

Cultivating Student Relationships in the Classroom

Introduction

Have you ever walked into a college classroom before class has started and heard nothing but silence? Then when class starts it is a challenge for the instructor to get the students engaged in meaningful discussion. When students feel comfortable in a classroom setting, they are more likely to talk with their peers and engage in the learning experiences provided by the instructor. In today's educational environment it is critical to prepare students that are capable of using critical thinking skills to solve real world issues. Additionally, employers often expect graduates to be able to work effectively in a team setting. In order to prepare students to work with other people and to be successful in their chosen field, classroom learning experiences should be designed to cultivate student relationships.

Procedure

The following is a list of methods that help to cultivate student relationships and create a sense of community in the classroom.

1. On the first day of class allow the students time to get to know one another and to become comfortable speaking to the entire class. Provide students with a prompt that encourages students to learn about each other.
2. Use icebreakers on the first day of class to ease the tension and promote the importance of student interaction.
3. Prior to your first class discussion set guidelines and expectations for the discussion. Taking the time to outline your expectations will allow for meaningful conversations throughout the entire semester.
4. Form small teams of students that will work together on assignments and in class learning activities.
5. Design learning activities that allow for students to solve complex issues when working together in teams. Allow the teams to use class time to work together on the learning activities in order to build relationships with each other and to collaboratively work on complex projects.
6. Design learning activities that promote regular student interactions.
7. When lecturing, take the time to pose questions and allow students to work together to answer the questions. After students interact with their peers, have multiple students share their answers with the entire class.
8. Form peer editing teams to allow the students to critique the work of other students. This will provide students with the opportunity to critically examine the work of others and to build relationships as they enhance their critical thinking skills.

Assessment

The above methods of cultivating student relationships in the classroom has helped to make the classroom environment more comfortable and conducive for student centered learning. Time spent on cultivating student relationships has allowed the students to become comfortable with one another and more willing to share their ideas with small groups of students and the entire class. The students no longer seem apprehensive to share their ideas with the class. Additionally, the students are much more accepting of each other's ideas and beliefs. Taking the time to foster student relationships in the classroom has turned the classroom into a room full of open discussion in which the student does not have to be concerned with being ridiculed for their opinions and ideas.

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