Teachers
Promoting Positive School Climate & Culture
The Impact of Teachers on Positive School Climate

Teachers play a critical role in cultivating a positive school climate because of their proximity to students.

Through a dedicated and specific focus, teachers can be the initial implementers of positive school climate strategies for students by cultivating an environment that allows students to thrive.

This tool highlights ways teachers can develop classroom climates to promote positive experiences for students, including social and academic aspects and physical features of their classroom, and shares research on working with students with diverse identities.

Topics we'll cover:

1. Teacher’s Role in Cultivating Strong Relationships
2. The Classroom Environment
3. Academic & Behavioral Aspects
4. Research on Creating an Inclusive Climate for Diverse Students
5. Possible Lesson Topics to Promote Positive School Climate

“A good education can change anyone. A good teacher can change everything.”

-Unknown
Social Aspects of School Climate

Cultivating Strong Relationships

Strong relationships between teachers and students help students feel **safe and accepted**, and aids in **cultivating resilience** that protects them from potential harm caused by adverse childhood experiences (**ACEs**) and other traumatic occurrences they may be experiencing.

Good relationships between teachers and students are essential for a student to support and improve their:

- **Academic success**
- **Positive behavior**
- **Effective Communication Skills**
- **Trust in the school community**
- **Social & Emotional Development**

Strong teacher-student relationships help students to learn that their teachers are there to help them be successful. Additionally, families are often interested in their child developing a secure relationship with their teacher because it impacts their child’s well-being and success in school.
Cultivating Strong Relationships

How can teachers start?

Greet each student as they enter the room.
- This could simply be saying, “Hello [student’s name]. I’m happy to see you today.”
- Ask the student about what they did over the weekend, if they have any fun plans in the coming weeks, or give the student a compliment.

Conduct daily check-in exercises to ask students how they are feeling.
- Rose, Thorn, Bud: Students share one good thing (rose), one challenge (thorn), and one thing they are looking forward to (bud) for the day.
- Emoji Check-in: Students choose an emoji that represents how they are feeling and share it with the class.
- Weather Report: Students share their “weather report” for the day, using a metaphor or adjective that represents their mood.

At the middle and high school levels, create an advisory system for students to work in.
- Work with a small, consistent group of students weekly or daily to build a sense of community within the school.

Have a welcoming demeanor when communicating and interacting with students.
- Create a safe & inclusive learning environment that promotes positive relationships and fosters student engagement.
- Demonstrate warmth, positivity, and respect to help create a welcoming atmosphere encouraging student success and well-being.
Creating a welcoming environment demonstrates to students that teachers care about their comfort and quality of life.

Below are a few examples for building an effective learning environment.

- **Proper number of materials for all students**
- **Up-to-date & functioning learning supplies**
- **Procedural considerations (e.g., having emergency plans in place)**
- **Lights & heating working properly**
- **Clean building & classroom**

Click here for more strategies to arrange your classroom!
Communicate Expectations for Behavior & Enforce Fair Discipline for Misbehavior

A safe and orderly environment is another key aspect of a good school climate, and rules and discipline are tools that teachers use to make that happen.

To establish this, teachers must:
(1) communicate clear behavioral expectations
(2) teach students how to meet those expectations
(3) acknowledge when students are doing so

How can teachers start?

Follow NASPs Discipline Framework.

Ensure discipline is appropriate to students’ developmental stage, ability, and proportional to their behavior.

When discipline is used, ensure it is attuned to preserving relationships and respecting students’ dignity.

Use restorative justice practices and positive behavioral interventions and supports.

Focus on the prevention of unwanted behavior. Learn more about prevention through the PRC!

Rules should be consistently enforced among all students regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and disability status.

Only remove students from class as a last resort. If they are removed, they should be placed in an alternative setting that still provides them with academic instruction.

Ask students whether they feel school rules are applied equitably and discipline is fair.
Academic Expectations

Educators should hold **high expectations** for ALL students. Balanced with the **warmth and support** needed for youth to feel valued and capable.

**How can teachers start?**

- Assist students in setting meaningful academic goals for themselves and promote a strong academic culture where success in life and career is the goal.
- Carve out space in the school schedule to give students the extra time and help they need.
- Celebrate and showcase students’ achievements!
- When a student is performing poorly, be candid but positive.
- Create support systems where students must opt-out of help rather than opt-in for extra help.
Working with students whose identities do not match the teacher’s

Supporting Trans* & Gender-Diverse Students

Be Aware of Cisnormativity Microaggressions

Research findings recommend professional development for educators that challenges and seeks to correct both structural and interpersonal cisnormativity microaggressions and articulates the need for gender expansiveness.

Try these websites to learn more about gender expansiveness:

**Gender Spectrum**: This website offers a variety of resources for educators on gender identity and expression, including lesson plans, webinars, and professional development opportunities.

**Welcoming Schools**: This program offers resources for creating LGBTQ-inclusive schools, including lesson plans and activities for teachers.

**Teaching Tolerance**: This website offers a variety of resources for teaching about gender identity and expression, including lesson plans and articles for educators.

For more info on supporting people with trans identities, check out our LGBTQ RTP Tool.
Lesson Plans to Promote Positive School Climate

Social and emotional lessons help children develop self-awareness and social skills, which are shown to reduce cases of school violence and improve academic performance.

Implement behavioral management strategies through positive lessons. Lessons should include how to resolve conflicts, school violence, and prevent bullying.

Conflict Resolution Education: This website offers a variety of strategies, solutions, and resources lesson plans, activities, and resources for managing classroom conflict.

The National School Safety Center: This organization offers a variety of resources for preventing school violence, including lesson plans and activities for teachers.

StopBullying.gov: This government website offers a wealth of resources for teachers on bullying prevention, including lesson plans, activities, and classroom resources.

Lastly, teachers can involve students in setting goals for themselves and the school. The co-developed plan should convey a clear message of what is expected of them.


