

Affective Strategies Handout

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STRATEGY: DISCUSSION GROUPS

Description: General guidance discussions including affective topics such as respecting others, accepting differences, managing stress, being a good friend, etc. These are not specific to the needs of children with high abilities, but they help all children get along with others and develop in a healthy way. However, it will be important for there to be opportunities for high ability students to be together and to discuss those issues that specifically relate to being different from others.

Ideas for where/when these discussion groups can occur: “morning circle,” small group lead by the counselor or by the teacher, homeroom or advisory, lunch.

Sample topics: listening skills, being sensitive; including others; doing your best, not being the best; making mistakes is ok; showing off; bullying; fitting in; stress and expectations; time management

Guidelines for Adults:

- Emphasize active listening rather than questioning or informing.
- Pay attention to the feelings being conveyed and validate those feelings.
- Play the feelings back to check for accuracy.
- Avoid giving advice or solving the problem.

STRATEGY: ROLE PLAYING

Description: Groups or pairs of students are given scenarios dealing with an affective problem in which they assume the roles of the characters, act out the scenario, and devise a solution to the problem.

Sample problems for use with role playing:

- Your best friend doesn't understand how to do his math homework on multiplication. He asked if you would just do it for him, so you two could have time to play. You are an expert at multiplication and really do want time to play with your friend, but you are not sure it is right to do your friend's homework. You also worry, though, that your friend will be angry with you if you do not do it. What do you do?
- You are afraid to tell your parents that you got five wrong out of twenty on your spelling test. You lied and told your mom you knew all of the words, so you could finish playing your video game, but really you never even looked at the list. What should you say to your parents?

Idea: Have students suggest scenarios.

STRATEGY: PAIR PROBLEM SOLVING

Description: One student is designated the listener, while the other assumes the role of solving the problem aloud. The listener's role is to encourage dialogue from the problem-solver by asking for the

next step, paraphrasing to ensure understanding, requesting clarification, providing suggestions for alternative viewpoints, and checking for accuracy. The pair then switches roles. Eventually, the external dialogue becomes internalized. Students begin to internally dialogue as they listen to a discussion or read to themselves without the need for the external listener to be prompting the dialogue.

Sample dilemma:

Every time a test is coming up, you feel very nauseous. You get so sweaty and nervous taking the test that you cannot even concentrate. As a result, the grades you get are not very good, and they do not show how much you actually know. What could you do to solve this problem?

STRATEGY: JOURNAL WRITING

Description: Written narrative for unpacking students' thoughts and feelings on affective issues. Journals may be kept private, or teachers or counselors may collect them and respond with their own reflections to the text. Such commentary would not be critical in nature but rather responses that encourage continual dialogue on the topics. Corresponding back and forth through journal prompts can be a way to open up channels of communication between high ability students and their teachers or counselors regarding sensitive topics.

Examples:

- Sample prompt: Tell about a time when you have succeeded at something that was very challenging for you. Why do you think you did well? If you are in this situation again in the future, are you likely to be successful again? Why or why not?
- Prompt at the beginning of the year: The most difficult obstacle for my success in middle school will be

STRATEGY: SPATIAL STRATEGIES AND MODE SWITCHING

Description: Spatial strategies include mind maps which can be an effective way to facilitate high ability students' comprehension of social and emotional issues as well as a means through which they can brainstorm solutions to problems.

Example: A topic, such as stress, is placed in the center of the map, and students branch off in all directions by brainstorming all the concepts related to stress, such as what causes it, how it manifests, and how to cope with it. Following the activity, students' concept maps can be used as a prompt to facilitate a small group discussion on the topic.

Description: Mode switching involves using multiple methods of representation to explore topics and facilitate understanding. These modes may include figures, symbols, words, musical interpretation, art work, feelings, or actions. This transformative process is effective because it requires deeper mental processing of information which leads to better understanding and synthesis of information. With this strategy, students are also encouraged to keep a written log of how they created the mode switch, what

the various symbols represent, and how it ties in with their current interests. Their representations may be shared with fellow students to stimulate small or whole group discussion of the topic.

Examples of Mode Switching:

- Have students compose haiku poems about when perfectionism can be harmful
- Have students illustrate the pressure they experience when they try to be perfect

TOPIC: COLLEGE PLANNING AND CAREER GUIDANCE

Description: High ability learners are often multi-talented, and this can cause more difficulty in making career decisions. Special care should be taken to ensure students the opportunities to explore college choices and career possibilities earlier than most other students and to assist them in aligning these with their interests and abilities.

Careers: Many times students in high ability classes may have access to individuals with high levels of education who are guest speakers. While they are there, ask them to speak about their career in addition to their topic. They could include the education and training required, the actual types of tasks performed during the day, the advantages and disadvantages of the career, how the career fits in with the values and personality of the individual, obstacles the speaker may have had to overcome, and any advice the speaker wants to give to these students.

Colleges: It is especially important to provide high ability students from poverty with an early opportunity to see what college campuses and college life might be like. If no one in the family has attended college, the students may not know what that experience might be like. Colleges are usually happy to provide tours and information to younger students. Arrangements might be made to visit various programs, talk with professors or students, and hear what is required as preparation to attend. Financial aid information should also be made available so that all can see the possibility of attending.