

Civility:

Can it be taught in the classroom?

IA. Abstract

IB. Executive Summary

IC. Introduction

II. Pre-and Post-Course Comparisons

A. Pre- and Post-Course Civility: Data

B. Pre- and Post-Course Survey of Responsibility for Civility: Data

III. Pre- and Post-Course Civility: Comments

IV. Student Rating of Classroom Behavior: Data

V. Student Rating of Classroom Behavior: Comments

VI. Focus Group: Faculty Comments

VII. Focus Group: Student Comments

VIII. Observations and Conclusions

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Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

IA. Abstract

This semester-length project (Spring 2002) demonstrates strategies for teaching and learning that can be used to promote civility and civil discourse in the classroom in order to influence knowledge and behaviors related to respect for others. The project examines pre- and post-course survey data related to students' attitudes toward civility in four courses, each of which has two sections taught by the same instructor, for a total of eight sections. One section of each course acts as a civility "intervention" group and the other section acts as a comparison group.

Each section was administered a pre-test, but only the civility intervention group received a presentation on civility. Students in the civility intervention sections also assessed the civility of classmates on a rating sheet. At the end of the semester, a post-test measured whether there had been any change in attitude about civility in each class. Assessment results from the civility intervention group are compared to the comparison group. The data show that the civility intervention group began with an average civility rating lower than the comparison group; however, the civility group ended up higher than the comparison group. This lends support to the belief that self-conscious reflection, attention, awareness, and valuing of civility can increase the use of civility by individuals in a classroom setting. Faculty and student focus group comments on the nature of their experience in these classes explicate the data.

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

1B. Executive Summary

Background

This semester-length project (Spring 2002) demonstrates strategies for teaching and learning that can be used to promote civility and civil discourse in the classroom. The project examines pre- and post-course survey data related to students' attitudes toward civility in four courses, each of which has two sections taught by the same instructor, for a total of eight sections. One section of each course acts as a civility "intervention" group and the other section acts as a comparison group. Participants included Guidance 130 (College Success), Humanities 2 (World Literature), Health Science 113 (Pre-hospital Care), and Math 61 (Finite Math).

Each section was administered a pre-test (Civility Assessment Questionnaire, see Appendix 1), but only the civility intervention sections received a presentation on civility by the researcher. Students in the intervention sections completed rating sheets to consider and assess the civility of their classmates. The rating sheets delineated characteristics of civility in the classroom (Student Rating Form, see Appendix 2). At the end of the semester, a post-test measured whether there had been any change in attitude about civility in each class. Assessment results from the civility intervention group are compared to the comparison group. Faculty and student focus group comments on the nature of their experience in these classes explicate the data.

Results

II. Pre- and Post-Course Comparisons

A. Pre- and Post-Course Civility: Data

The data show that the civility intervention group began with an average civility rating lower than the comparison group at 3.89 to 4.08. However the civility group ended up higher than the comparison group at 4.22 to 4.01. (A rating of 1 = "not civil"; a rating of 3 = "civil"; a rating of 5 = "very civil") The average rating for all questions went up for the civility intervention group and remained the same or went down for the comparison group. This lends support to the belief that self-conscious reflection, attention, awareness, and valuing of civility can increase the use of civility by individuals in a classroom setting.

B. Pre- and Post-Course Survey of Responsibility for Learning Environment: Data

The finding on the sense of responsibility for creating a positive learning environment was lower for the civility intervention group initially than for the comparison group at 4.00 to 4.05. By the end of the semester, however, the civility group at 4.18 was higher than the comparison group which actually declined to 3.92. (A rating of 1 = "no responsibility"; a rating of 3 = "some responsibility"; a rating of 5 = "large responsibility") This lends support to the belief that self-conscious reflection, attention, awareness, and valuing of civility can increase a sense of responsibility for helping create a positive learning environment.

III. Pre- and Post-Course Civility: Comments

Each student answering the Civility Assessment Questionnaire was asked to give an example of something observed in the class that represented a "best practice" of civil behavior toward another student and/or toward the instructor. Comments selected from an array of all comments are listed below. A complete list of students' comments is available.

I think this class represents civility because we work together in a group setting and the students generally tend to be supportive of each other and are interested in each other's opinions.

Our instructor treats every student with the same respect and I think the respect shows us our need to respect others the same.

I have not observed very many acts of civility in any of my classes. The amount of pressure that is put on the students does not allow us to do so.

In the class we had a discussion, and during the discussion everyone paid attention without interrupting one another.

Eye contact with whoever speaks (is common) and the outbursts while someone talks isn't happening at all anymore. Very respectful class as a whole.

IV. Student Rating of Classroom Behavior: Data

In the civility intervention sections each class period a different student was asked to observe and rate nine different behaviors and an overall civility measure (on a five- point scale) in the classroom. The data suggest a high exhibition of civil characteristics by students in all ten categories as shown by high ratings on individual questions. In questions 1-9, a response of "3" indicates many students exhibit a particular behavior and "4" indicates most students exhibit this behavior. The average of all responses exceeded 3, and in many cases, exceeded 4. Key elements of civility, such as the criteria about students' commenting "on issues, not persons" were rated highest (at 4.45 overall) of any of the questions. In question 10, all but one of the average course ratings exceeded "4" where a rating of "3" indicates at least "civil" and where "5" is "very civil".

V. Student Rating of Classroom Behavior: Comments

These comments, made by students in the civility intervention sections, are selected from the comment section of the Student Rating Forms. (Student Rating Form in Appendix 2.) A complete list of all students' comments is available.

This class is a very civil class. We all cooperate with one another.

Students are here to learn, not bicker.

I'm grateful to be in a class like this. I feel that we are a family.

The whole class seems focused and very attentive and cordial to each other and to the instructor.

VI. Focus Group Faculty: Comments

One faculty participant summarized the civility intervention section during the faculty focus group in this way, "...in terms of civility, students catch much more respect and translate civility into respect. To be kind to each other, listen, not speak while another is speaking, to allow the whole class to be attentive to whatever is happening, I think that really helps the learning process."

VII. Focus Group Student: Comments

All students in the civility sections were invited to comment orally and in writing in an evaluative focus group. Several pertinent comments listed below were in response to the question, "What suggestions do you have to make civility in the classroom especially meaningful to future students?"

Educate students about civility.

Group projects, where students teach in the class and where they can observe others.

Start talking about civility at the beginning of the year so people know what to do.

All students need to have civility to one another.

VIII. Observations and Conclusions

While this project was conducted on a small scale, results indicate that a presentation on civility in the classroom increased the level of civility experienced by students and instructors. Specifically, the civility intervention sections showed an increased awareness of several aspects of civility and attitude about civility in each class, as supported by post-test data. Assessment results from pre- and post-testing in the civility intervention group showed improvement in answers to all questions. Assessment results in comparison sections without a civility intervention showed a drop or remained the same in answers to all questions. Post test results in the civility intervention group were higher than results in the comparison groups for all but one question, where results remained the same.

The civility intervention sections also prompted all students to consider and assess the civility of their classmates on a rating sheet that delineated characteristics of civility in the classroom (Student Rating Form, Appendix 2) This rating form was designed to encourage students to evaluate individual components of civility and then to make comments, many of which were detailed and thoughtful. Based upon numerical scores and student comments, the use of these forms throughout the semester brought an awareness of civility in the classroom.

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

Introduction

Efforts to improve academic culture should include consideration of the manner in which ideas are discussed, both in the classroom and elsewhere among faculty, students, and staff. Civility, civil discourse and civic engagement must be included in the discussion on the scholarship of teaching, addressing such questions as how the college community can encourage civility, civil discourse and respect to and among students and faculty. Significant learning in any discipline is not just a matter of content and cognitive skills but also process and the affective domain. Civility represents a larger purpose of the college, to develop problem solving skills in a diverse population of students. My interest in civility as it relates to the classroom is to explore teaching strategies that promote civility, thereby enhancing students' educational and social development.

Civility is a practical skill, rooted in the values of the culture, but evidence suggests that society as a whole is suffering a diminution of civility, and civility is said to be less and less evident in schools. So even as there is an increasing emphasis upon civic engagement, students may not possess practical skills, such as civility, to engage with others while recognizing the value of others' ideas and the dignity of each person. A review of the literature reveals a multitude of material decrying the lack of civility in society, but little to enhance it. A special report on teaching in Silicon Valley in the *San Jose Mercury News* ("Asking for a Little Respect," Slonaker 8-27-02) treated a basic question of whether civility can be taught in the classroom -- without a clear answer. California Community College Accreditation Standards now include an emphasis upon citizenship, ethics and civility, recognizing the importance of assuring civic, political, and social responsibilities in a society that seems to suffer from their lack.

As part of my 1998-99 sabbatical project, *Civility in the Classroom: Respect and Civil Discourse*, I conducted group interviews of students in selected classes and individual interviews with faculty to investigate attitudes related to civility among members of the college community. My work included an examination of relevant literature and an explication of civil discourse as a means to discuss civility and respect in the classroom; I also suggested ways to make the college a more welcoming place for students. There continues to be little instructional material that treats classroom expectations, civility and civil discourse. The academic community would benefit from having available instructional strategies related to civility for use in any class.

