

STAFF RESPONSES IN THE LEARNING CENTER

To educate a person in his mind but not his heart is to train a menace to society.
—Teddy Roosevelt

CARE, RELATIONSHIPS, RULES: Accept the students (not necessarily their baggage).
They don't care what you know until they know how much you care. There is no effective outreach without healthy relationships. *Rules without relationships equal rebellion.* *The one who fully accepts another has the most impact in that person's life.*
 —Josh McDowell

RESPECT AND TRUST: Staff must remember that in order to receive respect from students, staff must respect the students' personage. Children learn what they live.
Expect people to be better than they are. It helps them become better. But don't be disappointed when they are not. It helps them to keep trying.
 —Merry Browne

SIGNS OF ACCEPTANCE:

- A. Greet students daily with a smile (make sure the smile is not just on the lips, but also in the eyes). Let the smile convey: 1. Each day is a new day: 2. You are as glad to see the students as your dog is to see you every day.

- B. Your willingness to talk and spend time with the student during breaks, lunch, before/after school, demonstrates to students that staff do not find students below their level and are willing to cultivate relationships with students not just on academic levels, but where students are every day.
 - T (Try)
 - A
 - L (little)
 - K (kindness)

RIGHTS: Staff should give up their rights to be offended or to be defensive. Such rights place the staff member emotionally on the same level as the students and do not train or demonstrate to students how to deal with offenses on a mature, constructive level.

UNDERSTANDING: Understand and use the Law of Reciprocals: If we call it Alike it is, nothing changes; if we call it like it ought to be, things begin to change.

What they are	How we respond
confused	give purpose, order
filled with strife	atmosphere of peace
rejected	acceptance
angry	soft words
ruled by anarchy	boundaries (rules)

TOUGH LOVE: *By mercy and truth is iniquity purged.*@

Tough love
mercyCCCCC||CCCCtruth
(soft) Balance (harsh)

CREATIVE CONTROL (NON-CONFRONTIVE):

- A. Build trust/relationships:
 - CThe initial interview is critical. It sets the tone for all future relationships with that student. Some degree of all-important bonding takes place.
 - CTreat all students and their families with honor and dignity
 - CRemember that goodness bestowed upon people helps them change
- B. Praise students whenever possible and give positive reports regularly to parents via phone, A brag notes@, etc.
- C. Affirm and bless daily via words, touch.
- D. Leave behind (at home) emotionally loaded expectations. *AExpectations destroy gratefulness. Gratefulness is the basis of happiness; therefore, expectations destroy or dampen happiness.*@
- E. Do not respond out of personal offense, disgust, anger or hurt. Respond out of sincere love and desire to see the student change for the better.
- F. Use creative language: *AHow would you like to...?@*
ACould I get you to...?@
(whisper) AYou need to....@
- G. Appeal to the conscience (see Resources A, #5)
- H. Utilize humor: Make them laugh: think of funny but not offensive retorts when you are Aconfronted. @ (see Resources A, #6)
- I. Go out of your way to help; accommodate students (but don't be a door matCyou must be balanced)
- J. Convey both spoken and unspoken messages of AI care,@ AI'm on your side,@ and AI believe you@
- K. Give impressions of trusting them but keep your eyes openCAI have observed that to succeed in the world, one should seem a fool but be wise.@CMontesquieu
- L. Avoid accusations: they build walls, not bridges (see Resources A, #7)
- M. Give the benefit of the doubt whenever possible
- N. Speak softly. *AA soft answer turns away wrath.*@(see Resources B, #1a)
- O. Tell parables (Aesop, etc.), give object lessons or impromptu dramatizations (see Resources B) to convey points.

HOW TO RESPOND:

- A. Respond rather than react to students (especially to students having a bad or temperamental day). Soft answers turn away wrath. Staff should never provoke students to anger because the staff member wants to exercise his/her rights at the students= expense.
- B. Two forms of deviant behavior generally surface during a typical PAC dayCprocedural violations and disruptive behaviorCboth require staff to analyze quickly/thoroughly the intent and motive of the behavior.
 - CSome violations are due to carelessness, not premeditation (expressions of an undisciplined lifestyle, i.e. forgetting pencils for testing, noisily wading up paper and throwing it in the trash from a distance, eating food over the carpet and not cleaning up messes)

Other behavior can be an expression of rebellion motivated by anger, hurt, embarrassment, or induced by chemical substance usage (i.e. slamming, kicking, shoving, yelling, cursing, etc.).

- C. Staff must be able to evaluate overt actions but also anticipate student reaction to intervention. That skill is a combination of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, training and insight on temperaments (sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic and melancholy). The ability to gain control of volatile situations is comparable with the job of a line backer on a football team who must instantly assess not only his opponent's behavior, but also his own team members' ability to out-manuever the opponent.

How you respond to a disobedient youth is very critical! Wrong or improper assessment of student behavior can escalate situations from a low key status to an explosive level. Successful staff are able to process relevant or observable data quickly and appropriately and call the right counter-maneuver into play in such a manner that the fission threshold is reduced and turned into a positive benefit.

Example: A student (Johnny) arrives at the testing table without his pencil. He has several options:

1. sit and do nothing until a staff member notices his inactivity
2. ask permission to get his pencil
3. get up without permission and get his pencil

The ideal response would be for Johnny to ask permission. But, at-risk youth do not operate in the ideal realm. Thus, Johnny's probable response would be #3. Johnny's motive is not rebellion. He is not trying to provoke a staff member by breaking a rule. Johnny is simply exercising a lifestyle habit of survival—get what you want/need because adults in his life have not been responsible.

A punitively motivated (or frustrated) staff member might say to Johnny, "Sit down!" or, "You don't have permission to get up!" Such a remark only reminds the student of the broken rule. A restoration-minded staff member would approach the student in a non-confrontive manner and ask, "Did you forget something I can get for you?"

PRIMARY PURPOSE: PAC staff must always remember that the primary purpose of PAC is not punitive, but clinical. Our motto is to meet the kids where they are and help them get where they need to be—the ideal. PAC's emotional therapy could be like a child confined to a wheelchair but who wants to take PE to learn how to run. A wise therapist helps the boy exercise his upper body (something he can do) while other staff work to help the student achieve his potential with his damaged legs (constraints).

IMAGE: Staff responses to student improprieties and disruptive behavior involve the total image of the staff: posture, eyes, facial expression, voice inflections, hand gestures. Young people instantly read these physical manifestations, which may bring past physical, and emotional hurts/reactions into play, and which may be indiscreetly slammed at staff members who demonstrate punitive/correctional authority rather than therapeutic/remedial help.