

MAKE YOUR DAY

A SCHOOL-WIDE CITIZENSHIP PROGRAM THAT ALLOWS
TEACHERS TO TEACH AND ALLOWS STUDENTS TO LEARN



Earl's Corner - Managing the Baggage

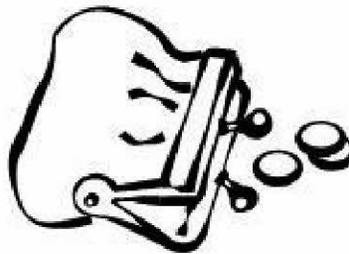
The original format for MYD evolved from the special education version originally named the Attitudinal-Transitional Format. The A-T F model was named based on the primary focus of the program at that time. The objective in my classroom was to work with my students on attitudes instead of behaviors. The contention at the time was that a change in attitude would result in a change in behavior. As my students changed their behaviors, they would transition back into general education classes, thus the name the Attitudinal-Transitional Format.

Perhaps the most effective piece in the original program that never made it into the Make Your Day program was the Group Meeting. Each day we started school with a discussion about what occurred the day before, the night before, to and from school, and any “baggage” that would follow a student into class. Our objective was to allow each student the opportunity to be successful without the influences of the distant or immediate past. It was during these meetings that my students were able to develop strategies for coping with their circumstances in and out of school. The genuine empathy that my students shared with one another helped to develop relationships between students who had previously experienced little success in interpersonal relationships.

Years later, in observing schools with MYD, I realize that omitting this piece has had a cost. It's not realistic to expect schools to put aside the time in each classroom for a daily Group Meeting. It is also not realistic to expect that “therapy” can be introduced into the general education classroom. It is, however, important that teachers visit with their students on issues unrelated to the school day.

Dysfunctional homes, sibling disputes, and, even, a difficult bus ride to school can affect a student's attitude and behavior throughout her school day. However, one chooses to do it, removing that baggage can make the difference between success and failure.

Some teachers have established a color system for each student to choose their feelings as they enter the classroom. The emotions the students can choose run from happy to sad or mad to anxious. These teachers seek to explore those emotions before the academic day begins, thus allowing their students a greater opportunity for success. If you have an effective method that you've employed, please contact us so we can share that with others.

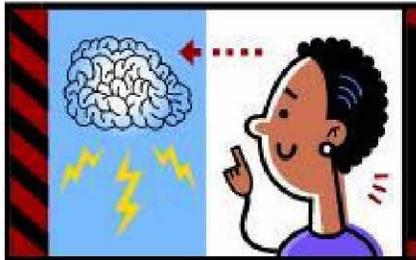


Cheryl's Two Cents - Leave the Sledgehammer in the Garage

"In my room or at my school, three Step 1s is an Automatic Step 4." This is a phrase that all of the MYD Trainers have heard more than once this last year. When we question the appropriateness of setting that criteria, we hear "It works."

As we reach the final stretch of the school year, it becomes easier to rationalize the need for coercive methods; however, that doesn't make them right. Within MYD, we've taught students that "mistakes are an opportunity to learn" and Step 1 is the result of a simple mistake. Why then would we penalize students for making mistakes as part of the learning process? How would we validate an Automatic Step 4 with the parents based upon making three simple mistakes? Prior to MYD, would you have asked a parent to leave work for an immediate conference because you've asked their child to work quietly three times within a day?

If you remain consistent in setting expectations, delineating interfering behaviors and consistently following through with Step 1, there will never be a need to resort to coercive methods. Does it take longer in the beginning? Yes. Will this approach have a more lasting effect? Yes. Will it be worth it for both you and the students? Yes.



Brainstorm: Sharing Ideas

Susan Countrymen, one of the MYD trainers, was recently asked about a situation in which a student with many behavioral challenges would not move away from their seat for Step 1. She had encountered the same situation with one of her students who would simply put his head down on the desk when he was given permission to go to Step 1. In thinking through how best to handle his attempt to comply, she thought about how she would have wanted a teacher to work with her at that age. In looking at the big picture, the student had stopped interfering and was doing perhaps the best version of Step 1 that he could at that time. In less than 5 minutes she walked over to the student, "How did you choose Step 1?" and completed the process.

The ultimate goal was that he would be able to move away from his desk so he would have an opportunity to reflect on his behavior. Putting his head down approximated the expected behavior. Noticing that he was attempting to comply and acknowledging that was far more effective than "making" him meet the entire expectation at that time.

For a few of our students, we will need to acknowledge their attempts to comply because that is all they are capable of doing at that time. If we are patient and honor their efforts, they will eventually be able to fully meet the expectations. It is then a win-win situation for both parties.



From a Student Point of View

When revisiting schools, MYD Trainers spend time talking with students. The following are student's thoughts about various aspects of MYD.

Steps - Helpful because they help you calm yourself down and think.

Teachers doing their own Points - They can show us how they're done.

Teachers accepting Concerns from their students - We can help them be better.

Appropriate Automatic Step 4s - Spitting on someone, fighting, name-calling,
putting stuff in other people's food.

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