

Positive Relationship Creators

Sam Rangel

How to Nail the Teacher Interview

1. Listen

Take the time to stop what you're doing and take an interest in what they have to say. It may be trivial to you, but it's big to them. This is not as easy as it seems. Many times I often caught myself talking to a student while I was working on the computer. I was listening, but not really. It might not seem like a lot to you, but to the kids, it shows that they matter to you, that they're more important than what you are working on.

2. Notice

Notice their haircut or their new shirt or their new shoes. Let them know that you saw them when they helped another student. Notice when that student comes in with the watery eyes, and ask what's wrong. Many times I've asked a student if they are OK after noticing that they have a worried or upset look on their face. Almost all the time, their first response was that everything was fine. After asking them a second time, however, the truth came out, and it provided me a moment to help the student through a difficult time.

3. Encourage

Remind them that you think they are smart, talented, capable, even if they don't believe it. You'll be surprised how many students will come into your class with preconceived ideas about their abilities. They've been labeled as dumb or lazy by some influential adult in their lives, and now they're in your class expecting you to be like every other teacher who just tolerates them. Imagine what kind of relationship you can build with that student by being the one teacher who tells them that they are smart, creative, important.

4. Celebrate

Make a big deal about birthdays and other important events. You don't have to make the class sing or rent one of those bouncy houses, but just remembering the student's special day goes a long way to create that connection. Maybe the student got a good grade in another class. Give him/her a high five. Show him that you are happy for him/her. We celebrate with people who are important to us. Don't we?

5. Compliment

Be on the look out for any opportunity to give out compliments, especially for that student who you really need to connect with. Sometimes it's not easy to give a compliment to a student who disrupted the class yesterday or who really hasn't done anything to earn a compliment, but your kind word might be the first kind word your student has heard in a long time. It will definitely make an impact.

6. Trust

One of the greatest ways to create a positive relationship is to demonstrate trust. Do you have to run something up to the office or to another teacher's room? Send the student who you need to connect with most. They'll be a little surprised, then they'll smile when you say, "I trust you." It's risky, but it's powerful.

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7. Brag

I like to pull a student into a conversation with another teacher and tell that teacher how amazing the student is. “Hey Mrs. Smith, did you know that Johnny got a 100% on his history test?” Calling parents to share some *good* news about the student is another way to make that special connection with the student. Quick story: I promised a student that if he could go a whole week without getting in trouble and turning in all his work, that I would call his mom and say a lot of good things. As you can guess, all my previous phone calls home had been of the negative variety. After five days, I contacted the teachers and asked about the student. All the teachers said that he had been great, so I found him in the hallway after school on the fifth day, and I asked him to come to my office. He didn’t seem too excited about the idea, but he came anyway. As I reached for the phone, I said, “I’ve been looking forward to making this phone call all week.” That’s when he surprised me by saying, “I’ve been waiting for it all week too.” Mom didn’t answer, but I left the most amazing voicemail his mom had ever heard about her son ever. At that moment, I could almost see the bridge being built between the student and myself. That was cool.

8. Ask

Show interest in the student by asking them about their weekend, what they got for their birthday, what they thought of the homework, etc. Let them know that their opinion is important. I used to start every Monday with a question to each class asking them if anybody did anything amazing over the weekend. I would always have about three kids raise their hand, and I would spend the next five minutes listening to their stories.

9. Thank

When one of my more challenging students had a good day, I made it a point to pull him/her aside and thank him/her for doing well. **“Thank you for hanging in there with me today. I know the lesson was not that exciting, but I appreciate you paying attention. I’ll try and make it more interesting tomorrow.”** Try and be as specific as possible. *“Thank you for being good.”* becomes *“Thank you for not letting your friends distract you today.”*

10. Defend

There will be times when other students will want to put down that student whose connection you’re trying to strengthen. Be quick to be the hero and defend him/her.

Sally: **“Johnny will you be quiet? You’re so annoying!”**

Teacher: **“Sally, that’s not appropriate. Johnny, you’re not annoying. You’re one of my smartest students. Can you help me out by not talking while I’m teaching?”**

You want to be Johnny’s hero, because you’re probably the only one he’s had.