My objective is to demonstrate, by using principles of Classroom Action Research (Mettetal, 2001), strategies for teaching and learning to promote civility and civil discourse in the classroom. In a semester-length project, I have examined students' attitudes toward civility using pre- and post-survey data, student and faculty focus groups, and student ratings of classroom attitudes. The project focuses upon four courses, each of which has two sections taught by the same instructor, for a total of eight sections. One section of each course acts as a civility "intervention" group and the other section acts as a comparison group. Participants included Guidance 130 (College Success), Humanities 2 (World Literature), Health Science 113 (Pre-hospital Care), and Math 61 (Finite Math). Each participating student gave written permission to be included in the project. (Student Agreement to Participate, Appendix 3)

Each course section was administered a pre-test (Civility Assessment Questionnaire, Appendix 1), but only the intervention sections received a presentation on civility. The civility intervention sections prompted all students to consider and assess the civility of their classmates on a rating sheet that delineated characteristics of civility in the classroom (Student Rating Form, Appendix 2). At the end of the semester, a post-test (Civility Assessment Questionnaire) measured whether there had been any change in attitude about civility in each class. Assessment results from the civility intervention group are measured against the comparison group. Faculty and student focus group comments on the nature of their experience in these classes explicate the data.

This paper begins with an Abstract (Section IA), Executive Summary (Section IB) and an Introduction (Section IC) explaining the background and purpose of the project, followed by numerical data in Sections IIA and B. Student comments (Section III) illuminate the data. Students rating of classroom civility (Section IV) and their comments rating classroom civility (Section V) demonstrate the effect of the civility intervention in the project. Both faculty and student focus group comments (Sections VI and VII) address the nature of the project participants' experience. Conclusions and observations follow (Section VIII). The appendices consist of the instruments used in the study as well as suggestions for implementing various aspect of civility in the classroom and on campus. Resources are listed.

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

II. Pre- and Post-course Comparisons

Background:

Civility intervention and comparison groups for Guidance 130 (College Success), Humanities 2 (Introduction to World Literature) Health Science 121 (Introduction to Pre-hospital Care), and Math 61, (Finite Mathematics) were each given four questions related to civility using a 5-point scale (1 = not civil and 5 = very civil). Another question was asked relating to the degree of responsibility each student felt for helping create a positive learning environment (1 = no responsibility and 5 = large responsibility). The questionnaires were given during the first week of the Spring 2002 semester (Pre-test) and again during the last week (Post-test). The average for answers to each question is recorded below for both pre- and post-tests in both civility intervention and comparison groups. Scores were derived from students who took both pre- and post-tests. The complete Civility Questionnaire is in Appendix 1.

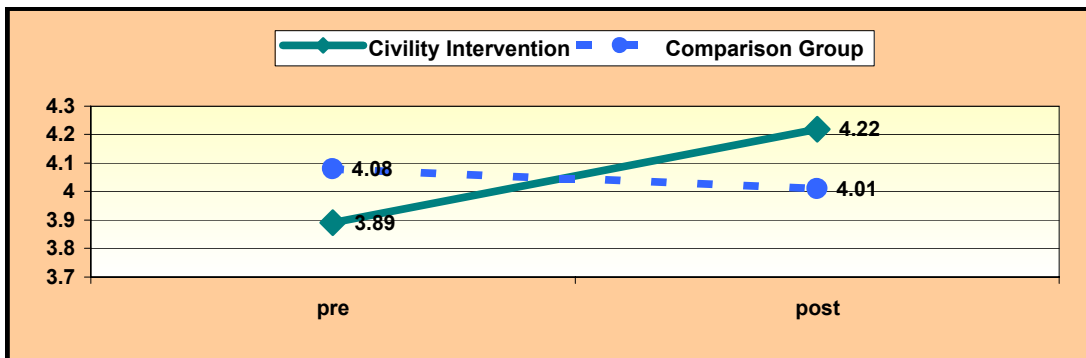
II. A . Pre- and Post-Course Civility Data

- Q2. How you treat others
- Q3. How others treat you
- Q4. Relationship between others
- Q5. Relationship with known classmates
- Q2-5 Total

Civility Class*			Comparison Class**		
Ave Pre	Ave Post	Diff	Ave Pre	Ave Post	Diff
4.24	4.54	0.30	4.40	4.29	-0.11
3.86	4.22	0.36	4.03	3.89	-0.14
3.58	3.92	0.34	3.94	3.94	0.00
3.88	4.22	0.34	3.94	3.92	-0.02
3.89	4.22	0.33	4.08	4.01	-0.07

* N = 50 with pre- and post-tests. 99 students took the pre-test.

** N = 55 with pre- and post-tests. 95 students took the pre-test.



Observations: Of high interest are the data that show that the civility group began with an average civility rating lower than the comparison group at 3.89 to 4.08. However, the civility group ended up higher than the comparison group at 4.22 to 4.01.

A rating of 1 = "not civil"; a rating of 3 = "civil" ; a rating of 5 = "very civil"

The average rating for all 4 questions went up for the civility group and went down or remained the same for the comparison group. This lends support to the belief that self-conscious reflection, attention, awareness, and valuing of civility can increase the use of civility by individuals in a classroom setting.

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

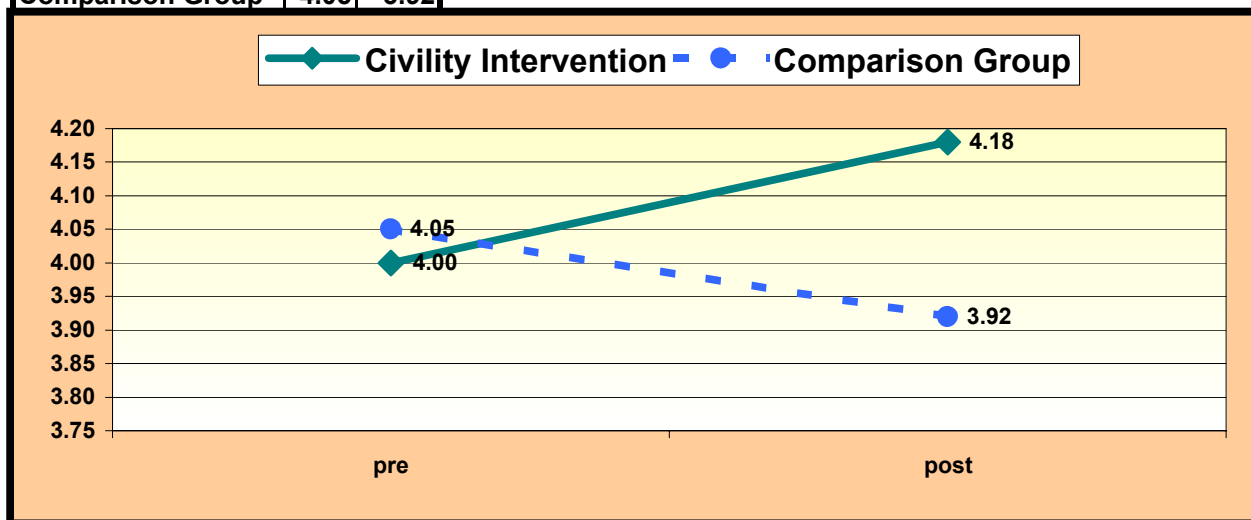
II. B. Pre- and Post-Course Survey of Responsibility for Positive Learning Environment: Data Background:

Civility intervention and comparison groups for Guidance 130 (College Success), Humanities 2 (Introduction to World Literature) Health Science 121 (Introduction to Pre-hospital Care), and Math 61, (Finite Mathematics) were each given this question related to the degree of responsibility each student felt for helping create a positive learning environment (1 = no responsibility and 5 = large responsibility). Additional questions were asked related to civility using a 5-point scale (1 = not civil and 5 = very civil). The questionnaires were given during the first week of the Spring 2002 semester (Pre-test) and again during the last week of the semester (Post-test). The average for answers to this question is recorded below for both pre- and post-tests in both civility intervention and comparison groups. The complete Civility Questionnaire is in Appendix 1.

Question:

"What degree of responsibility do you feel for helping create a positive learning environment?"
(1 = no responsibility and 5 = large responsibility).

	pre	post
Civility Intervention	4.00	4.18
Comparison Group	4.05	3.92



Observations: Of high interest is the finding that the sense of responsibility for creating a positive learning environment was lower for the civility group initially than for the comparison group at 4.00 to 4.05.

By the end of the semester, however, the civility group at 4.18 was higher than the comparison group which actually declined to 3.92.

A rating of 1 = "no responsibility"; a rating of 3 = "some responsibility"; a rating of 5 = "large responsibility"

The average rating for this question went up for the civility group and down for the comparison group. This lends support to the belief that self-conscious reflection, attention, awareness, and valuing of civility can lead to an increase in individual students a sense of responsibility for a positive learning environment.

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

III. Pre- and Post-Course Civility Comments

Background

Each student answering the Civility Questionnaire during Spring 2002 was asked to give an example of something observed in the class that represented a "best practice" of civil behavior toward another student and/or toward the instructor. Comments of the civility intervention group (I) and the comparison group (C) from both pre- and post-test are identified by course section. While all student comments illuminate the data, pertinent comments representing a range of responses are listed below. A complete transcript of student comments is available.

Please give an example of something you have observed in this class that represents a "best practice" of civil behavior or respectful relationship toward another student and/or toward the instructor.

Pre-test Comments Civility Intervention Groups

Guidance 130 (13574 I)

I would say class behavior and the respect that they give the teacher. If they wouldn't respect the teacher, it would be hard for anyone to learn anything. So I would say pay attention, listen to the teacher and don't be rude.

Everyone treats everyone as we're one group. Color doesn't matter.

Humanities 2 (11788 I)

All the students have an open mind to others' opinions.

When a member of this class is speaking everyone pays attention and does not interrupt.

Health Science 113 (12814 I)

Saying "Thank you" and "Excuse me."

Respect is very important to each other because it shows you are a person sooner or later in life.

