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THE DIFFICULT CLASSROOM

Characteristics:

A difficult classroom may be:

- Overwhelming
- Crisis centered and primarily reactive
- Overly noisy
- Hostile
- Violent
- Disrespectful
- Ambivalent
- Chaotic
- Unfriendly
- Nonaccepting
- Unresponsive

Underlying Causes:

1. School System

- Lack of heterogeneous grouping
- Disproportionate number of dysfunctioning students
- Lack of support personnel for the class
- Lack of emphasis on cooperative learning
- Lack of staff teamwork
- Physical environment of the classroom
- Overcrowded class
- Toxic grouping - class group does not gel for unforeseen reasons
- Teacher lacks:
 - A. Information
 - B. Skills
 - C. Confidence
 - D. Objectivity

2. Family and/or Community

- Sociological and cultural issues
- Family issues
- Multilingual grouping
- Unrest
- Violence
- Life style (e.g., substance abuse)
- Impoverishment (inadequate medical, safety, nutrition, or emotional support)

3. Extraneous Circumstances

- Time of year - stress and excitement of holidays and end of school year
- Weather conditions
- Political & economic state of the country or region

10 WAYS to Quiet the Classroom

- ① *Raise your hand in the air.*
- ② *Count to 3 or to a particular number.*
- ③ *Have students raise one hand.*
- ④ *Use the touchdown method.*
- ⑤ *Ring a bell.*
- ⑥ *Dim the lights.*
- ⑦ *Be silent.*
- ⑧ *Sing a song.*
- ⑨ *Talk softly.*
- ⑩ *Do something unusual.*

CONNECTING*

Activity 1.1

Purpose:

To encourage children to build friendships with others in the classroom.

Procedures:

1. Divide the class into groups of four people.
2. One person is asked to lie down on a large sheet of paper.
3. Draw an outline around the student's body.
4. The group then lists on each of the body parts things that they have in common.
For example:

Head - things we like to think about

Eyes - things we like to see

Ears - things we like to hear/listen to

Mouth - things we like to talk about

Stomach - things we like to eat

Heart - things we feel strongly about

Hands - things we like to make

Shoulders - problems we have

Feet - places we've gone and would like to go

5. These pictures can be shared with the larger group.

Follow-Up:

- Encourage each group to discuss why it is important to talk about how people are similar to each other.
- Have the class discuss the importance of accepting the things that are different between people.