

Students examine values

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be a better experience for them." Hickcox begins the first session with a get-acquainted activity. He has several approaches to this and tries to use a different method each workshop.

Once the ice had been broken and the students understood the ground rules, the workshop really began to start rolling.

"One activity that really got them excited was the value-ranking session. It helped the students look at extremes which are important in any situation and then see where they would put the value on a continuum graph.

"The students really enjoyed it. What comes out of this session is that students realize everyone has different values. They found it difficult to believe others have different values even though most come from the same community, go to the same schools and participate in the same activities."

HICKCOX Hickcox usually holds

this activity on the last day of the workshop because the group first has to feel safe together and not feel threatened when they volunteer reasons why they ranked the values the way they did. This activity is always ranked number one by students in their evaluations of the conference because it gives them the opportunity to make their own choices, he said.

Another activity had the students complete the statements "Men are..." and "Women are..." The group first finished the statements without discussing their reasons and then everyone checked off those they really believed were true.

"Then we started the discussion. Everyone really got involved in this one, especially the girls. They were really interested in what the men had to say about women and their roles in relation to each other. They looked at the male and female stereotypes from many different aspects.

"They really got high on this but I never kept them past the bell. I did this for psychological reasons more than anything else, so the kids would come back the next day ready to get into another activity."

Each session ended with the students writing an "I learned..." statement.

"This was important to the workshop because the students could personalize their experiences to their own lives. This was the key to the values conference and it could not be run effectively without the statement," he continued.

"Other teachers may try to use the values approach and it sometimes doesn't work for them because they don't personalize the experiences. That is a critical part of the program. If you don't follow the guidelines and rules, then it won't work."

One experience that put the group in a somber mood was writing their own obituaries.

Some students had a hard time with this because they never have been exposed to obituaries. The group divided into smaller groups and shared their thoughts with each other. They then plotted their lives over another continuum graph and tried to explain what it meant.

"Most were silent at this point because they actually realized part of their life is over and they are not doing what they want or that they are going nowhere. It really made them think."

But at the end of the session, Hickcox gave them a chance to write about their "ideal two days."

That quickly lifted them out of their somber mood and they left the session in good spirits ready for the next day's activity.

Hickcox sometimes included adults in his programs and let them add

their views along with the students. He feels this is good because the students realize that at different stages of life, people have different values and feelings.

He plans an advanced value-clarification workshop for February and only students who have experienced other workshops can participate.

"I'm at a point now where I would like to get into some advanced experiences with the students. I'd like to get into interpersonal conflict and teach them a model on how to cope with conflict and problems. It can really work if the student knows how to use it to his advantage," he explained.

ONE THING he will do next time is have the workshopers keep a journal of their personal feelings concerning their experiences at the conference.

"This will help the students a great deal," he continued. "They can have some positive things to look back on to see how they might have benefited from the workshop."

"Most students can benefit from a values-clarification workshop. Kids can grow more as persons and understand themselves better," he concluded. "And that's what this workshop was all about—helping the students put their lives into perspective."

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