I've observed someone in particular that is quick to see a person who's not talked to and goes to that person, an openness to share and make that person feel good; encouraging and helpful. We haven't had enough time to really notice each other though.

Being patient and listening to others or comments even if you know the answer or think it is a dumb question.

Math 61 (11582 I)

All students have shown civil behavior toward the instructor and other students. Students have been kind and willing to help each other.

In this class, we do a lot of problems. Not everyone knows what they are doing, so we help each other when asked or if we see others that need help.

Pre-test Comments Comparison Groups

Guidance 130 (11639-C)

The students give their full attention when the instructor is speaking. It seems like the students listen and pay full attention to the instructor. Also when a student is talking, everyone listens to the person speaking. This may also be because of the small class size.

I noticed today that a girl gave a really stupid answer to a question another girl asked, and I thought to myself that if we were in high school that girl would have been laughed at for her stupidity. I thought that it was nice that no one pointed out her mistake and made her feel bad.

I see the conversations going on among students before class starts as a very good preamble to class interaction. It appears to set up a comfortable environment where the students relax because they are familiar with each other.

Humanities 2 (11789 C)

I like when there is a mutual respect between the teachers and the students. It makes the class enjoyable.

People always seem to use good manners by saying please and thank you, excuse me, and things like that.

Health Science 113 (12815 C)

People treat others the way that they want to be treated, and that is with respect. We're all adults here.

Students willing to go out of their way to help one another, i.e. copies of notes. Attempting to form study groups, no one is uninvited.

Everyone is very civil because of the profession that this class will lead all of us to do.

Math 61 (11584 C)

So far in this class I've noticed everybody has been helpful to each other using the calculator. (Note: Many students made similar comments.)

I have not observed very many acts of civility in any of my classes. The amount of pressure that is put on the students does not allow us to do so.

I was unable to purchase a book for the first two weeks of class, and the man sitting next to me offered his book without my having to ask. It changed my opinion of human nature.

Post-test Comments Civility Intervention Groups

Guidance 130 (13574 I)

This class is small; therefore everyone is familiar with each other. People are respectful of others' thoughts and feelings.

This class is very respectful. They listen when you're talking and they're there to be a good friend if you need someone to talk to.

Humanities 2 (11566 I)

Eye contact with whoever speaks (is common) and the outbursts while someone talks isn't happening at all anymore. Very respectful class as a whole.

When someone is talking everyone gives their full attention towards that person.

Health Science 113 (12814 I)

People let others talk without interrupting and we help each other.

When we work on skills, we all work as a positive, respectful and joined team. We all work with each other and help each other out.

All students listen attentively when another student talks or the instructor lectures.

Quietly listening to others without interruption during demonstrations, taking turns to ask questions, deferring if necessary, and applauding after a presentation to show support and appreciation.

Math 61 (11582 I)

When someone is talking, everyone is listening.

Everybody is very nice and polite to every single member (of the class).

All of my friends in this course are helping me with everything. Also (the instructor) helps me with any questions that I need help with.

Post-test Comments Comparison Groups

Guidance 130 (11639 C)

While attending SJCC, I feel my guidance class is the most social class. I enjoy interacting with classmates around me. (The instructor) has become like a mother figure for the class.

Being a supportive class that comes together and communicates and we are very respectful towards (our instructor). She is a great instructor and makes us be better students.

The general friendly behavior that members of this class present to each other is refreshing.

Humanities 2 (11789 C)

Just the respect that most students have for the instructors as a whole.

People are very kind and open to talking. I have made a couple of friends. Also everyone is very courteous to the teacher.

Health Science 113 (12815 C)

The students (some) do not respect the class. The teachers are told but seem annoyed when told. The students are not told by the instructor to please be quiet, so the whole semester it was very annoying and affected some concentration in class.

The class is very oriented to making sure that everyone understands the information given.

Everyone simply becomes not a class but a team that works together to get through situations and this learning experience.

I see students very respectful (sic) toward the instructor and other students.

Math 61 (11584 C)

We need to study in groups. We have to have more communication with each other.

Students raise their hands before talking.

Our class respected one another. When one person talked the others listened. Also there were no put downs.

Staying quiet while instructor teaches.

Other students always help me out when I face difficulty or when I was absent. The instructor also gives me some time to discuss lessons that I do not understand.

Observations

While the data show an increase in positive ratings in the civility intervention group and a slight drop in the comparison group, the comments that accompany the questionnaire by students tend generally to be positive in both civility intervention and comparison groups for both pre- and post-tests. In the comparison groups, there seems to be slightly more focus upon the instructor and his or her assistance with instruction itself viewed as a best practice. In the civility intervention groups, there was slightly more emphasis upon how class members interacted. Overall, there was a thread throughout all groups emphasizing the importance of listening to one another as a best practice of civility.

Specifically, in the civility intervention group in Humanities 2, one comment may represent a conscious understanding of the introduction of the concept of civility: "Eye contact with whoever speaks (is common) and *the outbursts while someone talks isn't happening at all anymore.*" (Emphasis by researcher) Most student comments in the Health Science 113 civility intervention group emphasized inclusion and support of class members, as well as positive observations about the quality of listening to one another. The Math 61 civility intervention group also emphasized listening and mutual assistance as a best practice.

In the comparison groups, students made more references (almost all positive) to the instructor than they did in the civility group. One student even said the instructor had become a sort of "mother figure" for the class. This could represent a reliance upon authority to impose civility, rather than students developing civil interaction among themselves. The math class comments on best practice had frequent references to "manners" (this word was actually used by several students), listing such things as raising of hands to be recognized, remaining quiet during instruction, and a lack of "put-downs," but few references to the concept of respect. The guidance comparison class comments contained several references to friendliness and social discussion (part of the intent of a guidance class). These comments seemed to indicate less understanding of the underlying respect in civility than those of the civility intervention group.

Between the pre-test and post-test comments were at least 12 weeks of the semester, during which time dissatisfied students may have dropped, and remaining students may have developed a familiarity with others in the class. This could result in an increase in civility. Also the instructors chosen for this project are among those most respected in their areas, a factor that could be related to positive students' ratings and comments over the semester.

Other factors which might have positively influenced the civility outcome of the civility intervention groups could be 1) the subject of the class (Guidance classes, by their very nature, encourage bonding among students), 2) the intent of the class (Health Science 113 educates students to become EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians) by encouraging their collaborative work in groups), and 3) the pedagogy of the class (Humanities 2 World Literature necessitates group discussion to elucidate content). Even though most of the comparison group scores went down at least some of the positive changes over the semester could be related to the skill of the participating instructors and to the nature of the class. In any case, the discussion of civility in the classroom raised the level of conscious thinking about the concept and that in itself could be beneficial.

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

IV . Student Rating of Classroom Behavior: Data

Background:

During Spring 2002 semester, in each class period a different student was asked to observe and rate nine different behaviors and an overall civility measure (on a five- point scale) on a Student Rating Form. (Complete Student Rating Form in Appendix 2) To construct the Student Rating Form, I enumerated characteristics used to rate civility and field tested them with a variety of instructors. The average ratings for all student raters in all civility classes are presented in the table below.

Civility Classes					
	Engl 2 (n=14)	Guide 130 (n=9)	H Sci 113 (n=18)	Math 61 (n=22)	Overall (n=63)
Q1. Student listeners face speaker	4.00	4.33	4.39	4.78	4.22
Q2. New speakers summarize previous	3.31	4.00	3.31	3.19	3.34
Q3. Neutral or positive tone observed	3.93	4.00	4.56	4.05	4.17
Q4. Neutral expressions observed	3.77	3.55	4.06	4.25	3.98
Q5. Comments on issues, not on person	4.07	4.70	4.78	4.33	4.45
Q6. Comments supported by reasons	3.86	4.00	3.54	3.89	3.80
Q7. Speakers take turns	3.71	4.25	4.53	4.19	4.18
Q8. Respectful words, strategies observed	4.29	3.50	4.40	3.95	4.09
Q9. Understanding of other's ideas observed	4.07	4.20	4.13	3.59	3.94
Q10. Overall rating by students	3.62	4.41	4.33	4.05	4.1

A rating of 1 = "not civil"; a rating of 3 = "civil"; a rating of 5 = "very civil"

Observations:

The data suggest a high exhibition of civil characteristics by students in all categories as shown by high ratings on individual questions. In questions 1-9, a response of "3" indicates many students exhibit a particular characteristic and "4" indicates most students exhibit this characteristic. The average of all responses exceeded 3 and in many cases, exceeded 4. Key elements of civility, such as #5 commenting "on issues, not persons" were rated highest (at 4.45 overall) of any of the questions. One student's comment provided an apt summary: "Students are here to learn, not bicker." In question 10, all but one of the average course ratings exceeded "4" where a rating of "3" indicates at least "civil" and where "5" is "very civil."

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

V. Student Rating of Classroom Behavior: Comments

Background

In the civility intervention sections, during each class period a different student was asked to observe and rate nine different behaviors and give an overall civility rating (Student Rating Form, Appendix 2). Each student answering the questions was asked to make comments on his or her rating. While all student comments illuminate the data, pertinent comments representing a range of responses, categorized by question and identified by course and date during Spring 2002, are listed below. (G = Guidance 130, H = Humanities 2, HS = Health Science 113, M = Math 61) A complete transcript of students' comments is available.

