



ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH, INC

Anita Foeman, Ph.D. and Nate Terrell, LCSW

856-223-0606; nateterrell@verizon.net

www.organizationalgrowth.com

STRATEGIES TO WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH

STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Developed by Nate Terrell, LCSW and Anita Foeman, Ph.D.

- 1) Unconditionally accept and celebrate students in special education as whole people who have a lot to teach us.
- 2) Do everything possible to develop caring and trusting relationships with students so you have the credibility to positively impact their attitudes, behavior, etc. Know that all students are hungry to be cared for, regardless of the tough shell they may have developed for protection.
- 3) Let go of any discomfort, judgments, etc. you have towards students in special education since they are generally highly sensitive to how others respond to them and quick to pick up on even subtle signals from adults.
- 4) Never do anything which causes students to feel put down, shamed or cornered such as criticizing, yelling, threatening, etc. These strategies may work in the short run, but backfire in the long run because of their toxic emotional impact.
- 5) Help students to develop their own unique talents, interests, etc.
- 6) Always be patient with students and encourage them to accomplish tasks which challenge, but don't frustrate them.
- 7) Make sure that students are evaluated for possible medication to help reduce their behavioral challenges, anxiety, etc.
- 8) View all student behavior as communication and develop the savvy to interpret what it means and respond accordingly.
- 9) Recognize that all students have different learning abilities/challenges and that it is our responsibility to discover what they are and to develop relevant educational approaches rather than expecting them to simply adjust to how we are used to teaching.
- 10) Strive to understand how students view the world and, when possible, join them in this world to gain a perspective on their landscape.

12) Always remain calm and develop the ability to “go to the balcony” when confronted by challenging behaviors to assess the situation and figure out the most effective response.

13) Do not engage in power struggles that usually escalate student anger, disrespect, etc. and put them in a no-win situation. Instead, give them viable choices that build their sense of self-control and mastery.

14) If possible, isolate students who are behaving inappropriately or experiencing conflict since they may be trying to impress their peers with their angry words, toughness, etc. Students usually calm down in the context of one-on-one discussion with an adult who is willing to listen.

15) Disarm students who are behaving inappropriately and “change the game” by responding to them in a calm voice, agreeing with any valid points they are making and inducing them to get “on the same side” with you against the problem.

16) Allow students ample time to “cool off” when they are upset. Understand that they may be unable to engage in effective dialogue or problem-solving when they are in a reactive, “fight or flight” mode.

17) Collaboratively develop an effective “game plan” with students that promotes internal self-regulation which they can follow when they begin to feel out of control. Possible strategies include visualizing a peaceful place, taking deep breaths or removing themselves from the situation until they have regained self-control.

18) Use role-play to teach students effective social, anger management and conflict resolution skills.

19) Help students understand how they will benefit from improving their behavior, resolving conflicts more effectively, etc.

