

5 practices for creating a classroom climate that promotes high expectations

Teachers' expectations of their students' learning may be more important in influencing student progress than pupils' abilities. 'High expectation teachers' believe that students will learn faster and will improve their level of achievement. They also have more positive attitudes towards learners and more effective teaching practices.

However, high expectations on their own are not enough to impact on achievement. It is the combination of high expectations with particular beliefs and teaching practices that have the biggest impact on student learning.

Christine Rubie-Davies at the University of Auckland has demonstrated that when teachers adopt practices common to high expectation teachers (specifically relating to grouping and activities, class climate, and goal setting), there are gains to students' achievement.

Here are five ways to promote a positive class climate:

- **Create a warm, supportive classroom climate.** Promote peer co-operation and collaboration. Do something as a class each day to build class cohesion. Use buddies, inter-group games and circle time, and promote kindness through games and activities. Look at positive psychology resources for ways of increasing positive emotions in your class. The more positive the relationships in your classroom are, the more emotional support is available to students.
- **Show trust by giving students responsibility for their learning,** while showing interest in what they are achieving. Develop positive regard for each of your students. Research shows that students can tell when teachers' displays of warmth and emotional support are not genuine, and that students resent teachers that provide differing levels of emotional support to individual students. Interestingly, while teachers believe they are providing more emotional support to their low-achieving students, students perceive the opposite.
- **Take time to enjoy and get to know your students and their interests.** Getting to know your students at a personal level and valuing student diversity can have strong effects on class tone. Create authentic relationships with students, since the relationships students develop with their teachers are important for their academic and social progress. Teacher-student relationships have a marked effect on achievement, and influence peer relationships.
- **Incorporate student interests into activities** to ensure high levels of motivation and engagement. Students enjoy school when they are able to choose their own activities, when activities are focused on their interests and are accompanied with clear goals and clear feedback.
- **Establish routines and procedures at the beginning of the school year** and give ownership of responding to such routines to the students, so that reminders are unnecessary, and most classroom talk can focus on learning.