

Seven Habits Puzzle Pieces

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The Seven Habits

1. *Be proactive*
2. *Begin with the end in mind*
3. *Put first things first*
4. *Think win-win*
5. *Seek first to understand, then to be understood*
6. *Synergize*
7. *Sharpen the saw*

The puzzle project was a culmination of my Juggling Life and Learning Adult Diploma class. The group of students ranged in age from 17 – 60 years and was a mix of males and females all from downeast Maine. Several of the students had recently been laid off from Bumble Bee, Inc., the last sardine packing company in the United States.

I originally got the idea for this project while attending the Fall Managing Stress workshop at World Education. One of the participants had done a similar project using puzzle pieces as an introductory activity for students from various cultures. I wasn't planning on using it for this class but had put the idea in the back of my mind for future reference.

How I Got Started

This was my first time teaching an adult diploma class and I carefully chose the book, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens* by Sean Covey as a way to organize the class. I thought that the seven habits concepts illustrated the learning that I wanted to teach in the class: How to be a successful adult education student in spite of the busy lives we lead outside of class. I decided on the teen version because I found it to be humorous and less formal than the adult version, and the adult version was a little above their reading level. Since I like to make learning fun I thought I had found the right book. I was excited to incorporate stress management learning into this course because stress management is really the underlying theme to being a successful adult education student and the techniques learned would add nicely to each habit.

Some students were turned off by the teen version as they didn't feel they could relate to the examples given. I decided to give examples each week of how teen issues can be present in the lives of adults: peer pressure, relationships issues, communication in families etc. This helped students do the same as they read through the book and thought about how specific scenarios in the book could, with a little shift, fit into their lives.

My Mistake

On the first day of class I gave an overview of each of the habits and I had students pick a random habit out of a basket and that was to be their topic for their final project: a self-designed project they would present to the class to demonstrate what they had

learned. Since we had seventeen weeks of classes I thought it would be helpful for students to know ahead of time which habit they would have for their project. Boy was I wrong.



Students became stressed by the term “final project” and never heard anything after that. It would have been nice if I had give people time to get acclimated to the course and their classmates before we discussed the final assignment! I hadn’t thought about using the puzzle pieces at this point. Students got really stressed about the final project and it started to affect our class time. So, part way through the semester I decided to use

the puzzle project idea as a way for them to work on their final assignment. Students would demonstrate each habit by decorating a puzzle piece and then present it to the class. Then we could put the seven pieces together.

Week by Week

Each week we spent time on a different habit and things that they could do in their lives to work towards using the habit. I encouraged students to practice implementing the habit of the week and we shared what we learned outside the classroom about ourselves and ways to use the habit in our families, our community and at work. I really liked the discussions that happened and the creativity that came out of the project.

Puzzle Process and Product

- I met with each of the students to brainstorm ideas for his or her puzzle piece.
- Students brainstormed as a group what a successful project would include and students began collecting supplies needed for the project.
- We began the prep work for our puzzles such as painting them, cutting out pictures from magazines, enlarging pictures, finding quotes etc.
- We began creating the puzzle pieces.
- Students presented their puzzle pieces to the class and answered questions about their habits.
- We displayed the completed puzzle pieces in one of our adult education classrooms.

We now have it permanently displayed in one of our classrooms and we also posted pictures on our Facebook page.



Student Comments

“I was so nervous about having to do a project for this class. I have never done a project before. I’m so glad you changed it (to use the puzzles) and made it fun!”

“I really liked painting my puzzle piece. I haven’t painted in so long I forgot how much I liked it.”

“I don’t like art projects”

“It was fun doing it as a group. I liked talking with people about my ideas.”

“It was okay.”

“Thank you Ronda! This is so much fun and it’s more to me than just the project. I loved the first ten minutes of each class and will miss learning things I can do to lower my stress.”

“I was glad I could take mine home and work on it. Diploma day is so full that I get overwhelmed and I need quiet to do this kind of stuff.”

“I’m glad you did a puzzle project too. Teachers don’t do projects so it was good to have you do one.”