

# NB

Nuts and Bolts Symposiums

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**The most deadly of all sins is the mutilation of a child's spirit.**

Erik H. Erikson

# Positive, Proactive Classroom Management

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## What Are the Best Ways to Build Relationships with Students?

(from Education Week, 2018) --Debbie Silver, Ed.D.

I've always felt that as the teacher I am rather like a hostess, and it is my job to see that all my students (my visitors) are welcomed into my classroom with genuine cordiality. Since they have little or no choice about being at school and in my classroom, students deserve at least the same hospitality and interest I would extend to guests in my home. Yes, I have house rules, but I treat people in my home with dignity and respect, whether I'm "feeling it" or not. Why should I do less by my students?

The best way to build relationships is to let them know we are interested in getting to know them and inviting them get to know us. We look at them when we speak to them, and we do the same when they are speaking to us. I've worked with students at every grade level, and here are some of my favorite methods for building positive relationships with them.

### Learn their names

Hello  
my name is

Whether they say it's a big deal to them or not, it is a big deal to me. I tell them on day one that anytime I mispronounce or misspell their names, they are to correct me immediately. I think it is respectful to know and correctly pronounce their names. I use seating charts, pictures, and notes to myself to help me quickly learn who they are. I address them by their preferred name every time I speak to them, and I require students to do the same for their peers. We play name games, have "pop quizzes," and utilize trifold name tents until we all know each other's names.

### Personal inventories

On the first day I ask each student to fill out an inventory sheet that asks them questions about what they do when they are not in class, how they feel about school, and their personal likes and dislikes. They get a chance to tell me all kinds of things I need to know about them as learners. I read over the sheets regularly to remind myself who my students are, and I frequently refer to their particular interests when I'm planning lessons or having a discussion with them.

The form is titled "Student Interest Inventory" and includes the following sections:

- Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Age: \_\_\_\_\_
- Gender: \_\_\_\_\_
- What do you like to do in your free time? \_\_\_\_\_
- What are your favorite subjects? \_\_\_\_\_
- What are your hobbies? \_\_\_\_\_
- What do you like to eat? \_\_\_\_\_
- What do you like to drink? \_\_\_\_\_
- What do you like to wear? \_\_\_\_\_
- What do you like to do in your free time? \_\_\_\_\_
- What do you like to do in your free time? \_\_\_\_\_

### Greet each student every morning



I make it a priority to say "hello" to each student as they enter my class or anytime I encounter them outside my classroom. If at all possible, I mention something positive about the student regarding anything shared by another teacher, a personal observation, or just a reference to something they've told me before. I want to make sure they get at least one smile and personal greeting during the day.

## Show up at their events



Whenever possible I try to show up for their special times. Whether it is a ballgame after school, an award celebration, a concert, or a presentation they are doing in another teacher's room, I try to drop by and let them know I think they are worth the effort to be there. Even if I don't get to speak to them at the event, I am able to mention something positive about their performance when I'm greeting them for class.

## Share your own stories

My students seem to delight in hearing stories about what I was like when I was their age. They enjoy looking at my old yearbooks and asking me question about "the olden days." I create a bulletin board about myself for them to scrutinize during the first couple of weeks at school. I include not-so-flattering school photos along with current pictures of my family and life outside school. I use self-deprecating humor to engage them as well as to model how to handle things that make us uncomfortable.



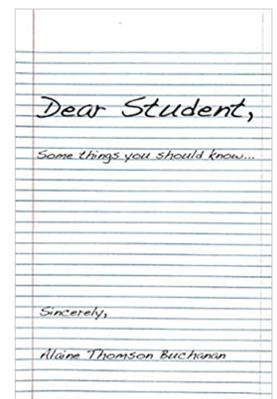
## Never give up on them



Through my words and actions, I let students know that there is no way I will give up on them. I tell them that hurtful words and inappropriate choices will have consequences, but that I am and will always remain their advocate. I had the good fortune to teach in my first school for 17 years. After the first few years word got around that once you were my student, you became "my kid "for life.

