

NUFS Workshop 2013

*Newsletter No. 10***Workshop in February****<Part 1 >****Date:** March 1, 2014, 10:30-14:00**Venue:** NSC College (Shin-sakae, Nagoya), Room A31**Presenter:** Curtis Kelly (Kansai University)**Title:** "Dealing with Difficult Students"

Abstract: In the first part, the presenter will a) offer different theories of motivation, b) discuss why it is, or is not, important for us and c) ask participants to share their own ways to motivate students. In the second half, the presenter will talk about motivation issues with difficult students, and how to deal with them. The presenter will relate these concepts to his own classroom experiences and discuss techniques for building relationships with difficult students and raising esteem. In particular, he will discuss Roger's three criteria for the humanistic approach: 1) authenticity, empathic listening, and 3) absolute positive regard.

The number of participants: 32**1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?**

- The 'checklist for making a lesson plan' is very useful. I'd like to use it when I make a lesson plan.
- I want my students to write 'Thank you poster', because thinking about appreciation makes us gentle and sharing the feeling makes us warm and happy.
- Try to arrange more opportunities for students to give verbal feedback, because it provides a more personalized approach.
- The whole ideas of being a more loving teacher and emotionally investing to students is something that I will work on. Being an ALT does not allow much chances to develop relationships but is also something that can be explored and do an action research on.
- Communi-Card is a brilliant idea. Dealing with students not only the difficult ones is very challenging. It's hard to spend time talking to each student but if we do this activity in class we can get a quick response and keep track about what they're feeling or what ideas they got from the class.
- I would like to use Exploratory Practice (EPs) to investigate these problems we have in our classes. For example, students can choose a problem (e.g. why do students use their cell phones in class?) They can research the problem by interviewing fellow classmates, teachers and friends. They could consult web or news articles on this issue, too. Finally they create a poster and present it alongside other classmates and the issues they chose to research.

2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- I learned how to get the magic drug 'Dopamine' to motivate students. I also learned English teachers are not only teaching language, but we can teach them more important things for life.
- Teachers should keep the importance of 'rapport' between students in their mind. It is easy to lose 'rapport' but hard to get it.
- Teachers have trouble separating 'fun' activities from motivational activities – just because an activity is fun, does that mean it is motivational? The lesson plan checklist was very useful in discussing this with the other teachers.
- We need to think about things from the students' perspective. Solving things, or approaching them from that perspective may help the student person, not just get a single immediate result.
- I thought I shouldn't try to grab my student's cell phone when they are using in my class. Next time, I will ask them why they are using them first.
- It reminded me of some words that "People don't do anything by logic but by emotions". We should appeal to their feeling so that they can feel something positive.
- I've learned that in teaching, we always point our students' faults, their weaknesses and their negative attitudes as barriers for learning but we should keep in mind that it always goes back to us teachers. We should examine our principles and how we can improve in order to meet students' needs.



3. Questions and Answers

Some answers are long, so I put the questions in boxes. You should be able to skip to the questions you are most interested in. Please understand that I am just throwing out my opinions and that they are biased. I see the world as a university teacher with a bit of a nurturing mother orientation. I understand that there are other wholly valuable views. In particular, I think we need strict fathers just as much as nurturing mothers, because different learners have different needs. In my case, being the strict father is hard because as a gaijin, it is hard for us to express enough authority.

I loved your reflections. Thank you. Many parts touched me and educated me, such as, as one person wrote: "To teach English is one way to teach students to live."

Also my warmest love to Chihaya, Nancy and the others who made all this possible.



1) What motivational approaches would be unique to J.H.S?

This is a good question and one that is hard for me to answer. Actually, I'd like to hear your opinion on this. Still, one of the ideas I gave in the presentation was that we need to adjust our teaching style and content to fit their needs, and different aged children have different developmental needs that they are attending to. A search online as to the developmental needs of JHS students shows that they are undergoing moral development and societal convention development. "Moral issues focus on the effects students'

actions have on the welfare of others (e.g., hitting another child). Societal conventions, on the other hand, focus on norms or rules (e.g., talking in class).”

See http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_misunderstood_middle_schooler

From the site:

Nucci and Turiel stress that, when dealing with student misbehavior, teachers need to take *both* areas into consideration.

Research suggests that even through adolescence, kids maintain a strong emotional response to moral issues where the direct effects on another person are clear—they still know it’s wrong to hit other people or pick their pockets, for instance.



Once they hit middle school age, however, they become less bound by societal conventions. This means that when their moral decisions have only indirect effects on other people, they become less likely to do the right thing. For example, even though they wouldn’t actually pick someone else’s pocket, they’re less inclined than younger kids to return money they find on the street. In that case, the indirect nature of the dilemma doesn’t stimulate their moral instincts, and we can’t count on them to adhere to societal conventions like they did when they were younger.

