

News from Psychological Services

THE IMPORTANCE OF POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS



Positive Relationships: Research and Strategies

Positive teacher-student relationships draw students into the process of learning and promote their desire to learn.

It has been long known that positive student relationships can be critical to student learning, however, new research is showing a clearer picture of how educators can build and leverage strong relationships with students.

- Research studies have found that strong teacher-student relationships were associated

in both the short and long-term with improvements on the majority of measures schools care about; improved academic engagement, attendance, grades, fewer disruptive behaviors and suspensions, and lower dropout rates.

- A 2016 study randomly assigned teachers to increase their positive interactions with students. Students of teachers who boosted their ratio to 5 positive comments and interactions for every negative one had significantly less disruptive behavior and more time on task academically.

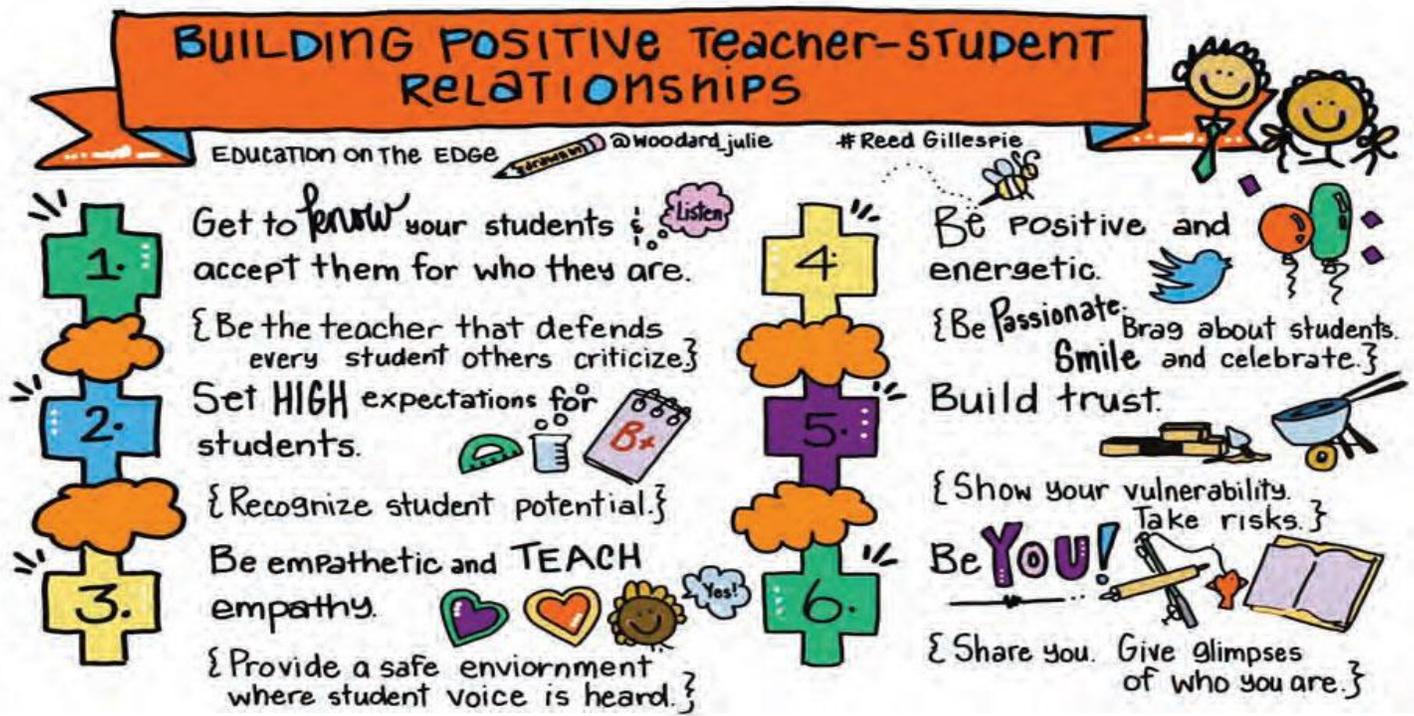
- When educators build positive relationships with students, students are provided with good social models, which can lead to them building better peer relationships.
- Resnick et al. (1997) found that students who were at-risk were more likely to be academically successful when they had a strong relationship with at least one teacher.

Check out this TED Talk with Rita Pierson about the importance of building positive relationships with children entitled "[Every Kid Needs a Champion](#)"



GOOD REMINDER FOR THIS SCHOOL YEAR:

Remember that this year does not have to go perfectly for students to feel a connection with you and your class! Simply being yourself and showing students that they matter to you will go far in fostering a relationship. For more ideas on building relationships with your students during our time of remote learning, click [here](#) and [here](#).



TIPS FOR IMPROVING AND MAINTAINING POSITIVE STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS:

- Try to find a time or place when you can have positive discussions.
- Notice and mention the positive behaviors students exhibit.
- Remind yourself that even if a challenging student appears unresponsive to your requests, he/she is hearing the messages that you are giving her/him. The student's responses may not change his/her immediate behavior but may matter in the long term.
- Greet students at the door.
- Watch for and touch base with students who show strong emotion.
- Empathize with students.
- Actively and sincerely listen to students.
- Proximity
- Use and maintain good eye contact.
- Provide frequent feedback (verbal/written)
- Increasing latency-giving students more time to provide a response.
- Communicate positive expectations for all students.
- Noting the student's previous successes to communicate expectations.
- Use students' names.
- Showing interest in students.
- Have students identify what they are feeling at the start of each day.
- 2X10 Strategy-with a student that may exhibit more challenging behaviors, commit to talking with the student about his/her interests for 2 minutes a day for 10 days in a row and then re-assess the relationship.
- Correcting Students in a Constructive Way

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How to Establish & Maintain Positive Relationships with Students During Remote Learning

Create opportunities to connect and enjoy time with one another!

