

Title of Session: Alt/Correctional Ed Forum

Moderator: BJ Berquist

Title of File: 20080515alted

Date: May 15, 2008

Room: Alt/Correctional Ed Group

CynthiaF joined the room.

BJB2: Hi, Cynthia. Welcome

CynthiaF: Hi

BJB2: did you get any responses to your concern?

BJB2 . o O (in addition to the reply by John)

CynthiaF: Not so far

BJB2: I posted to the CEA lists and didn't get anything from there either

CynthiaF: Too bad. I was hoping for some words of wisdom after a very stressful week!

BJB2: I was disappointed also.

BJB2: but I'm always happy to give hugs after a stressful week!

BJB2 . o O (if that helps)

CynthiaF: I have had some excellent progress with a few of my students, but my boss.....

BJB2: what was so stressful?

CynthiaF: I think my boss has a few more scars on his knuckles from dragging them along the ground, if you know what I mean?

BJB2 chuckles.

DavidW smiles

BJB2: what were you trying to do that the boss prevented you from doing?

CynthiaF: Smile and be hopeful?

BJB2: well, there you go! ;-)

BJB2: were you teaching a specific lesson?

CynthiaF: In truth, I have had a better week for the most part.

CynthiaF: No, I have students in my class of 18 who range from "never been to school" to pre-calculus

CynthiaF: and three ESL students, too

BJB2: that's good! Your own mental health and attitude are vitally important

BJB2 . o O (good that the week wasn't so bad)

CynthiaF: so most of my work is one-to-one

BJB2 nods....that's a big class. How long is it?

CynthiaF: three hours straight

CynthiaF: and in the afternoon, I teach ESL to 23 Federals

CynthiaF: for another 3 hours

BJB2: that's a long time for people who have very limited attention spans

CynthiaF: Indeed it is

CynthiaF: My boss believes in the "do it or else" motivational technique

BJB2: I was in heaven when my classes went from a half hour to an hour....but I'm happy to see them go at the end of the hour

CynthiaF: How many classes do you have?

BJB2: I have five classes a day

CynthiaF: What grade

BJB2: so, with the three hour classes you have to work it like block scheduling where you change focus every so often

BJB2: same grades you deal with...pre-k to 12th grade

BJB2 . o O (with ESL mixed in)

CynthiaF: That's another issue. My boss wants me to follow the GED testing schedule, which is English/Math one month, and Science/Social Studies/Reading the next month

CynthiaF: But many of my guys are just beginning to grasp one subject when it is time for the next

BJB2: do you use the pre-GED tests?

BJB2: are your guys able to study outside of class?

CynthiaF: Yes, but I can't Pretest until the CASAS scores are high enough

CynthiaF: And most of my students begin at the 3rd to fifth grade level

BJB2: it's difficult when you're put in a position to teach something that is unrealistic for the learners

BJB2: do you use workbooks?

BJB2 wonders how the lessons are individualized

CynthiaF: I have workbooks, texts, readers, etc. Plenty of resources. Each of my students is currently using a different one due to their unique needs. I write out a lesson plan for each one of them every week, and correct their work when they finish each assignment. I also do a lot of table surfing!

BJB2 nods

BJB2: any chance of teaming two students?

CynthiaF: I have CD players for the ESL students, so that they can hear the pronunciation of what they are reading and writing. Once a day, they each read aloud a portion to me as well.

BJB2 . o O (sometimes that's more trouble than it's worth)

CynthiaF: Fortunately, my class has become very cohesive and they do help one another.

BJB2: you're doing a great job with differentiated lessons

BJB2: and yes, you are very fortunate that the class is cohesive

CynthiaF: I feel very gratified at the progress they are making; I just need to get my boss off my back

CynthiaF: grrrrrrrrrr

BJB2: you can't just ignore him?

BJB2 . o O (feed him poisoned brownies?)

CynthiaF: I do ignore him. But sometimes the air is permeated with his negativity . . . like today

BJB2: I think the students will be more attuned to your attitude than his

CynthiaF: Yeah, and as long as I am more attuned to them than him, I am okay, too

BJB2 nods.

BJB2: sometimes you just need a place to vent and know you're in a safe and supportive environment

BJB2 . o O (like Tapped In ;-)

BJB2: you're not going to change your boss...so focus on the stuff you can change

CynthiaF: I am especially tired today, because we had some violent fighting in the rec, yard on Monday, and one of my most troubled guys is in seg. He was doing so well, too

CynthiaF: I am grateful to have found this site, believe me

CynthiaF: It feels good to know that others out there understand

BJB2: I can really understand how you feel about your students...

CynthiaF: Like a mother hen?

BJB2: instinct ;-)

BJB2: but they don't need a mother...and they don't need someone to feel sorry for them

BJB2: they need someone who is firm and fair but also kind

BJB2: and recognizes their tiny successes and supports them when they fail

CynthiaF: "Firm, fair and consistent" ; it's our motto :)

BJB2 smiles...good motto. Easy to say, but hard to do

CynthiaF: How long have you worked in this field?

BJB2: when I first started working with juveniles I likened it to working with terminally ill people...

BJB2 . o O (this is my 24th year)

CynthiaF: Yikes!

CynthiaF: Did you wonder in your first year if you were cut out for this job?

BJB2: oh, yes. I always say that you go through three year cycles...

