

Building Respectful Relationships

Overview of building respectful relationships

Teachers intentionally build and sustain respectful relationships with students in the classroom. Teachers who form respectful relationships with students are able to work collaboratively with children and manage power dynamics in ways that increase student participation, engagement, and achievement. Respectful teacher-student relationships are characterized by trust, care, and appreciation of students' cultures and communities. Teachers develop these relationships in all aspects of their teaching, including through small conversations with individual students, notes to students, nonverbal signals, and in how they respond to and acknowledge students during lessons.

Advancing justice through building respectful relationships

The quality of the relationships that students have with their teachers affects their success and flourishing. Teachers' relationships with students can help students feel valued and supported, positively shape students' academic identities, and help engage them in learning. A teacher who has strong relationships with students will be better positioned to leverage that knowledge in favor of curriculum and learning activities that are relevant to students' lives and draw on their experiences. However, because teacher-student relationships can also be harmful and oppressive, and can reproduce patterns of racism, care with developing positive relationships is foundational to everything teachers do.



Decomposition of building respectful relationships

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Building Respectful Relationships

Areas of work for building respectful relationships	Techniques for building respectful relationships
Establishing rapport	• Seek to learn about and connect with every student as a human being. • Provide opportunities for students to learn about and connect with you. • Use work on content to both convey appreciation/regard for and connect with students. • Find small moments to connect with children.
Building mutual trust	• Demonstrate trustworthiness. • Treat students as trustworthy. • Support students to engage in productive struggle with content and to persevere. • Invite and take seriously students' questions, challenges, criticisms, and disagreements without taking it personally.
Monitoring and maintaining relationships with students	• Establish routines for connecting with students on a regular basis (e.g., greeting students at the door). • Build communication systems (e.g., interactive journaling, regularly scheduled check-ins, surveys) in order to gather individual student thinking and feedback. • Develop systems to track the quality and quantity of interactions with individual students. • Recognize and actively mediate conflict. Take ownership when mistakes are made, and adapt behavior based on the needs of the relationship.



Areas of work for building respectful relationships	Techniques for building respectful relationships
Examining and managing self in relationship with students	• Attend to who one is outside of the classroom and what aspects of that can be brought into relationship-building work. • Attend to who one is in the role of teacher (i.e., professional persona) and how to deliberately use aspects of oneself in relating to students. • Seek to surface and challenge biases and assumptions that affect relationships with students. • Attend to how one expresses oneself with students.



Visual representation of building respectful relationships

