

## A Couple of Sequencing Stories

So I was walking into the Blue Pod the other day and a 1<sup>st</sup> grade student was standing at the entrance to the boy's restroom looking down and mumbling "The lights are off." I pointed out that the switch was right by his head and all he needed to do is flip it on. He proceeded into the restroom and I headed into a classroom. I came out a few minutes later, in time to see him walking out of the restroom looking at the floor and mumbling something about hand washing. I stopped him and asked what he was saying. He repeated, "I already washed my hands this morning." I said, "Billy (name changed to protect the innocent), did you wash your hands after going to the bathroom?" He responded, "I already washed my hands this morning." I said, "Billy, it's a good idea to always wash your hands after you use the restroom." He turned and went back into the restroom. I followed to watch him do what I call a "boy job" of washing his hands. First comes about a quart of soap onto the palm of his hand. It would have been more if I didn't tell him to stop. Then he rubs his palms together fingers out straight so that water and soap only touch his palms. A quick rinse of the hands is followed by cranking out the paper towels until they almost touch the floor. It would have been more if I didn't tell him to stop. In spite of the fact that nothing is wet other than his palms, Billy methodically dried his arms and hands starting at the elbows working down to his fingertips.

Two things come to mind when I think about Billy.

1. Just because you already did it once, doesn't mean you don't have to do it again.
2. Doing it the same way every time can be a waste and not a good use of time and resources. (Why dry a dry elbow? Because I've always done it that way!)

This reminds me of how important sequencing and framing are. *It is important to do things in the right order, but the sequence and frame must be constantly tweaked according to the group's needs.* Sometimes we have to go back a step and repeat what has already been done. Sometimes we have to change the rules of the activity or the questions we ask in order to make it work. The best part of this process from my point of view is that it often does not go the way you expected. Sometimes you get a pleasant surprise.

Remember, the basic sequence is: Warm-ups and get-to-know-you activities, Deinhbitizer activities, Trust building activities, and Group problem-solving activities.

## Problems, Problems, Problems

I have been a professional problem solver for almost 30 years now. I think of problems as being job security for me. This fall I am feeling more secure in my job than I have felt in 30 years...

**Here's a problem:** I think it was the second week of school this fall. Marla came into my office talking about instructional pacing guides. Already in week two she was feeling behind. "We didn't get to this week's stuff. Do we move right into next week's stuff so we don't get behind? Find just most important stuff and do that?" It was really a rhetorical question. Marla knows what to do. She has been practicing great teaching for a long time. She just wanted to do it right, because that's what Marla does. This makes me think about *sequencing* again. I know that everyone reading this knows how to assess where their students are in an academic area and determine the best time to move on, the best pace, and when to back up, re-teach. I never cease to be impressed with the academic instruction I see at Sequim elementary schools. They have that academic sequencing down.

**Here's a solution:** Sequencing your *Learning Communities* activities may be a different story. I would like to remind you of a method that is commonly used for determining how to adjust your building successful *Learning Communities* activity sequence (*Warm-ups and get-to-know-you, Deinhbitizer, Trust building, and Group problem-solving activities*). The method is called GRABBS. Using GRABBS, we can read a group and tell where we should go next.

<b>Goals</b>	How does the activity relate to the group and individual goals that have been set?
<b>Readiness</b>	This regards levels of instruction (skills) and safety capabilities. Is the group ready to do the activity? Will they endanger themselves and others? Do they have the ability to attempt or complete?
<b>Affect</b>	What is the feeling of the group? What kinds of sensations are they having? What is the level of empathy or caring in the group?
<b>Behavior</b>	How is the group acting? Are they resistive? Disruptive? Agreeable? Are they more self-involved, or group involved? Are there any interactions that are affecting the group, both positive and negative? How cooperative are they?
<b>Body</b>	What kind of physical shape are they in? How tired are they? Are they on medication? How do they see their own bodies?
<b>Stage</b>	Which developmental stage is the group at? Groups will go through levels of functioning. Having a schema to describe these levels will provide you with another means of assessment.

Source: Islands of Healing, 1988.

**And speaking of problems**, I was doing a Kelso's Choices lesson in Judy Flynn's Kindergarten class. We were talking about the difference between a big problem and a small problem. One little girl raised her hand and said, "I have a big problem. My underwear is too small for my butt." **I just can't wait 'til tomorrow... the Kindergartens will be back!**