Selected Student Comments listed by question and identified by course and date

1. Student listeners face speaker

Everyone listened attentively. No one faced their back toward the person talking. (H 4/22)

There were some private conversations going on during class. (M 2/20)

2. New speaker summarizes ideas of previous speaker

Not very many chances to do this. (H 2/20)

Some blurted out unnecessary comments. (H 4/22)

Classmates often try to help each other understand things. (G 4/05)

When questions or comments are made, students usually repeat previous students' (ideas) to make sure they are following and understanding. (HS 3/04)

We rarely follow-up on comments made by other students in the class. (M 3/13)

3. Speakers have neutral or positive tone of voice (no sarcasm or "put-downs")

There is no one putting down another person. All are either positive or neutral comments. (H 4/03)

Our class is very good with being positive, but there were still sarcastic answers. (H 4/17)

Almost everybody conducted this type of attitude. I even noticed a student reach out and try and help a fellow student who seemed upset. (G 2/14)

There were a few students who laughed at another student's answer or comment. (G 4/16)

There are no put-downs on questions that might seem a little silly. (HS 3/18)

4. Listeners and speakers have neutral facial expression (avoid "eye-rolling" or "smirking")

Class environment had positive energy. (H 3/11)

No put-downs. Supportive class on answers for discussion. (H 5/06)

Some students made crazy faces when the teacher said we had homework. (G 4/30)

5. Speakers' comments focus on issues not on a person (no "name-calling")

Most of them expressed this, but some did name-calling. (H 3/18)

Students are here to learn, not bicker. (M 3/13)

All comments are based on material being presented, not on individuals. (M 4/01)

6. Speakers' points are supported by reasons ("I agree or disagree because")

Everybody has very interesting and serious comments and points of view. (H 3/13)

Most students' points are supported by reasons, though some are not. (H 4/03)

(Few students exhibit this characteristic) other than the teacher's response and reasons. Most of the class seemed to have not read the book because the same people who talk all the time come with reasons for their answers. (H 5/06)

7. Speakers take turns (avoid interruptions)

Students talk while teacher talks about informational notices. (H 2/20)

Some interjections are inappropriate but otherwise perfect. (H 3/13)

A lot of people just speak out and don't raise their hands. (H 4/01)

This class was pretty good about hearing what other people had to say before they spoke their mind. (G 2/14)

Yes we had one interruption – one of the student's beeper went off. (G 4/30)

8. Speakers use respectful words or verbal strategies (i.e. "Please clarify," "I'm unclear about," "I disagree because," "In other words, you are saying")

Class structure set by instructor requires this and it is respected. (H 2/20)

There wasn't much of an agree-disagree situation. (H 3/06)

The atmosphere is about learning as much as possible, and if someone is confused they feel comfortable to ask for clarification. (HS 3/04[2])

Speakers may not use these words but use a respectful tone of voice. (HS 4/08)

9. Speakers indicate understanding of another's ideas if they don't agree ("I appreciate what you say; here's my opinion.")

I never saw any hostility when there was a disagreement in the class. (G 2/14)

Students may be likely to do this but (the) opportunity to do so was limited (G 4/09)

Everyone is very courteous. They are polite and understanding that everyone is just trying to learn. (HS 2/11[2])

I didn't hear anyone disrespect another person's ideas when they disagreed. (HS 3/11)

On the Student Rating Form Question #10 provided an opportunity to summarize the overall civility rating for the particular class session the student evaluated. The comments below explicated the numerical rating given by the student. (G = Guidance 130, H = Humanities 2, HS = Health Science 113, M = Math 61)

10. Overall civility rating for this class period - Selected Representative Comments

This is a civil class, now maturity is the only thing lacking. (H 2/20)

The class is civil, but it could be a little more respectful to one another and become better at choosing the words they use. The class seemed a little "high schoolish" at times. (H 2/27)

The class was very controlled and it produced a positive learning situation. (H 3/11)

Civility is well displayed in this class. (There are) a few things this class can still work on, but, hey, no one is perfect. (H 4/03)

There were a few outbursts, but the overall civility of the class was very good and respectful. Also a few cuss words were said, but not loud enough for the teacher to hear. "Ass" was heard but the word was used in a way that wasn't so bad. (H 4/17)

This class is a very civil class. We all cooperate with one another. (H 5/06)

I believe we all were very civil, had it not been for the student who was having a bad day. (G 3/05)

The class was very civil as far as their reactions. Everyone listened to the instructor and what ideas she had. (G 4/04)

I'm grateful to be in a class like this. I feel that we are a family. (G 4/30)

The whole class seems focused and very attentive and cordial to each other and to the instructor. (HS 2/11 [1])

Only one incident, when one student tried to clarify something and another student said, "Duh." (HS 4/15)

This is a very civil class. Everyone seems to display respect for each other. This was especially evident as we all had to do presentations as groups today. For example, there was quiet attention paid to speakers, discussion afterwards with respectful waiting of turns, and applause after to show support and appreciation for the presentations. Nice group of people as students towards teachers and as peers towards one another. (HS 4/29)

This is a difficult math class that demands attention in order to pass. Students are here to learn, not to interfere with the learning process of their peers. (M 3/13)

Since this is a math class, many students help one another. Everyone in the class seems to be working toward a common goal, and all help each other. (M 3/20)

I believe students follow and treat a teacher the way the teacher treats the students. (M 4/15)

Observations

The data suggest a high exhibition of civil characteristics by students in all categories as shown by high ratings on individual questions. In questions 1-9, a response of “3” indicates many students exhibit a particular characteristic and “4” indicates most students exhibit this characteristic. The average of all responses exceeded 3 and in many cases, exceeded 4. A key element of civility, question #5 rating tendency to comment “on issues, not persons,” was rated highest (at 4.45 overall) of any of the questions. One student’s comment provided an apt summary: “Students are here to learn, not bicker.” In question 10, the overall civility rating of “3” indicates a rating of, at least, “civil” (where “5” is “very civil.”)

The biggest variation in a rating response was observed in question #8 about students “using respectful words or verbal strategies.” In two classes where the most discussion might be expected, Humanities 2 averaged a high rating (4.29) and Guidance 130 a much lower one (3.50). The highest rating (4.40) came from Health Science 113, a class where there is training in the use of respectful words and strategies, as a factor in employment of EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians). Said one student, “Class structure, set by the instructor requires this, and it is expected.” (E2/20)

In question # 9 another essential element of civility, “indicating understanding of another’s ideas, even if they don’t agree,” obtained mostly high ratings, exceeding “4.” Said one student, “ I never saw any hostility when there was a disagreement in the class.” (G 2/14) The math section’s slightly lower rating of 3.59 may be explained by a number of students’ similar comments stating there were no disagreement of opinion in math, only facts. The slight dip in level of response to question #4 about summarizing a previous student’s position may be related to less reliance upon formal rhetorical devices than in the past.

The average overall rating of 4.10 indicates the students in each of the classes exhibited, at least, civil behavior. The emphasis in the student comment section was upon cooperation, as evidenced by one student saying, “This is a very civil class. We all cooperate with one another.” (G 4/04)

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

VI. Focus Group- Faculty Comments

Background

Faculty members participating in the project were asked to comment in writing and orally on the nature of their experience in each of their two class sections. Prompts using a format of simile and metaphor (Tinto 2000) were sent to instructors to elicit written feedback. (Instructor Focus Group Prompt, Appendix 4) Both written responses from the prompts and oral comments from the focus group remained anonymous to the researcher to ensure candid responses from colleagues, who were informed of their anonymity. Written responses (to prompts) were submitted without names. A focus group comprised of all project faculty was conducted by the SJECCD Director of the Teaching and Learning Center and tape recorded comments were transcribed by an assistant using Speaker 1, Speaker 2, 3, and 4 as titles rather than names. The full transcript of the faculty focus group is available.

Summary of Written Comments

Civility Group (course section with civility intervention)

In terms of civility, the students in this class were (like):

- ...very respectful and cooperative, willing to participate in the civility project
- ...observant, mature.
- ...at first, 75%, but 25% immature, rude and even obnoxious.
- ...a protective family when it came to individual student needs.

In terms of civility, teaching this class was (like):

- ...problem-free, a positive experience.
- ...able to relate civility to lecturer/behavior
- ...being in a high school class for learners with ADD. But, the most annoying student dropped after peer pressure made him uncomfortable, and other talkers did become more courteous.
- ...a bit of a roller coaster because of some of the personalities ("hyper/brain injury).

Comparison Group (course section without civility intervention)

In terms of civility, the students in this class were (like):

- ...very respectful and attentive.
- ...indifferent, immature (some students).
- ...shy and quiet. The only possible lack of civility was their lack of verbal responsiveness.
- ...a warm, close family where everyone gives their 2 cents worth -- at the same time.

In terms of civility, teaching this class was (like):

- ...problem-free, a positive experience.
- ...distant and remote (some students).
- ...easy but not stimulating. They were civil but boring. I'd prefer civil PLUS creative.
- ...being the mom in the family and trying to listen to each student while others always had something to say at the same time.

San Jose City College

In terms of civility, this college is (like):

- ...in the process of improvement, especially in the area of practicing civility when disagreements occur.
- ...divide and conquer (isolated groups).
- ...the rest of campus, isolated problems.
- ...a complex institution – I can't generalize about civility college-wide. It's a person-to-person issue, I think.
- ...frightening when people get political and self-centered, but a safe and warm place to be (for 28 years); a history of friendships/tendency to gravitate to happy and kind persons.

What suggestions do you have to improve the Civility in the Classroom project?

- ...Set up focus groups early in the semester – for students to express observations, concerns and suggestions related to civility in the classroom.
- ...I only glanced at the students' daily evaluations, but they seemed very minimal. To get more feedback, you might offer a reward for each sheet completed, the day it is done, to encourage more extensive feedback.

