Instructional Strategies for Building Student Self-Esteem

The Yuba College Correctional Academy is a partnership between Yuba College, Woodland Campus, and the Yolo County Sheriff's Department. It enrolls preservice students, as well as correctional officers and deputy sheriffs serving in various law enforcement agencies within the college's service area. The instructional program has been designed to accurately reflect the challenges and demands of "real world" law enforcement; to promote student academic success; and to instill and develop a sense of pride and self-confidence in each student. Instructors implement a number of instructional strategies that promote self-discipline and increase self-confidence—in short, build student self-esteem. Some of the most successful strategies are described here.

- Academy classes are designed to be intensive eight-hour work days and are scheduled Monday through Friday. Daily attendance is required, and students are to be in their seats and ready to begin class each day promptly at 7:00 a.m.
- On the first day of class, each student (1) receives a hospitality pack that includes a map of the county; a list of places of interest, restaurants, and businesses; a current events calendar from the chamber of commerce; and a variety of community and college activities of special interest for students; (2) receives a thorough orientation to Yuba College and the academy; and (3) meets at least one other student (each student interviews another and introduces him/her to the class).
- Desks are arranged in a "U" design so that each student will have a front row seat; the seating chart changes daily to encourage interaction among *all* students.
- Cooperative learning is encouraged; students have the option of choosing or being assigned to a study group.
- A variety of classroom instructional techniques are implemented to accommodate the wide diversity of learning styles.
- To keep the class oriented to the scheduled curriculum, daily objectives ("students will demonstrate . . .") are written on the board.

- Five major exams are given during the academy's term, and each is preceded by an extensive pre-exam review. Students are invited to evaluate each exam immediately by addressing in writing any irregularities with test questions and/or any subject matter which may not have been discussed or adequately covered during class sessions. The program coordinator reviews these comments and determines if any adjustments to class test scores should be made.
- A classroom suggestion box encourages student input to the program. Because early problem resolution is a major instructional objective, suggestions are presented to the entire class for discussion on the day they are submitted.
- Field trips to an area detention facility and the county's Superior Court for role-playing modules reflect a progressive instructional shift from a content-centered to an application-centered mode.
- Team-building projects, such as planning for graduation activities, encourage sharing of individual student resources to meet common academy goals.
- While uniforms are not required, a dress code for acceptable classroom attire is enforced. Strict adherence to the code by students and instructors promotes the critical sense of professional pride. To promote pride in the academy, quality hats and t-shirts bearing the academy's name and logo are available for purchase.
- The majority of students are representing (and/or being sponsored by) various law enforcement agencies; their badges are displayed collectively in the classroom, providing an important reminder that as students and as professionals they are involved in meeting common, shared goals. The names of the instructors (employed by various agencies) appear on student binder covers; their resumés and business cards are bound and displayed.
- Students are encouraged by the public support of their activities. Awards for individual achievements and honors are built into the program, and many are sponsored and/or financially supported by community groups and businesses. As well, a sizable number of active community volunteers serve the academy in various advisory capacities.

- Instructors and the program coordinator encourage extensive press coverage of the academy's activities. The newsletter, *Excellence Together*, is published at the conclusion of the training sessions and profiles students, instructors, and special events.
- At the conclusion of each academy, students' grades must be reported to their respective law enforcement agencies. However, academy instructors feel that grades alone do not provide adequate information about the student. Therefore, the program coordinator showcases each student in an individual letter and mails it to his/her department head, highlighting that student's achievements and contributions to the program.
- A formal graduation ceremony is held in Superior Court, with guest speakers, local officials, and members of the press giving the correctional officers a dignified finish to an intense learning experience.

Critical to the academy's success has been the active networking with other correctional academies. Sharing program outlines, promotional brochures, and supplemental materials has resulted in improved course development and student achievement.

Michael Mangiaracina, *Instructor, Law Enforcement*

For further information, contact the author at Yolo County Sheriff's Department, 814 North Street, Woodland, CA 95695.

Test Preparation From the Student Point of View

At least one week before any major test, I enter a set of study questions into Microtest, a test-generating computer program. These questions are drawn from a test item bank (which I have developed over several semesters) and, therefore, will include some of the same questions that will appear on the actual test. I program the computer to print a "study test" without answers and give it to the students. (I also ask the publishers of our textbooks for copies of their computerized testing programs. Many have test banks and will supply them free of charge to instructors.)

The students then choose their teams for the test (see *Innovation Abstracts*, Volume XII, Number 7, "Why Not Team-Testing?"). The study test *forces* the students to seek out the answers to the test items. Students mark their books, make notes, identify page numbers and book titles, and so on. By test day, the study tests look well-used—*fantastic!* On or before test day, I answer any questions students have about the study test.

On test day, they can't wait to get started. Typically, students are shocked when they see the first actual test and discover that most of the test items are *not* the same as those on the study test! But they quickly realize that they **know the material,** and the teams go to work to formulate their answers.

When the tests are returned, they invariably say things like, "Oh, we misread the question," or, "I told you guys that was the wrong answer, but noooooh, you wouldn't listen to me." A new definition of what it means to be a student begins to take shape.

After one test, a student asked, "You really believe in TQM (total quality management), don't you?" I said, "Sure do. Why do you ask?" "You just gave us an example of it," he said. "You told us at the beginning of the class what you expected us to learn, you told us how we should go about learning it, you gave us study questions to show us how well we should learn it, you gave us this test to see if we had learned it, and then we got instant feedback on how well we did. If that's not TQM, what is it?"

Joy to the world!

Tom O. Harris, *Instructor, Business Management*

For further information, contact the author at St. Philip's College, 1801 Martin Luther King Drive, San Antonio, TX 78203-2098.