



TURNAROUND  
FOR CHILDREN

# Strategies to Build Relationships with Students

**OBJECTIVE:** Educators will be able to use communication and interaction strategies that support relationship building with students.

**PURPOSE:** When educators intentionally use positive language and strategies for relationship building, students have a variety of opportunities to develop trusting relationships with adults.



## SCIENCE SIGNALS

**Relationships buffer the negative impacts of chronic stress.**

Knowing how positive relationships can buffer the impact of chronic stress empowers educators to prioritize relationship building in their daily interactions.

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## Portrait of Practice

The story below highlights many of the strategies and tools found in this toolkit. As you read, notice how Ms. Taylor engages students in ways that build and maintain positive relationships.

Ms. Flynn was thrilled to be paired with Ms. Taylor for her fall student teaching rotation. Ms. Taylor had a reputation for building and maintaining positive relationships with her students. Other teachers lovingly called her “Yoda” because of her ability to stay calm when faced with even the most challenging behaviors. After a semester of “high highs” and “low lows” in her first student teaching practicum, Ms. Flynn knew she would learn a lot from Ms. Taylor.

The first thing Ms. Flynn noticed was the way Ms. Taylor talked to students. She was never overly animated or harsh. Instead, she had a steady, calm, and interested tone. Ms. Taylor revealed that it took a few months to find her “sustainable tone,” but that now she knows how to sound like her authentic self. Although there were times when she got excited with her students, or mimicked their feelings, she seemed to avoid the highs and lows that Ms. Flynn had experienced in her first teaching practicum. As a result, students knew what to expect from Ms. Taylor, and they, too, seemed calm in her presence.

The second lesson Ms. Flynn learned from her time with Ms. Taylor was that relationship building happens intentionally. When Ms. Taylor struggled to connect with a student named Javon, she didn’t label him as “difficult” and shrug her shoulders. Instead, she engaged other teachers who knew Javon and tried a number of small interventions to reach him. It took time, but after setting aside two minutes a day for four weeks to simply talk to Javon, she started noticing a change in the way Javon responded to redirection. Ms. Flynn could see the change too, and was convinced by Ms. Taylor’s belief that all children want to do well, and that sometimes we just have to shift our practice in intentional ways to help them feel that they are part of a community that cares at school.

A third lesson was that Ms. Taylor was the master of keeping students calm. After observing her for a semester, Ms. Flynn began to notice the signs of student agitation and developed a collection of strategies for keeping small problems small. First, Ms. Taylor constantly reflected on how to limit the number of potential triggers in her environment and lesson structure. Her goal was to set students up for success from the start. Second, when she did notice an early sign of student frustration, she immediately attempted to use the least invasive intervention possible to bring the student back to calm. Tapping pencils, rolled eyes, or heads on desk were not left unnoticed. Instead, they were signs that students needed “extra love” and would result in her making changes to her proximity, or verbally checking in with a student, or offering a break, or even changing the music being played during work time to help shift the mood of the room. Ms. Taylor always says, “If a kid reaches their breaking point, it’s a sign that I missed something. I’m always looking for ways to help him or her be their best self in the face of a challenge.”

Perhaps what was most impressive about Ms. Taylor was her own self-awareness. Ms. Taylor would often tell Ms. Flynn that she needed 10 minutes of quiet time before they could debrief lessons or discuss student behavior. One time, Ms. Flynn observed Ms. Taylor telling a student that she was going to take a few moments to calm down and that they could discuss the incident tomorrow when she was calmer. In these moments, Ms. Flynn learned that good teaching doesn’t mean that you never get frustrated, it means that you know how to recognize your frustration and create space to bring yourself back to calm. In doing so, you model exactly what you hope your students are able to do in their times of need.

## Science Grounding

A wealth of research suggests that warm and positive developmental relationships between students and teachers are linked to improved school performance. A positive developmental relationship is defined by four key characteristics. This type of relationship promotes lasting attachment, includes reciprocal interactions, provides opportunities for progressive complexity, and supports a shift in power from the adult to the child (Li & Julian, 2012). Not only do positive relationships positively impact student performance, they can also be biologically significant. Consistent and attuned relationships between teachers and students have the potential to develop brain architecture that enhances emotional, social, behavioral and cognitive competencies (Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron, & Osher, 2019).