Think about it this way: Middle school students have just spent the first 11 or 12 years of their lives following the rules. All of a sudden, they wake up to the fact that these rules were set by adults and are somewhat arbitrary. Developmentally, they haven’t yet understood why these rules were developed in the first place: to protect the welfare of other people. They typically won’t make that connection until they’re about 15 or 16. So their behavior often falls in a moral gap between the fidelity to the rules they showed as young kids and the more complex moral reasoning they develop in their later teens.

So what can teachers do to help middle school students bridge this gap? Here are some developmentally-appropriate suggestions.

1) When a student misbehaves, tell him or her whether the misbehavior broke a societal convention or a moral issue—and then talk about it. In other words, if a student breaks a classroom rule, ask him/her to consider how the action impacts the smooth running of the classroom. If the misbehavior is a moral transgression against another student, explore how the action impacts that other student’s welfare. Researchers have found that teachers who match their discipline to the type of infraction (moral vs. convention) are considered [more knowledgeable and effective](#) by their students.

Talking about the misbehavior helps students realize the impact of their actions on others and understand why societal conventions are necessary.

2) Discuss moral transgressions as they occur—and ask how they made students feel. Students more deeply understand the impact their actions have on others when they discuss motives and consequences with each other.

It’s also crucial to include students’ emotions in the discussion. Research has shown that children have strong emotional reactions to moral situations because they’re about care and harm to other people rather than adherence to rules. For example, moral transgressions cause children to respond with anger, sadness, or empathy for the victim, while positive moral interactions foster emotions of happiness. The breaking of societal conventions, on the other hand, brings very little [emotional response](#) from children.

By discussing how they feel—and made other people feel—in moral situations, students become better able to identify and regulate their emotions in future moral dilemmas.

3) Give students the opportunity to have input on classroom rules. In setting boundaries for middle schoolers, schools often do exactly the opposite of what’s developmentally appropriate: greater teacher control and limited opportunities for students to practice decision-making and choice. Research has demonstrated that the mismatch between students’ need for autonomy at this age and schools’ greater wielding of control causes students to **lose motivation and interest** in school. Allowing students to craft societal conventions for school helps them understand the need for these conventions and keeps them engaged in the learning process.

The research is clear: Instead of clamping down on middle school students when they misbehave, we need to engage them in discussion. This is critical to their moral understanding—and research suggests it can even impact their long-term academic success.

Hopefully, we can turn some of those middle school tears into smiles for students and teachers alike.

2) What readings could I read to further my understanding particular for Japan?

I assume the best stuff about Japanese students is in Japanese, so I am at a loss in answering this. Can anyone else? Then too, this documentary about really moved me to my roots:

Children Full of Life (parts 1-5)

"In the award-winning documentary Children Full of Life, a fourth-grade class in a primary school in Kanazawa, northwest of Tokyo, learn lessons about compassion from their homeroom teacher, Toshiro Kanamori. He instructs each to write their true inner feelings in a letter, and read it aloud in front of the class. By sharing their lives, the children begin to realize the importance of caring for their classmates."

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=armP8TfS9Is>

This version is in English.

3) When you give each student different tasks, what/how do you evaluate them?

This is a good question, but not one I can easily answer. It might be better if you gave me a clear example of the different tasks.

Still, basically, you can still evaluate students with different tasks by the same criteria, even if you personalize the assignment. For example, you might ask students to write a paragraph about one of the best days they have ever had. Every student will produce something different, but you can still standardize the evaluation criteria to be something like: a) use of a topic sentence, b) use of descriptive adjectives before nouns, c) use of a good closing sentence, and so on, depending on what your teaching objectives are. Just be sure the students know the criteria before starting and in this case, also be sure to let them read each others’ work and comment on it.



4) To apology is necessary when teachers make mistakes. Tell me your good experience: your apology changed something..

Wow. I could write pages on this. But let me start by saying that apologizing is more than “necessary,” it is humanizing. The teacher-student relationship represents this huge difference in authority and ability and

can be uncomfortable for students. Making mistakes and then laughing at them, or apologizing, is a huge psychological leveler for students. It makes you human, and makes them less afraid of mistakes. It makes them feel easier about the situation and like you more. It might also make them more likely to take risks and misbehave, but that is not necessarily a bad thing either.

In fact, I sometimes make mistakes on purpose, especially in regard to Japanese, to make my college students feel both relieved and superior. If the teacher makes mistakes, then they don't feel so bad making mistakes themselves.



As for an example, here you are: I taught a 70 student Eigo Nyumon class last fall in first period. I had to leave home at 7:15 to get to Osaka on time, and once I forgot the morning Tokyu does not stop at every station. I watched my station go by and recede in the distance. I was 15-20 minutes late to that class and apologized. I always start the class with a 5 item quiz on the homework, so from that class on, I started putting extra quizzes on empty desks in the back for students who came up to 30 minutes late. I was late, so I gave them some lenience for this early class. After all, I wanted to measure their hw completion and proficiency, not their punctuality.

