



ADVANCING EQUITY

Practice Brief:

Building Supportive Relationships

Learning Objectives

After reviewing this practice brief you will be able to:

1. Describe the foundational importance of building relationships with students and consider relationship-building with students through a cultural lens.
2. Reflect on your own style of relationship-building with students.
3. Identify three relationship-building strategies.
4. Develop a plan to integrate at least one relationship strategy into your own practice.

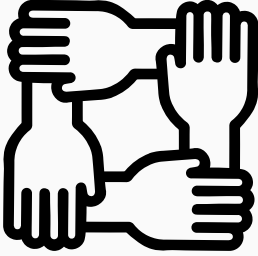
Background

- Strong student-teacher relationships built on trust, respect, and self-awareness are crucial, especially for students facing academic or social-emotional challenges.
- A supportive classroom where students feel heard fosters trust, particularly for minoritized students historically unheard in schools (Gregory et al., 2016).



Photo by CDC on Unsplash

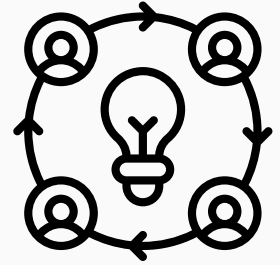
Key Strategies & Takeaways



Structured Daily Connection Time

Set aside daily time for students to connect, build community, and share interests through non-academic activities, such as through:

- Morning meetings
- Circle discussions
- Group reflections



Student Leadership Opportunities

- Empower students by offering opportunities for them to lead various classroom activities, projects, and discussions.
- Allow students to showcase their strengths, interests, and talents.
- Encourage peer collaboration and mentorship.

Collaborative Learning

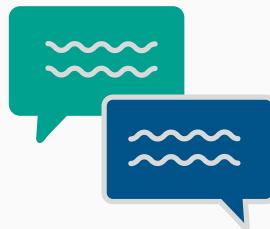
Foster collaborative learning environments where students can work together across diverse backgrounds, skill levels, etc. to exchange ideas and learn from each others' perspectives.



"My teachers are pretty open to when you don't agree with something. You could just raise your hand, give them feedback, they'll take that into consideration." - BPS Student

Restorative Conversations

Proactively address conflicts or instances of harm in teacher-student or student-student relationships through intentional two-way conversations.



Student-Driven Feedback

Actively seek and respond to student feedback about:

- Classroom routines and structures
- Curriculum content
- Instructional methods

Respectful Communication Practices

- Encourage students to use language that feels comfortable and respectful, including:
 - Pronouns
 - Cultural identifiers
 - Communication styles
- Support self-advocacy by providing options such as:
 - Adding pronouns to name tags
 - Connecting content to personal identities
 - Offering choices in assignments



"Some things that my teachers do to make sure that we feel safe and welcomed in the classrooms, they would make us work in groups with other people. So we get to know each other and we get to get to know one another instead of just talking to the same people. And they also make us do fun activities that make everybody engage and want to learn what we're doing." -

BPS Student



Tools & Resources

- Turnaround for Children has a great resource on building relationships with students, which can be found [HERE](#). Teachers might consider using the "Interactions Tracking Sheet" on pages 14-15 of this resource to more deeply consider their relationship patterns with students.
- The University of Michigan's CRLT created an [Inventory of Inclusive Teaching Strategies](#). You can use this as a self-assessment tool or just as an inspiration for inclusive teaching strategies you might want to incorporate into your practice.

Conclusion

It is important to build strong relationships between students and teachers to foster a supportive classroom community where students feel comfortable to speak and feel heard. A supportive classroom can be created by:

- Providing structured daily connection time, student leadership opportunities, collaborative learning opportunities, and time for students to give feedback.
- Engaging in restorative conversations and respectful communication practices.