Representative Faculty Focus Group Comments:

A focus group provided the opportunity for participating faculty to discuss with one another the experience of their two comparable sections. Selected, representative comments are listed below. A complete transcript of the focus group is available.

...in terms of civility, students catch much more respect and translate civility to respect. To be kind to each other, listen, not speak while other is speaking, to allow the whole class to be attentive to whatever is happening, I think that really helps the learning process.

I did read their evaluations before I gave them to Judy. And it amazed me from their behavior that I saw that they were really catching on to this observing, they were picking, up making comments. Generally, their comments were very, very positive.

...I think students really paid attention when Judy spoke and definitely had something out of that. Students felt that things are relevant, things are considered, things affect the teaching-learning process.

I had a very, very hyper student in there; a student from DSP (Disabled Students Program) with a brain injury. The other students took care of him like big brother all semester, everyone.

But I think in terms of the intervention, Judy's presentation was very helpful. I think the forms that the students filled out were very useful because it kept the idea in consciousness that this class, part of a project, where we are focusing on paying attention to how we interact with each other in the classroom. So the fact that this section was part of a project, just increased awareness and consciousness, overall, in a positive way.

They liked being part of the project and they also felt it was a worthwhile project.

And as far as the intervention, I saw that the papers, I am not sure how much they considered their responses. ...I'd like to question the credibility of all the surveys that people filled out -- did they really get anything? So that was unfortunate, but I feel I can question that the assessment technique could bring more of the differences, in effect the personality of the class, than did the civility intervention.

On day one, as a result of Judy's influence years ago, on my course outline, I have a paragraph about civility. I lay it out that there is going to be no vulgar language, people must be respectful to each other. ...and that means no swearing, no disrespect, turn off your cell phones, and I am not going to tolerate anything else.

Actually I didn't notice a lot of difference in the 2 sections. I felt in both sections students were very respectful, free to ask questions, a lot of questions, listen to each other, were interested in questions that some student would be asking. Students were attentive, they were willing to participate in the study that they thought was relevant.

This is an area where civility project should be focused: campus committees.... I think that people can be political, have strong opinions and still be very respectful and interact in a very positive way where the synergy could occur and greater ideas can come forth. When people disagree and when there is strong emotion going on, that is when really practicing civility is most important. So that people can hear and not feel threatened about it, but really look at it and honestly look at it and give and take when there is disagreement. Look at where is the place of disagreement, and how we could get it resolved.

Observations

Many comments from instructors were similar about the two course sections they taught (one with and one without a civility intervention). One instructor remarked that that s/he didn't notice much difference between the two sections. One observed rudeness in both civility intervention and non-intervention classes, saying it was like "being in a high school class for learners with ADD" (Attention Deficiency Disorder), but did notice students in the civility class becoming more courteous after "the most annoying student dropped after peer pressure made him uncomfortable."

One instructor noticed a difference between the two sections and one instructor in the civility intervention section over time. Specifically, one instructor noted a distinct difference, saying the students in the section without a civility intervention were "indifferent and immature" and the class was "distant and remote." In the section with a civility intervention, the students were "observant and mature" and in teaching the class the students were "able to relate civility to both the lecturer and their own behavior."

Focus group comments were less explicit in their direction than those from the written prompt, characterizing the project generally, rather than a particular class. One instructor emphasized the students understood the term "respect" and that "really helped the learning process" because they could "be kind to each other and listen." Another said the civility presentation was helpful and the student rating forms very useful (in the civility intervention section) because they kept an awareness of civility on the part of the students.

An instructor described one particular student's relationship to the class in the civility section in which there was a DSP (Disabled Students Program) student around whom the students rallied. This instructor remarked, "After the intervention, it was easier to say, 'We just need to speak one at a time'." Then students would say (to the DSP student) "O.K., did you understand what she said? Or 'I'll get that for you."

Overall, the project was deemed helpful by the project instructors. Of the civility group students an instructor said they were "very respectful and cooperative, willing to participate in the project. Another instructor said the students felt the project was important and wanted to know what was going to happen with the project.

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

VII. Focus Group- Student Comments

Background

All students in the civility intervention sections were invited to participate in an evaluative focus group, consisting of both written and oral responses. (Student Focus Group Prompt, Appendix 5) Eight students responded in writing to a written prompt using simile and metaphor (Tinto 2000). Then facilitators led twelve participants in a group discussion on their experience in the civility class, the college, and their overall recommendations. The instructors were not present, and students were assured their comments would remain anonymous.

Summary of Written Comments (Eight written responses)

In terms of civility, being a student in this class was (like):

- ... being in a group meeting.
- ... a relationship. You have to be respectful of the other's opinion.
- ... being at home and being able to state my beliefs.
- ... great. There were no put downs. Everyone respected each other.
- ... pretty good. Everybody was respectful.
- ... very good. I learned a lot.
- ... being on an obstacle course. You never know what to expect.
- Everybody is respectful, but a couple of students, they need to refer to civility.

In terms of civility, the other students in this class were (like):

- ... animals from the zoo.
- ... casual friends. I can relate what I feel to them but only to a certain extent.
- ... my friends that come over to my house.
- ... excellent; great to speakers and fellow classmates.
- ... very respectful.
- ... very respectful most of the time. No one disrespects the teacher.
- ... children wanting attention.

Some were rude to the teacher or kind of loud and not so polite to others. 20% needed to work on civility. 70% have civility I think.

In terms of civility, the teaching in this class was (like):

- ... a wise leader.
- ... just like the elderly respected people in my household.
- ... very informative.
- ... very respectful and challenging.
- ... kindergarten. Everything was broken down and she's very nice.
- The teacher was great. She was enthusiastic and made topics interesting.
- The teacher was very polite.

In terms of civility, this college is (like):

... a very cool place.
... my own house. I am comfortable to go wherever I want and ask questions of any student.
... a second home. I feel comfortable.
... pretty easy in a social perspective.
... very good. Also, the people are friendly.
... 50% OK and 50% not. A lot of students and Admissions and Records need to work on civility.
I don't interact with students here.
Overall, college is about the same except in some classes.

What suggestions do you have to make civility in the classroom especially meaningful to future students?

Educate students about civility.
Group projects, where students teach in the class and where they can observe others.
Start talking about civility at the beginning of the year so people know what to do.
If there's an issue with civility, if students are allowed to address the issue on paper, usually the issue will be resolved.
All students need to have civility to one another.

Summary of Oral Comments (Transcription of 12 participants' comments; no identifying course sections were recorded)

Students are pretty respectful. It's easy to talk; everybody's cool.
Whenever we had discussion, the class is easy and you feel kind of accepted.
We didn't have people disrespect; we never experienced disrespect.
She was a good teacher, best teacher I had. She makes you think about the literature you read.
She controls the room – makes you not want to cut the class. You can think about the literature; you can actually sit down and discuss, and say what you want.
I go to another college as well. This is only my second semester and I don't really interact with many people.
SJCC is like high school. I grew up here, and everybody's younger here, especially in the daytime.
People are real friendly; people talk.
There are a lot more functions here. Evergreen (Evergreen Valley College) is not like that.
City is like congested compared to Evergreen. I think EVC is bigger. City brings people closer together; we always have things to do. There is an incentive to go to class and up to the next level.
City brings different cultures together.
I like the group teaching. (In Humanities 2, small groups of students take a turn teaching part of a lesson) People get up and teach. It lets you see what your classmates do to teach each other. You get to see from a teacher's point of view. I learned a lot from other people. When people are interrupting, you have to take control. It helps you understand how not to make jokes and side comments. A couple of people in class would interrupt. The teacher shouldn't let kids run over them. Just looking at it from being the teacher, you can see what she's going through.

(Facilitator's probe: Were there ever any controversies in class?)

A couple of times I disagreed. I let them know I don't take any offense. They were cool. Our instructor told us some people came up after class and they didn't appreciate others talking. (The next class session) she had each of us in the class write down something we disliked about the class. She read the responses and we said that we didn't appreciate other students talking. Then those students left the class. I'm 26 I'm not here to and don't have time to play. She (the teacher) told us she had already addressed the students, but this worked. We had just said "Don't say rude remarks when other people are talking." They were here 2-3 weeks, then they couldn't do it. She put the spotlight on them without letting them know.

We only have two men in our class (Guidance 130). She gets us going. She's moving around, talking. She always has us going here and there and outgoing (Guidance 130 visits a homeless shelter as part of Service Learning, a community service project.) The more group things, the more people can know each other more. We interact with different people every day and every week. This brings more respect.

(Facilitator' probe: Was there anything instructors do the first part of class to address civility.)

On the first day, she let us know (about) respect.

Within two weeks (someone cussed). (She said,) "We can't have this here. You can't cuss in class."

When the class is interesting, then you start getting irritated at the jokes and side comments.

The thing most interesting about this class is we deal with many different cultures.

Observations

Overall comments were positive in the written responses, although one student claimed that a couple of students “need to refer to civility.” Another said, “20% needed to work on civility, 70% have civility I think.” (The other 10% unknown?)

Most written responses were positive about their instructor using civility in teaching the class, “just like the elderly respected people in my household.” The college also received positive responses: “... a second home; I feel comfortable;” and (it’s like) “my own house; I am comfortable to go wherever I want and ask questions of any student.” On the negative side, one student characterized SJCC as “50% civil and 50% not” and went on to mention a specific operations area they felt needed to work on civility.

