

COMM 415: Creating a Classroom Climate/Dr. Hest

Goal: Welcoming, Safe, Conducive to Learning

*Research tells us that students (especially middle school students) have anxiety on the first day of school about the teacher. They wonder, “Will he/she like me?” “Will they be nice to me?” “Will they notice me?” “What will this be like?”

1. Setting a tone~

- a. Developing classroom rules with student input - post and adhere to.

Try not to create rules that you can't enforce. Revise if needed.

What are some examples of realistic classroom rules?

- b. Presenting a firm, but welcoming demeanor. Smile, be kind. Kindness does not mean that you don't have rules or boundaries.

- c. Establishing a classroom routine – routines make students feel comfortable.

What are some examples of classroom routines?

- d. Make sure students know what to expect from you and the class

2. You (the teacher) as a Communicator~

- a. Teachers who have a positive outlook and enjoy teaching foster positive self-concepts in students (which results in better student behavior and higher self-esteem among teachers).

Can you think of an example of a teacher who had a positive outlook? What kinds of things did he or she do that exhibited positivity?

- b. Teacher efficacy – a teacher's belief that she can influence how well students learn.

High efficacy = more satisfaction and less stress

What do you think contributes to this belief that you can influence how well students learn?

- c. Teacher expectations of students

- a. You should enjoy teaching
- b. Realize teaching is your main responsibility
- c. Assess your students regularly
- d. Expect all students to meet minimum objectives
- e. Expect students to enjoy learning
- f. Deal with individuals (not stereotypes)
- g. Assume that students have good intentions
- h. Expect students to obey you

Do any of these seem overwhelming to you?

- d. Student expectations of the teacher
 - a. Being prepared
 - b. Being enthusiastic
 - c. Being clear
 - d. Using current and well-researched information
 - e. Give assignments regularly
 - f. Have a sense of humor
 - g. Be fair

3. Interpersonal Elements in the Classroom~

- a. Self-Disclosure – should be incremental, appropriate, reciprocal
What kinds of things should a teacher disclose?
- b. Immediacy – verbal and nonverbal communication that results in a positive impact and enhances learning (smiling, knowing names, moving around the classroom, etc).
- c. Immediacy can be influenced by culture (might be cultural differences).

4. Communication Style~

Effective teacher style is described by secondary students as friendly, attentive and relaxed. A teacher should be approachable.

5. A Teacher's Credibility~

Composed of competence, character, and caring
Credibility has a positive impact on learning. *Why? Examples?*

6. Conferences~

To make parent-teacher conferences a more comfortable climate:

- *Use name tags with their name and their student's name
 - a. Consider asking (mailing, emailing) parents ahead of time and asking them what they want to talk about.
 - b. At the beginning of the conference, preview what you plan to cover.
 - c. Parents like to know how their student is doing - both in relation to his own ability and compared to other students.
 - d. Don't wait until the end of there is bad news - tell the parents early using clear, specific examples and a non-judgmental tone. Have an action plan ready and ask for their input/help. Help parents keep perspective.
 - e. Don't use unfamiliar terms or jargon.
 - f. Allow time for the parents to ask questions - be sure to listen.

- g. Utilize a timer so that there is a clear signal when time is up (you can schedule another time if needed).

7. Overall~

Effective Teachers: Have more positive views of others, are less critical of others, have a more favorable view of a democratic classroom, have the ability to see things from another's perspective, see students who are capable of doing things for themselves once they feel respected and valued.

Source: Communication for the Classroom Teacher Simonds/Cooper

Asking Questions in the Classroom Keeping It Simple

#1. What do you think?

This question interrupts us from telling too much. There is a place for direct instruction where we give students information yet we need to always strive to balance this with plenty of opportunities for students to make sense of and apply that new information using their schemata and understanding.

#2. Why do you think that?

After students share what they think, this follow-up question pushes them to provide reasoning for their thinking.

#3. How do you know this?

When this question is asked, students can make connections to their ideas and thoughts with things they've experienced, read, and have seen.

#4. Can you tell me more?

This question can inspire students to extend their thinking and share further evidence for their ideas.

#5. What questions do you still have?

This allows students to offer up questions they have about the information, ideas or the evidence.

In addition to routinely and relentlessly asking your students questions, be sure to provide time for them to think. What's best here, three seconds, five, or seven? Depending on their age, the depth of the material, and their comfort level, this "think" time will vary. Just push yourself to stay silent and wait for those hands to go up.

Also be sure to vary your tone so it genuinely sounds like a question and not a statement. When we say something in a declarative way, it is often with one tone and flat sounding. On the other hand, there is a lilt in our voice when we are inquiring and questioning.

To help student feel more comfortable and confident with answering questions and asking ones of their own, you can use this scaffold: Ask a question, pause, and then invite students to "turn and talk" with a neighbor first before sharing out with the whole group. This allows all to have their voices heard and also gives them a chance to practice their responses before sharing in front of the whole class.

Rebecca Alber [Edutopia](#) January 22, 2014 The George Lucas Educational Foundation