

Elizabeth Rebutillo  
Hialeah Miami Lakes High  
7977 W 12<sup>th</sup> AVE  
Hialeah, FL 33014  
Mail Code: 7131  
Telephone: 305-823-1330 ext 2301  
e-mail:er3teaches@dadeschools.net  
Principal: Karen Robinson

## Action Research

### Question:

How will the use of current events in a 9<sup>th</sup> grade Leadership Skills class impact student's critical thinking skills, attitudes in science, and performance?

### Problem: Rationale & Background:

One-trend educators keep mentioning in the halls and workrooms is students' apathy. Educators refer to the increase in number of students who shrug their shoulders and make comments like, "So what?" or "Who cares?" Students have apathy towards their learning and their grades. Students do not see the connection between what they have learned in school and the world around them. In the past three years, I have recognized this as a growing trend with my students. My school is an urban school with 3,300 students. The ethnicity breakdown is 70% Hispanic, 28% Black, 1% white, and 1% other with 65% of our students are on free or reduced lunch. The particular class I used for this research was added when the district extended our day and added this class to the last hour of school. Students were distressed by the requirement to stay in school an extra hour and take an additional class. Students in this class had low motivation and therefore made it a perfect class to try my intervention. I used current events in my daily lessons in order to establish a clear connection between the curriculum and the real world. Some of the current events were from video recordings of news stories and others were articles from the *USA Today*, *The Miami Herald*, *Popular Science Magazine*, and *Discover Magazine*. After viewing or reading the piece, students had to respond to questions and write their own questions using Bloom's Taxonomy.

### Research:

There was an extensive amount of research available on classroom questioning and its relationship between teacher questioning and student achievement. The focuses of the research were: strategies to improve student thinking and comprehension, placement and timing of questions, cognitive levels of questions, wait-time, redirection, reinforcement, and probing. Research that focused on the connection between questioning and student attitudes as well as research that used current events and questioning strategies were non-existent. Several articles made general statements in regards to making connections, however, they lacked a specific manner in which to accomplish this.

### Data Collection & Tools:

I administered a pre and post attitudinal survey in regards to science. I compared their Student Reading Inventory Scores from May 04 to May 05. I collected samples of their

questions and answer throughout. I kept a journal of anecdotal comments made by students in the class.

Analysis:

My analysis indicates an increase in students making a connection between the subject matter and their lives as well as their personal confidence. There was little change in students' perceptions of their teacher's attitude. There were statements made by students that indicated to me that my intervention was having some positive impact even though it may not be measurable at this time. In regards to science being in the male domain the students' responses remained mostly unchanged. Students' ability to write questions improved with the use of Bloom's Taxonomy and students familiarity with it. Students' willingness and ability to respond to questions that used Bloom's hierarchy increased with increased use and familiarity, however, the progress lagged behind the ability to write questions.

Policy Recommendations:

This research indicates the need for students to have quality instruction that connects the real world to the academic world. Additionally, students and teachers must be trained on the practice of developing quality questions and answers. Moreover, teachers need time to develop these lessons in order to incorporate them accurately. Therefore, teacher should have at least one-planning period and one-progress monitoring/data analyzing period per day.