

Introduction

A funny thing happened on my way to giving a seminar on a curriculum I developed called Prejudice Awareness. . . .

When my daughter Felicia was a new teacher taking classes at San Francisco State University, she talked about my course with her fellow students. Her classmates kept saying that they would love to hear more about it, which led her professor to invite me to address the group. I gladly leapt at the opportunity, as it was a wonderful excuse to see my daughter. (I didn't need an "excuse" to see her, but I did have to justify the 3,000-mile plane trip!)

Well, I planned everything I was going to say but lived in perpetual fear that I would stand up there and re-create some of those awkward moments from what seemed a lifetime ago—when my daughter was a cringing preteen and teenager being humiliated by everything I said and everything I did. I had to keep reminding myself that it was her idea to invite me.

When the big night came and I was about to speak, I realized I had left my note cards in the computer room, which was now locked. While Felicia was getting the security guards to open the door to retrieve my notes (and hence, rescue me), I was sure that her memories of being embarrassed by me were alive and well in her mind. While she was gone, I noticed all the anxieties that those in her class were sharing among themselves about their own students, the other teachers, their lack of control, and their insecurities in general. I remembered those days and those anxieties.

When I finally began speaking, I looked at them and said, "When I was a new teacher, I asked myself what I would want in a teacher if I were one of the students. I knew I would want someone to teach me in an environment that was fun, yet demanding. I hope I did that.

"Now, tonight, I look at you—new teachers—and I ask myself yet again, what would I want if I were sitting where you are? I would

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want a real live classroom teacher—a person who has 175 children passing through her classroom every day and has all kinds of strategies to cope with the daily routines and crises that occur—to tell me her “tricks of the trade.”

Their heads were nodding so furiously, I knew I was right on target. For the next two hours, I shared with them the skills I had accumulated from my contact with so many thousands of young people between 8 and 17 years of age, and from the wisdom I had amassed by having students share their journals and personal thoughts with me. I had also led parent-teacher workshops for many years and was trained in the specialty area of conflict resolution, and I was able to draw on those experiences. After sharing teaching strategies for two hours, I discussed my course on prejudice for another two hours. And guess what? My daughter winked and gave me two thumbs up. Puberty was over . . . I hadn't humiliated her and she is a contributor to this new edition. Who would have thought?

Since that day I have shared my strategies and ideas in workshops with countless other teachers who provided valuable feedback and encouragement. This book has evolved out of that process.

My goal in writing this book is to give teachers the book I wish I'd had when I was first struggling in the classroom—a “teacher-friendly” book to tell me what to expect, how to make my classroom a place that students can't wait to get to and where they want to learn; a common-sense book with a sense of humor, written by someone who has been in the classroom—and who loved every day of it. I also hope to help veteran teachers prevent “burnout” by offering fresh ideas and sharing stories with which they can identify.

In this book there are over 300 strategies to help preservice, new, and experienced teachers develop rapport with students and manage everyday school problems. Major topics include how to start a successful year, how to help students learn responsibility, how to communicate with honesty and fairness, how to build students' confidence, how to prevent confrontation and showdowns, and how to work effectively with parents and school staff.

Let me express my gratitude to all the teachers who have been kind enough to share how the first two editions of this book have helped them in their classrooms. What has delighted me is the diversity of readers, from the student teacher to the seasoned veteran.

To all teachers who are looking for new strategies, I hope I provide those for you. I am sure there are some strategies to which you

will take exception, but I hope there are many more that you will try and find effective. To all new teachers, I congratulate you on choosing a wonderfully fulfilling career, and I hope my experiences and strategies will help you. Remember, a few of these might work for you, and you will probably invent some for yourself that may be even more successful. Good luck—and make a difference!

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