The students who came late were already feeling so bad about not being on time, and I am sure they were in anguish the whole way to school. When they rushed in, knowing they had missed the quiz, even though they might have stayed up late studying for it, they looked upset. But then, when I pointed to an extra quiz on a desk in the back and said "Well, sometimes I'm late too," I saw these looks of relief and smiles I knew affected the rest of the class for them. Cortisol levels dropped, learning potential increased, and they felt accepted and understood. Did that encourage them to be late again? Not at Kandai, though I'm not sure that would work elsewhere. In fact, I think it made them like the class better and more likely to leave home on time.

5) I didn't get the exact answers on how to deal with difficult students at the end of the workshop, but I learned a lot on how to change myself into a more sensitive teacher to difficult students. What do you think?

You got it! That is exactly the point. "Dealing with difficult students" really means "dealing with yourself." The thing to do, then, is to forget yourself, your needs, and your agenda and focus on theirs. It is kind of Buddhist, isn't it?

6) I think you sometimes need to scold students, showing them you are offended. What do you think?

The question is whether we do it for our sake or for their sake? Do we do it in a way that makes them reflect and come to a decision on their own, or just avoid that behavior without growing from the experience? Do we scold them in public, embarrassing them, or one on one? After all, scolding one person in public is impossible. When you scold one, you scold all (though sometimes that has value too). Scolding one makes everyone feels worse, just like when you praise one, you praise them all. So, scolding is neither good or bad, it depends on the method and the big outcome.

I scold too, sometimes, but I always reflect on why too. If it is because I am angry, I see it as an opportunity. Anger is ultimately your own fault rather than anyone else's, so it is a sign that something inside hurts: your pride, your desire to get something done, or whatever. Often it is your confidence as a teacher that is hurt. So when you get angry you get an opportunity to discover a weakness and deal with it. I

remember one time I got very angry at a girl who walked in late, while I was talking, saying something loudly. I exploded, but later realized that the real reason was because I was trying something very new and did not have confidence I was teaching very well. I felt threatened.

7) What is your opinion with regards to giving rewards (ex. stickers for primary students)? Is it beneficial or does it shift the motivation of students from integrative to instrumental?

Again, case by case. Grading is a reward, but so are chocolates. My favorite activity is to give enough sweets to best ones that they can give some to everyone else, or better yet, very publicly give sweets as a rewards to the very best students first. Follow that by giving more to other students who are trying, and then follow that by giving them to everyone else in the room because I like them, and believe in them too. It's nice. They all want to be like the best for a minute or two, but feel accepted in the end.

Rewarding and grading is very hard and we tend to underestimate its effects. Consider a speech contest, for instance. It truly energizes the winners, but what about the others? If I knew you were grading us presenters at NUFS as number 1, 2, 3 etc., I'd be uneasy about going. Would you like your action research presentations made into a contest? So I believe reward is good, praise is good, but ranking a tad dangerous if it gets interpreted as self-worth. (Though I might rank effort, such as posting the 5-point homework quiz results)

Now, as for kids and stickers, I am less qualified to answer, but I expect the same principles apply. Saying "Keiko said XXX" Wasn't that great?" to everyone seems a good way to reward, or giving stickers for performance that anyone can succeed at if they make the effort. But what do you think? I want to hear your opinion.

Instrumental? Integrative? I can't make the distinction very easily and I suppose it depends on the personality of the receiver. I suspect kids are pretty much instrumental for everything anyway.

8) I have trouble with dealing with ADHD students. Do you have any suggestions about that?

Absolutely none. In my elem teaching experiences, they were a huge problem. I think it is the school's responsibility to implement a policy. Some schools put two teachers in every room with one taking care of the hard-to-handles. The second person could also be a university student volunteer or intern, and your admin should be looking into such possibilities. Another source of help can be the parents by themselves. I've been to elem schools that do so. They explain the problems large classes with a couple unruly kids cause for all the kids, and ask the mothers to volunteer or maybe contribute a day a month to help. It's amazing how responsive they are. This is their child they are helping.

I love the way my daughter's Yochien has a mentally disabled student in her class. It is good for all of them. But ADHD is another matter.

<Part 2>

Date: March 1, 2014, 14:00 -17:00

Venue: NSC College (Shin-sakae, Nagoya)

Advisors: Nancy Mutoh (NUFS)

Abstract: Monthly reports on action research

The number of participants: 13



Workshop in March (Scheduled)

Date: March 29-30, 2014

Venue: XIV Biwako

Title: Final presentation of action research

This workshop is for action research members only.