

Teaching For Success Faculty Success Center

Success Insights

Pure and Simple

Have you ever noticed how the terms “we” and “they” naturally paint a picture of collaborative health in a class or organization? Learning how to join forces and team up with others to create new products, services, and processes appears today to be vital to succeeding in the new global economic playing field as described by Tom Friedman in *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*.

The “we” or “they” test is has been credited to Robert B. Reich, former U.S. labor secretary and is mentioned in Daniel Pink’s new book, *Drive*. This brief diagnostic of collaborative health jumped out at me as being an element of what I call the “Success Conversation,” an important developmental and learning dialogue. The purpose of an ongoing success conversation is to discover ways to optimize critical parts of work, learning tasks, and outcomes.

When beginning a success conversation at your institution or in your classes, watch for and discuss the use of “we” versus “they.” Observe how language can determine how well a group can collaborate and produce quality-enhancing innovations.

Further, Dan H. Hockenbury and Sandra E. Hockenbury in *Psychology* report that when groups work toward common goals, their respect and positive feelings for each other grow and the “they” can be readily transformed to “we.”

Willingness to start, or be part of, an ongoing collaborative success conversation with a common goal of improving teaching and learning is the key element of teaching for success.

~John H. (Jack) Shrawder, Exec. Director,
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