

Building Relationships

I often feel the most pressure at the beginning of the year. Creating the right environment is vital to the rest of the course. Over the years, creating the right environment has evolved from using primarily adventure education activities to focusing more on character education. Here's a basic sequence for the first week of my classes (this takes approx. 6 classes to get through):

- I.) Establish Value:
 - a. Tell the students, "I never want you to feel like what we are doing is a waste of time. EVERYTHING has a purpose. I (we) are here to help you and to improve your quality of life."
 - b. Fact: it takes only 30 seconds to make a 1st impression. If you make a bad impression, it takes 20 more encounters with that person to change what they think of you
 - c. 6 parts to a great 1st impression:
 - i. Posture, smile, eye contact, firm handshake, speak clearly, slightest lean in
 - d. This sets up my attendance routine:
 - i. Students stand on the sideline of the basketball court, I walk down and shake each student's hand.
 1. it allows them to practice the a great 1st impression, allows me to give immediate attention to each student (see what type of day they are having), and teaches them a valuable skill day 1
 2. time management: as soon as I shake a hand, students know to head to the whiteboard or projector (PPT) for the first set of directions
 - e. **Activity: teach proper intro/handshake and have the students practice**
 - f. **Activity: Crazy Shake (a favorite!) get a partner, shake their hand, this is your handshake partner; find a new partner, give them a high-five, this is your high-five partner; find a new partner, pound-it (fist bump), this is your pound-it partner; FIND YOUR HIGH-FIVE PARTNER, NOW HANDSHAKE PARTNER, NOW POUND-IT PARTNER!!!; step out of your comfort zone and find a partner that you don't know, shake their ankle, this is your ankle-shake partner; FIND YOUR HIGH-FIVE PARTNER, NOW HANDSHAKE PARTNER, NOW YOUR ANKLE-SHAKE PARTNER, NOW POUND-IT PARTNER!!!... (continue in this manner with new and crazy "handshakes," and every now and then have them find each partner)**
- II.) Learning Names:
 - a. I tell students, "you don't have to like everyone or anyone in this class, but you must respect them...and the most basic form of respect is learning someone's name"
 - b. **Activity: adjective name game**
 - i. **Come up with a positive adjective that starts with the same letter as your first name. Class sits in a circle. First person says their adjective and name. Second person repeats the first, then says their own. Third person repeats the first and second, says own. Each person does the same (it gets harder and harder with the more names, but the repetition is key). Teacher goes last!**
 - c. Great quote that I share with them: "If you remember my name, you pay me a subtle compliment; you indicate that I have made an impression on you. Remember my name and you add to my feeling of importance." Dale Carnegie
 - i. Debrief about the quote
 - d. **Follow-up activity for another day: Peak-a-Who**
 - i. **Two teams, each hiding approx. 8 feet behind one tarp (the tarp is held up so the teams can't see each other). Each team sends one member to the front near the tarp. The tarp is dropped, and only the two people near the front quickly shout out the**

other person's name. The person that says it first wins, and "loser" joins the other side. The tarp goes up, 2 new people approach it, go again. See which team grows!

III.) 1st Impressions:

- a. After learning names I begin activities to help the students with 1st impressions
 - i. Smile & eye contact:
 1. **Staring contest: partner up, first one to blink or look away loses**
 - a. **Variation: Laughing contest; must look into eyes, are allowed to talk and blink**
 - b. Purpose: increase self-efficacy with smiling and eye contact
 - ii. Eye contact:
 1. **Scream: groups of 6 circle up; everyone stares down and secretly picks one person in the group; on the count of 3 everyone looks up at the person's eyes they've chosen; if that person is looking back at you both people SCREAM**
 - a. Purpose: desensitize them to the fear/awkwardness of looking into someone else's eyes
 2. **Wink Wink: the teacher secretly makes a few people "it" (taggers) before class; in a small area students walk around and look into each other's eyes; people that are "it" tag others by winking at them; once you tag someone you are no longer "it" (until someone winks at you)**
 - a. Purpose: same as Scream
 - iii. Firm handshake
 1. **Finger Jousting: partner up; shake hands, hold the grip; lift pointer finger; must try and tag your partner with pointer finger (obviously tagging the wrist doesn't count)**
 - a. Purpose: activity requires a firm grip, much like is needed when shaking hands
 - iv. Speaking Clearly
 1. **Telephone: class stands in a circle; whisper into the person's ear next to you; they pass the message to the next person, etc.; the last person says the message (it's usually totally different)**
 - a. Purpose: speak clearly or else your message will be misunderstood

IV.) Communication

- a. 4 keys to communication: listening, eye contact (done!), draw out information, acceptance
 - i. Listening
 1. **Say What? Split class into 2 groups; each group is given a common saying (ex. "life is good"); the groups are unaware of the other team's saying; each member of the group is assigned one of the words of the saying; one group goes first; every one yells their single word at the same time; the other group (silent, listening) must guess what the common saying is**
 - a. Purpose: with everyone talking at once it's next to impossible to understand what's being said; must listen!
 - ii. Draw out info
 1. **Double Circle: class gets into 2 circles, one inside the other (like a donut); each student is paired up with someone; teacher begins with a prompt (ex. "my favorite movie is"); students must say/finish the prompt... then must ask questions and draw out more information; students must keep the**

conversation going and prevent that awkward silence; teacher rotates one of the circles (so students are matched up with a different partner) and provides another prompt (ex. someone I admire is...)

- a. After the exercise I usually say, “along with practicing how to draw out information, there was a hidden/secret agenda.... The more you learn about someone, like you just did your classmates, the less likely you are to hurt them... obviously we aren’t talking about physical hurt...” then we discuss the idea of acceptance
- b. At this point I usually read, “Kyle’s Story” and we discuss acceptance

V.) Cooperation

- i. **All aboard: this is typically an adventure education low-element that I do really cheap but effective; split class into groups of 2 or 3; tape a few different size boxes on the floor (example: 3’ by 3’, 2’ by 2’); everyone in group must fit in the box with no body parts touching outside the box; if they achieve the large box move them to a smaller one**
 1. Purpose: become comfortable working in close quarters; problem solving; team work; etc.
- ii. **Human knot: oldie but a goodie; group of 6 or 8 in a circle; everyone reaches across with right hand and clasps hands; left hand reaches across circle to a different person; w/o letting go, group must untangle itself**
 1. Purpose: same as All Aboard

VI.) Finale: **Social Contract**

- i. I tell the students, “if you were in elementary school, I would be telling you the rules. Instead, I want to give you the respect you deserve as a young adult... you tell me and each other how to treat you”
- ii. Split students up into small groups (I like groups of 3)
- iii. Each group answers 4 questions:
 1. How do you want to be treated by the teacher?
 2. How do you want your classmates to treat you in physical education?
 3. Pretend you are a physical education teacher, how do you want your students to behave/act?
 4. If there is a conflict b/w students, what is a good way to resolve any issues?
- iv. Hints: the kids will all write ‘respect’... counter with “What does respect look like?”... or they will just write ‘golden rule,’ to which I reply “how do you want to be treated? Be specific!”
- v. Large group discussion, answers are written on large easel paper
- vi. Teacher and students sign the social contract at the end
 1. I have tons of samples if you would like one
- vii. I transfer the contract to a smaller sheet of paper and carry it with me at all times. That’s one way to continue what was done the first week through out the course. Revisiting the contract is a great way to start a new unit or discuss during closure