Negotiation Activity: Student and Principal

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Overview:

This activity introduces students to very basic negotiation. Negotiation is a vital skill for leadership, professional development, and civic engagement, and can help people reduce destructive conflict and tackle shared challenges. To practice factors of negotiation, students will be assigned to take on one of two roles in a simulated negotiation between a student and the principal of a school.

Learning Outcomes:

- Learn skills for handing conflict in a professional and constructive manner.
- Develop ability to discuss complex issues and ideas with people of different views, learning to speak with clarity and respectfulness.
- Build interpersonal communications skills to listen and respond to various types of conversations and materials to participate in respectful discourse.

Information for Instructor:

- "Negotiation Activity: Student" and "Negotiation Activity: Principal"

Instructions:

- Separate the class into two groups. Assign the role of "student" or "principal" to each group and give them their respective handouts. It is important that neither group sees the handouts of the opposite role.
- Students can fill out the handout individually or with their group members.
- Representatives from each group – however many the teacher wants, no more than 4, take the stage in front of the class and role play the negotiation. Negotiators can pause at any time during the negotiation to discuss with the rest of their groupmates and come back to the table.
- Regroup for Debrief Questions
    - How did you prepare for the meeting? What was it like negotiating?
    - What was it like to meet the needs of the other party?
    - Is it important to learn skills for negotiation? Why/Why not?
    - How will negotiation play a role in your life moving forward? What kinds of things do you anticipate needing to negotiate now or in the future?

Applications:

Student Government; Leadership and diversity; historical role plays and reenactments; US government; professional development; etc.

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Principal:

Ever since you took over the principal position (when the previous one retired after 27 years on the job), you've seen a few student-initiated events and programs that had the potential to enhance the school's reputation and provide students with leadership opportunities. These include things like recycling, providing books to underserved populations, and fundraising events for community-based initiatives and charities. While there was indeed value in those efforts, you're not convinced that the payoff matched the administrative headache (and bookkeeping!) that was needed to support these events or programs. Moreover, it seems students' interests have shifted to events that have political overtones and the potential to make the school appear to be taking sides…not the smartest move at the moment with viral videos and "active" parents who wouldn't think twice about demanding the cancelation (or reinstatement!) of an event. Given this history and the concern for unwanted controversy, you're wary of such efforts but are open to considering supporting modest programs that require minimal resources and don't distract students (or their parents) from the primary objectives: learning. One of the students—a high-performing junior/senior—has requested a meeting with you about a potential project for which she'd like your support. Plan for your upcoming conversation/negotiation…

Goal/Interests

What do I ideally want?

Why…what are my interests?

What do I anticipate the student's interests to be? How might I appeal to those?

Questions

What questions should I be asking?

Credibility

What can I say at the start to both ensure a positive tone and maximize my credibility?

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Student:

Talking with your friends, you realize that one of the ways you can make a difference in the upcoming elections (in addition to voting, if you're able) is to raise awareness and donations for the causes most meaningful to you (e.g., climate change, higher education affordability, women's reproductive rights, safety in schools). You want to ask the principal for her support in sponsoring an event on or near campus (to include a bake sale, car wash, etc.) this Saturday. Time is short but two of your friends are very strong in key social media platforms. She's agreed to meet with you, but you've heard that similar requests were denied recently, due to the divisive political climate and parents' push-back on the appearance of the school "taking sides." Free speech is a right, but these days… You need the principal's backing to put on the event, but you're concerned that with these issues—and the fact that the event would be days away—you're not sure if she'll approve it. Plan for your upcoming conversation/negotiation…

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