

MODEL: Demonstration School & Real World History

News Highlights

Policy and Practice

PREPARE: Inspired Teacher Certification Program

Our Mission and Model

SHIFT: BLISS & SCALE

Learning through Play

Partner Feature

20th Anniversary

Teacher Feature

Archives

February 2016

January 2016

December 2015

November 2015

October 2015

September 2015

August 2015

July 2015

June 2015

May 2015

April 2015

March 2015

February 2015

January 2015

December 2014

November 2014

October 2014

September 2014

August 2014

July 2014

June 2014

May 2014

April 2014

March 2014

February 2014

January 2014

December 2013

November 2013

Bite-Sized Advice



October 9, 2013

Today's post was written by Monisha Karnani, Inspired Teaching's Director of Teacher Preparation Initiatives.

"Ms. Karnani, what do I need to do to pass?" was the most often asked question in my classroom.

In my third year of teaching high school mathematics in an urban school, I had a group of students who wanted to pass and would do whatever they needed to do to make that happen. For many teachers, that would be a perfect scenario. But not for me.

The students I taught were the product of over nine years in high poverty school systems in which low expectations are often the norm. They had learned what they needed to do to get by, and that's all they were willing to do. They were so focused on writing down the right answer that I couldn't get them to care about the process, despite knowing they were capable of so much more.

And then along came my mentor, Robin: an amazing educator, mathematician, and coach.

Robin often reminded me that my students would learn what I valued most. If I stopped emphasizing their grades as the most important thing and started valuing their learning and understanding, they would follow my lead.

She worked with me to ensure that my students didn't just pass Geometry; they learned Geometry. Robin offered me some of the most memorable advice I have ever received as a teacher – small, simple tips to change my classroom culture:

- Robin taught me the importance of "never saying anything a child can say." (More information on this tip and others can be found in this Steven C. Reinhart [article](#).)
- She challenged me never to touch a writing utensil in the classroom. Sounds like a little thing, but it was actually quite challenging!
- She helped me develop strategic questions during my planning process – questions that would get my students to think deeply through their experience with the math.
- She taught me never to accept questions that didn't indicate the student had tried to understand the problem. "How do you do #5?" was not acceptable.
- She encouraged me never to spend more than 30 seconds with any student before moving on to the next student – to say just enough to get each student thinking.
- She taught me how to accept wrong answers and how to shift the role of the "mighty answer-holder" from me to my students. When a student asked if her answer was correct, I would return the question: "I don't know . . . is it?"

And as soon as I had mastered one approach, Robin challenged me to implement another. And with each of her small strategies, I saw a huge difference.

The Inspire... my students... in my classroom... with the... I started to...

October 2013

September 2013

August 2013

July 2013

June 2013

May 2013

April 2013

March 2013

February 2013

January 2013

December 2012

November 2012

October 2012

September 2012

August 2012

...

The J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation is supportive of Center for Inspired Teaching because we recognize that quality teachers result in better outcomes for students.

— Anne Gunsteens, Executive Director, J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation

...

Mar 10 02:02 pm

"What can I do to make a difference for a child?" Apply to be an Inspired Teaching Fellow! Final deadline 3/15.

<https://t.co/JB2aQTRvp2>

[Reply](#) | [Retweet](#)

The language my students spoke in my classroom quickly changed. I started hearing:

"I don't want to copy your answer. How'd you get it?"

"I disagree. Prove it to me."

"This is what I tried, and now I'm stuck."

"Can you explain that to me?"

"Why?"

"How?"

"Let me explain."

"I get it!"

My students were thinking. They had transformed into active learners, taking ownership of the learning process and pride in their classroom success. My students were no longer interested in just getting the answer or the grade. They enjoyed learning for the sake of learning.

Robin's bite-sized advice – delivered thoughtfully, one piece at a time – changed my classroom culture. More importantly, it changed who I am as an educator, teaching me to value the process of learning so that my students will, too.

...

Share

Tweet

Like 0

...

Comments

Leave a Reply

Name (required)

Mail (will not be published) (required)

Website

Submit Comment

Stay Connected

Sign up for our newsletter.

Support Inspired Teaching

Help us help students, teachers, and schools.

Search

Search the Inspired Teaching website.