Responsive Classroom: Collaborative Problem-Solving

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From: Responsive Classroom Level II Training
Teacher conferences with student in private to address a specific problem.
Collaborative process hinges on a relationship of respect and acceptance between teacher and student.
Can be used when teacher notices a specific behavioral pattern which is counter-productive for the student’s learning or well-being.
Seeks to get to the root of a specific problem and develop a plan of action.
Invites child into a conversation & asks for child’s take on the situation.
Collaborative Problem-Solving

- Brings out the best in children by building on their positive intentions & abilities
- Positions the teacher & student as collaborators
- Based on Student-Teacher and Student-Student relationships
- Aims to address the underlying problem, not just the surface issue
- Does not look for “quick fixes”
- Gives children ownership for solving their own problems
- Not a one-size-fits-all formula...Individualized to fit the needs of the child & situation

Guidelines for Problem-Solving Conference

- Use a kind, but business-like manner & voice tone.
- Recognize something positive that the student does.
- Be prepared to propose some options and to accept options from the student (but don’t depend on the student for direction).
- Be prepared to end the conference at any point if the student becomes defensive or resistant.
Guidelines for 
Problem-Solving Conference

- If student is resistant and you must end the conference, state the expectations for behavior and following class rules before closing.
- **Avoid lectures or sermons!**
- Leave options open for student and teacher.
- Keep conferences as short as possible & schedule when others are not around.
- Focus on solving an immediate problem.
Careful observation of the child…
- Notice behavioral “triggers”
- Notice social skill deficits & errors in thinking

Establish positive teacher-student rapport
- Acknowledgement of positive behaviors
- “I’ve noticed that….”
- Ask: “What do you notice?”

Belief in children’s desire to learn & behave: “I want you to have friends.”

Openness to a range of options
Listen carefully and take child’s thoughts seriously.
Ask open-ended questions to explore child’s thinking & gain insight.
Remain open to unexpected explanations and ideas.
Acknowledge child’s strengths and ideas.
Arrange a time to check in later.
Steps in Problem-Solving Conferences

1. Establish what the teacher and the student notice…specific events, actions, feelings, or expressions:
   - Teacher notices positive things
   - Teacher notices things that don’t work
   - Teacher asks what the student notices

2. Name the problem & need to solve it.
   - Help child see why the behavior is a problem
   - Establish “buy-in” to work with teacher to solve it
Steps in Problem-Solving Conferences

3. Help student understand the problem & gain new insight
   • Use “Could it be?” questions
   • Help student explore causes of problem

4. Generating alternatives
   • Both teacher & student brainstorm 2-3 strategies that might solve problem
   • Strategies may involve action for both teacher & student (ie. Teacher gives reminder signal)
   • Student chooses which strategy to try
5. Choosing one strategy to implement

- Teacher & student agree to try one strategy
- Agreement may be in writing and includes:
  - What the teacher will do
  - What the student will do
  - Time frame to check-in to evaluate progress to decide if strategy is working
DEMONSTRATION

Sammy, and His Behavior Problems
by Caltha Crowe

Audiobook, 2010
How did the teacher’s attitude contribute to Sammy’s openness to try a new approach?
How did the teacher elicit Sammy’s positive attitude?
How might this situation have turned out with a different teacher attitude?
Case Studies

1. Identify the Problem-Solving Steps the teacher used with each student
2. Think of a student in your class who might benefit from a Collaborative Problem-Solving Conference
3. Plan the steps you will take during the conference to help the student begin to resolve the issue
4. Share your plan with the group
Read through the PS Conference Starters handout to differentiate between possible root causes of various problems.

Then read your selected scenario.

Use the Steps in Problem-Solving Conference to plan what you will say in the conference with the student.

Share your thoughts with your group.