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ARMED FORCES ACADEMY
SLOVAK REPUBLIC

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE of SCIENTIFIC PAPER
AFASES 2011
Brasov, 26-28 May 2011

COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN THE CLASSROOM

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Effective communication is at heart of good classroom management. The manner in which a teacher communicates with his students sets the overall tone for the classroom. Managing a classroom requires patience, confidence and respect. Ultimately, teachers should strive to create an environment where students feel respected, trusted and comfortable enough to take risks in learning.

What makes you a good teacher? This probably depends on the subject matter and the level of students. Some teachers can make even the most boring material seem interesting and alternately some teachers can make interesting materials boring.

The best way for teachers to encourage communication from all students is through classroom discussion or small group (Rika, 1996).

Games are a great way to help group of teens learn skills for working together. Skills can be learnt and practiced in a fun, non-threatening way says Susan Carney. This is an example:

Tell Three Things

Each person writes down three things about himself: two of each are true and

one of which is a lie. After everyone has finished making his (or her list), students take turns reading their lists aloud and asking other students to guess which one is a "lie". Students can answer either individually or in a "raise your hand if you agree" format. Students can also be asked to justify their guesses if time allows. Whether groups are just getting to know one another or have been together a longer time, they can still learn things about each other from this activity.

- Teachers should avoid yes/no questions and short answered question if they want to have a quality discussion;
- Debate is a way teachers can provide their students with the opportunity to practice their communication skills;

Another way to encourage students to communicate, especially if they are too shy to speak up, is to have their journal. Research suggests (Terrell Young, 1999) that dialogue journals provide a purposeful activity in which students communicate their thoughts and feelings. Teachers must provide students with an environment that is conducive to learning. If a student feels uncomfortable, unsafe, or not respected, then their chances of success in that class dramatically decrease. Also, as our society becomes more diverse, it is important that students learn to value and use diversity to the greater good. Teachers already have a

number of roles in the classroom; yet, valuing diversity is one of the most important ones a teacher must fill. Below is a list of just a few things that teachers can do to create an environment where each student feels valued and respected.

- Take the time to learn about your students' background, interests, and learning style.
 - This will allow you to create an environment that is conducive to each individual student.
- Allow time for the students to learn about each other and gain an appreciation for the diversity they bring to the classroom.
 - Remind them how boring it would be if we were all alike and there were no differences among us to make each person unique.
 - Teach students that everyone has strengths and weaknesses. When working in teams encourage students to take advantage of the strengths of the team members in order to produce the best possible results.
- Bring in different people to the class as resources that students might be able to connect with.

- Search out people that are different from yourself and that might share certain qualities with your students.
- Students need role models. Many times when they see they are connected in some way to a person they will be more apt to listen and learn from them.

- Never tolerate bullying, teasing, and other put-down behavior at any time in the classroom.
 - Implement a "zero tolerance" for anything that is disrespectful, hurtful, or intolerant of diversity.

• Teaching is a very challenging and rewarding profession. Some teachers have more success than other because they have developed certain teaching skills that motivate students to learn, help students to stay focused, and provide students with self-learning skills.

Bibliography: NDT Resource Center