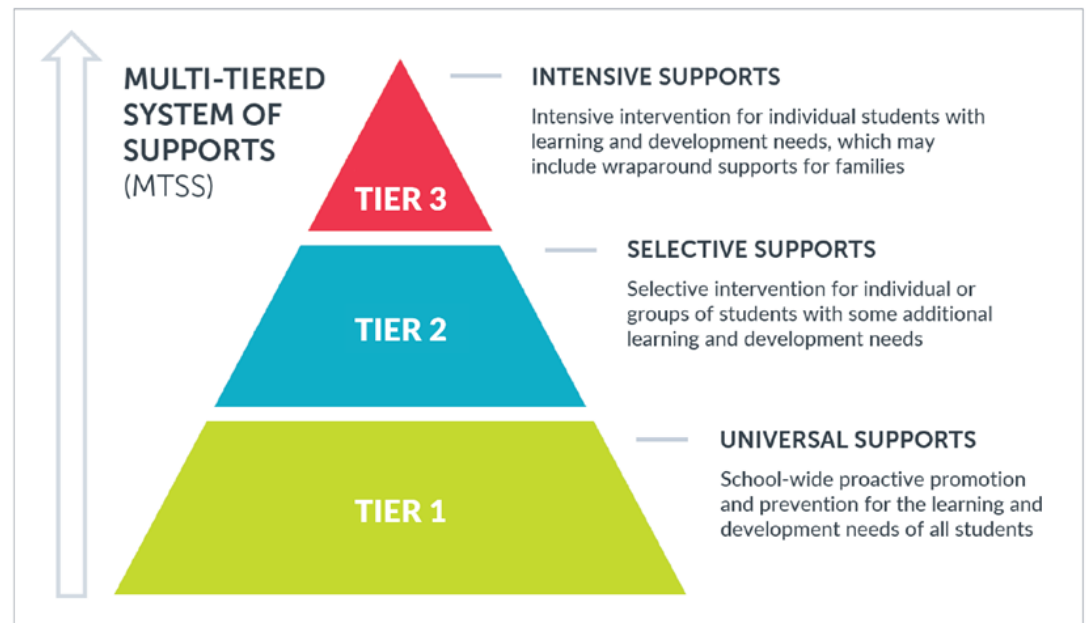
Relationships are central to the healthy development and academic performance of students because they foster trust. Trust between the teacher and the student creates conditions for reduced anxiety, as well as increased motivation. Trust also sets the foundation for learning as it facilitates open communication and an exchange of ideas between the teacher and students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Teachers can create a trust-filled environment by prioritizing structures and strategies to promote relationship development and by the way they communicate with and respond to students. When teachers engage students in a calm, positive, consistent, and warm tone, students know what to expect and build trust as their relationship with the teacher deepens. This is especially true when educators can respond to a student proactively and calmly in moments of agitation. By responding supportively in a student's time of need, educators can maintain or further develop a relationship while helping to reduce stress and return a student to a state of calm.

Relationships are especially important for students who have experienced adversity. Research finds that students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, and students with learning disabilities are more harmed by negative teacher affect and benefit more from positive relationships with teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Teachers have a powerful opportunity to provide a new mental model for relationships, care, risk taking, and learning, and they can either reinforce a student's past negative or positive experience with school or unlock a new way of being and interacting with caring adults. It is an enormous responsibility, but intentional strategies and interactions can pave the way for meaningful teacher-student relationships.

## Connections to Other Turnaround Tools

Tool Interconnectedness	Description
<b>Module 2</b> <b>Educational Practice Toolkit 2.2</b> “Culturally Responsive Interactions”	This toolkit supports educators in understanding and planning for culturally responsive interactions with all learners. These types of interactions help to create equitable classrooms that promote success and feelings of belonging in each and every child.
<b>Module 12</b> <b>Professional Learning and Educational Practice Tools</b> “Mindsets and Motivation”	Module 12 is focused on the mindsets that students need for themselves and school. Intentionally developing these mindsets promotes feelings of belonging within an academic community and also enables learners to achieve greater academic success.
<b>Module 8B</b> <b>Professional Learning and Educational Practice Tools</b> “Class Meeting/ Advisory”	This session introduces the Class Meeting/Advisory structure and engages participants in each component: Huddle, Share, Team Builder, Townhall, and Mind & Body. The components of this structure are aligned to developing a sense of belonging and relationships in the classroom.

## MTSS Connection



Creating an environment that is conducive to positive developmental relationships is the cornerstone of a robust Tier 1 system for all students. These relationships are especially beneficial to students experiencing chronic stress and are the key ingredient to intervention success.