## Put it in writing

At the beginning of each year I give every student a composition notebook that will remain in the classroom until the end of the year. They decorate it however they choose. Occasionally I supplement a science lesson with a chance for students to write about their feelings. When a student seems upset, I ask them to grab their journal and "write it out." On a regular basis I read their journals and respond or write specific questions to the owner. I keep an emergency basket on my desk for students to place their journals if they have written something they need me to read immediately. I keep their notebooks secure and private until the end of the year. At the end of the term, I return their journals to them along with a personal letter I write telling them my favorite things about them, my dreams for them, and some of the things I'll never forget about them. I have had students tell me they have kept their letters for years after they left our class.



## What Can Teachers Do With Early Adolescent Behavior?

1. Remember, one of the earliest signs of the emerging early adolescent is forgetting. Why? Their minds are preoccupied with issues that are real and meaningful to them. Be creative when dealing with this trait.
2. Middle school kids are irritable! Hint: Do not argue with a middle schooler. The situation escalates, and you will lose. Know when to disengage.
3. Be willing to listen – but don't play 20 questions with every contact.
4. Avoid lecturing – keep it brief and non-threatening. Don't double team the child. Call for back-up only if you need it.
5. Deal only with the precise problem. Don't bring up other issues.
6. Keep your head. Don't let *their* moods ruin *your* day.
7. Give them appropriate power when possible. Negotiate more, listen more, command less.
8. Save your power for really important issues. Don't use power unless it is urgent. Give them a way out.
9. Work hard to help build their self-esteem.
10. Provide a safe haven for children.

## How We Act When We Don't Understand What Is Said in Class

- We cry when we are scared.
- We make a face – roll our eyes.
- We put our heads down and sleep.
- We get angry – we kick the chair; we say bad words.
- We interrupt and talk loudly.
- We cut class.
- We daydream in class, don't pay attention, think of other things.
- We ask the counselor if we can drop the class because we are afraid.
- We bite our nails.
- We listen to music.
- We feel hungry.
- We fight with other students.
- We bother the other students.
- We flirt with the other students.
- We stay home.
- We run away.

\*Cushman, Kathleen. 2003. *Fires in the Bathroom: Advice for Teachers from High School Students*. New York: The New Press.

