Creating a Culture
of Respect and Rapport

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Students are more likely to flourish academically within a positive classroom culture. High academic expectations are supported by strong peer relationships, trust in the teacher, and a respectful emotional climate. Students who feel cared for academically and emotionally are more likely to succeed.

Charlotte Danielson (2007) asserts that "respect and rapport both between the teacher and students and between students is the cornerstone of maintaining an environment in which students feel safe and valued." Danielson's quotation serves as a reminder that most peoples' strong recollections of school focus on relationships made with peers and feelings experienced within the classroom environment. Students feel valued and are treated with dignity and respect when the teacher models inclusive and welcoming behavior and ensures that all students are held accountable for their behavior with one another.

Hattie (2003) suggests that teachers represent the "greatest source of variance" of positive effect on student performance. The powerful influence of teachers may have "sensationally positive effects on the learner." Research shows that quality of teaching and the nature of teacher-student relationships are the two factors that show the greatest effect on academic achievement.

Information Alignment

Materials presented in this eBook align with the following:

Module Questions

- How could beliefs and expectations within a classroom impact student learning?
- How could a positive relationship provide essential supports for learning?
- How could establishing a classroom of mutual care, respect, and trust enhance student learning?

Learning Outcomes

- Identify ways to establish a positive culture.
- Explore the qualities that promote a supportive and positive teacher-student relationship.
- Discover how to create a learning environment that promotes a culture of respect and rapport.

Module Topic Focus

- Establishing a Positive Culture
    - Awareness of students' backgrounds
    - Getting to know each student
    - Being open with communication
    - Modeling a positive culture in the classroom
    - Classroom self-disclosure
- Relationship Qualities
    - Evidence of emotional support
    - Responsive and respectful interaction
    - Positive discourse
- Creating Respect and Rapport
    - Facilitating a sense of belonging
    - Blending warmth with firmness in providing feedback
    - Modeling respect

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At time of publishing, all of the website information was accurate. Due to the nature of the internet, some of the website information may have changed or become unavailable. Please see the references section of the corresponding online module for the most up-to-date information.

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Establishing Positive Culture

Effective teachers know that small efforts made in making positive, personal connections with students, especially adolescents, may reap great rewards in terms of student motivation and emotional harmony. Pianta, Hamre, and Allen (2012) maintain that classrooms are natural, social forums in which teachers and students enjoy interactions and share information about their lives outside of school. A positive classroom climate occurs when students enjoy school and is evidenced by students' "experience of warm caring relationships with adults and peers." Extreme negative classroom cultures may involve instances of "frequent yelling, humiliation, or irritation in interactions with teachers and peers." Teachers develop classrooms as safe learning environments when they display sensitivity to the needs of students in the form of "consistent, timely, and responsive interactions." Some teachers have successfully improved their relationships with students by participating, with teaching partners, in classroom observations that focus on the quality of teacher/student interactions. Pianta et al. place interactions and relationships with students as the "central problem in school reform" above other issues such as curriculum reform, assessment, and teacher/student ratios.

Fred Jones (2007) reminds us that enjoyment is a critical component of learning. Some teachers are able to create exciting classrooms and infuse lessons with adventure. In such cases, students "look forward to entering the classroom in the morning." The most positive learning environments are characterized by a teacher who is relaxed, in control, and enjoying the interactions with students. Such a culture is created when the teacher is organized and consistent in upholding a well-understood set of expectations that includes appropriate incentives and consequences.

Awareness of Students' Backgrounds

Student populations are represented by a wide ranging mixture of backgrounds and characteristics. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (n.d.) defines diversity as "differences among groups of people and individuals based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area."

The typical contemporary U.S. classroom contains students from a diverse mix of cultures. In their homes, many students speak mother tongue languages other than English. Statistically in the U.S., 25% of students are from non-European backgrounds. The culturally knowledgeable teacher is aware that students' cultural identities are shaped by more than nationality and race. An inclusive classroom environment recognizes students' strengths and weaknesses, celebrates cultural attributes, and addresses the needs of all individuals. Personal relevance of content is a key factor in persuading students to participate with interest and enthusiasm. In order for students to become successful life-long learners and confident citizens they need to bridge values contained in their cultural backgrounds and academic experiences (Moore & Hansen, 2012).

