

- Forms of achievement.
- Building a tolerant environment.
- Performance and ability.
- The universal need to be accepted.
- A culture of recognition.
- Friendship advantages.

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Confident Students

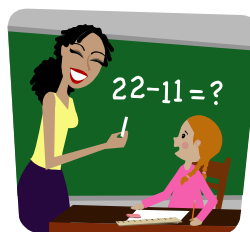
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The Magic of Reaching Students

Educators intrigue me. Have you ever noticed how each one prefers a specific age range? Whether it's elementary or high school, educators tend to know where their strength in teaching students lies. When I taught kindergarten years ago, fellow educators would often remark, "I could never teach those little ones." I would just smile but I was thinking the same about their grade level in return. Why? I believe teaching kindergarten is one of the most rewarding jobs on the planet. Students who enter school for the first time are eager to learn and willingly try new things. As milestones are achieved, the level of involvement and excitement in learning grows. Children become

like sponges – the more they soak up, the better they feel about themselves. They become confident in their skills and abilities to meet requested



Maintaining a positive mind-set is critical to continued learning.

tasks successfully.

So what happens to students? Why do middle and high school teachers often have trouble get-

ting students to become involved in their studies? Although there are many obvious social reasons, as students progress they are more likely to have experienced difficulty and disappointment in their studies. The more failed attempts a student has experienced, the less likely he is to attempt new tasks. Instead of a conquering attitude, each new challenge is viewed as another opportunity to fall short of grade level goals. Teaching students that they can be successful is a multi-layered task that often begins with the mind-set students have for themselves. "Children have to have concrete ways of seeing that they are smart or able to be successful" (USA Today, 2010).

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Confidence in the Classroom

How can educators effectively build confidence in students? How can educators encourage students to tackle new assignments with determination? Educators often ask these questions as students become reluctant to attempt new skill sets. Here are a few suggestions:

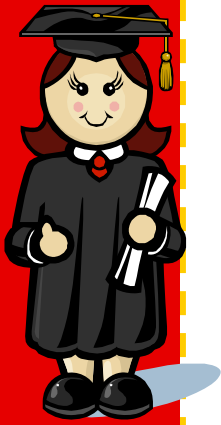
- **Independent work.** Although there are times for

groups to work as a team towards a common goal, there are times when students must demonstrate what they know. Practice and teacher facilitation prior to establishing individual expectation is encouraged.

- **Responsibility.** Students often blame others for their inadequacies. Hold students accountable for assignments

and material learned. Self-reliance is paramount when building self-confidence. **Pride.** Educators are overwhelmed with everything they must teach in a semester. Although we must push to prepare for academic assessments, it's important to stop and celebrate the successes along the way.

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Success must occur in order for students to willingly accept new challenges.

“By the end of the first day, *Chrysanthemum’s* name has gone from absolutely perfect to dreadful.”

Students learn the value of character when they discover the importance of good sportsmanship.



The Magic of Reaching Students (continued)

Working hard and being determined offers students the opportunity to fail “safely” but remain determined. Our society often equates doing well with academic achievement. Achievement comes in many forms. “Smart is a relative term, and as long as you believe it, you shall perceive and achieve it” (USA Today, 2010). It’s important for educators to remember that in order for students to attempt new

challenges, some success must be met along the way.

Benita Hackett Albert, a high school math teacher, has made college-level calculus obtainable to many who thought they couldn’t meet course requirements. “There’s no such thing as a dumb person, a stupid person or a person who is not a math person – just people who have gotten it and people who have not gotten it yet” (USA Today, 2010).

Jeffery Thompson, an elementary teacher in Washington, believes educators must know their students first before they can begin learning. “You have to get to know them if you want to see where they are weak and where they are strong and build up those strengths and self-confidence” (USA Today, 2010).

Acceptance

In Kevin Henkes book by the same name, *Chrysanthemum* thinks her name is absolutely perfect until school begins. By the end of the first day, *Chrysanthemum’s* name has gone from absolutely perfect to dreadful. Mrs. Twinkle, *Chrysanthemum’s* teacher, discovers her distinctive name has become an object of derision. Remarkably, Mrs.

Delphinium Twinkle loves *Chrysanthemum’s* name and her positive influence inspires others to appreciate one student’s beautiful unique name (Henkes, 1991).

In the elementary years, when name-calling and teasing first begins, teachers are highly influential with students. “If teachers allow teasing to continue by not

making attempts to stop this behavior, they can send a message that teasing is acceptable and the victims feel unsupported” (NASP, 2008).

When educators do not accept name-calling and teasing behavior, students frequently begin to establish their own respectful and tolerant environment.

Confidence in the Classroom (continued)

- **Emotions.** Sometimes we are disappointed and other times we are beaming with pride. Discuss the value of being a good sport in all areas of life. Mistakes can be laughable and bragging can become irritating to those around you. There’s a happy range of emotions when we meet goals, as well as a healthy range of emotions when we

feel like we’ve failed.

- **Try.** No matter how discouraged you may become, keep reaching for new challenges. Attempt new tasks and become determined to overcome areas considered to be weaknesses.

Efficiency. If you feel you are overwhelmed or need help, reach out to others. Encourage students to stay

for tutoring or to tackle extra homework to strengthen skills. Confidence in performance and ability is directly related to success and adult independence (suite101.com, 2010). The more children accomplish, the more assured they become that they can meet new challenges successfully.

Recognition



Humans are more alike than different. However, even minor “differences” are often met with disapproval. A tendency to be shy may be viewed as weakness. Popularity may be regarded with jeal-

ousy. How can we unite an array of personalities and learning styles? How can we create a classroom of harmony with fewer discipline issues?

Facilitate discussions of acceptance and understanding. Read books containing characters who overcome adversity. Ask students to work in cooperative groups. Celebrate success along the way, noting how each team member contrib-

uted to the result. Recognize, and compliment thoughtful, friendly gestures.

Our universal need is acceptance. When positive behaviors and actions are affirmed, students will begin to thrive in a climate of cooperation and mutual respect.

I Did It!

Children want you to be proud of them. More important, we want children to be proud of what they achieve.

As educators, we need to remember the positive message school work can demonstrate. Absent of letter grades or constructive comments, display children’s work in a location to be viewed by fellow

colleagues and students. Subject area projects are often enjoyable for others to view as well as written assignments that may critique a person, place or thing.

Many schools keep portfolios for individual students. Ask students to help you choose work to show parents for teacher-parent conferences. Ask them to choose pieces

they feel demonstrates their best work.

Create in Your Classroom a Culture of Recognition.

Peer Group Advantage

While peer pressure may have a negative effect, students need to also understand the “benefits of belonging to a peer group” (KidsHealth, 2009). Peers offer “friendship and acceptance, and share experiences that can build lasting bonds” (KidsHealth, 2009). A student who watches a peer succeed in sports or achieve aca-

demically is more likely to remain committed, encouraged and inspired. As students develop ideas, explore beliefs, and discuss problems, peer groups are there to listen and provide feedback (KidsHealth, 2009). Socialization allows students to build relationships while working out differences. A student’s world “will be far less rich with-

out peers to encourage or offer moral support” (KidsHealth, 2009). It’s always more rewarding to experience life with friends, even through challenges and embarrassments.



Friends are great to have!

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Daphne Morris, M.Ed., met Trevor Romain in 1992 when he visited a school as a guest speaker. Impressed by Trevor's profound and meaningful impact on students and educators, Daphne joined The Trevor Romain Company in 2006. A former elementary school principal, Daphne holds two Master's degrees in education.



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