## Taking Inventory

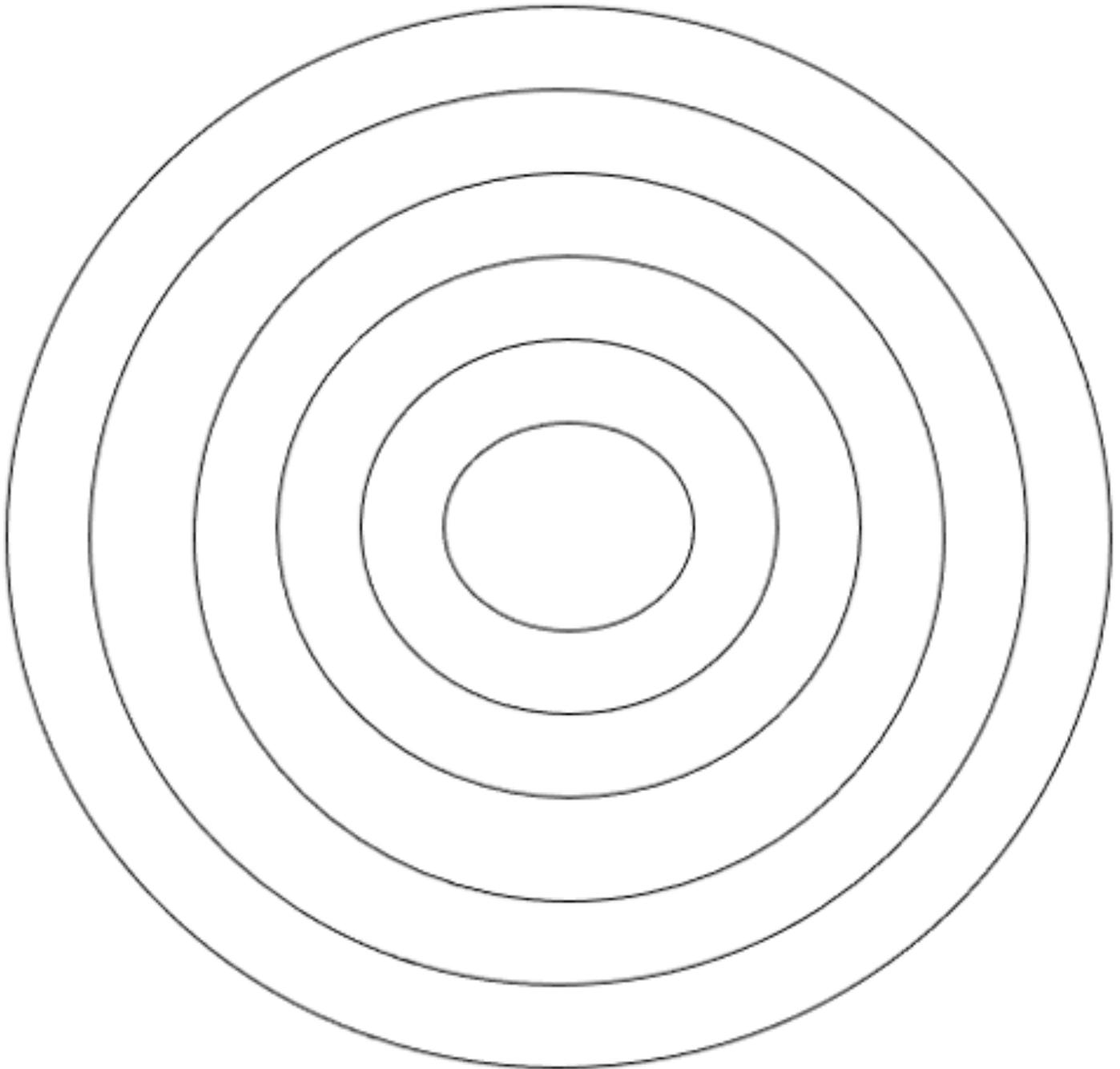
*Please answer each part of each question honestly and candidly. There are no right or wrong answers. What you write will be held in confidence.*

1. What is your full name? What do you like to be called? Why?
2. List 10 words that describe you,.
3. List the people that live in your home(s) and put 2 describing words after each name.
4. What do you think you will be like 5 years from now?
5. Of all the things you do in your free time, which ones do you like best?
6. Of all the things required of you in your life, which things do you like least?
7. Who is your best friend? Why?
8. What do you and your friends have in common?
9. At what kinds of things do you excel?
10. At school what are your favorite things to do?
11. At school what are your least favorite things to do?
12. What is your favorite book or movie? Why?
13. If you could change this school, what changes would you make?
14. If you were the teacher in this class, what five rules would you have?
15. What is your major goal (aim, ambition, dream, hope) right now?
16. Who is the person you admire the most? Why?
17. What are you most afraid of?
18. What is it about you that makes your friends like you?
19. What is something I (the teacher) need to know about you?
20. Write your own question and answer it.

*This is an exercise in rethinking or reframing perceptions about a person. Select a person who needs affirmation or a person about whom you have ambivalent or negative feelings.*

## My Favorite Things About You

Put the identified person's name in the center circle. In each surrounding circle put words or phrases that describe your favorite things about that person. The most important factors should be placed closest to the name