Many classes contain a proportion of students who are English language learners (ELLs). These students are prepared with various levels of background knowledge, literacy skills, and previous experience in a variety of school cultures. Students who speak a common language, (such as Spanish) may differ in cultural backgrounds, home environment, and the role of the family. ELL students progress through proficiency stages of English language acquisition. Similarly, they gradually become accustomed to a new culture. Teachers should be aware that this process is not always a smooth transition. The four stages of cultural adaptation associated with the development of ELLs are illustrated in Figure 1.

1. Euphoria	An initial period of feeling excited by a new culture.
2. Culture Shock	Emotions such as anger, frustration and resentment may be triggered by the challenge of adapting to a new culture.
3. Acceptance	The expectations of the new culture are gradually accepted.
4. Assimilation/adaptation	Finally, the student embraces and adjusts to the new culture.

Figure 1. The four stages of ELL adaptation to a new culture.

The welcoming teacher takes care to establish an encouraging classroom environment. Correct pronunciation of the student's name—by both teacher and peers—is an essential first step toward inclusion. The teacher needs to initiate individual contact and check for understanding with ELL students who may be reluctant to ask for help. A willing and helpful peer partner can be a great source of support, especially if the designated partner has some knowledge of their partner's first language. Displayed daily schedules and instructions illustrated with symbols, pictures, and times can cut through the language barrier and reassure a student that he or she understands classroom expectations. The modeling of behaviors and routines by the teacher or peers helps to communicate classroom expectations. Labeling classroom equipment and facilities in dual languages helps with both acquisition of vocabulary and understanding of instructions.

Sharing cultural stories, vocabulary, and representative show and tell objects are sure ways to both make the ELL student feel welcome and to educate peers about other cultures. ELLs may need to mimic and copy others in collaborative situations as they desperately try to perform according to expectations. They may, according to classroom rules, be plagiarizing at times. Additionally, cooperative learning strategies may be part of their cultural learning experience. The fair- minded teacher extends some leeway in terms of performance and behavior for ELL students at the beginning. Once they are reasonably established, a consistent and fair approach holds ELL students equally accountable to other class members (Colorado, 2007).

According to the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) there are over 45,000 English language learners in Pennsylvania schools. The teaching of "ESL is core instruction and its goal is to develop skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing by effectively implementing the Pennsylvania English Language Proficiency Standards." Subject teachers are expected to support ELLs with the use of a range of appropriate instructional strategies. All teachers with ELLs included in their classrooms are required to be familiar with state mandated English language proficiency assessments (Sainz de la Pena, 2013).

Getting to Know Each Student

Getting to know a new class of students is a crucial skill for effective teaching. The task is multiplied for specialist subject teachers who are typically scheduled with a number of different classes each week. Some advanced preparation is possible, for example by reading records and talking to colleagues. The initial phase of getting to know students involves learning and pronouncing their names correctly. Techniques such as seating plans, name cards, and icebreaker activities may help to facilitate the process. Knowing students' names is the first step in building teacher-student relationships. The effective teacher becomes aware of students' individual academic needs, personal background, and characteristics. Academic profiles of students may be ascertained from activities such as pre-tests, assessments, essays, presentations, and reflective academic logs. More personal information that enables a caring teacher-student relationship to develop may be gleaned from casual conversations, personally based student presentations or writing pieces, meetings with family members, or by careful observation of a student's behavior and dispositions within the classroom. Families are likely to converse freely and share relevant information once trust is established and they feel assured of professional confidentiality on the part of the teacher. Strong, positive relationships serve to reassure the student that their teacher cares and thus results in higher levels of motivation and academic success.

Harry and Rosemary Wong (2009) advise teachers to become informed about new students and at the same time refrain from prejudging them. Background information may be gathered from previous teachers, school files, and conversations at a meet the teacher event. Welcoming students by greeting them at the door, using their correct names, and offering a handshake can make a strong first impression. The use of common courtesies, such as please and thank you, impart respect. Attentive listening and meaningful responses establish a sense of worth for the student. Smiles and a sense of humor can bring joy to the classroom and form bonds between the teacher and students.

Being Open With Communication

Moore and Hansen (2012) assert that "without communication, teaching does not occur, children do not learn, and schools do not function." Students spend a significant proportion of their lives listening and responding in classrooms. Teachers are important role models for students to emulate as they develop effective verbal communication skills. Persuasive teachers develop confident classroom conversational skills and learn to observe student behavior and listen to students' spoken ideas. Highly developed verbal and nonverbal communication skills enable teachers to respond to the needs of, and influence the behavior of, students and their families. Words alone are insufficient to communicate effectively. Students and family members are quick to recognize positive and caring dispositions such as empathy, kindness, appreciation of cultural differences, and the enthusiasm to lend help and support.

