, school, or classroom level.
References:
Maccaro, R.J. (2003). Classroom management that works: Research-based strategies for every teacher. ASCD.

Questions?
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Thank you.