

Leadership for Educational and Organizational Advancement



Volume 1, Issue 3

October 1, 2008

Article by Dr. Derrick L. Campbell, Ed.D.

Smile: They Like It

When teachers interact with students they must become aware of how their nonverbal behavior can impact student achievement and student disciplinary infractions.

During a recent school transition that promotes positive racial teacher-student classroom relationships, Language Arts teachers complained that the minority students were not putting their best foot forward. They also complained that the students became classroom discipline challenges which added to the teacher's frustration.

Teacher nonverbal behavior has an impact on student achievement and classroom behaviors. According to *The School Discipline Advisor* (2006), when "teachers look and feel anxious, some students pick up that and worry too This can prompt psychosomatic reactions that contribute to discipline problems such as avoiding school and resisting classroom instruction. Or depression can lead to anger and disruptive behavior, Freinberg said. Some kids think if they make a fuss, people may absolve them from having to take the test." (p. 3)

Student achievement improves when teachers exhibit positive nonverbal

behavior. Richmond (2002) reported that "the primary function of teachers' nonverbal behavior in the classroom is to improve affect or liking for the subject matter, teacher, and class and to increase the desire to learn more about the subject matter. One step toward this is the development of a positive affective relationship between the student and the teacher. When the teacher improves affect through effective nonverbal behavior, then the students are more likely to listen more, learn more, and have a more positive attitude about the school." (p. 70)

Teachers can begin developing positive relationships with minority students by smiling. Minority students have a superior ability to determine a person's mood by evaluating their facial expression. Even when a teacher or administrator is delving out discipline in front of other students it should be done with a smile because other students are watching too. It sends the message that you care but you must also do your job. Students who perceive that teachers feel favorable toward them demonstrate desired classroom behaviors (Davidson & Lang, 1960) and students are more likely to complete assignments in classes that they feel accepted by the

teacher (Morganett, 1991). Teachers who smile are perceived as friendly while a frowning teacher is perceived as mean or grumpy (Powell & Caseau, 2004).

Smiling has benefits for students that will lead to higher levels of achievement in the classrooms and schools.

References

- Davidson, H., & Lang, G. (1960). Children's perceptions of their teachers' feelings toward them related to self-perception, school achievement, and behavior. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 29(2), 107-118.
- Morganett, L. (1991). Good teacher-student relationships: A key element for classroom motivation and management. *Education*, 112(2), 260-264.
- Powell, R., & Caseau, D. (2004). *Classroom Communication and Diversity: Enhancing Instructional Practice*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Richmond, V. (2002). Teacher nonverbal immediacy: Use and outcomes. In J. Chesebro & J. McCroskely (Eds.), *Communication for Teachers* (pp. 65-82). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- The School Discipline Advisor. (2006). Prevent test anxiety from increasing discipline problems. *LRP Publications*, 8(10), 3.

DLC Consultant Group

PO Box 1668
Blackwood, NJ 08012

Phone: 856-566-3267
1(877) WiSolve

E-mail: info@dlconsultantgroup.com
www.dlconsultantgroup.com

Specializing in Educational and Organizational Change