One student described a teaching technique used by an instructor to garner assistance from the class to prompt a change in student behavior (CAT, Classroom Assessment Technique) “Our instructor...had us write down something we dislike about the class. She read the responses and we said we didn’t appreciate other students talking...We just said, ‘Don’t say rude remarks when other people are talking,’ They were here 2-3 weeks, then they couldn’t do it. She put the spotlight on them without letting them know,”

One student supported the technique of assigning students to teach a segment of the class as a way to demonstrate the importance of mutual respect in the classroom, “I like group teaching. People get up and teach. It lets you see what your classmates do to teach each other.... Just looking at it from being the teacher, you can see what she’s going through.” Another student noted the importance of group activities, relating, “The more group things, the more people can know each other. We interact with different people every day and every week. This brings more respect.”

Written suggestions about making civility in the classroom meaningful to future students indicated a eagerness to promote it: “Start talking about civility at the beginning of the year so people know what to do, “ and “Educate students about civility.” One recommended a specific pedagogy: “Group projects, where students teach in the class, and where they can observe others.” And in the oral portion of the focus group, a student expanded that notion, saying, “You get to see from the teacher’s point of view. I learned a lot from other people.”

Review of the written responses indicated student respondents might have had some difficulty in understanding the format of using simile and metaphor.

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

VIII. Observations and Conclusions

While this project was conducted on a small scale, results indicate that a classroom presentation on civility together with an exercise reinforcing that concept increased the level of civility experienced by both students and instructors. Specifically, students in the civility intervention sections showed an increased awareness of several aspects of civility and their overall attitude about civility in each class, as supported by post-test data. Assessment results from pre- and post-testing in the civility intervention group showed higher ratings in answers to all questions. Assessment results in comparison sections without a civility intervention showed a drop or remained the same in answers to all questions. Post-test results in the civility intervention group were higher than results in the comparison groups for all but one question.

The civility intervention sections also provided for each student to consider and assess the civility of her/his classmates on a rating sheet that delineated characteristics of civility in the classroom. The Student Rating Form was designed to encourage students to evaluate individual components of civility and then to make comments, many of which were detailed and thoughtful. Based upon numerical scores and student comments, these forms brought an awareness of civility in the classroom over the course of the semester.

The overall civility rating (Question # 10 of the Student Rating Form) encouraged the student to think critically about how members of the class related to one another in the context of the classroom. Many comments showed a depth of awareness of other students in the class and the level of respect they employed. While not all students approached the Student Rating Forms with the same amount of commitment, the number of complete rating forms exceeded the number of forms with answers left blank or those that lacked comments. At the end of the semester, in focus groups faculty and students commented positively upon the nature of their experience in the civility intervention classes. One faculty member encapsulated the project, "...in terms of civility students catch much more respect and translate civility to respect. To be kind to each other, listen, not speak while another is speaking, to allow the whole class to be attentive to whatever is happening, I think that really helps the learning process."

Vision for civility in the classroom

A classroom in which civility is encouraged gives students opportunities for construction of knowledge (content) as well as for developing skills essential for social interaction (process) as citizens in the community. In an ideal classroom setting, diverse participants express a range of views. The instructor sets forth explicit expectations of mutual respect and civil discourse, and fosters discussions among class members about the relevance of civility, respect and discourse. Discussion is a means of demonstrating critical thinking skills, as students learn to be open to the ideas of others, rather than simply defending their own ideas. The instructor models respect for ideas, students and colleagues. Civility and civil discourse become cumulative as numerous classes employ these concepts. Civility and civil discourse become a common thread in the building a learning community which fulfills an important purpose of the college.

In addition to setting a positive teaching and learning environment, reference to civility and civil discourse may give a new perspective to those for whom civil discourse is not a tradition. (The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that by the end of the 1990s there were 26.4 million foreign-born people living in the United States, representing close to 10 % of the U.S. population.) Faculty have an opportunity to develop what may be a new concept with foreign-born students as well as with students who may not have practical skills in civic engagement.

In an ideal setting, the instructor employs learning activities that support students' getting to know one another, including students from different backgrounds. When using collaborative learning, the instructor discusses the best way to interact in a small group, emphasizing teamwork and perhaps organizes peer tutoring so that students can further learn to help one another. Community colleges have a number of distinct populations, ranging from first-time college students who may not have a tradition of higher education to professionals returning for re-training. Any one of these students might be from among a variety of cultures and be seeking a range of goals from transfer to a university, to immediate job preparation, to basic skills review, so there may be different presumptions by individual students of civil behavior in the classroom. Given community college student demographics, it is important that instructional strategies utilized be sensitive to a variety of students' backgrounds, as well as to differences in academic goals and performance.

In an ideal setting the college furthers learning in a comprehensive way. Outside the classroom, opportunities for experiential-based learning, as well as for participation in campus and community-based activities such as Service Learning should be available. In student government and college committees, students can be encouraged to participate in leadership development and in the governance aspects of the college. The college can support community mentorships for students and faculty mentorship for new faculty. There should be a variety of events and speakers in an environment that challenges thinking and opinions. Ideally the college should sponsor campus educational and social events, ranging from musical performances to scientific lectures, during which the campus community can participate, contribute, and learn together. There should be frequent and public recognition of staff and student contributions to campus and community.

To approach common understanding about civility, there is a need for wide discussion of what constitutes civil behavior and civil discourse within the context of an academic environment. There is a need for teachers to discuss and to implement the best approach to the diversity of their students, regardless of their background, using strategies that promote civility and civil discourse. A statement in an instructor's course syllabus about civility and expectations initiates the topic. (Sample Course Syllabus Statements, Appendix 6) Curriculum materials can include further references to civility, engendering discussion in the classroom. (Sample Presentations for Classroom Discussion, Appendix 7)

Responsibility in instruction goes beyond imparting content. Supported by staff, the instructor models respect for learning and respect for participants in the learning process; the instructor encourages discussion that is mutually respectful, open to and tolerant of other views. This is as true for math classes as it is for English, for laser technology as it is for guidance. Encouraging civility in the classroom is not about providing a contrived community of shared values for a semester; it is about setting a tone for the college community of mutual respect and civil discourse. (Suggestions to Encourage Civility on Campus, Appendix 8)

Remaining questions:

If a learning environment is civil and respectful, will a student learn better? Is civility in the classroom connected to student success, as measured by better grades? What responsibility has faculty to engender a civil classroom? What responsibilities have students to one another to contribute to a civil classroom that may increase the learning of all students? Is it possible to institutionalize mutual respect?

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

Appendix 1 - Civility Assessment Questionnaire

CIVILITY ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _____
 Course: _____

Date: _____

Civility is both a civic virtue commonly associated with politeness and good manners and an ethical principle that underlies respect for persons and for the foundation of the civil state. The Oxford English Dictionary defines civility, in part, as: 1.) connected with citizenship, a community of citizens collectively; 2.) ordinary courtesy or politeness, as opposed to rudeness of behavior; 3.) respect; consideration; decency.

1. How long have you been a member of the San Jose City College community? *(Circle one)*
 1 = 1 semester 2 = 2 to 4 semesters 3 = 4 or more semesters 1 2 3

SCALE: 1 – 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest? *(Circle one for each question)*
 for example: 1 = not very civil 3 = civil 5 = very civil

- | | <u>not civil</u> | | <u>civil</u> | | <u>very civil</u> |
|---|------------------|---|--------------|---|-------------------|
| 2. How would you describe the way you treat other students in this class? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. How would you describe the way other students in this class treat you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. How would you describe relationships among students in this class? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. How would you describe your relationships with those at the college with whom you interact on a regular basis? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. What, if any, responsibility do you have to other members of the class to contribute to a positive learning environment? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

7. Please give an example of something you have observed in this class that represents a “best practice” of civil behavior or respectful relationship toward another student and/or towards the instructor. *You may write your response on the back of this questionnaire if you need more room.*

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

Appendix 2 - Student Rating Form

San Jose City College
CIVILITY IN THE CLASSROOM
STUDENT RATING FORM

DATE: _____ COURSE: _____

Civility is both a civic virtue commonly associated with politeness, good manners, and rectitude and as an ethical principle that underlies respect for persons and for one foundation of the civil state. The Oxford English Dictionary defines civility (in part) as: 1) connected with citizenship, a community of citizens collectively; 2) ordinary courtesy or politeness, as opposed to rudeness of behavior; 3) respect; consideration; decency.

Below are several characteristics associated with civil behavior. Please observe students in your class and make a general assessment of the civility they exhibit in this class period based upon the characteristics below. Where possible, please use the comment section to illustrate or explain your rating. At the end of the class period, you may be asked to summarize your observations for the class. Please give this form when it is completed to your instructor, at the end of the class.

For one class period, please circle one characteristic for the whole class for each of the 10 questions and make comments when possible.

