

Running Head: ASSERTIVE DISCIPLINE

Group Dynamics and Assertive Discipline

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Assertive Discipline

As described by Lee Canter, assertive discipline has three components. The three components of assertive discipline are rules, positive recognition and consequences.

(WikiEd)

First, rules set the guidelines for how a group will conduct itself. The rules of a group lay the framework by which the group conducts business and acceptable behavior among members of the group. Lee Canter describes six important properties of rules to ensure healthy group work. First the expectations should be held at all times. Second, there should be a limited number of rules. The rules should be observable and apply at all times. Fifth, the rules should deal with behavior only, and finally, students should be able to chose some of the rules.

Secondly, positive recognition works off of the theory that reward is more powerful than punishment. Therefore, if a student is rewarded they are more likely to repeat the positive behavior. Lee Canter explores five ways to recognize group individuals in a positive manner. First, positive recognition should encourage appropriate behavior. It should increase self-esteem and create a positive work environment. It follows that this would establish positive relationships. Finally, types of positive recognition may include praise, phone calls, notes, rewards and special privileges.

Finally, assertive discipline also incorporates consequences for poor actions. When working with consequences, students should be dealt with calmly and quickly. To begin with it is important to ensure that there are appropriate consequences in place for inappropriate actions. These consequences should be appropriate for students, actions that

students do not enjoy. Within the consequence hierarchy there should be a range from low, a minor infraction resulting in a warning, to high in which an administrator may be more appropriate to work out with the student.

School Improvement Team

One organization that I am a part of is the school improvement team, SIT. The SIT team is comprised of school department leaders and other staff leaders who recognize the need for a school to evolve with the changing times. It is the job of this group to promote the school, make important school decisions with appropriate feedback from other staff members and discuss curriculum and content covered at the school. The team also includes a parent from each grade level parent teacher association, PTA. The role of this parent is to provide feedback from outside of the school. Often the parents are able to give valuable input about program and school perceptions among community members and how decisions will affect children.

During the first meeting of the year, the team creates a list of norms, rules by which each member and the group at large will adhere to. These are fundamental community based decisions about how things should be run and organized to utilize time effectively, ensure that each voice is heard and that multiple viewpoints are considered. Setting a groups norms is very similar to the rules outlined by Lee Canter's theory of assertive discipline.

Given that the group is comprised of school leaders, each meeting the principal begins the meetings with recognitions, rewards members of the committee for their contributions to the school community. This reinforces to members of the committee that their work is appreciated and that students are truly prospering from the work that we, as educators, do, a lesson often forgotten about.

In the past year that I have been a member of this committee I cannot recall ever hearing about or seeing consequences. By giving the members of the committee to power to create the group norms each member has buy-in to the community and is consciously aware of the reasons behind the norms. This drives each member to participate fairly and constructively, given that they understand why the norm was created and that they can recognize the detriments to a group without such norms. This allows each group member to personally identify with the group and desire to not destroy it.

Although there are no consequences, this is an example of buy-in fostering a healthy environment in which no member wants to ruin their own happiness within the group.

Reference

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