# Context-Setting

## Skills

### Skill 1: Use Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Strategies That Support Positive Interactions

It can be easy to think that relationship building is about team-building activities, games, or completing student interest surveys. While each of these strategies can play an important role in learning about students and the development of class culture, true relationship building starts and ends simply with how we talk to students. The words we choose, how we say them, and how our actions match our words, are the most important things we can attend to when building relationships with children. Our words either will be a source of trust, comfort and affirmation, or they will create a code to decipher, a source of confusion, and an uncertainty that undermines healthy attachment.

#### The Words We Choose

There are countless verbal interactions between a teacher and their students within a day. Whether it's giving directions, introducing new content, offering praise, or asking follow-up questions to learn more, teachers are in constant communication with students. Below are qualities of thoughtful teacher word choice that supports the development of positive relationships.

Qualities of Thoughtful Teacher Word Choice	
<b>Predictable</b>	Many of the directions given during a school day are the same from day to day. Where possible, use the same language daily so that students know what to expect. One way to accomplish consistency is to use age-appropriate songs and chants to make key transitions routine and fun. By cueing students in the same way every day, educators can remove a mental barrier and help students focus on what's important.
<b>Clear and Concise</b>	With so much to communicate to so many different students, it is essential to focus on being clear and concise. Ask yourself, "What's most important?" Deliver directions and new academic content in bite-sized portions and avoid long lectures or sermons about behavior.
<b>Conveys a Sense of Possibility</b>	Everything we say to students should convey a sense of possibility. Language should be forward-looking and positive and should describe what we want our students to do rather than what they are doing wrong.

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Questions That Prompt  
Reflection  
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	Language should be used to highlight specific achievements toward broader goals.
<b>Culturally Responsive</b>	Word choice should be inclusive and sensitive to the needs and backgrounds of students. Educators should engage in continuous reflection to determine how their backgrounds impact their verbal and nonverbal communication styles, and how those styles might need to be adjusted to accommodate students from different backgrounds. Perhaps the best way to be culturally responsive is to approach each student from a place of learning. Be willing to listen, ask questions, and provide opportunities for students to speak about themselves. The <b>Questions That Prompt Reflection</b> tool (p. 13) provides examples of questions you can use to start a dialogue with students and learn more about their identity, experiences, and thinking. Good questioning also allows teachers to show interest, demonstrate belief in the child, and prompt reflection.

Now, review the example below. Notice the difference between the way Teacher A and Teacher B respond to the same student behavior. Use the reflection questions to unpack the benefits of Teacher B's approach.

**MAKING MEANING  
OF KEY CONCEPTS**

<b>Student Behavior: Denise is a quiet and dedicated student most of the day. She completes her work, participates successfully in class, and gets along with her peers. Unfortunately, when she goes to P.E., her behaviors become disruptive. She refuses to participate, talks back to the coach, and is frequently sent to the office.</b>	
<b>Teacher A's Response:</b>	<b>Teacher B's Response:</b>
Denise, you are constantly getting in trouble in gym. You are disrespectful to Coach. One of our rules is to respect others. It is not respectful to roll your eyes or refuse to comply with directions. Those behaviors are unacceptable. If you continue to act in this way, you will report to Coach during recess to make up for the time you disrupted or refused to participate.	<p><b>Teacher:</b> Denise, how are you?  <b>Denise:</b> Good.  <b>Teacher:</b> I wanted to talk because I know you're struggling in P.E. That's not like you, is everything okay?  <b>Denise:</b> It's fine, I just hate that class.  <b>Teacher:</b> Can you tell me why you hate P.E.?  <b>Denise:</b> I don't know. I feel uncomfortable. I hate kids looking at me when I move, and Coach is always making me the example.  <b>Teacher:</b> Can you tell me what you mean by the kids are looking at you? Can you give me an example?  <b>Denise:</b> I don't know. Sometimes they look. But sometimes I just don't want to be seen.  <b>Teacher:</b> Why do you think that is? Can you tell me more about how that makes you feel?  <b>Denise:</b> I don't like the way my body looks. I didn't get new gym pants this year, and my uniform is tight.  <b>Teacher:</b> Do you think that might be causing you to not participate?</p>