1. Student listeners face speaker.

- 1) No student exhibits this characteristic
- 2) Few students exhibit this characteristic
- 3) Many students exhibit this characteristic
- 4) Most students exhibit this characteristic
- 5) All students exhibit this characteristic

Comments:

2. New speaker summarizes ideas of previous speaker.

- 1) No student exhibits this characteristic
- 2) Few students exhibit this characteristic
- 3) Many student exhibit this characteristic
- 4) Most students exhibit this characteristic
- 5) All students exhibit this characteristic

Comments:

3. Speakers have neutral or positive tone of voice (no sarcasm or “put-downs”)

- 1) No student exhibits this characteristic**
- 2) Few students exhibit this characteristic**
- 3) Many students exhibit this characteristic**
- 4) Most students exhibit this characteristic**
- 5) All students exhibit this characteristic**

Comments:

4. Listeners and speakers have neutral facial expression (avoid “eye-rolling” or “smirking”)

- 1) No student exhibits this characteristic**
- 2) Few students exhibit this characteristic**
- 3) Many students exhibit this characteristic**
- 4) Most students exhibit this characteristic**
- 5) All students exhibit this characteristic**

Comments:

5. Speakers’ comments focus on issues not on a person (no “namecalling”)

- 1) No student exhibits this characteristic**
- 2) Few students exhibit this characteristic**
- 3) Many students exhibit this characteristic**
- 4) Most students exhibit this characteristic**
- 5) All students exhibit this characteristic**

Comments:

6. Speakers’ points are supported by reasons (“I agree or disagree because”)

- 1) No student exhibits this characteristic**
- 2) Few students exhibit this characteristic**
- 3) Many students exhibit this characteristic**
- 4) Most students exhibit this characteristic**
- 5) All students exhibit this characteristic**

Comments:

7. Speakers take turns (avoid interruptions)

- 1) No student exhibits this characteristic**
- 2) Few students exhibit this characteristic**
- 3) Many students exhibit this characteristic**
- 4) Most students exhibit this characteristic**
- 5) All students exhibit this characteristic**

Comments:

8. Speakers use respectful words or verbal strategies (i.e. "Please clarify," "I'm unclear about," "I disagree because," "In other words, you are saying")

- 1) No student exhibits this characteristic**
- 2) Few students exhibit this characteristic**
- 3) Many students exhibit this characteristic**
- 4) Most students exhibit this characteristic**
- 5) All students exhibit this characteristic**

Comments:

9. Speakers indicate understanding of another's ideas even if they don't agree. (I appreciate what you say; here's my opinion)

- 1) No student exhibits this characteristic**
- 2) Few students exhibit this characteristic**
- 3) Many students exhibit this characteristic**
- 4) Most students exhibit this characteristic**
- 5) All students exhibit this characteristic**

Comments:

10. Overall civility rating for this class period

- 1) Not very civil**
- 2)**
- 3) Civil**
- 4)**
- 5) Very civil**

Comments:

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

Appendix 3 - Student Agreement to Participate

San Jose City College
Civility in the Classroom Spring 2002 Judy Rookstool, Ed.D.
Student Agreement to Participate in Project

Description of project

The Civility in the Classroom project is funded by the San Jose Evergreen Community College District Carnegie Scholars Program to examine some of the characteristics of civility and their presence in the classroom. As the researcher, I have selected four SJCC courses, each of which has two sections taught by the same instructor, for a total of eight sections in the study. At the beginning of the semester a pre-test measures students' attitude about civility. At the end of the semester, a post-test measures whether there has been any change in attitude about civility in the class.

Your participation and confidentiality

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. When you participate, all of your pre-test and post-test results and any other of your comments will be kept anonymous. Your name on the pre- and post-tests is confidential and simply allows me to match your responses at the beginning and end of the semester, but your name will not be public. I shall keep all records of this project in a secure location. Summary statistics will be published as part of a project report and may be published in other materials.

It is my hope that this documentation of civility in the classroom will benefit students in future courses as well as members of the college community interested in civility. If you have any questions, you may contact me in the Counseling Building (C-6), by telephone at (408) 298-2181 ext. 3149, or by email at judy.rookstool@sjeccd.cc.ca.us.

I _____ (please print name)
agree to participate in the above described Civility in the Classroom project conducted by Judy Rookstool, Ed.D.

Signature

Date

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

Appendix 4 Instructor Focus Group Prompts

**Civility in the Classroom Spring 2002 Judy Rookstool
Instructors' Focused Assessment Using Simile/Metaphor Prompts**

The prompts below are intended as a means of capturing, using simile and metaphor, your assessment of each of the sections included in the Carnegie Scholar Civility in the Classroom project. While each course section has its own "personality" and the civility project cannot be considered as causing any outcome, perhaps you could think about and comment upon any perceived correlation between the civility intervention in one section and the absence of intervention in the other.

Please take a few moments (on top of all that you have already contributed) and consider the following prompts for each section. What you have written will be transcribed by a Teaching and Learning Center intern into a typed format to disguise handwriting, so you can be completely forthright in your written comments. A short (one hour or less) discussion session, facilitated by Marcia Corcoran, is planned to explicate these ideas during which time you can submit this sheet and hear what other participants in the project have written. The discussion group and continental breakfast will be Thursday, May 16 @ 8 in the GE Conference Room.

**Course section without civility intervention
In terms of civility, the students in this class were (like):**

In terms of civility, teaching this class was (like):

**Course section with civility intervention
In terms of civility, the students in this class were (like):**

In terms of civility, teaching this class was (like):

**San Jose City College
In terms of civility, this college is (like):**

What suggestions do you have to improve the Civility in the Classroom project?

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

Appendix 5 Student Focus Group Prompts

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP PROMPT

Civility in the Classroom Spring 2002

Students' Focused Assessment Using Simile/Metaphor Prompts

Please indicate your course: Guidance 130___ EMT___ Humanities 2___ Math 61___

Thank you for participating in this project. The prompts below are a way of capturing your idea of how important civility was in your educational experience in your course this semester by using simile and metaphor. A simile or metaphor is a word or figure of speech that describes by the comparison of ideas, one idea as if it were another. For example, you could say that reading a book is like meeting a new person (simile, using the word "like") or, she thought of her instructor as a tour guide and her course outline as a roadmap (tour guide and roadmap are metaphors).

Please take few moments and consider the following statements and think of a simile or metaphor to describe your experience, then write a few sentences explaining your word or phrase and why you chose it to represent your thoughts. You will be discussing these ideas in a small group. Please don't write your name on the paper, as you will be handing this in to become part of the project description. (Use the back of this page if necessary.)

In terms of civility, being a student in this class was (like):

In terms of civility, the other students in this class were (like):

In terms of civility, the teaching in this class was (like):

In terms of civility, this college is (like):

What suggestions do you have to make civility in the classroom especially meaningful to future students?

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

Appendix 6 Sample Course Syllabus Statements

San Jose City College /Evergreen Valley College is attempting to foster the practice of civility within the classroom and on the campus. Civility is both a civic virtue commonly associated with politeness and good manners and an ethical principle that underlies respect for persons and for the foundation of the civil state.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines civility, in part, as: 1) connected with citizenship, a community of citizens collectively; 2) ordinary courtesy or politeness, as opposed to rudeness of behavior; 3) respect; consideration; decency.

Behaviors that reflect civility in the classroom include:

- Comments are made on issues, not on persons
- Comments are supported by reasons
- Speakers take turns, don't interrupt
- Respectful words and strategies are observed
- Understanding of other's ideas observed
- Neutral or positive tone is observed
- Neutral expressions are observed

Examples of statements that could be used in a syllabus:

1) Teaching and Learning Center, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Teachers are committed to developing and actively protecting a class environment in which respect must be shown to everyone in order to facilitate and encourage expression, testing, understanding and creation of a variety of ideas and opinions.

Any successful learning experience requires mutual respect on behalf of the students and the instructor. The instructor, as well as fellow students, should not be subjected to any student's behavior that is in any way disruptive or rude. A student should not feel intimidated or demeaned by his/her instructor and students must remember that the instructor has primary responsibility for control over classroom behavior and maintenance of academic integrity.

2) SJCC and EVC faculty members drafted sample civility statements in a series of workshops on civility on the classroom:

Respect should be shown to everyone in order to facilitate the expression of ideas and to create a positive educational environment.

To demonstrate your respect for your classmates and your instructor, it is expected you will arrive in class on time and ready to work, turn off cell phones and audible pagers, refrain from talking while the instructor is talking, and stay the whole class period until dismissed by the instructor.

Vigorous and uninhibited debate of ideas is encouraged during class discussions, but personal attack on other class members is inappropriate and will not be tolerated.

The classroom is first and foremost a place of learning and teaching within an atmosphere of respect and caring for each other and ourselves. Every student is entitled to full participation and to full expression of their individuality and diversity within the bounds of courtesy, sensitivity and respect. Interruptions and disruptions of the classroom atmosphere inhibit and prevent learning and teaching, as well as convey disrespect to others in the room.

In an atmosphere of courtesy and mutual respect – in which racism, sexism, and the use of vulgar language will not be overlooked – we will pursue questions and debate ideas. This college is an institution of learning and teaching. We strive to maintain a climate of respect, sensitivity and courtesy. We recognize that each of us has an obligation to support acts of civility in the classroom. We will take pride in our achievements and celebrate our differences.

3) San Jose Evergreen Community College District Policies – Section V Student Services Policies Section 5065.03 Standards of Student Conduct

Behavioral standards include showing mutual respect to students and college staff and adherence to District and College rules and regulations and State/Federal laws.

4) The De Anza College Catalogue (1998) “Mutual Respect”

(The) College shall take all steps necessary to provide a positive educational and employment environment, which encourages equal educational opportunities. The college will actively seek to educate staff and students on the deleterious effects of expressions of hatred or contempt based on race, color, national or ethnic origin, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, or physical or psychological disability; and will promote equality and mutual respect and understanding (italics mine) among all groups and individuals.

5) Suggestion for language appropriate for an educational community, adapted from American Bar Association Report of the Professionalism Committee, August 1996.

The hallmarks of an educational community are respect for truth, deliberation, reflection, and openness to ideas and to the pursuit of learning.

Instructors and students should act and speak civilly to one another, abstain from disparaging remarks, and uphold standards of respect and dignity, endeavoring in good faith to conduct college matters in a professional manner.

6) Civility clause that is required to be printed on all syllabi at Eastfield College in Dallas.