Modeling a Positive Culture in the Classroom

Gerber Allred (2008) asserts that "people need to feel good about themselves," and are more likely to achieve this state when they "engage in positive actions." Student motivation may be reinforced by teacher acknowledgement of positive student behavior. Comments, compliments, and even stickers or certificates can promote the continuation of positive behavior. The teacher's role is to ensure that students make the connections between the behavior exhibited and the resulting feeling of success. The effective teacher consciously models a positive attitude in all school situations and responds positively to situations that arise throughout the day. Gerber Allred asserts that positive behavior from teachers provides the catalyst for change and facilitates the creation of positive classrooms and happier students. The proactive teacher recognizes that students need to be systematically taught how to think and behave positively. With practice and coaching, students can learn to replace a negative thought with a positive one that generates a positive action. The reward for students is a feeling of self-worth. When interacting with peers, students need to treat others kindly, fairly, manage emotions, and respect different values and cultures. The responsible student takes ownership of mistakes and learns to think honestly. Intellectual endeavor, problem-solving, collaborative work, and decision-making all benefit from a positive mindset.

Classroom Self-disclosure

Teachers who share a little humanity and admit to vulnerabilities and imperfections encourage students to acknowledge their own faults and insecurities. Self-disclosures shared in the form of stories are sometimes more effective than direct confrontation as a means of addressing problematic behaviors and dispositions. Some possible themes for self-disclosure stories include:

- The recollection of an ineffective or inappropriate response to a person's behavior or question, together with a reflection of how the situation could have been better handled.

- The recollection of acting in a way that lacked awareness or appreciation of another person's situation.
- An admission of a personal fear or apprehension.
- An allusion to mistakes made that relate to similar mistakes made by class members.
- The admission that a long held truth turned out to be false.

Self-disclosure by the teacher provides an opportunity for students to think introspectively without the encumbrance of threats and confrontation (Lee, 2013).

Relationship between teacher and student self-disclosure. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (n.d.) offers guidance for teachers when making decisions about the suitability of topics for self-disclosures and the appropriate parameters for teacher-student relationships. The fundamental basis of such relationships is to maintain a focus on the best interests of the student and learning: "When teachers become confidants, friends, or counselors of students, a dual relationship is created which creates an ambiguity in the student-teacher relationship where roles are less defined." A professional teacher is able to recognize the appropriate student-teacher boundaries and accept the responsibilities associated with being a role model, both in and out of school.

How students and teachers co-construct self-disclosure. Harper (2005) asserts that "a blog can be an incredible tool to generate self-disclosure between educator and student." Blogs offer additional learning opportunities outside the physical classroom. The creation of a positive classroom environment can be enhanced by positive teacher self-disclosure. Students are not always willing to reciprocate with their own disclosures and may be naturally suspicious or even resentful of attempts at familiarity or drawing out personal opinions. Students who are normally reluctant to participate and share opinions in the classroom may appreciate the absence of pressure and extra thinking time available when writing an entry in a blog. Harper cautions that students who self-disclose online may not be comfortable when their thoughts are referred to in the physical classroom. Teachers should take care to seek permission and reassurance before mixing blog entries with face-to-face discussions. When encouraging students to participate in a blog, the teacher also needs to be authoritative in exercising control over the suitability of posted messages. Inevitably, students will occasionally post inappropriate messages that need to be removed quickly. The blog settings can be adjusted to aid the work of the teacher by restricting replies to the original message thread and preventing peer-to-peer discussions. The automatic generation of emails each time a new post is added serves to alert the teacher when new online activity appears. Blogs may be most appropriate for encouraging self-disclosure from older students and also have a useful role in teaching younger students how to interact appropriately online.

Social media networks including Facebook and Twitter are commonly used by teachers and students. In the U.S., young people need to be thirteen years of age before they are legally able to open a social networking account. Some educators are using these web-based tools to communicate with students and enhance the learning process. Many teachers also use online social networks to keep in touch with friends and family. Salvage (2013) reminds teachers that a guarded approach is necessary when posting messages, photographs, and setting the privacy controls on these platforms. Students are curious about their teachers and will search for information online. The advice is to take care and avoid posting statements that could be considered inflammatory or unprofessional, photographs that could be embarrassing out of context, and/or materials that are copyright protected. Additionally, links with students' social networking accounts could lead to assumptions that the teacher is spying on their private lives. In order to use these networks safely the wise teacher takes care to understand the intricacies of privacy settings and checks regularly for inappropriate links and associations.

