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Life Impact: Empowering Students with Relationship, Ownership and Problem-solving

“What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.”—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Why do we say that GRACE & ACCOUNTABILITY are equally important? Empowerment! Daily, you are working with students who have great reasons to be mad and/or question whether they can trust adults because of past or present experiences. By being sensitive to this, we can stay in a relationship with students to educate and coach them both academically and behaviorally. Our BIST Philosophy of letting kids know “You can never make me mad enough that I won’t be in a relationship with you,” while maintaining high expectations provides much needed structure, emotional support and assurance.

On the other hand, it takes a lot of COURAGE to hold students accountable. Although easier to ignore or dismiss acting out, we know the subtle message to students when we choose this, equates to adults saying “Your choice/behavior is okay because I’m not stopping it.” Adults AND students are empowered when we can choose the BIST Philosophy of “You’re too important to let you do the wrong thing. If it won’t work on a job or in life, it can’t work here.”

When students are emotional, by design adults mirror that emotion. Giving ourselves permission to utilize EARLY INTERVENTION and committing to one redirection and support preserves our ability to be logical. The intent isn’t to get students out of the room; but to intervene in a quick, kind, firm and direct manner in order to build trust while preserving the learning environment. When students are too emotional to respond, how do we respond while maintaining the balance of GRACE & ACCOUNTABILITY? We must give ourselves permission to pause and give students time, validation, boundaries, relationship, and questions.

Time: How much time do we give students? It depends on the student, which can bring about anxiety in adults. As much as we want students to be in the classroom, if we try to hurry the process we know that in the long run we will be compromising the learning environment and ultimately setting that student up to fail.

“Take all the time you need.”

“When you’re sitting in your chair, I’ll know that you’re ready.”

“When I see your hand raised, that will let me know that you are calm.”

Validation: What is the purpose of this step and what do we validate? The purpose of validation is to empathize while extending partnership. We validate the emotions the student is experiencing and the difficulty of being accountable.

“I get that this is difficult.”

“You may have great reasons to be mad.”

“It’s a challenge when we have to do something we don’t like.”

Boundaries: The student remains in the place where the acting out stopped. This could be any place in the continuum and is individualized to each student. The student is protected in this area until they can partner with the adult and be in partnership with the correct adult.

“Until we can talk, where do you think you should be to stay out of trouble?”

“I’ll be back to check on you. What should it look like/sound like to be classroom ready?”

“Are we asking you to stay in the _____ (place) to make you mad or to help you?”

Relationship: When students reject us, they are testing to see if we will reject them back. By maintaining high expectations and staying in the relationship, we are teaching boundaries through words and actions of care.

“I’m on your side.”

“Can you trust that I will help you?”

“I’m not mad at you.”

“You’re not in trouble, I will help you figure this out.”

“It’s difficult when we have to look at ourselves, I will help you.”

Questions: Waiting for students to move from an emotional state to logical models respect. Our building respects you enough to support through emotion until you can allow us to help you to problem-solve. When we tell students what they’ve done instead of asking questions, we deny students the ability to self reflect and feel the accomplishment of growth. By asking questions, we challenge students to be problem-solvers and feel proud of their ability to know everyone makes mistakes and they have the ability to fix things.

“On a scale of 1-5 (1=Calm / 5=Furious), where are you?”

“Are you ready to talk about what happened?”

“What will it look and sound like to talk?”

“Are you ready to talk without using other people’s names or blaming?”

Reflection Questions:

Building Level:

- As a building, do we have a tendency to give more GRACE or ACCOUNTABILITY?
- How do we define GRACE? (Lowering expectations, giving chances or acceptance with high expectations?)
- What level do we get students to on the five levels of ACCOUNTABILITY? (I did it, I'm sorry, It's part of a problem in my life, I accept the consequences and I accept and need help)
- What steps will we take to become more balanced?
- Do we require students who struggle to practice their new skill daily or only after a problem has occurred?
- What support do we need from our Building BIST Consultant to become more balanced?

Classroom Level:

- Do my classroom absolutes address talking, movement around the room, kindness and following directions?
- Are my students able to articulate the purpose of redirection and expected response to keep problems small?
- Do I utilize Early Intervention by stopping the student the first moment I can see that they are struggling? Using validation, caring confrontation and not just sending them out of the room?
- Do I give too many redirections or chances?
- Am I able to be mindful about my emotions so I can remain logical and coach my students?
- Do my students know the Goals for Life and Levels of Accountability?
- Are my students required to process and problem-solve with me after a problem occurs? (Even if they needed to leave the classroom to get back on track)

Individual Level:

- Are we respecting students who are emotional by waiting for them to become logical?
- Do we know the students who require quiet, predictable redirection to decrease resistance to adults? Do we utilize this caring confrontation language consistently with those students who need it the most?
- Are we able to validate student emotion without adult sarcasm or emotion?
- Can students who struggle the most identify 1-3 adults in the building that they have a positive relationship with? If not, are we requiring daily contact with an adult to build a relationship?
- Do we provide continued support until students can answer the questions in order to work through all five levels of accountability to own the problem with the correct adult?
- When students have been moved reactively three times or more in a month or less, are we moving to proactive planning? The Plan for Success must have enough restriction/protection to stop the acting out while teaching a new positive skill.

5 STEPS TO ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

- **I did it.**
 - What happened to you?
 - What did you do?
 - Who was involved?
 - What was your part of the problem?

- **I'm sorry.**
 - How will you fix this?
 - Who would you apologize to?
 - What would you need to say?
 - What should your voice sound like?
 - What will you say?

- **It's part of a problem in my life.**
 - How long has this been happening?
 - What percentage of the time do you get away with it?
 - Do you get in trouble every time you are mad?
 - Can't have an overwhelming feeling without getting in trouble.
 - Do you always get in trouble when other people do things you don't like?
 - Can't be okay when others are not okay.
 - When an adult asks you to do something you don't like, do you make it better or worse?
 - When there are rules you don't like, do you follow them or break them?
 - Can't do something when I don't want to.
 - Can you let us help you?

- **I accept consequences.**
 - What do you think is a reasonable consequence?
 - Have you ever had consequences that have helped?
 - What can you do differently next time?
 - Do you make better choices by yourself or with others?
 - What do you think would be fair if you were me?

- **I accept and need help.**
 - Which adult in the building can help you?
 - What skills do we need to work on?
 - How often do you need help?
 - What will it look like for an adult to help you?
 - What questions should an adult ask you to help you?



BIST KUDOS:

Do you want to acknowledge the BIST work a colleague has accomplished? Email content to be included in the quarterly newsletter to: mshipman1@kc.rr.com. Thanks for all you do!

Kudos to Ms. Schmidt from Lansing Elementary! She is using a Team Rulebook Bulletin board to establish her classroom BIST Expectations, Bottom Line and Goals for Life. Thank you for letting us share! How will you show your team spirit while reinforcing your class expectations?

