

Research Snips on Classroom Culture and Related Dynamics
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1. Thompson (1998) says, “The most powerful weapon available to secondary teachers who want to foster a favorable learning climate is a positive relationship with our students”.
2. Demonstrating caring is one of the most powerful ways to build positive relationships with your students. When your actions and words communicate that you sincerely care for your students, they are more likely to want to perform well for you and enjoy coming to school. Caring also fosters a preventive approach to discipline, as students who feel cared for are more likely to want to please you by complying with your wishes and policies. (Kerman et al., 1980).
3. Marzano (2003) states that students will resist rules and procedures along with the consequent disciplinary actions if the foundation of a good relationship is lacking.
4. According to Zehm and Kottler (1993), students will never trust us or open themselves up to hear what we have to say unless they sense that we value and respect them.
5. Standing by the door and welcoming students as they enter the classroom is a quick and easy way to show students they are important and that you are glad to see them. This procedure also helps you start the day with personal contact with each and every student. This is a procedure Wong and Wong (1998) advocate as a way to begin the day and the school year on a positive note.
6. Canter and Canter (1997) make the statement that we all can recall classes in which we did not try very hard because we didn't like our teachers. This should remind us how important it is to have strong, positive relationships with our students.
7. Student behavioral performance is also dependent to a large degree on the expectations of significant adults in students' lives. (Kerman,

Kimball, & Martin, 1980). Numerous studies indicate that the expectations teachers have for students tend to become self-fulfilling prophecies. It is therefore critically important for educators to monitor their interactions with the goal of communicating appropriately high behavioral and academic expectations to all students, not just to high achievers.

8. Kerman and colleagues (1980) explain that the amount of time we give to students to answer questions is directly related to the level of expectation we have for them. We give more time to students when we have confidence in their ability to answer a question. Conversely, we give less time to students in whom we have little confidence. When you quickly give up on a student who is struggling with a response, it is clear to everyone in the classroom that you don't expect him or her to come up with the right answer.
9. Kerman and colleagues (1980) point out that teachers usually do more “delving and rephrasing” for students for whom they have high expectations and less for students for whom they have low expectations. It is important that we communicate to all our students that we have high expectations for their success, and one way to do this is by giving more hints and clues to all students, especially the low-performing students.
10. When you tell a student that you know he will behave appropriately at the class assembly because he was successful yesterday, you help build confidence in the student and increase his chance for success. And after a student demonstrates good behavior or academic achievement in a specific situation, telling her you knew she would be successful (Kerman et al., 1980) also instills confidence and a culture of positive expectations. Students need to know that their teachers respect them and have confidence in them.
11. The difference in students' reactions to being disciplined is often related to the manner in which you correct them. If you allow students to keep their dignity, you increase the chance that they will reflect on their behavior and choose their behaviors more wisely in

the future. The correction process will be counterproductive if students are corrected in a manner that communicates bitterness, sarcasm, low expectations, or disgust.

12. When you call on students, there are several things to keep in mind. First of all, you must monitor the equitability of response opportunities. Often, teachers who keep track discover that they call on a small number of students frequently and allow few, if any, chances for students for whom they have low expectations to answer. When you fail to recognize particular students, you can communicate a low level of confidence in their abilities. Individual students may “tune out” and believe that you don't expect they will be able to answer your questions. This message is compounded when these students see others being called on regularly.
13. There are numerous opportunities to *develop pride in all areas*, such as by publicly recognizing high-test scores, acts of kindness, positive citizenship, and athletic accomplishments. Remember that pride does not always have to involve only excellence. *Pride in improvement* is an important type of pride to nurture.
14. Listening intently and sincerely to students is a powerful way to communicate how much you care. Maintaining eye contact and paraphrasing helps students realize that you have heard them. In addition, when you empathize with students, they understand that they are recognized and valued. This does not mean that you have to agree with all their actions, but that you let them know that you recognize the emotions behind their actions. You can communicate empathy by telling students that even though it's wrong to hit someone, for instance, you understand the emotions behind an incident.
15. Students often will work hard and behave appropriately to prove that your confidence in them is justified. Every child needs to have at least one significant adult in his or her life that believes that he or she can do well. Ideally, children would hear this from their parents, but the sad truth is that is not always the case. Teachers have the unique

opportunity and privilege to communicate daily to a number of students that they believe in them. What a gift to be able to be that significant adult in even one student's life.

16. Studies show that connections to teachers, for example, can be just as protective as connections to parents in delaying the initiation of bad choices (eg; use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco) and poor school performance.
17. Emerging brain science indicates that during early adolescence social acceptance by peers may be processed by the brain similarly to other pleasurable rewards, such as receiving money or eating ice cream. This makes social acceptance highly desirable and helps explain why adolescents change their behavior to match their peers.