

Instructional Strategies for a Relationship-Centered Classroom Checklist

This checklist summarizes many of the effective classroom strategies that will maximize the teaching and reinforcement of social and emotional competencies and create a relationship-centered learning community.

In setting up the physical environment in my classroom, I:

- Arrange the room to reflect a student-centered approach.
- Arrange seating so that students can see one another.
- Make sure bulletin boards and displays reflect the rich diversity of my students.
- Prepare all materials in advance of class in order to be present for students.
- Greet students as they enter my classroom, creating a welcoming environment.
- Create visual aids that are easy for everyone to read and understand.
- Present one idea at a time when using learning media.

In establishing a comfortable learning environment, I:

- Prepare lesson content and time frames in advance.
- Learn students' names and use them often.
- Face my students with an open and receptive body posture.
- Establish shared ground rules/agreements with my students.
- Enforce ground rules/agreements consistently with the help of students.
- Model SEL behaviors of respect, caring, self-control, and fair decision making.
- Use energetic and enthusiastic body language and words to convey interest.
- Use a respectful Quiet Signal to bring attention to myself during group work.
- Focus on all students' positive qualities and praise their efforts.
- Set tasks that are within students' capabilities.
- Pay attention to student reactions, need for clarification, and need for change in activity, and address the needs immediately.

In opening a lesson, I:

- Make sure students are ready to learn and have put away unrelated work.
- Write the lesson objectives on the board to focus students' attention.
- Ask open-ended questions to discover what the students already know.
- Use a variety of inquiry methods to draw out authentic student responses (e.g., silent reflection, heads together, think-pair share, signaling, sampling, journaling, etc.)
- Use "What do you think?" rather than "Why?" questions to stimulate divergent thinking.
- Invite students to participate in a non-threatening way by offering a question to the group first and then encouraging volunteers to respond.
- Use "wait time" of 7–10 seconds before calling on students to give everyone a chance to think of an authentic response.

In introducing new skills and information, I:

- Present and connect new skills and information to the students' responses.
- Give clear instructions and model tasks when appropriate.
- Respond respectfully to a wide variety of student responses to show respect and openness to divergent thinking (e.g., "Okay"; "All right"; "Thank you").
- Share personal experiences from time to time to model and encourage appropriate and authentic student disclosure.
- Offer students the right to pass to honor different learning styles.

In preparing my students to practice and apply new skills and information, I:

- State the purpose of the guided practice and the skill to be demonstrated.
- Assure students it is okay to make mistakes during the Practicing activity.
- Model guided practice before asking students to practice and apply new skills and knowledge.
- Determine some guided practice situations in advance to guarantee appropriate situations for learning the new skill.
- Always play the role with negative behavior in a role play; students always act out the appropriate behavior as skill-building practice and reinforcement.
- Give timely, supportive, and clear feedback immediately after guided practice.
- Use closure questions to help students reflect on their learning and imagine ways they will apply the new learning to their own lives.
- Assign homework that is essential to the practice and application of the new skills and information and follow up with students consistently.

In managing discipline respectfully, I:

- Encourage students to discuss solutions rather than blame others.
- Consistently enforce the ground rules/agreements.
- Handle problems quickly and discreetly, treating students with respect and fairness.
- Share my reactions to inappropriate behaviors and explain why the behaviors are unacceptable.
- Talk outside of class with students who continue to disregard the ground rules/agreements.