Relationship Qualities

According to the Committee for Children (2012), "a positive classroom climate feels safe, respectful, welcoming, and supportive of student learning." The caring teacher seeks to create an environment in which students are kind to one another. A positive classroom climate is created and developed by means of relationship-building activities and the frequent reinforcement of positive interactions between students. Younger students respond well to planned games that encourage positive interactions and opportunities for students to get to know one another better. The effective teacher is aware of social dynamics within the classroom. Typically, some students make friends easily while others find difficulty in striking up relationships. An appreciation of the social connections within the class guides and enables the teacher to choose beneficial seating plans and balanced composition of work groups. Carefully planned class meetings offer a safe environment in which students may raise important issues concerning rules, recess, and any topics that are important to members of the class. Students need to appreciate and believe that their teacher cares about them as individual people with aspirations, concerns, and preferences. Correct use of names, welcome greetings at the door, warm and inclusive body language, and smiles all serve to create a bond of care. Personal questions about students' families, hobbies, and sports demonstrate personal interest in the individual.

The observant teacher notices significant changes in students' physical and emotional behaviors and investigates to see if support may be needed. Some classes, due to the composition of students, gel more easily than others. Regardless of students' past experiences, the determined teacher may use strategies in order to shape any classroom into a positive learning environment.

Evidence of Emotional Support

How does it feel for a student from a functional and unhappy home to experience the same feelings of failure and negative thought at school? The caring and empathetic teacher seeks to maintain a classroom environment in which a sense of well-being and positive disposition is possible for all students.

The effective teacher believes that positive social behavior can be taught, modeled, and reinforced. The Reading, Writing, Respect, and Resolution (4Rs) Program developed by the Morningside Center reports on the improvement, after two years, in academic achievement of elementary school students who were identified as exhibiting high levels of aggressive behavior. The 4Rs curriculum is based on the premise that students internalize positive social and emotional behaviors when taught directly and with repeated teacher modeling of the desired behaviors. According to Fusaro (2010), students from schools employing the 4Rs program have been observed to exhibit increases in social competence, better attention skills, fewer cases of depression, and less likelihood of aggressive responses in ambiguous conflict situations.

Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, and Linkins (2009) assert that a wide disparity exists between the most stated family priority for children's upbringing, "well-being," and the perception by the same families that schools prioritize "preparation for the workplace." Seligman et al. call for schools to explicitly teach well-being in order to counter the threat of depression, raise happiness levels, and increase learning. Specifically, creative thinking and the exploration of new ideas are to be encouraged alongside the current emphasis on critical thinking and following instructions. The Penn Resiliency Program (PRP) is a project to help adolescents develop abilities to cope with commonly encountered problems. PRP teaches "assertiveness, creative brainstorming, decision making, relaxation, and several other coping skills." The major goals of PRP are to "help students identify their signature character strengths and to increase their use of these strengths in their daily lives." Teachers in all schools are able to help students by directing discussions and activities in order to focus on positive thoughts and behaviors. Literature teachers focus on strengths of characters in novels; athletics coaches encourage students to dismiss resentment of poorly performing team members; music teachers build optimism to improve upon poor performances. When students are encouraged to focus on both great and small successful achievements using reflective conversations and journals, they are better able to develop dispositions such as resilience and to invest positive emotion in relationships.

Responsive and Respectful Interaction

The professional teacher's respectful relationships with students, families, and colleagues are the foundation of healthy and constructive interactions that promote learning. According to Kennedy and Stonehouse (2012), "responsive engagement with children and families builds on respectful relationships and sensitivity to the uniqueness of each child and family." The effective teacher creates meaningful learning experiences founded on students' "strengths, abilities, and interests." Successful responses to the students' challenges and successes require the teacher to remain alert and receptive to the academic progress of individuals.

Paula Denton (2009) values language as "one of the most powerful teaching tools." Teachers who develop a repertoire

of language and choose words carefully are better able to support students academically and socially as they develop skills of collaboration and self-control. Specific language strategies are applicable to different categories of classroom interaction. For example, questioning techniques challenge students to venture out of their academic comfort zones. Corrective language is needed to redirect students' negative behavior. Direct language with a "kind and straightforward tone" conveys trust, respect, and a feeling of safety in the classroom. Direct instructions, such as open your folder, are more effective and less divisive than comparisons with the exemplary behavior of a peer. Younger children respond better to commands that appeal to their concrete thinking domain. For example, a student who is distracted from a class discussion may be more effectively told to look at the speaker and listen rather than be respectful of the speaker. Sarcasm is to be avoided. This mode of speech may be effective in gaining an immediate redirection of behavior and can provide an amusing interlude for the class; however, the price to pay is a long term loss of respect and trust from the target student. The most respectful instructions focus on student behavior rather than the person. A comment about the lack of progress in a story-writing assignment is preferable to a comment about lack of caring. Negative comments about a student's disposition are likely to result in defensive responses and negative reinforcement. The effective teacher is aware of language that will further engagement and promote progress for all students.

