Solution Focused Classroom Strategies

A positive approach to supporting students.

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What is Solution Focused Therapy?

- Goal-directed
- Focused on what works rather than dwelling on what didn’t
- Doesn’t change the situation but changes the perspective
- **Collaborative not directive**
- Externalize problems
Key components of Solution Focused Coaching:

- Finding Exceptions/Reframing
- Miracle Question
- Scaling
- Goal Setting
- Following up-Check for progress
## Problem Focused vs Solution Focused

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Focused Talk</th>
<th>Solution Focused Talk</th>
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<tr>
<td>Billy won’t listen.</td>
<td>Billy listens when we are working on multiplication facts. I wonder what is different then?</td>
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<td>Sarah doesn’t make friends well.</td>
<td>Sarah volunteers to help new students find their way around the school. How is she able to do that?</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Marcus, you failed the last three tests. What is going on?”</td>
<td>“Marcus, you improved from your last test. What did you do differently this time?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joel is constantly annoying his classmates.</td>
<td>Joel is able to help younger students in the cafeteria. I wonder how is able to be so patient and attentive with them.</td>
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Focusing on Solutions = Looking for exceptions

- Noticing times when the problem is NOT present.
- Identifying times when even a little progress is made.
- Looking at what is going right rather than obsessing over what is wrong.
- Working collaboratively with students to help them notice the exceptions.
**Let’s practice: Think of something (not too personal) that you would like to improve in your classroom.**

Step 1: Talk about the concern. – What can we talk about that would be helpful to you?

Step 2: Set the goal together – What will it look like when things get just a little bit better? How will things be different for you?

Step 3: Identify exceptions – Tell me about a time when a little of that happened. What did you do differently? How did it make a difference in your classroom.

Step 4: Scaling question – On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 means things are NOT working and 10 meaning things are perfect, where are things now related to your goal?

Step 5: Set a task for a short time period – What will you need to try to get you 1 step closer to a 10?
Applying Solution Focused Strategies in the classroom
Key ideas to remember:

1. Always let the student define the goal. Do not dictate what YOU believe it should be.
2. If something works, don’t change it. If it doesn’t do something different.
3. Focus on strengths and abilities in other situations.
4. Notice how and why behaviors happen, and always ask “How did you do that?”
5. Realize that change is constant, and help students and parents notice changes too.

Metcalf, 2008
Applying Solution Focused Strategies with parents
Discussion: Transforming the Parent-Teacher-Student relationship

1. What are the benefits to using exception finding rather than problem identifying language with parents?

2. What difference will it make for students to HEAR you using solution talk when discussing concerns with parents?

3. What are some possible challenges/drawbacks to this model? What can you do to prevent them?

Let’s try it: Think of one of your MOST challenging student from last year. Write a short note home to his/her parent.
What this model is NOT…

1. Sugar coating or condescending.
2. Giving false/insincere praise.
3. Giving students a free pass to misbehave.
4. Setting low expectations and then over praising students for meeting them.
5. Setting unrealistic goals.
Help! We can’t find ANY exceptions! WHAT do I SAY?

- The MIRACLE Question!

Imagine that the goal was already achieved.

How will you know?

Who else would notice?

What could you begin to do now to get a little closer to the goal?
Follow-up is important:
So… What do you think?

- What did you find helpful in today’s session?
- What would you like more information about?
- What is one strategy that we talked about that you might try in your classroom this year?
Bibliography