

Making Connections: Social Bonding



Pam Stephens

Social bonding, the act of connecting with others, is one of the human commonalities identified by Ernest Boyer. Social bonding can take a variety of forms. In this article, we look into some aspects of social bonding and student-teaching.

Most human beings are fundamentally social; that is, they interact with others in ways that are often mutually beneficial. Because people differ in their interests, what they know, and what they are able to do, such interpersonal behavior can also contribute to better end products. As a student teacher, you will have many opportunities for social bonding. Some of those bonds will be life long.

Bonding with Your Peers

During your teacher-preparation program you have undoubtedly met and worked with quite a few pre-service educators. As you moved through the program, you likely gravitated towards those individuals whose interests, beliefs, and abilities were similar to your own. Perhaps you researched projects together, made collaborative presentations, or simply went for coffee after class. As pre-service teachers moving towards the same goal, you have shared a form of social bonding.

Talking through problems and celebrating successes with peers can make the student-teaching experience less stressful and more meaningful.

Take the time to meet other student-teachers on your assigned campus. Stay in contact with those you already know and who are assigned elsewhere. Have a set meeting time or create an online social network. Talking through problems and celebrating successes with peers can make the student-teaching experience less stressful and more meaningful.

Bonding with Your Teacher

One of the most important people in the student-teaching experience is

Students who work together develop a social bond that results in respect for one another.



the cooperating teacher. It is imperative that you develop a good relationship with the person whose classroom you will be sharing. If possible, take the time to meet your cooperating teacher well before you begin student-teaching. It's a good idea to visit the campus for an entire day to observe the school's routine and the cooperating teacher's classroom management style.

After the student-teaching semester begins, always confer with your cooperating teacher. Ask for pointers. Even if you are certain that you have a better way to teach a lesson or to arrange the classroom, ask for advice first, or inquire if it is okay for you to try a different approach.

Today, many of the student-teachers who practiced in my elementary art classroom stay in contact. We developed deep social bonds that have extended into their professional lives. It's this sort of mutual respect, caring, and consideration that you should seek to establish with your cooperating teacher.

Bonding with Other Faculty

While the cooperating teacher is the main faculty member with whom you will interact on a campus, do not discount the benefits of bonding with other faculty. After obtaining permission from your cooperating teacher, ask other teachers if you may visit their classrooms. Seek out expe-

rienced teachers and watch how they interact with students.

As a warning, social bonding with faculty should remain professional. Remember that information about students is confidential and gossip is never acceptable. If you need to speak with another teacher about a student, that conversation should always be in private. Respecting the rights of your students and fellow educators will win their confidence, and you will form a professional bond.

Bonding with Your Students

As you begin your student-teaching experience, you need to develop immediate bonds with students. It is also advisable to help students bond with each other. It's not your job to ensure that everyone is best friends, but it is your job to establish and maintain a climate of respect. A simple way to introduce yourself and your students is through the use of a graphic organizer.

Write the names of all students on the board and then ask students, "Where were you born?" Write the names of cities on the board. Draw a line from the city to the names of students who were born there. Who was born in the same place? Develop other questions that are likely to resonate with the age group you are teaching. What is your favorite movie? Favorite video game? Favorite artist?

Social bonds take many forms. As you develop ways of bonding with your peers, your mentors, and your students, share those experiences with others. Submit your social bonding ideas to *SchoolArts*. ☺

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