Responsive and respectful interactions focus on qualities or behaviors that a student values. What a student values is shown in his or her actions and by what he or she produces. The kind of interactions that feel best to students are credible, sincere, and, most of all, believable. Labels jeopardize believability because learners often interpret them as all or nothing." When possible, interactions should take the "I" and the "you" out of the sentence and include a what"—what the student values, or what the student is working on.

Examples:

- Primary School: The lines and circles in the art project are colorful and neatly drawn.
- Elementary School: These math problems are clearly written out and show all work.
- Middle School: The verb conjugation in the Spanish homework shows understanding of the rules that apply.
- High School: This history paper shows a clear comprehension of the war and its outcome.

Note that in the examples above, the statements reflect the teacher's understanding of what the student values. The primary school student values neatness and color. The elementary school student values clear solutions to math problems. The middle school student values correct conjugation of verbs. The high school student values clear comprehension.

To summarize, responsive and respectful interactions:

- Focus on the behaviors a student values
- Are credible, sincere, and believable
- Replace the "I" and the "you" with a "what"
- Are as nonjudgmental as possible

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) (2012) asserts that "student interpersonal skills are the foundation for multiple life achievements." The development of these important skills is a responsibility for all teachers to "model, encourage, support, and promote" within all grade levels and subject areas. The teaching of interpersonal skills is a perfect example of how a whole faculty is responsible for the learning of every individual child in the school. The interpretation of the PDE standards for interpersonal skills is guided by the principles that students are valuable, worthwhile, respected, and cultural differences are respected and accepted. PDE also offers a Safe and Supportive Schools resource that relates to responsive and respectful interaction. These resources and exemplars promote active student engagement in a safe and positive learning environment. Areas within the element include the following:

- **Engagement**: School engagement is essential towards building academic success and a positive school climate. Engagement in school is a process of events and opportunities that lead to students gaining the skills and confidence to cope and feel safe in the school environment. These events and opportunities include relationships, respect for diversity and school participation.
- **Safety**: School safety refers to the security of the school setting and school-related activities as perceived and experienced by all stakeholders, including families, caregivers, students, school staff, and the community. School safety encompasses both emotional and physical safety, and is influenced by positive and negative behaviors of students and staff as well as the presence of substance use in the school setting and during school-related activities.
- **Environment**: School environment refers to the extent to which school settings promote student safety and student health. Environment is inclusive of all aspects of a school—its academic components, its physical and mental health supports and services, its physical building and location within a community, and its disciplinary procedures.

Positive Discourse

Most educators would agree that learning is a social activity in which academic interactions extend student understanding. In the 1920's, Lev Vygotsky hypothesized that students are able to assist each other by modifying a task in order to make it accessible and understandable. Fisher, Frey, and Rothenberg (2008) assert that many teachers are dissuaded from incorporating collaborative learning activities for pragmatic reasons such as the maximization of instructional time and the maintenance of firm class control. Teachers who embrace the advantages of collaborative work are able to structure activities in order to leverage success. Academic discourse between students may be facilitated with the use of a set of prompt phrases that serve to initiate specific cognitive functions found in the targeted learning activity. In order to engage in cognitive activities students need some common skills such as compare and contrast, formulate questions, and describe observations. Some examples of sentence

starters are:

- *These are different because …*
- *I predict that …*
- *A better answer would be …*
- *The most important parts are …*

The listener is also responsible for active participation in the exchange of ideas that academic discourse represents. "Accountable talk" requires that discussions and statements are supported by evidence. Listeners ask for clarification and add new ideas in response. Collaborative work offers a valuable opportunity for students to explain challenging concepts using their own language, metaphors, and examples.

