Building Classroom Climates -- 8th-grade Lesson -- Making Sense of One's Own and Others' Learning Video Transcript: Day 5 Students identify needs and norms for constructive partner and group work

PATTY FERRANT: Talk to your partner right now and share your ideas about the last question. I am going to let you decide who goes first, so make that decision. The other person has to be the active listener. I don't want you asking questions, I just want you to listen right now and try to do what?

STUDENT: Make sense.

PATTY FERRANT: Make sense of what they're saying.

STUDENT: I think groups need to help each other understand each clue.

STUDENT: Something we should do when we work as a group is make sure that everyone understands what they're doing so no one is left behind.

STUDENT: We should try to make sense of all of our clues and try to find the possible combinations.

STUDENT: They need to make sense of what the other people are saying.

PATTY FERRANT: Remember, this is something I think we need to think about because I looked around and saw this. So when your partner is talking, why don't you turn, lean in a bit, whisper but enough that the person can hear you, and make sure you're showing that respect when the person is talking to you.

STUDENT: Be more patient when you don't understand the question.

STUDENT: What our group needed to do is work as a team and communicate, and not work as an individual.

STUDENT: I think there's like, mainly communicate because when you're communicating together you can figure it out faster.

PATTY FERRANT: Now you can talk together. Can you come up with another idea together that you didn't have when you just shared? What's another idea? Another thing that will help your group be successful when you work together.

STUDENT: I was thinking, um, assign everyone a certain number and whatever number you have you go in order, and everyone shares their own clue at the same time.

STUDENT: Like one, two.

STUDENT: Yeah and then number one goes first.

STUDENT: We can help each other by asking questions and trying to understand what the [inaudible] is.

STUDENT: We figured out great effort.

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STUDENT: We can all get new ideas and we can put them together and make big ideas, so we can all be successful.

STUDENT: We need to be better and focused more on the group instead of us working alone.

PATTY FERRANT: Remember I told you this discussion is going to be ongoing. It's actually going to be ongoing throughout the year but I want us to think about, um...

We had our first group activity yesterday. There are going to be many times in here where you just work with a partner, or you work with a small group, or maybe a bigger group, and we want to make sure that we are successful when we're having...when we're doing that. So, would anyone like to start us off?

STUDENT: Communicate more and not do it by yourself but to do it with the group.

PATTY FERRANT: Okay. So communicate more. What does that mean, to communicate more?

STUDENT: To talk more with your group, not just by yourself.

PATTY FERRANT: Oh! So you're saying talk with...okay. So if there's four people in the group, who's going to talk?

STUDENT: Everyone.

PATTY FERRANT: Everybody? Okay. So all of a sudden everybody is talking.

STUDENT: No.

PATTY FERRANT: Wait. Okay, so what do you mean? Help me out. You guys, jump in. Go ahead, just jump in.

STUDENT: Take turns.

PATTY FERRANT: So take turns? Okay. Ah! So if we're taking turns we're not interrupting each other. Be patient. Wow! That's something I'm always working on as well, being patient, be patient. Why do you want to be patient?

STUDENT: Show respect.

PATTY FERRANT: Showing respect. Is that...so, but why do we want to be patient and show respect to each other?

STUDENT: So you're not arguing all the time.

PATTY FERRANT: So you're not arguing? Okay, so is arguing not a good thing?

STUDENT: It depends.

PATTY FERRANT: It depends, right? So what's something you could argue about?

STUDENT: The outcome that you think is right.

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PATTY FERRANT: Okay. So maybe you're thinking that this is the answer and someone else is thinking this is the answer, and you're going to have an argument about that? Argument like you're going to throw it out?

STUDENTS: No.

PATTY FERRANT: Okay, good. Not that kind of argument, right? If you're working in a group, how could you make sure you're not putting words in other people's mouth? Am I saying it right? What could you do? So make sense of it, so what could you say? You could try to paraphrase what they're saying. So "I think you're saying this. Is that true?" instead of just assuming they're saying that? Would that work?

So I just happened to be in your group and I just happened, like, whatever problem we're doing, I don't know. It just...it did click with me really fast and I got it right away, and you just started to read the problem, so you want me to tell you the answer? I don't know. Dalia, you want me to tell you the answer? You do? So you just want the answer right away? So think about that with your partner right now. Talk to your partner.

STUDENT: So it's not learning if the person just tells you the answer. You just have to work for it.

STUDENT: Yeah.

STUDENT: So give me the answer, I said no because you're not really learning anything from it.

STUDENT: By showing the steps after you finish reading the thing, like the problem.

PATTY FERRANT: So, so am I hearing you right? Who? I said am I hearing you right because I don't want to put words in your mouth. Am I hearing you right? Are you saying that you still want some time to do it yourself first?

STUDENT: Yeah.

PATTY FERRANT: If you're not doing anything in this class, what's not happening? You're not learning, you're not getting...you're not getting smarter. Because remember, we talked about the brain a little bit? You have to be struggling in order to get smarter.

Okay, think about it, dot talk. Wasn't the answer 7 or something, or 6, 8...I don't know. What was it? Seven. Was that important? It was important. I don't know, he said it was. It's important? Does something have more importance? Is something more important than the answer? What? How you got there? The explanation. I heard you say explanation. You think the explanation is more important than the answer?

STUDENT: Yes.

PATTY FERRANT: Interesting. But then a bunch of you said no, you have to have the answer, except Jacob and I. We were like, pfft, we don't what you to tell us the answer. Interesting.