Discovering Strengths

Here are some suggestions for bringing a strengths perspective to your work with students taken from an article in *Professional School Counseling* by Dennis Saleeby.

1. Make sure you listen for and hear the voices, stories, and theories of students; they are critically important to bringing about change.
2. Adopt the resilience attitude--that is, a firm belief in students' capacity for self-righting.
3. Account for, appreciate, affirm, and act on the strengths of students and teachers in as many ways as you can. To do this, you need to recognize the value of your own strengths.
4. Represent students' views, narratives, perspectives, and ideas wherever possible--in staffing, bulletin boards, newsletters, and in-service trainings.
5. Celebrate, ritually and officially, personally and publicly, the accomplishments and successes of students, faculty, and staff.
6. Challenge views of students and their families that diminish their humanity and/or simply make them a case or a label.
7. Invite students to participate to the extent feasible in the workings of the school--to be mentors, advisors, tutors, and liaisons.
8. Help foster an organizational culture in which conversation in the teachers' lounge is not always about how awful it is, but occasionally about how awesome it is.

**The 2/10 Activity**

Choose a student who you consider to be hard-to-reach, or one who you have a hard time connecting with in positive or productive way in the classroom. Experiment with getting to know that student; spend 2 minutes a day for 10 days in a row talking to the student about non-school related matters. *What is their favorite hobby? TV show? What is their home life like?*

Building teacher-student relationships is one way to increase the emotional climate of your classroom, increase student responsiveness, and decrease difficult student behaviors. It is also helps teachers look at students from a strengths-based perspective.

With 2 minutes a day for 10 days in a row, has anything changed? Does the student respond to you differently? Do you respond differently with the student?

Don’t stop after 10 days! Keep nurturing the relationship, checking in on a regular basis.