

## **Relationships and learning**

Relationships shape everything we do in life and are critical to effective learning and teaching in our classrooms. Our students are brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, nieces, nephews and grandchildren well before they are students; likewise, we as teachers are all of the above well before we are teachers.

Schools are about people and knowing students' names a must; our students don't care what we know until they know we care

Following are some strategies that build relationships with our students and get to know them as people. Read local newspapers and compliment them about the other things they do. Build rapport, share interests by talking in the yard at lunchtimes.

When talking with children in class show genuine interest and empathy by sitting, kneeling or crouching at same eye level. Always know and use students' first names. Use welcoming and inclusive body language and use storytelling to inspire their imaginations. Give students opportunities to make choices that empower them to create and discover connections and understandings for themselves.

Good decisions come from experience and often experience comes from poor decision making. We should strive to create an atmosphere where mistakes are seen as valuable springboards to new understandings. Adopting a developmental non judgemental approach will win their confidence in us.

Questions in class should start with curiosity, not certainty, and we should encourage dialogue that considers possible, then probable to preferred outcomes. Enable students to relate the diversity of their past experiences to discover new connections; make it fun; anything goes. Also, integrate into their thinking, connections from different subjects; multi disciplinary. Most of all, ensure that all students' ideas are encouraged and valued; no put downs, only appreciation.

Relational Learning is all about people and possessing an understanding of personal interactions, including emotional intelligence, knowing how we and how others feel and adapting appropriately. Spiritual intelligence, having a higher meaningful purpose in what we do in our lives. Interested in the well being of individual students, valuing them as people and inspiring a sense of freedom of thinking in them.

Strategies to "get to know" our students include distributing an "about me" sheet, writing a letter to them about yourself and asking each of them to write back, talking in the school yard regularly with them and coaching and running co-curricular school activities such as debating, sports/clubs and musical productions.

Every student in our classes is loved by someone, and that someone wants the very best for their child. Would we want my children/brothers/sisters to be taught by me?

Following are reflections as to what Year 10 students think makes a good teacher:

### **TOP 15 RESPONSES FOR YEAR 10**

1. Someone who will takes the time to help you if you don't understand something
2. Someone who treats us like adults and not like kids
3. Someone who treats every student the same
4. Someone who enjoys teaching
5. Encouraging
6. Organised
7. Makes the class interesting and fun
8. Knows the class individually
9. Gets to know us on a personal level
10. Someone you can talk to and have a conversation with
11. Happy
12. Enthusiastic
13. Relaxed
14. Considerate and caring
15. Someone who loves their job

“ What you are speaks so loudly, they can't hear what you say” Ralph Waldo  
Emerson