	<p><b>Denise:</b> Yes.</p> <p><b>Teacher:</b> I don't want you to feel that way, and I know Coach doesn't either. What could we do to help you feel more comfortable participating? What could we do to help you feel more comfortable participating?</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What did Teacher A explicitly or implicitly communicate to Denise?</li> <li>2. What was Teacher B able to either explicitly or implicitly communicate to Denise?</li> <li>3. What did Teacher B learn about Denise? How does this information change the situation?</li> <li>4. What social-emotional skills were modeled or practiced with Denise in her conversation with Teacher B?</li> <li>5. How did Teacher B demonstrate cultural responsiveness? What assumptions did she avoid?</li> </ol>	

You may have noticed that Teacher B's responses prompted a dialogue between the teacher and the student. During these conversations, it can be easy to fall into the trap of asking leading questions, such as "Are kids actually staring at you? Or are you just worried about that?" A response like this already contains an underlying presumption and analysis from the teacher. As you engage in these conversations, try to keep the questions open-ended and free of premature or leading interpretations. Some sentence stems that you may utilize include:

- How are things going? How are things going in [a particular setting]?
- What happened? Tell me in your own words.
- Can you tell me why...?
- Can you tell me what you mean by...?
- Can you tell me more about how that makes you feel?
- Can you give me an example?
- Why do you think that is?

As mentioned in the previous section about thoughtful teacher word choice, the **Questions That Prompt Reflection tool** on page 13 can also help to support a variety of conversations.

### How We Say the Words We Choose

The way teachers speak to students should model emotional consistency and should set the stage for a trust-filled and predictable environment. To do this effectively, teachers should strive to find a sustainable tone that allows them to remain consistent in their response throughout the school day and school year. Although each teacher will have their own style, below are characteristics of tone that foster the development of relationships and should be present when communicating with students.

- Calm and compassionate; shows interest, concern, and/or a desire to help
- Sincere and lacking sarcasm
- Consistent (no highs and lows)

Prompts reflection

## MAKING MEANING OF KEY CONCEPTS

Review the chart below for insight into what the characteristics of good word choice and tone might sound like in action. Next, make it your own by revising the last two non-example statements.

Characteristic	Non-Example	Example
Interested	You're late. Take your seat and get started. You'll need to work fast to catch up.	Hi Marcus, everything okay? I'm glad you're here. Let's get you caught up.
Sincere and lacking sarcasm	Wow. I can't believe you did your homework. That's a first.	I'm so happy you completed this assignment. That's real progress. Keep it up.
Culturally responsive – prompts reflection	You don't behave well in music.	How are things going in music? <i>If student response does not acknowledge a pressing issue, the teacher may follow up with:</i> I'm hearing that... I'm noticing... Is there anything that you want to say about that?
Conveys a sense of possibility	Jacob, stop talking! You keep disrupting this class, and we are tired of it.	
Consistent (no highs and lows)	You are amazing! We just walked quietly down the hall! I'm so excited! Way to go, all stars!	

### Maintaining Control of Tone in Moments of Stress

It's easy to stay calm and consistent when everything is running smoothly. It becomes infinitely harder during moments of stress and frustration. Understanding your own triggers and needs, and planning for how to regulate your emotions, will greatly increase your ability to maintain a consistent tone with students. When teachers are able to demonstrate self-awareness and take steps to bring themselves back to a calm state when interacting with students, both the teacher and the student benefit. Below are some questions to consider to support your ability to demonstrate self-awareness and regulation.

- What do I physically need to do my best work? How much sleep? What food/snacks help me feel my best? Where do I get energy during the school day?
- What happens in my body when I start to feel agitated by a student or colleague?
- When I start to feel agitated, what can I do to reset? (Deep breathing, five minutes of quiet on my prep period, calling a spouse/friend, quiet reading, a walk outside, etc.)
- When I notice I'm having a tense interaction, can I pause the conversation and resume later when I am calm? What steps can I take to reenter the conversation more positively?

### How Actions and Words Work Together

If you have ever been on the receiving end of a side eye, or a scoff, or a scrunched nose, you know that sometimes our actions speak louder than our words. What we say, how we say it,

and our nonverbal body cues work together to communicate an overall message to students that either affirms a trusting relationship or creates doubt in that relationship. Below are strategies to help ensure that your words and actions are in alignment.

**NOTE:** As you use these strategies, it is imperative to remain attuned and responsive to student cues and reactions. If there are signs that a student is feeling uncomfortable, adjust your response until you notice a change back to a more relaxed and open state.

