

Facilitating Difficult Dialogues in the Classroom

“We find comfort among those who agree
with us, growth among those who don’t.”

Frank A. Clark

Outcomes

- Identify steps to lay foundation for productive classroom dialogue
- Apply strategies appropriate to classroom context and situation
- Utilize the OTFD framework as a strategy for difficult dialogues
- Summarize options that follow a difficult classroom dialogue

What to do PRIOR to difficult dialogue?

- Ground rules
- Clarify expectations
- Create a safe climate
- Serve as a model in ALL interactions
- Provide early/regular feedback re: discussion.
- Others?



**“An ounce of
prevention is worth
a pound of cure.”**

Ben Franklin

Strategies to take **during** difficult dialogues? Nonverbal Awareness



Never attribute to malice what can be attributed to ignorance.



When someone is clearly offended by a comment:



- Inquire about what led to the offense.
- “Tell me more what is going on for you...”
- “What upset you about...”

A student makes a blatantly inappropriate remark

- Clarify
- Explore Intent
- Explore Impact
- Share Impact
- Rethink/Change



OTFD: Open the front door to communication

- **O = OBSERVE**
 - concrete, objective, factual observations
 - both be able to agree on the observation(s) stated.
- **T = THINK**
 - thoughts based on observations.
 - DO NOT put other person on defense.
- **F = FEEL**
 - actual feelings/emotions you have as a result of the conflict/observation.
- **D = DESIRE**
 - a statement of desired outcome.



Example OTFD

“Let’s pause for a moment here. I noticed (Observe) some raised eyebrows and other nonverbals that make me think people might be reacting strongly to something that was said. I think (Think) we need to explore this because I feel uncomfortable (Feel) moving forward with the discussion. Following our ground rules, I am hoping someone can share (Desire) what they are thinking or feeling right now so we can have a productive conversation about this.”

Practice in Pairs: A OTFDs B (“to the class”)

While having a discussion, the topic of school segregation in the United States comes up. One student mentions how she read an article recently that claimed that schools are more racially segregated today than they were in the late 1960s. Another student stated, “That’s because people like to group by race, which just drives me crazy. We are all part of the human race and should stop dividing up by racial groups. After all, we are more alike than different.” The student who mentioned the article didn’t respond verbally but rolled her eyes and avoided eye contact with anyone.

- *Once done: B give feedback to A on use of OTFD*

Practice in Pairs: B OTFDs A (“to the class”)

- You are having a discussion about the effects of burning coal and climate change when a student states “those people who live and work in coal mining communities just need to move and find a different job.” Another student responds quickly and sharply with “You’re totally classist!! Many people in coal-mining towns are locked into jobs and communities which make it hard to leave.”
- *Once done: A give feedback to B on use of OTFD*

Groups of 3/4

- Group according to color of handout
- Read directions & scenario
- Answer & write down answers
- Use one communication framework for #4. See packet
- Let me know if you have questions



What to do AFTER?

- Metacommunicate: Conduct a debrief using a framework.
 - **The Four F Debrief** Framework:
 - Facts, Findings, Feelings, Future
- Pass out a brief, anonymous survey with questions assessing the discussion.
 - See me for an example
- Conduct a quick, anonymous Minute Paper.
- Quick nonverbal poll

In summary

- Identify steps PRIOR
- Apply strategies
- Utilize the OTFD framework
- Summarize options for AFTER

Quaker Ending

- Something I learned today was. . .
- I still wonder about. . .
- Something I will do as a result of today's session is
...

Thank you!!