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Verbal Communication Challenges Complicate Classroom Management Strategies

Minority students have verbal cultural behavioral patterns that can make classroom management challenging and therefore impact standardized test scores.

Some in class disagreements between teachers and minority students are a product of the Black and Hispanic systems of language socialization. Researchers report that Blacks have systems of language socialization that often create challenges in the classroom. For example, Blacks not only debate the idea; they also debate the person while Whites debate the idea rather than the person debating the idea (Kochman, 1981). "Blacks often probe beyond a given statement to find out where a person is "coming from," in order to clarify the meaning and value of a particular behavior or attitude (Kochman, 1981, p. 23). Black students are inclined to talk back when motivated by what a teacher says and may become so impressed with the teacher, that students will want to hear the teacher again due to an interest in how it was said (Abrahams & Gay, 1972).

Hispanic students use

specific language and speech patterns that can create classroom challenges which result in low student achievement. Hispanic students are more likely to participate in group consensus decisions rather than democratic processes (Grossman, 1995). According to Patton et al. (1993):

Lively exchanges with interjections from all those involved are often found in Hispanic-American conversations, individuals do not need to wait for a pause to enter the discussion. Interruptions are interpreted as eagerness, involvement, and interest regarding the topic. (p. 11) Puerto Ricans make decisions jointly where one person speaks and others join in and respond until the group makes a decision. Anglo Americans value one person speaking at a time to indicate respect for the individual.

Educators run the risk of developing negative classroom relationships with their students by reacting negatively to some minority student verbal behavior. Educators can develop positive classroom relationships with their students by:

- ▶ Evaluating verbal communication patterns

for minority students.

- ▶ Determining which student cultural verbal behaviors are acceptable in the classroom.
- ▶ Establishing rewards and consequences for appropriate and inappropriate verbal classroom behavior.

References

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