

Service Learning Paper: Ephraim Elementary

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Interpersonal Communications

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Johann Wolfgang von Goethe stated that “Correction does much, but encouragement does more.” As we spent time serving the students in grades 1-3, at Ephraim Elementary, we saw this quote come to life. Although correcting their errors helped them realize their mistakes, it didn’t boost their confidence or help them as much as our small hints of encouragement. All of us were elementary students at one time or we know someone who is currently in elementary school. Because of this, we know firsthand how it felt to go through the stages of learning and improving our education. Kim Cragun, the Human Development teacher at Snow College said that “children in this age group build their self concept most strongly from how well they are excelling intellectually.”

The kids we were helping were part of the star program and after school program because they were slower learners than the rest of the kids in their grade. It is apparent that their self-concept gets deteriorated as they spend time around other children their age who are learning at normal speeds. Betsy Schenck said that “If all children are helped to develop a positive self concept, the course of the world could be changed for the better.” None of us want to see those we love experience low self esteems or have a negative self concept because it takes them a little extra time to learn things. Because of this it is important that we, as tutors, give positive feedback and encouragement and help these students find success in their school work. This in turn, will give the students a positive self concept and make them feel of worth.

There are many ways that we can give encouragement even while giving necessary corrections to their mistakes. These concepts are found in the various ways that we communicate our messages to the students. Although we can do our part, the children also

need to be actively engaged in the ways that they participate. Before the kids can do their part, they have to respect us and know that we care.

When children know that we care and that we value them, they begin to feel of worth, which builds up their self concept. Self concept is subjective because it can always change based on who is giving us feedback. Students may be getting negative feedback from fellow students, so it is necessary that we give them positive feedback so that their self concept of whom they are as a person is not distorted or incorrect. These children have hopefully developed some sense of self concept, which means that they will not want it to change, so they seek people who support their self concept (Alder & Proctor, 2008, pg 41-43). Therefore it is necessary for tutors and parents to create a positive self concept from the get go so that the change will not be necessary. We all participated in encouraging the students we taught.

Natalie taught a girl named Samantha, in the star program, who really struggled to read and to focus on what she read. Natalie would always compliment her when she read things right, and gave her a high five at the end of each book to show that she was impressed with Samantha's reading abilities. Jamie taught a boy named Keenon who struggled to pay attention, but with a little encouragement he was directed back on track. The after school program was mostly for the Hispanic children who needed a little extra help to get caught up on their homework. They all came in and actually started working on their homework without being asked. Whenever they needed help we would look at their math problems and tell them they were doing well and were on the right track. Most of the time, the children would figure out the problems on their own with a little encouraging boost from us. Our positive comments

build up these students self concept but how do we encourage them in times where we need to point out their flaws in order for them to learn?

Some of the ways in which we communicated these flaws in positive ways were by hinting, equivocating, silence, and by complementing our verbal actions with our non verbal actions (Alder & Proctor, 2008, pg.317-324) When the kids read to us and missed a word, we had to point to the word and ask them if that word was what they said it was. After looking at it for a minute they would sound it out and we would hint the sounds it made if they couldn't figure it out. We used equivocating in situations such as when they would say at when the word was it. We would tell them that the word was pretty close but not quite there even though they flat out got it wrong. There were even times when we didn't correct some mistakes if we felt like we were correcting them too much as it was. We didn't want to discourage them by telling them that every word was wrong. We also used complementing because we would say things verbally such as good job and we would complement it with non verbal cues such as nodding our head, giving thumbs up, or a high five. We did our part to help the students learn in a positive manner, but in order for them to actually maintain that knowledge, they had to participate as well.

There are many things that the students can do to be able to take in what we teach them. These things should be taught in the home, and reinforced at school. First they need to hear what we say, they need to be attentive, they have to understand what is taught, and they need to respond what they learned to show that they remember. All of these things are the proper steps in being a good listener (Alder & Proctor, 2008, pg.236-239). In our lesson packets, the kids had to read two books. They had to be attentive to us while they were

reading so that if there were corrections that needed to be made, they could hear the errors. When they finished the books we had to ask them what the book was about. There were three boxes that could be checked off which included no comprehension, comprehension when prompted, and good comprehension. If there comprehension was low, that usually meant that their understanding of what they read was also low. Their responses also proved to us if they remembered what they read or the new words they learned. When we were at the after school program, they had to do a lot of times tables. They would often ask for help on the same multiplication problems they asked for help on the previous day. This showed that they didn't remember what they received help on during the previous day. Eventually, after some promptings and reminding, they no longer needed help on those particular problems.

As you can see, it is important for both student and teacher to participate in positive steps that will help the children learn to the best of their abilities. Through following proper steps, we can help these kids create a positive self image. We can give encouragement, while still correcting errors. All of the items that we have discussed are a perfect recipe for a successful student who has value and self worth. William Arthur Ward said "The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires."

References

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