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Solving Group Discipline Problems without Coercion: An Approach Based on Attribution Retraining

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Abstract: The objective of the study was to examine the effectiveness of an intervention based on attribution retraining with regards to student misconduct and coercive teacher behavior. An intervention would lead to a sustained decrease in misbehavior and coercive discipline without using any external control systems. In this case study, a male, veteran Grade 8 teacher and his students were involved in a long lasting conflict characterized by an increase of disruptive student conduct and the teacher's coercive behavior. Inspired by the explanatory model of the extended symmetrical escalation (Lapointe, 2003), the researchers developed an intervention using attribution retraining to resolve the problem. Data collected from observations, questionnaires, and interviews indicated that this non-coercive intervention contributed to long-term general improvement of teacher student relations and behaviors. The results highlight the importance of perceptions within conflicting interactions and lead to recommendations for interventions that could be used to reduce group discipline problems.

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The Influence of Teacher Experience on the Elementary Classroom System: An Observational Study

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Abstract: This study used a systems perspective to determine whether differences exist between classrooms of expert (n=35) and novice (n=35) teachers on the cohesion, communication, and flexibility dimensions of the Classroom Systems Observation Scale (CSOS). A 50-minute observation using the CSOS was conducted in elementary school classrooms in New York State. The study found classrooms of expert teachers had statistically higher levels of classroom communication and flexibility than classrooms of novice teachers, while there was no difference for classroom cohesion. Results indicate that expert teachers' classrooms were significantly more flexible than classrooms of novice teachers; however, no differences were found in the number of classrooms that fell within the balanced range. Implications for classroom environment and student learning are considered.

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What Does It Mean to Participate in Class? Integrity and Inconsistency in Classroom Interaction

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Abstract: The original study upon which this article is based began with a seemingly simple question that had origins in the author's own experiences as a high school teacher. Why do some teachers talk too much when they are teaching, and what can a teacher education program do to address this problem? When informed, then transformed, by available research in the area, the question becomes more accurate and useful for teachers and teacher educators. How can a teacher education program enable teacher candidates to encourage greater student participation and interaction in their classrooms? This article attempts to answer these questions by reporting the results of both a comprehensive literature review and a case study of six teacher candidates in one course of a teacher certification program. The study compares what the candidates say and believe about students' participation and interaction to their own actual participation and interaction in a teacher education classroom, resulting in provocative and intriguing implications for teacher education programs.

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Collaborative and Interactional Processes in an Inquiry-Based, Informal Learning Environment

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Abstract: This study was conducted on informal aspects of an inquiry-based physics course and reports findings about learning interactions and discourse observed during the first three semesters the course was offered. The course offered an alternative to the large lecture instruction typical in introductory university physics and promoted learning in an informal environment. The course organization attempted to engage students in investigations with only a small fraction of time devoted to lecture/discussion. Students collaborated in groups of three to conduct investigations with the use of computer tools and laboratory apparatus. The instructor and teaching assistants interacted directly with the students with the intent to ask probing questions to guide the students through conceptually meaningful problem solving. Researchers videotaped student groups as they worked through investigations. Field notes and students' investigation reports provided additional information about student performance. The study reports detailed accounts of student interaction through discourse during the class investigations and comments on the nature of the student collaborations. The study showed that during collaborative problem solving, the students engaged in informal elaborative and reflective discourse that critically examined the data the students had collected during the investigations. The author comments on possible relationships of these interactions and cognitive processes to knowledge construction in an informal setting.

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