Creating Respect and Rapport

Charlotte Danielson (2011) maintains that "teachers create an environment of respect and rapport in their classrooms by the ways they interact with students and by the interaction they encourage and cultivate among students." Good classroom rapport is dependent upon the teacher's insistence that students are respectful and caring toward one another. Appropriate choice of vocal tone and body language communicate a caring and interested disposition from the teacher toward students. Social inclusion by both the teacher and peers is necessary in order to create the feeling of a safe classroom environment in which all students are encouraged to learn. The effective teacher models socially inclusive behavior and ensures the creation of a supportive culture within the classroom. Classrooms that exhibit respect and rapport from the teacher and students display attributes such as respectful talk, politeness, turn taking, and fairness.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education offers a Safe and Supportive Schools resource related to school environment. On the SAS site, school environment refers to the extent to which school settings promote student safety and student health. Environment is inclusive of all aspects of a school – its academic components, its physical and mental health supports and services, its physical building and location within a community, and its disciplinary procedures. Several materials and resources related to each of these aspects is available on the SAS site.

Facilitating a Sense of Belonging

According to Sager (2003), "the feeling of belonging has two elements: comfort and acceptance." Unsurprisingly, students who feel accepted at school are comfortable with daily interactions and are more likely to engage with work and succeed academically. Students who feel rejected by peers or feel out of place in school are less likely to show commitment to their studies. Sager asserts that students in some schools perceive a social hierarchy in which popular students succeed and others are left to fail. Teachers who consciously seek to include all individuals are likely to create a more welcoming classroom environment. The employment of a variety of teaching strategies and a diversity of activities is likely to strike chords of interest and promote engagement for all students. An acknowledgment of students' cultural preferences, language strengths and weaknesses, and personal interests sets the tone for an inclusive and caring classroom environment.

Blending Warmth With Firmness in Providing Feeback

Teachers, especially in secondary education, generally think of raised performance on academic assignments as the main purpose of feedback to students. Feedback on student behavior is also an important responsibility of teachers in order to both create a positive and safe classroom environment and to promote individual student growth. Teachers are uniquely situated to provide feedback on academic progress and also to guide students in addressing behaviors such as low levels of participation, tardiness, calling out, lack of preparation, and other negative dispositions. Academic and behavioral feedback is linked. For example, a student is more likely to increase academic engagement having accepted feedback about poor preparation. Effective feedback within a warm and trusted classroom relationship may support students in gaining confidence and strengthening self-image inside and outside of school. Feedback is effective only if the teacher and student have developed positive rapport and trust. Secondly, the manner of delivery needs to be respectful, reassuring, and aimed at the behavior rather than at the student. Some teachers, in addition to reactive and immediate feedback, elect to schedule meetings with each individual student in order to ensure a safe environment for discussing dispositional behaviors (Burke, 2013).

Modeling Respect

Michele Borba (2006) asserts that students learn character building behaviors by "watching others do them well." For some students, the teacher may be their only model of respectful behavior. Borba draws attention to the frequent exposure of students to disrespectful dialogue such as "negativity, ridicule, and sarcasm" when watching popular television shows. Additionally, teachers cannot assume that all students are raised with respectful language in the home. Students may need guidance in order to recognize "appropriate language and destructive language." Consistently used labels to describe examples of respectful and disrespectful language help students to distinguish between the two categories. For example, respectful language could be referred to as a compliment or booster and disrespectful language could be referred to as disrespectful or a put-down. Borba reminds teachers that "it's easier to change behavior by focusing on the positive aspects instead of the negative." Classroom rules, ideally created with students, should include the need for respectful behavior and language. Lists of respectful statements displayed on posters may be of some help.

Realistically, modeling and authentic practice are the means by which students build up their positive behaviors. Some students may feel awkward when voicing respectful statements. For such students, something as simple as a smile may be sufficient as first steps toward building a repertoire of respectful responses. The behavior of some students who may

have used "disrespectful words and behaviors for years" cannot be changed overnight, and teachers need to practice patience and persistence. Individual students may be taught to reinforce their respectful behavior by keeping a private tally that records incidences of respectful and disrespectful responses. Asking students to "be more respectful" or "act nicer" is ineffective in cases where students lack the repertoire of skills needed to act respectfully. The teacher needs to teach, model, and consistently reinforce the desired positive behaviors.

Conclusion

Teachers are unable to select the composition of students enrolled in their classroom; however, they are able to shape the classroom culture by modeling and reinforcing the value of positive relationships between all students in the class. All students need to feel valued by the teacher and peers. Only then will they feel secure and develop the confidence needed to flourish academically. A culture of respect and rapport provides the platform for the successful implementation of instructional strategies by the teacher and deep engagement and risk-taking by the student. A positive classroom climate is recognized by polite and respectful language, student collaboration, fairness, and an appreciation of students as individuals.

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