

Hot Moments in the Classroom

A Communication Framework to Cool Down Tension

What can you do when a comment has been made or reaction observed that causes heat in the classroom? Despite the feelings of paralysis that take over during hot moments in the classroom, certain practices can be implemented to increase the likelihood of maintaining a supportive climate and positive learning environment. Consider using a communication framework, such as Open The Front Door to Communication (OTFD) to describe what is going on, reduce tension, and offer a positive direction. The OTFD steps (adapted from The Excellence Experience, 2015) include:

OBSERVE

Concrete, factual observations of the situation

"I noticed the volume of some people's voice getting raised.

THINK

Thoughts (yours or theirs) based on what was observed

I think there were some strong reactions to what was said

FEEL

Emotions using "I statements"

and I feel uncomfortable moving forward until we explore this.

DESIRE

Thoughts (yours or theirs) based on what was observed

I am hoping we can share our thoughts so we can unpack this and learn from each other."

The following is one strategy (of [many offered](#)) meant to be reflected upon, modified, practiced, and utilized so that you can be better equipped to effectively respond to hot moments in the classroom when they arise.

When practiced, the OTFD framework can be a tool that is quickly retrieved out of our mental toolbox to organize our thoughts and describe the situation in a way that cools down the heat. When hot moments ignite in the classroom, doing nothing is a damaging option (Souza, Vizenor, Sherlip, & Raser, in press). Instead, we can engage thoughtfully and purposively in strategies that maintain a climate that is conducive to learning by not adding fuel to the fire (Souza, 2016).

Resources

- Souza, T.J. (2016). Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom: Concrete Strategies for Cooling Down Tension. In *Faculty Focus Special Report: Diversity and Inclusion in the College Classroom*. Magna Publication.
- Souza, T., Vizenor, N., Sherlip, D., & Raser, L. (in press) Transforming conflict in the classroom: Best practices for facilitating difficult dialogues and creating an inclusive communication climate. In P. M. Kellett & T. G. Matyok (Eds.), *Transforming Conflict through Communication: Personal to Working Relationships*.
- SuperCamp. The Excellence Experience. Learning Forum SuperCamp. Retrieved from <http://www.supercamp.com/OTFD.aspx>.
- Warren, John T. Reflexive Teaching: Toward Critical Autoethnographic Practices Of/in/on Pedagogy. *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies* 11, no. 2 (2011): 139-44. doi:10.1177/1532708611401332.

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