

Promoting Positive Racial Teacher Student Classroom Relationships Findings

Camden County Technical High School (Pennsauken Campus) was the location for this project. Project demographics indicated that most staff members were White and students were economically challenged minorities. Administrator demographics were White (67%) and Black (33%). Instructional staff demographics were White (95%), Black (3%), and Hispanic (2%). Most students at Camden County Technical High School were minorities. Student demographics were Hispanic (60%), Black (33%), White (4%), and Asian Pacific Islander (3%). Ninety-nine percent of the students qualified for reduced or free lunch.

Minority student suspensions were overrepresented at Camden County Technical High School. The student suspension rate was twice the state average for three consecutive years. Black students were overrepresented in disciplinary infractions. Black students accounted for 45% of the processed disciplinary infractions while accounting for 33% of the student population. Hispanics, Whites, and Asians students accounted for 53%, 1%, and 1% of the processed disciplinary infractions, respectively.

Teacher-student interactions accounted for 70% of the discipline referrals at Camden County Technical High School. Within this 70%, discipline referral quantities included disrupting class (40%), disrespect towards a staff member (28%), open defiance (23%), and other infractions (9%).

The racial dynamics and discipline referral quantities indicated there was a need for a positive racial teacher-student relationship educational reform initiative at Camden County Technical High School.

After one year as the project director, the results indicated there was an overall 5.2% decrease in processed disciplinary incidents. Black and Hispanic students decreased their involvement in disciplinary incidents by 4.5% and 10.9% respectively. Teachers also reported significantly less disciplinary incidents that involved teacher-student interactions.

There were also increases in student achievement. Black and Hispanic students had increases in State assessment Language Arts scores. Students who attended participating teacher's classes had increases in receiving a "B" as a grade by 59%, decreased receiving a "C" (average) grade by 4%, "D" (below average) grade by 28%, and an "F" (failure) by 4%.

Testimonials

May 25, 2007

Promoting positive student teacher classroom relationships
In this past year, I have worked on promoting positive classroom relationships. The main reason that I volunteered for this was to get a mentor student, and try to help them, but I ended up learning much more.

There was information from the meetings I attended that helped with student relationships. The biggest item that stands out for me is when it was discussed that most students that are discipline problems also have failing or poor grades. I checked into mine, and it was true! Several of my biggest offenders ended up getting classified as special needs during the year and were moved out of my class. But, those few that did not switch out, I changed my way of thinking, and tried to get them to be more successful academically, so their behavior would be less disruptive in class. Although I had taken a course prior to this committee, I realize the significance of assessments on students. I have made a big effort this year to make sure my assessments followed what we learned in class, and there were no surprises or changes along the way.

In one session, Mr. Campbell spoke about giving choices. I have since used this technique many times. I even use it on my small children at home. This seems to work well, because it is the student's option to be successful or not. If given the option to do what is expected or not do what is expected and face the consequences, rarely does a student make the wrong choice. This has been quite an effective technique for me. I enjoyed hearing the other teachers in discussions about how they handle students and build relationships. The round-table discussions were very helpful to me, even if I did not participate all that much. It made me see that even seasoned teachers have the same issues I do and gave some good suggestions on what to do about them. I also enjoyed some of the speakers; the most effective to me was Heather P. Her honesty of having a not-so-great class was refreshing, her solutions seemed effective, and she was not "preaching" about how she could turn any class around. What she showed was a true professional who wanted to share something she learned.

Julia P.

Hello, Mr. Campbell,

Just a note to let you know that I felt the Promoting Positive Teacher Student Classroom Relationships group was a positive thing in our school. I personally wish more teachers were involved. I thought of it as a type of professional development where sharing of ideas was the main goal. I think everyone likes hearing stories about other teachers and their students and I know teachers like telling their stories. The most useful meeting was the one where we discussed the academic/disciplinary choices. I learned a couple of tips for allowing students to make choices, or at least "controlled" choices.

Bonnie D.

Dear Mrs. F.,

You stated that you wanted to see if the Promoting Positive Students Teacher Classroom Relationships school initiative was having an impact on student achievement. I thought you wanted me to look at the grade distributions. I have just compared the 3rd marking periods for this year and last year only. It looks promising. For example, Mrs. B. had 32% D's last year and 18% D's and F's this 3rd marking period. Mrs. C. had 11% D's last year and 8% D's and F's this year. Mrs. S. had 12% D's and F's last year and 0% D's and F's this year. Mr. S had 22% D's and F's last year and it remained unchanged this year. Mrs. J. had 43% D's and F's last year and 25% D's and F's this year. It looks like the teachers that are implementing and developing strategies that promote positive teacher student classroom relationships are having greater success with the students. In addition, it looks like our two guest speakers are having greater success with the students when compared to last year. Mr. S had 20% D's and F's last year and 18% D's and F's this year. Mrs. BB had 71% D's and F's last year and 54% D's and F's this year.

Mr. Campbell

Mr. Campbell,

I'm writing in regards to a great thing that happened after school on Thursday March 1. Miss Elaine. came to me for the first time this year and asks me if we could talk. Our talk was about her second change in her seat for first period. We talked for between 15-20 minutes on the bench outside my [class]. The high point of our talk was her apology for how she has been with me since the beginning of the year. She then went on to explain a large part of her life for which I already knew a little about. Elaine found out that I know what she feels about some things. When I explain to her about watching both my mother and older brother die a slow death from cancer, she realized I do understand a lot of her problems and anger. She now understands the offers I have made to her to talk were true and from my heart. I also told her I can work with her. Elaine and I have an understanding about her seat, she has taken responsibility for all her actions, and as long as she does not create any problems, I will change things. For the first time this year we have talked like two adults, I have also seen her smile for the first time. Elaine also said she will also respect me as a person if I stop hating her. I told Elaine that I have never hated her at all, including her worst moments. What I told her was that I didn't care for how she treated me. After yesterday, my bad days aren't bad anymore. Today she held to her word and I thanked her for it.

Thanks,

Carl S.

I recently had the opportunity to sit down and have a conversation with a student. She was upset about the detention that I assigned for her earlier in the day. During our talk, it became clear to me that I had treated her unfairly. We were able to resolve our issues because we both had mutual respect for each other. When dealing with students, sometimes it's best to be quiet and just listen to what they are saying. That could mean more to them than any advice or instruction you have to share.

Larry M.

Mr. Campbell,

Attached is the set of classroom rules, consequences, and reward system that my period 6 class developed. As we discussed this class is my largest class, 23 students, all freshmen. This class is an extremely talkative class. As I explained, I have been racking my brain trying to develop a way to quiet them down without losing the first 5 minutes of every class. Seeing as this is right after lunch for the majority of the students in this class and they are hyperactive from basketball, and hanging out in the cafeteria, I have tried to be understanding. They are not disrespectful students they are just antsy. I finally came up with a plan after we talked.... I must tell you that this was done on Tuesday, October 3, 2006. The next day, I had 3 people forget rule number 2 and had to issue a verbal warning. Today, I am pleased to say that I did not have to issue any warnings. They have taken ownership of the rules and the consequences. I just thought that you would like to know.

Wendy G

"I told them I really liked the activity that you did with the kids the other day. It gave the kids an opportunity to see their thinking and what it is that they say to teachers".

Judy C.

I think what you're doing is great. At least what you're doing is you're making sure that the students know what the rules of the games are.

Douglas W.

