

66TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

Deploying Humor and Empowerment in Teaching Those With Special Needs.

Michael Townsley-Conover School
(Newton-Conover City Schools)
michael.townsley@n-ccs.org



SELF-ASSESSMENT: A Journey of Change

PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education | Department of Public Instruction

November 8-10, 2016

Disclaimer

Presentation materials are for registered participants of the 66th Conference on Exceptional Children. The information in this presentation is intended to provide general information and the content and information presented may not reflect the opinions and/or beliefs of the NC Department of Public Instruction, Exceptional Children Division. Copyright permissions do not extend beyond the scope of this conference.

SELF-ASSESSMENT: A Journey of Change

66TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

Session Outline- Giving you fair warning.

- Humor
- Why use humor
- Types of humor to use/not use
- Little Stories
- Breakout
- Empowerment
- Little Stories
- Wrap-up

SELF-ASSESSMENT: A Journey of Change

66TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

Let Us Begin.....

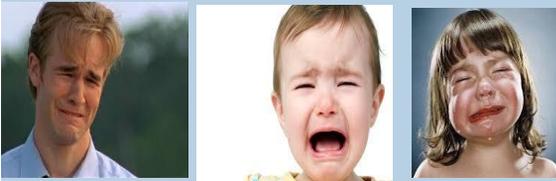
- HUMOR?

SELF-ASSESSMENT:  *A Journey of Change*

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

Why Use Humor?

Is this helpful in teaching students to love learning?



SELF-ASSESSMENT:  *A Journey of Change*

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

Why Use Humor?

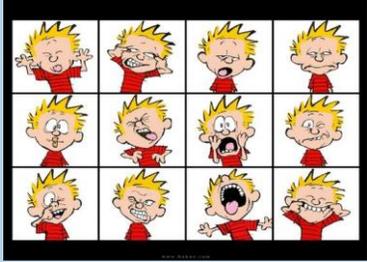
- Build Relationships
- Take the edge off of learning
- Teach valuable social skills



SELF-ASSESSMENT:  *A Journey of Change*

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

Students aren't interested in the mundane. Expression and voice inflection draw their attention.



SELF-ASSESSMENT: A Journey of Change

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

Seven horizontal lines for writing notes.

What Humor NOT to Use

- Sarcasm
- Too much touching
- Extreme Slapstick- (don't hit student's heads with frying pans.)
- Puns with low functioning students
- Anything that belittles
- Humor with the very serious child/parent
- Double entendre

SELF-ASSESSMENT: A Journey of Change

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

Seven horizontal lines for writing notes.

Hats That Work for Me

- Wild Exaggerator
- Bumbling Oaf
- Carefree Clown (without the scary clothes)
- Klutz *

SELF-ASSESSMENT: A Journey of Change

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

Seven horizontal lines for writing notes.

A LITTLE STORY "Danny at The Infirmary"



SELF-ASSESSMENT:  *A Journey of Change*

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

"Danny At the Infirmary" (cont.)

- How do you know your student is open to humor?
- Does he/she start it?
- Do they laugh when it's used?

SELF-ASSESSMENT:  *A Journey of Change*

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

A LITTLE STORY "Patti and Pitty Airlines"



SELF-ASSESSMENT:  *A Journey of Change*

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

“Patti and Pitty Airlines” (cont.)

- The uselessness of pity
- The contagion of laughter
- The changing of lives

But how do I keep my humor in this job? Things I’ve done.

- Send goofy emails- especially to promote learning.
- Play “Face/Dance Roulette- Walk down the hallway making the strangest faces you can or dancing and take a chance that no one will see you!
- Randomly pick staff mailboxes and put something silly in them.....incognito!

Break Out Session

- Get with a nearby neighbor, preferably “a stranger”
- Exchange funny classroom stories with “The Stranger”
- Share?



Let us continue.....

EMPOWERMENT

Why Give Up Power to Empower?

- Education is serious business Shouldn't WE PROFESSIONALS be in control?
- Is it true that, "if you give an inch they take a mile"?

Empowerment Roles

- Mayor
- Sheriff
- Treasurer

WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO DON'T GET ELECTED?

- City council
- Spiritual Guide

A LITTLE STORY “The Sheriff”



SELF-ASSESSMENT: *A Journey of Change*

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

“The Sheriff” (cont.)

- Use empowerment to the greater good.
- Help prevent behavior problems (student led)
- Help transition from one level to another
- Not abusing power.

SELF-ASSESSMENT: *A Journey of Change*

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

A LITTLE STORY “The Recycling Foreman”



SELF-ASSESSMENT: *A Journey of Change*

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

“The Recycling Foreman” (cont.)

- Be mindful of your helpers
- If you lose your support you are on your own!
- Do people REALLY want power?

SELF-ASSESSMENT:   
A Journey of Change

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

A LITTLE STORY

“The Spiritual Guide”



SELF-ASSESSMENT:   
A Journey of Change

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

“The Spiritual Guide” (cont.)

- Everyone needs a place in the world!
- Try to make it happen.

SELF-ASSESSMENT:   
A Journey of Change

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

A LITTLE STORY "Redemption of the Fired"

A letter was sent to 2 students who had been acting out to inform them that.....