"Since every student is entitled to full participation in class without interruption, all students are expected to be in class and prepared to begin on time. All pagers, wireless phones, electronic games, radios, tape or CD players or other devices that generate sound must be turned off when you enter the classroom. Disruption of class, whether by latecomers, noisy devices or inconsiderate behavior will not be tolerated. Repeated violations will be penalized and may result in expulsion from the class."

7) Sample list of values adopted by colleges:

a. Florida State University (adopted 1987 by the Board of Regents for the Florida State University System) from Building a Community of Citizens (Eberly, 1994)

These values and principles are specific enough to be meaningful and broad enough to be acceptable in a pluralistic culture:

1. Personal integrity that is rooted in respect for truth and love of learning.
2. A sense of duty to self, family, and to the larger community.
3. Self-esteem rooted in the quest for the achievement of one's potential.
4. Respect for the rights of all persons regardless of their race, religion, nationality, sex, and age, physical condition, or mental state.
5. The courage to express one's convictions, and the recognition of the rights of others to hold and express differing views.
6. The capacity to make discriminating judgments among competing opinions.
7. A sense of, and commitment to, justice, rectitude, and fair play.
8. Understanding, sympathy, concern, and compassion for others.
9. A sense of discipline and pride in one's work; respect for achievements of others.
10. Respect for one's property and the property of others, including public property.
11. An understanding of, and appreciation for, other cultures and traditions.
12. A willingness to perform the obligations of citizenship, including the obligation to cast an informed ballot, to complete jury service, to participate in government, and to respect the rule of law.
13. Civility, including congenial relations between men and women.
14. A commitment to academic freedom as a safeguard essential to the purposes of the college and to the welfare of those who work for it.
15. The courage to oppose the use of substances which impair one's judgement or one's health.

b. Solano Community College District (from Solano Community College Catalog 1999-2000 Mission and Goals – Core Values)

1. Focus on Students
2. Accountability
3. Quality
4. Innovation
5. Diversity
6. Respect
7. Responsiveness to the Community
8. Pro-active Leadership

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

Appendix 7 Sample Presentations for Classroom Discussion

I. Civility in the Classroom: Respect and Civil Discourse (Judy Rookstool)

Objective: Present basic concept of civility, apply it to a school setting, and set up a discussion of the application of civility to a classroom setting in any course.

Time required: 50 minutes

Differentiate Civility vs. Manners. vs. Etiquette

Civility - What is it?

Civility is both a virtue of politeness and good manners and an ethical principle that underlies respect for persons and for the foundation of government. Civility is related to ethics and to one's participation as a citizen, as well as ways in which humans communicate.

Definition

The Oxford English Dictionary defines civility (in part) as: 1) connected with citizenship, a community of citizens collectively; 2) behavior proper to the interchange of civilized people; 3) courtesy or politeness, as opposed to rudeness of behavior; 4) decent respect, consideration.

Philosophy/Ethical Theory

Underlying principles not discussed very often

Two main directions: civic virtue/civil state

Civic Virtue (Society) and Civic Responsibility

Ethics of virtue – Aristotle: What constitutes a Good Life?

List values common to many: honesty, respect for family, loyalty

Civil State (Individual)

Universalism – Rawls and individual rights

How to balance these two concepts?

While these are important principles of society, in US there is some difficulty in balancing society/individual/government. It is an obligation with benefits. Civility unfolds from collective conscience – there is no “right “ to civility

Why Civility as a Concept for the Classroom? (Same question of balance – individual/society)

Many believe courtesy and civility may be a good thing in the classroom, but there may be disagreement how much civility is a good thing. Civility must not ever become the means of stifling classroom discussion, but it may be used to set the terms of respect, which help discussion happen.

American tradition of classroom discussion: The classroom is a forum for intellectual inquiry, which is enhanced by a civil environment

Some reasons to develop civility in the classroom:

- 1) Schools are socially embedded institutions; society and education impact one another. (Durkheim)
- 2) Equality and respect for persons is an essential notion of U.S. public education. (Kant, Dewey)
- 3) Civility is a model for respect of different traditions and respect for diversity of individuals. (Dressler))
- 4) Civility and civil discourse promote and are conducive to (lead to) learning.
- 5) Civility as an essential job skill – employers interested in the way employees relate to one another as part of the overall organization

Civility in a classroom: How would it look?

- 1) Model civil discussion

In order for civility to predominate in the classroom, the instructor sets the tone for honesty, openness, and good listening: thoughtful reflection, tact, sensitivity, and the avoidance of cynicism.

- 2) Avoid debate that is the defense of beliefs; discourse is not merely the expression of ideas but listening and deliberation.

- 3) Instructor examples:

How do you teach civil behavior in college classrooms?

Increase cooperation; reduce competition.

Collaborative learning: group projects, discussion questions, increase the variety and frequency of interaction among students different from one another.

- 4) Collaborate to establish rules; discuss classroom behavior; develop personal contact.

- 5) Have students discuss how breaches of civility are handled in different cultures.

Discussion Questions (Examples)

If you were helping to determine what a civil classroom would be like, what suggestions would you make? (Cell phones? Late? Language? Interruptions?)

Does one have a responsibility to others in class (or society) to be civil? Does one's attitude reflect who one is? (Civic Virtue)

If society is represented by your individual act, what responsibility do you have to society? Can society govern your private morality? (Civil State)

Who goes first in being polite? If someone is respectful to you, what may be gained by returning respect? What can be gained by returning disrespect?

Do you have a responsibility to your family and your community to be civil? Are there values common to both? Are there values that are in conflict?

As you would treat others, let them do the same. Consider the principle that your individual act could be made the standard for everyone. What does this mean to you?

How does a group achieve a balance between individual rights and responsibility to the group?

What is the "common good" and who defines it?

What responsibility do you have to other members of the class to contribute to a positive learning environment?

Useful Discussion Phrases - Examples

I agree because...

I'm unclear about...

I'd like to add on to _____'s idea...

I disagree because...

I'm confused about...

Please clarify...

In other words, you're saying...

II Dialogue vs. Debate

(from A Practical Guide for Integrating Civic Responsibility into the Curriculum, 2002, Gottlieb and Robinson, eds.)

Objective: To understand the importance of listening and empathy as a fundamental citizenship skills; to understand the difference between dialogue and debate.

Time required: One hour of outside research and one hour of in-class dialogue, debate, and reflection.

Directions: Select a topic that students can discuss, for example, a local or national public policy issue or a school policy. Divide students into four groups of equal size. Ask each group to research the selected topic or issue on their own. During a subsequent class period, Group 1 will debate the issue from a supportive viewpoint, and Group 2 will debate the same issue from an opposing viewpoint. Groups 3 and 4 will conduct a dialogue on the issue, discussing both "sides" equally and without antagonism.

Sample reflection: Ask students to analyze dialogue and debate from a democratic/citizenship perspective. Why is dialogue an important concept in effective citizenship? Why is dialogue more conducive to civic responsibility and citizenship skills? What is a consensus? How can we move from debate to dialogue when dealing with our communities' tough issues?

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

Appendix 8 Suggestions to encourage civility in the classroom and on the campus

Classroom-related

1. Develop for inclusion in course syllabi a statement delineating expectations of civility, mutual respect, and civil conduct in the classroom.
2. Set aside at least one class discussion during a semester for expectations of open dialogue, mutual respect and civility. Consider including civility-related topics and projects.
3. Use opportunities to both model and employ the use of mutual respect, open dialogue and civil discourse in classroom discussion.
4. Consider, where appropriate, use of activities which allow students to know one another; consider use of collaborative learning and student projects where possible.
5. Include civility-related topics and projects in college orientation classes and other courses, where appropriate.
6. Create a compendium of “best classroom practices” suggested by staff which encourage civility and civil discourse.
7. Develop an applied ethics/social issues course, perhaps using a multi-disciplinary approach.
8. Create a web-based instructional service site, which provides advice on a variety of classroom instructional techniques, for example, the development of course outlines, and pedagogical strategies such as collaborative learning and group discussion models emphasizing civil discourse.

College-wide

1. Review campus publications for appropriate insertion of language that encourages civility. Such language could appear in the college mission statement, catalogue, schedule of classes, and selected brochures. (California Community College Accreditation Standards 2002 include an emphasis upon Citizenship, Ethics, and Civility.)
2. Consider the use of Staff Development or College funds to sponsor a workshop for staff, and possibly for others in the education community, on civility and civil discourse in the classroom.
3. Consider the use of Staff Development or College funds to sponsor a forum or series of lectures that encourage and model principles of civil discourse, for discussion of issues in ethics and applied ethics.
4. Administer a college-wide campus climate survey (with some modifications) periodically in order to evaluate campus attitudes on an ongoing basis.

5. Coordinate activities surrounding the first week of classes to ensure a friendly, caring and welcoming environment and to set a tone for civility on campus.
6. Emphasize the principle of community or public service for staff and students. Continue and augment the Service Learning Project. Encourage students to relate community service to common core values and to their own individual values.
7. Offer staff training, especially to staff members who have initial and/or frequent contact with students, to revitalize and maintain civil practices on campus.
8. Encourage faculty to become advisors to student clubs, associations that develop civic engagement and participation.
9. Recognize contributions made by staff and students to the campus and community.

Public space

1. Improve public spaces on campus with art, colorful surroundings, cultural performances, comfortable seating, and meaningful signage. Develop and maintain improvements in landscaping and general campus appearance.
2. In conjunction with new campus construction, increase public meeting spaces and establish visually well-defined entrances to the campus.
3. Develop a graffiti removal task force that can respond quickly to problems.

Civility: Can it be taught in the classroom?

Appendix 9 - References/Resources

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