

General Strategies we can all Agree On

These suggestions are what a panel of experts from many different cultures considered basic to working with all students.

Clear Expectations: Students need to know you expect them to do the work, come to class, be part of the community of the classroom and school.

List your own expectations on the board. I used:

Be physically considerate

Be verbally considerate

Be on Time

Be willing to try new things.

Take some time to discuss these behaviors. If you need to “start over” to get this across in November, wear new glasses, a new hair style, a pair of red shoes one day to signal something new is happening in your room.

Interpersonal Relationships; Establish for each student the feeling that you recognize them as an individual, that you support them and believe in them. This is the key to working with a multicultural classroom. You do this with your body language, your tone of voice, your sincere interest in their lives. Do not be afraid to show you do not know everything and ask them about their culture, language, etc.

Stay Away from Confrontation: this only sets students up. They feel they can't back down in front of their peers. Use *humor, a neutral tone* of voice, a system that allows students to take a breath, begin again.

Understand the Context of your students' lives may not be the same as your own. Leave the judgmental attitude at home. Try and acquaint yourself with the world view of your students. Not a detailed syllabus of each history or language, but a respect for the stance and background they come from: ie communal emphasis versus individual, lack of education in their history vs. assumed college education for all family members.

Connect to the communities of your students. Invite in speakers, plan walks around the neighborhood, connect your subject matter to what is going on in their lives, communities.

Find a Support Group for yourself: Find those who are thinking like you and want to change or expand their classroom and personal knowledge

Be willing to be uncomfortable and vulnerable: be willing to learn about the history of racism in this country, this state. Be willing to examine your own views, thoughts, impulses honestly. Acknowledge your own hidden prejudices

Be willing to put yourself in the place of someone unlike you to understand the lives of your students. What is it like to be a non native speaker in this city? What is it like to live in the United States and have dark skin?

Expand your awareness of history, methodology and classroom organization and apply it to your classroom. Explore using small groups as many students of many cultures, do well working with each other.

Be willing to give up some of the absolute control you may feel you need to have. Allow students to discuss ways to make the class better, more responsive and conducive to learning.

Use humor, body language, tone of voice to reduce tension and to diffuse tough situations in your classroom.