BJB2: the first year just breaks your heart...such terrible stories and hard lives

CynthiaF: I hear that

BJB2: the second year you want to kill every one of the sob's

BJB2: the third year you come to a compromise

BJB2: then I found I went through the same cycle every three years

BJB2 . o O (I'm a slow learner)

CynthiaF smiles

BJB2: it wears you out emotionally if you're not careful...

BJB2: it's important to have a sense of humor

CynthiaF: I worked in Mental Health (what an oxymoron) for 15 years

BJB2: and to rejoice over successes...even if the success is just surviving the day

CynthiaF: and one day found myself envying the guy who was directing traffic at the dump

BJB2: most of the incarcerated people have mental health issues

BJB2 laughs.

CynthiaF: So I quit, and started working a "Non-stress" job at Walmart

CynthiaF: lasted 6 months

CynthiaF: horrible

BJB2: oh, no! I didn't think that would work

BJB2: you have a special gift

CynthiaF: Nope

CynthiaF: I mean, nope, Walmart didn't work

BJB2: you understand that your students need an advocate

BJB2: to make them feel like they are real human beings of some worth

CynthiaF: I have lived a hard enough life that I know how easy it would be to land on the other side of those walls

BJB2: and they can learn if you give them the right tools

BJB2 nods...but you have the resiliency factor

BJB2 thinks about who said that...I think I have the resource here...

CynthiaF: One of my students raised his math grade 2 levels in three months. This morning he told me that "Next year I'll be a math genius! Or at least the best tutor you've ever had!" THAT is worth everything to me (even the misery of working with Groucho Marx)

BJB2 smiles happily.

CynthiaF: Last week a new teacher joined us; she's fantastic, has a real heart for the guys, and it has made a big difference for me. I feel blessed to have her, and to have found this group.

BJB2: always nice to have a colleague with whom you can collaborate.

BJB2: The isolation of correctional educators can be tremendous

CynthiaF: So, have you ever heard of the online program at a California University (I don't remember the name offhand) that offers a graduate degree in correctional education?

BJB2: yes. CEA sponsors the program...

BJB2: it's a couple years old and is experiencing some success

CynthiaF: They use a textbook, I think it is called "Into the Borderlands", or something similar?

CynthiaF: Do you have an opinion about the program?

BJB2: <http://ceanational.org/books.htm>

BJB2: Into the Borderlands

BJB2: no, I don't have an opinion since I haven't taken any of the classes

CynthiaF: It sounds like a good book

CynthiaF: but it's \$75.00

BJB2: but I like the idea of providing correctional educators with more training...the majority of teachers currently started teaching in a facility by 'accident'

CynthiaF: Me, too

BJB2: me too

CynthiaF: I was looking for a fulltime adult ed job, and most of them are part time

CynthiaF: But now, I feel a deep attachment to the program

CynthiaF: And maybe a sense of purpose

BJB2: absolutely

BJB2: and those who are in classes are there to learn...they want to succeed

CynthiaF: My guys are mandated, so not all of them are happy to be there!

BJB2 nods. Our guys have to come to school...but after a while they would rather be in school than back in the living units...and complain when teachers have vacation days

CynthiaF: But I do have a few who really want to learn; and others who are learning despite their resistance

BJB2: btw, the school that teaches the CEA class is CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SAN BERNARDINO COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

CynthiaF: Thanks

BJB2: heck, if you had gone to school and been told a thousand times that you are too stupid to learn, wouldn't you be programmed for failure?

CynthiaF: Do you know if they are accredited? I would need to get Federal Aid at this point, to pay for classes

BJB2: I'd contact them and ask...or go through CEA

DavidW:

<http://www.csusb.edu/majorsDegrees/graduate/maCorrectionalAlternativeEd/Default.aspx>

CynthiaF: Absolutely!! And it is so delightful when they realize that they can learn

CynthiaF: David?

BJB2: thanks, David

DavidW: The web page for the Correctional and Alternative Ed. program

BJB2 . o O (that's the link for the school)

CynthiaF: Ok Thanks

DavidW: welcome

CynthiaF: Tomorrow I get a new student who has never been in school; he is 51 years old and was born into the circus life.

BJB2: oh, my!

BJB2: he's been to "school" just not the same kind we're used to...

CynthiaF: I have been told that he is delighted to be going to school....

BJB2: so your challenge will be to find out what he has actually learned

BJB2: too bad he had to get locked up so he could go to school!

CynthiaF: His CASAS score for reading was 8

CynthiaF smiles

BJB2: is that an age or a grade?

BJB2 . o O (sorry, not that familiar with CASAS)

CynthiaF: That's 8 out of 31, too low to calculate

BJB2 nods

CynthiaF: But he can sign his name

BJB2: is he ESL?

CynthiaF: No, a native English speaker

BJB2: that helps

CynthiaF: He can recognize letters, but cannot read at all

BJB2: The big hand is almost straight up, Cynthia. I have a big day tomorrow. It's Grandparents Day at our grandson's school :-)

BJB2 . o O (you won't have to unteach any bad habits)

CynthiaF: Thanks so much! Have a good night,

BJB2 hugs. You don't have to wait a month to log in again!

CynthiaF: And thanks to you, too, David

CynthiaF: I'll be back soon!

BJB2 smiles. Goodnight

BJB2 hugs David goodnight