SELF-ASSESSMENT: *A Journey of Change*

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

"Redemption of the Fired" (cont.)

- The classroom economy- making it "real"
- The reality of "firing"
- The SACS review and teacher remorse
- Redemption!

SELF-ASSESSMENT: *A Journey of Change*

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

"Redemption of the Fired" (cont.)

- Good things can come out of bad things. Never give up!
- Words matter- especially to the right audience!

SELF-ASSESSMENT: *A Journey of Change*

64TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

Wrap-Up

- Humor- the wherefores and whys
- Make your own stories to enjoy
- Empowerment- It's not about us (though we have a right to enjoy it!)
- Make it real for as many as possible, including the community



Session # 6

Deploying Humor and Empowerment in Serving Those With Special Needs

Michael Townsley- Conover School

RESOURCES

Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor

<http://www.aath.org/at>

(They will be having a Conference at the Holiday Inn Orlando- Disney Springs. LET'S GO!!! 😊)

Learning Through Laughter Humor in the Classroom

<http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED276028>

(45 pages involving 13 thought provoking advantages to using humor in the classroom)

Laughter and Learning: Humor Boosts Retention/ Edutopia

<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/laughter-learning-humor-boosts-retention-sarah-henderson>

(Discusses using age appropriate humor, among other things.)

The Science of Happiness-Greater Good- University of California

http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/news_events/event/the_science_of_happiness#.V-MFfJgrLIU

(This is currently being offered as a FREE online course or a paid-for course, depending on your need for credits. It is a pretty rigorous, university offered, scientific look into exactly what drives happiness from genetics, brain science, and cultural/social inputs.)

The Empowering Economy

Trying to make it real:

I pay students **minimum wage** for being in school and doing what they should be doing.

Students get “paid” via check each week (and I write tons of bogus checks to make sure kids are looking at them!) and must **endorse** their **checks** and make **bank deposits** with my **banker** TAs. If they fail to do that.....too bad.

Students must pay for their food and **rent** for their desks. I base all costs on real prices in our area. In my case the rent is \$350.

NOW HERE IS WHERE IT GETS FUN!

Each week I make several situation strips on 1” strips of paper, nearly one per student. Each strip has a scenario on it, **half are good** (e.g. Grampa gives you \$100 for your birthday, neighbor gives you \$50 for raking leaves, etc.) **and half are bad** (e.g. you are horsing around in your house and break a lamp. You must pay \$50 to replace itor you accidentally drop a \$10 bill in the toilet- they CAN choose to fish it out but most don’t....I WOULD....see where the humor can come in????!). I never give or take away more than \$100 on these strips.

Students seem to love it but some get wary and don’t want to take a chance on drawing strips. You can have them play the lottery if you so desire. They pay \$1 and pick a number between 1- 5,000,000. If they win then you lose!!!!!!

Grampa Gives you \$100	You break a lamp. Pay \$50	You find a \$10 bill	You go to a restaurant Pay \$6	You rake leaves and get \$50	You dropped a \$10 in the toilet	You got your \$25 allowance	Your dog bit a neighbor. Pay \$50 vet bill	B-Day Present \$50	You lose a \$20 bill.
------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------	--------------------------------	------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------	--	--------------------	-----------------------

If students show bad behavior, poor attendance or otherwise mess up, the **CEO** of the classroom company (aka ME) may send a warning letter to the **employee**/student expressing a need for change. If the student fails to improve he/she will be **FIRE**D, in writing by yet another letter from the CEO!

Once fired the student pulls a strip everyday (I use 10 strips and only 1 has a job on it). The student does not get her job back until that day when she draws the lucky 1 strip that says “**job**” on it. (the strips are GREAT because it proves that their fate is nothing personal, (keeps students from saying- you just don’t like me. You wouldn’t do that to so and so”) simply the luck of the draw, as is the case in life sometimes.

No job	No job	No job	job	No job					
--------	--------	--------	-----	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

After the student finally draws a job strip the student immediately draws from another 10 strips, all but 1 indicating a minimum wage **job**. That 1 strip might say, \$15 hr. Should that student draw a \$15 an hour job just watch how mad all the other students get! It can be hilarious or not at all but very realistic.

\$7.25	\$7.25	\$15	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25
--------	--------	------	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------	--------

Students really seem to enjoy being in a place that mimics the real world. You can start offering rent on the “poor side of town”, in the “country club” district or whatever you choose. I have had students go “**broke**”/”**bankrupt**” and lose their desks. That really has an impact. Some draw a job the next day but some go more than a month before that lucky “job” strip comes up. It’s all up to fate.

You can advance your students to investing and following **stocks and bonds, precious metals, etc.** It’s all up to you.

OTHER IDEAS:

- students choose and “buy” (online) articles for various rooms in their apartment or clothing

-Credit/debit cards

- “**wants**” vs “**needs**” and let students research and buy an item they want. Some get into big trouble here.

- Medical disaster! Hit them with a huge **bill**, preferably at the end of the year when the activity is about to end for the year. It reinforces the need to **save**.