

Learning Activity 46 : Making links between classroom learning and outside activities (e.g. sports days).

Learning Behaviours: The ability to apply good learning behaviours in a range of contexts. Learning from successes and using failure as a motivator. Working out what behaviours increase the likelihood of success in life.

Teacher: Claire Walsh

DATE: 11.6.06

Class: 10B (English)

Learning Activity Description

After a very poor group effort at the swimming sports where attendance was low and participation minimal, I spent some time talking with the group about what had led to 10B coming last in the Year 10 form competition. We decided to look towards the athletics sports which were a couple of months away. The class were disappointed in their results at the swimming and wanted to be competitive at the athletics sports day. They discussed ways they could win and used the form 10F, who had been the overall winners at the swimming (and winners of many categories on the day from actual swimming results to team costumes, chants, etc.) as their inspiration. They really wanted to beat them at the athletics.

- They agreed that they would need to make sure that attendance on the day was strong and that everyone got involved in some way. They felt good about the fact that the athletics catered better to a range of people's interests and abilities than the swimming and wanted to find something for everyone. They got excited about planning a theme and costumes and even those who had not attended the swimming got involved in organising the group. All decisions were made democratically. We talked a lot about the fact that the form competition couldn't be won by a few individuals and that it would take a team effort to achieve success.

* The result of the athletics was that 10B not only won the overall form competition, but also the costumes/theme for their year level. Interestingly though, neither of the individual Year 10 champions (male and female) came from 10 B which meant that although some of the 10B students did put in excellent individual efforts, their win was very much a team result.

Discussion Tool:

When we were back in class after the sports day, I congratulated them on their attitudes, participation, enthusiasm, sense of fun and commitment to the sports day as a group. We talked about why they had been so successful after the swimming sports disappointment and agreed that the decision had been made to try to achieve a 'win' and that through planning and the involvement of the group, they realised this goal.

I asked them if they could find ways to apply the behaviours they exhibited on the sports day in their learning in class across a range of subject areas and gave them a small journal reflection to do. I even made the comment that if they approached the upcoming mid-year English exam with the same determination as they had the aths day, that they would most likely be 'winners' at that too. Although many grinned or laughed at the thought of treating their exams like a sporting competition, some suggested that there could be merit in seeing

the exams as another challenge to be met in a similar way. I also encouraged them to support each other in their preparation for exams in a similar way to the sports day.

They responded to the following questions in their journals, as well as making oral contributions to our class discussion:

1. 10 B was successful at the Athletics Sports because...
2. What could we take from this success into our study of academic subjects?
3. What helps me to be successful in my school work?

Student Comments:

1. "10B was so successful...because everyone was determined to win and do well as a team. We all watched each other doing our events to encourage and support them. We were all really pumped for the day and had a lot of fun."

1. "Everyone had a go and tried their best... all the events were filled."

1. "...we were the best prepared team and we worked together really well."

2. "We could motivate each other in becoming determined to achieve high marks like A's and B's. We can all help each other by not distracting them while doing their work and everybody believing in everyone."

2. "We all gave it our best shot at the athletics, if we have the same positive attitude towards the exams and work hard at it like we did on the sports day, we pass with flying colours".

Teacher Journal:

As I am writing this a few weeks after the mid-year exams, it is interesting to reflect on the way 10B prepared for their exams and the results they obtained. They were, on the whole, very keen to do well and took the exams seriously. They worked well in preparation and were proud when so many people did well and when they learned of the very high pass rate in the group (only one student, who had very poor attendance and who has since left the school, failed).

I was interested in trying to keep some of the excellent team spirit that had been created at the sports alive in the class and to try to get them to 'fire up' about their learning and to value academic achievement in the same way that many students value sporting achievements. I also wanted them to see that they didn't have to approach learning alone and that there are many opportunities for a team approach to learning and working at school. Simple things like encouraging each other, speaking positively to one another, helping a struggling classmate, reminding each other of due dates, collecting work for an absent classmate, keeping each other on task, and a range of other behaviours exhibit team spirit and can lead to greater success in school.

I think they quite liked the idea of competition and I would like to further explore the ways I could incorporate some 'friendly' competition into their learning, between each other or other Year 10 forms. The fact that 10B really wanted to beat 10F at the sports seemed a big part of their motivation. I would like to try to use this competitive spirit in a positive way. It seems to appeal a great deal to boys in particular.

The other thing that occurred to me is that way the sports day experiences and the exam preparation highlight the various applications of the Habits Of Mind. Qualities such as persistence, finding humour, taking responsible risks, applying past knowledge to new situations, remaining open to continuous learning, etc. all seem very relevant.