- Think about the activities you typically implement this time of year and reflect on how you can accomplish them remotely. Now more than ever, the “getting to know you” activities are so important for building relationships with your students. Try out some [virtual icebreakers](#) with your class or consider having students create a short introduction video or paragraph to post on a Canvas discussion forum. As a teacher, consider filming and posting an “about me” or “what I’ve been up to at school while you’re away” video for your Canvas page.
- Allow students to have a voice in shaping your new ways of working and being together. To do this, try developing a classroom pledge with the input of all students, and post this on your class Canvas page. This pledge is also a great way to establish online etiquette during live instruction on Teams, such as how to ask for help and how to interact with teachers and peers online. Make sure to review it regularly and adapt as needed.
- Create a virtual greeting that students can use when logging on for live instruction. For example, have the class create a special wave or series of hand signals; have a student play their favorite song (approved by the teacher before class); recite a positive class mantra, etc.
- Allow students to collaborate remotely with one another when possible. One idea is to adapt partner “turn and talk” to the virtual world by setting up “virtual pals” where students call each other on the phone or send messages to discuss specific topics or prompts.
- Build in some time to have fun! [Move This World](#) has some excellent free, printable fun activities adapted for remote learning. Recommend or include some of these activities in your lesson plans, and also include some [fun, free activities students can do at home](#).

Check in frequently!

- Create a daily or weekly “check-in” survey. Find sample questions [here](#). One easy way to do this is to send a check-in survey to students via an electronic form. A sample template using Microsoft Forms can be accessed [here](#).
- Send a positive note or thought to students and/or their parents through Canvas messaging or Class Dojo.
- Start class with the [rose and thorn](#) activity, where students share one positive (rose) and one negative (thorn) for that day. Or for a quicker activity, have students put an emoji in the chat box to match their mood.
- Each day keep one student on your Teams meeting for a one-on-one conference. Use this time to check in on the student to see how they are doing and to find out more about their life and what they are interested in. Think of this as a chat that you would have on the playground or in the cafeteria during a typical school year.

Be open and honest about emotional experiences!

- Discuss the strategies and coping skills you use during stressful times. Recommend quick mindfulness or self-soothing exercises such as smelling a flower or completing four-corner breathing prior to completing a lesson. Four-corner breathing simply involves inhaling deeply and exhaling deeply four times. Find other mindfulness strategies [here](#).
- Give students opportunities to express their emotions in nonverbal ways. This may include writing a journal entry or drawing a picture about how their day is going. Teachers can complete this exercise first and share with students as a model. Make sure to review these and follow up with the appropriate staff members if drawings/writings reveal concerning and/or dangerous thoughts or actions.
- Have students complete a virtual gratitude circle. Encourage students to write one thing they appreciate about classmates. Add your own, and then message each student the positive things that were written about them.

Re-Entry Relationship Building Strategies

- ⚙ As we transition back, ensure students have at least one trusting, supportive adult relationship at school that provides a “sense of security and inclusion, enhances student resilience and coping, protects students from risk factors such as trauma, and contributes to higher engagement and achievement and positive long-term outcomes.”
- ⚙ During the first few weeks of re-entry, prioritize adult-student as well as peer relationship-building in daily schedules. Work this into the schedule as you would an academic focused lesson.
- ⚙ Implement ongoing structures such as welcoming students at the door, individual check-ins, whole group community building check-ins, etc.
- ⚙ Offer opportunities, if possible, for students to create a sense of closure from the previous school year. For example, provide time for them to reflect on the past school year with their former teachers and classmates.
- ⚙ Before jumping to disciplinary action, consider practices such as calm down rooms and the use of de-escalation strategies.
- ⚙ Utilize check-in surveys to assess where your students are emotionally. This will help build and maintain healthy relationships between you and students by ensuring that students feel safe and that they belong. Student may not outright express if they are having a hard time upon re-entry. This tool may help you assess where your students are emotionally and who may need additional support and relationship building strategies from you as the educator.
- ⚙ Develop scripts among your grade levels to read to students to ensure consistent communication from a trusted and familiar adult.
- ⚙ Consider the impact of masks on one’s ability to read the emotions and facial expressions of others.
- ⚙ Consider additional impacts on English-language learners and students with disabilities.
- ⚙ As you begin teaching and interacting with students, acknowledge that everyone has had a different and unique experience from COVID-19. Individual trajectories will vary widely. Recognize and validate that some are disappointed, some had fun, some are grieving, some are exhausted from added responsibilities at home, some are anxious/scared.
- ⚙ Expect some academic, emotional and social regression, but also capitalize on the unique learning experiences students may have had at home.
- ⚙ Utilize objects such as squeeze/stress balls to help ease the potential negative impact of an environment that requires social distancing, less social interacting, masks, and no shared manipulatives or toys to help de-stress.
- ⚙ Engage in social and emotional skill building with your students. Skills in this area may have regressed with a lack of social interaction over many months. Students who are not showing proper social skills may have regressed socially and emotionally; Be careful not to assume a lack of appropriate social and emotional skills is a display of purposeful disobedience.

10 Ways

to Build Relationships with Kids

1 Talk to them about non-school related subjects.

2 Let them teach you about their interests.

3 Remember things about their lives.

4 Share about your own life.

5 Engage in activities with them.

6 Tell hilarious (and even embarrassing) stories.

7 Share inspirational stories from your life.

8 Do crazy things.

9 Use their interests in your lessons and activities.

10 Apologize when you mess up.

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