## STRENGTH WORD LIST

romantic	investing	serene	prudent
busy	strong-willed	organizer	confident
kind	motivated	tactful	tireless
artistic	understanding	committed	industrious
careful	disciplined	spontaneous	thoughtful
convincing	self-reliant	commanding	expressive
friendly	persistent	tolerant	settled
gentle	neat	goal-directed	persuasive
loyal	caring	progressive	affectionate
distinctive	thinker	sharp	graceful
perfectionist	clever	capable	reliable
exact	self-determined	certain	leader
tenacious	well-informed	looked up to	growing
tenacious	creative	dedicated	eager
ambitious	orderly	courageous	active
outgoing	individualistic	consistent	influential
steadfast	searching	honorable	giving
poised	appreciative	productive	original
strong	fair-minded	determined	thrifty
considerate	respected	planner	unselfish
fulfilled	flexible	efficient	self-aware
manager	likes new ideas	cooperative	self-directed
open-minded	forceful	dependable	adjusted
talented	predictable	comforting	inquiring
witty	intelligent	sociable	practical
systematic	encouraging	serious	unique
trustworthy	imaginative	adaptable	precise
foresight	pursuing	forgiving	listener
empathetic	compassionate	visionary	humorous
cheerful	motivating	artistic	athletic
energetic	disciplined	sharing	caring
daring	risk taker	courageous	patient
coordinated	loyal	fun loving	perceptive

SPIRITUAL STRENGTHS  
MENTAL STRENGTHS

PHYSICAL STRENGTHS  
EMOTIONAL STRENGTHS

## Behavior Journal Page

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class/Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I violated our class code by: \_\_\_\_\_

I chose to do this because: \_\_\_\_\_

A more appropriate choice would have been: \_\_\_\_\_

This is how I feel about what happened: \_\_\_\_\_

This is what I plan to do in the future to prevent a recurrence of my actions: \_\_\_\_\_

This is how my teacher can help me implement my plan: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

-----  
Date

*Teacher Comments:*

## Individual Behavior Plan

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class/Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Long-Range Goals for student: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Short-Term Target Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What Student Will Do to Meet Target Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What Teacher Will Do to Help Student Meet Target Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What Parent or Other Will Do to Help Student Meet Target Goal (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What will happen if student fails to meet target goal:

1st<sup>nd</sup> Time- \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> Time- \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Positive recognition student will receive for making target goal:

\_\_\_\_\_

Positive recognition will make for sustaining target goal for \_\_\_\_\_ (time period).

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date-

\_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Other Signature (optional)

Comments and Dates:

## **Tips for Writing to Students**

- Write things that are positive and specific to the individual student. (Some students will compare their messages from you to see if you say the same things to everyone.)
- Make sure everyone gets at least one note from you during the year.
- Be truthful and be sincere. You can even be funny if that's how you interact with students, but be very careful that your words cannot be misinterpreted as sarcastic or negative (humor is tricky without the facial expressions and vocal tone to indicate that you are joking).
- Make sure your positive comments have "no strings attached."
- Don't make a big deal of presenting the note. Be as private as possible (you can even leave it in a locker or mail it).
- Don't ask them if they read it; give it freely, and let it go.
- Don't ask for or expect anything in return.

## **Tips for Successful Communication With Students**

- Do not begin instruction until all students are focused and attentive.
- Be sure your voice and body language are consistent with your words.
- Use direct eye contact and simple hand gestures to redirect off-task or inappropriate behavior.
- Use close proximity and a quiet voice to make reminders and censures personal and private.
- Be warm and friendly, and be firm.
- Talk to upset students away from other students.
- Practice active listening skills.
- Write e-mails, notes, or letters to students occasionally just to tell them why you are glad that you are their teacher.



### **Things to Consider Before You React to a Disruptive Student**

- Could this be about your own need to win?
- Could you have misinterpreted the situation?
- Have you confronted the one who wasn't the primary instigator?
- Is this hostility directed towards you actually displaced aggression?
- Is the student just trying to attract attention (even if it is negative)?
- Does the student feel that s/he is not being respected or losing face?
- Is it possible that this student really *did* misunderstand?
- Is this student acting out of a feeling of powerlessness or hopelessness?
- Could this student have been joking?
- Is this student just acting in a way that is typical of his age group?

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