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Respect and equality as a basis for OHS learning

Narelle believes that establishing respect and equality within the classroom is paramount, then educational achievement will follow. Working with some disengaged students in a rural government school, Narelle has discovered that establishing relationships with students based on respect, equality and negotiation prevents power struggle and tension within the classroom. Once respect is established and a system for negotiation is in place it is easier for teacher and student to have the 'tough' or difficult conversations.

To establish respect and equality Narelle begins the year with a discussion on rights and responsibilities. While students generally understand their rights they do not realise that rights come with responsibilities so she teaches them the subtle relationship between rights and responsibilities.

Once students appreciate this subtle relationship Narelle feels they are all on level ground: student to teacher, teacher to student, student to student. This sets up a fertile teaching and learning environment where much is possible. Over the year one of the greatest lessons students learn is that the correct exercising of rights and responsibilities underpins successful teaching-learning and employee-employer relationships.

Narelle spends time teaching and modeling to students how to behave in ways that elicit favourable behaviour from others, such as employers. As young people may be afraid to speak up if they feel unsafe in a work environment Narelle teaches and models the way students can set up an environment that makes those tough conversations easier to have, including giving them a language to use. Narelle's aim is to give her students the tools so they can have the tough conversations that may be necessary for their safety.

As students can be quite bored with OHS content by senior VCAL, Narelle has developed a unit where students teach an aspect of OHS to younger groups of students, *Let the students teach*. Students are required to plan, cover outcomes, negotiate with the students and

teachers and deliver and evaluate their class. Students can see for themselves how integral relationship is to success.