

PEACE POWER TOOLS

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Proactive Teaching

Summary:

Proactive Teaching is a simple and effective education method that helps prevent problems among youth by telling them what to do and giving them a chance to practice what they've been taught before encountering a particular situation. The Proactive Teaching method, developed at Boys and Girls Town, is comprised of a broad collection of strategies that are categorized as either Planned Teaching or Preventive Prompts. Planned Teaching can be done with groups or individuals and entails teaching a new skill or reviewing a skill that was taught. Preventive Prompts are brief reminders to behave in ways previously taught. Using Planned Teaching and Preventive Prompts will help youth learn what is expected of them, which allows them to face situations with greater confidence and find success more often.

Resources Needed:

- Tangible and/or social rewards

Implementation Steps:

- After a skill has been identified, introduce and discuss the skill with students. Give a general explanation of the skill, the different ways the skill can be used, and then outline the specific steps that make up the skill. To increase student sense of ownership of the skill, have them help generate the components of the skill.
- Then, work with students to develop a list of benefits or payoffs (rationales) that may come from using the new skill. Although long-term benefits are important once a new skill has been learned, short term benefits are more ideal because students get to see desirable results immediately.
- It will also be important to ask questions to determine if students are able to follow what is being taught and to engage them in the process of learning the new skill.
- Engage students in brief role-plays or demonstrations and encourage them to try the new skill in a "real life" situation that they will report on later. When practicing complex skills or what to do in difficult situations, be sure to explain that situations do not always work out perfectly!
- Youth who are at risk must learn to navigate between numerous worlds on a daily basis and Proactive Teaching can help them negotiate these transitions safely using a process known as "code switching". Here, students are given a forum to discuss the various settings they face, what behavior is expected in each environment, and what to do when they find themselves in an unfamiliar setting.
- Finally, give the group a carefully selected positive consequence for their cooperation, such as extending an assignment deadline.

Variations:

- Proactive Teaching can be used effectively without implementing every step. For example, in a test prep scenario, it may be desirable to introduce a skill (i.e. preparedness), outline the steps and then develop a rationale for that skill.
- Proactive Teaching can be useful outside of the classroom, especially in the hallway, playground or cafeteria. In non-academic settings, be sure to listen to what youth are saying (i.e. know their slang), watch their body language, know their whereabouts, ask questions, and show them you're watching them.

Rationale and Evidence Base:

Considerable evidence indicates that Proactive Teaching can enhance teacher effectiveness. When this "up-front" teaching method is used, the teacher is able to establish clear

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expectations, tolerances and consequences. This broad-based collection of strategies can help youth be successful in/outside of the classroom. Evidence also shows that Proactive Teaching increases the opportunities students have to learn and participate in their own learning. It is possible that students may acquire new skill more quickly because of their engagement in the learning process. Proactive teaching may help youth learn positive ways of responding where they may have dealt aggressively in the past.

David, J. L., Nelson, C. S., & Gauger, E. S. (2000). Proactive teaching. In J. L. David, C. S. Nelson, & E. S. Gauger (Eds.), *The Boys Town Model: Safe and effective secondary schools* (pp.89-99). Boys Town, NE: Boy's Town Press.

Mattaini, M. A. (2001). *Peace power for adolescents: Strategies for a culture of nonviolence*. Washington, D.C: NASW Press.

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