1. **Adjust proximity and body position to reflect balance of power:** Rather than tower over students, get down to their level. This can serve to lower anxiety in the child and communicate that you're on the same level and working together.
2. **Look students in the eyes:** Show students you care by taking time to see them. Look at them when they speak and greet them by making eye contact.
3. **Be aware of your facial expressions:** Although it might be hard to not think about the flat tire waiting for you in the parking lot after school, do your best to match your facial expressions to the messages you want your students to hear and see. If you want students to feel welcomed in the morning, greet them with a smile. Even in times of frustration or stress, try to maintain a neutral facial expression to demonstrate calm.
4. **Keep an open and relaxed posture:** Exhibit warmth by turning toward students and maintaining a posture that is approachable. Avoid quick movements and demonstrate calm in your body's response.
5. **Synchronize your body language to complement student emotion:** Use your face and body to demonstrate excitement when students are excited, and care and concern when students are sad. Use your verbal and nonverbal communication skills to show students that you're with them and understand how they feel. This is especially true for children who have experienced trauma and may have difficulty focusing on the content of language, in part because they are monitoring nonverbal messages.

## Skill 2: Utilize Strategies for Relationship building in Daily Interactions

### An audit of interactions

An important way to begin our work of building relationships with students is to take an honest look at our daily interactions and the status of our relationships with our students. Through this process, it will be common to identify unevenness in our interactions; there are some students with whom positive interactions will be easy for us, and others with whom interactions veer in a more negative direction, even despite our best efforts. You may find that there are some students you interact with more regularly, and some who may be overlooked in the course of the day. Either way, the **Interactions Tracking Sheet** (p. 14) will support educators in tracking their interactions with a set of students across the day and reflecting on how to account for unevenness in interactions.

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Interactions Tracking Sheet  
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### Tier 1 Strategies for Embedding Relationship Building into Daily Instruction

Educational Practice Toolkit 3.3: "Structuring the Classroom Environment to Support Relationships" highlights how informal interactions and planned structures work together to create a relationship-rich environment. Structures such as class meeting, collaborative learning

projects, and planned informal interactions are important classwide supports and can prioritize relationship building and social-emotional skill development in the midst of a busy school day. In conjunction with these structures, teachers should seek to embed relationship-building strategies into the daily fabric of their content instruction and classroom environment. Review the strategies below to find ideas for how you can keep relationship building an evolving and ever-present part of your Tier 1 instruction.

- Sit with students during group work or student work time. Share your thinking, listen to their thinking, and work alongside them.
- Use content to develop share topics for you and the students to discuss. This will make the content personal and relevant. Take time to share elements of your life with students so that they have a sense of connection and see you as human.
- An easy, but sometimes overlooked, strategy for making sure that students are seen and valued in the classroom is to fill out a **Birthday Recording Sheet** (p. 16). Once this information is handy, teachers can find ways to acknowledge a student birthday in a way that best fits the preference of the student. It may seem like a small thing to do, but imagine the difference for a student whose birthday goes unknown and unacknowledged by peers and teachers throughout the day, versus one where this date is noted and acknowledged.
- Throughout the course of the day, teachers gather personalized information about students both formally and informally. The **Personalized Knowledge Recording Sheets** (p. 17) provide a place to record and collect these daily noticings for each student. A quick skim through these pages can signal to a teacher where they have more or less personalized knowledge about students.
- Schedule one-on-one conferences with students to address content needs and build relationships. Set goals for conferencing with each student – perhaps two 5-minute conferences per week, with the goal of seeing each student at least once a quarter. Find opportunities to share what you’ve learned during these conferences with the class. The **Box Notes for One-on-One Conferences** tool (p. 19) can be a helpful way to capture your conference with students and help you remember follow-up items for each student. These notes are a more formal way to record personalized knowledge, but can also be transferred over to the Personalized Knowledge Recording Sheets mentioned above.
- Use teacher planning meetings to discuss individual students. One strategy, known as an Index Card Roster, is to place each student’s name on an index card and complete a role call at each meeting. Identify students you want to discuss and identify key follow-up steps. This ensures no child gets overlooked.
- Another way to make sure that you continue to make personal connections with all students is to use sticky notes to leave short, personalized notes to a few students each day. Use the **Personal Connection Post-Its** tool (p. 20) to make sure that all students are included.

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**Birthday Recording Sheet**  
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**Personalized Knowledge Recording Sheets**  
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**Box Notes for One-on-One Conferences**  
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**Personal Connection Post-Its**  
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**Strategies for Building Relationships with All Students**  
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Additional strategies are also listed in the tool **Strategies for Building Relationships with All Students** (p. 22) in this toolkit. Given that educators will be collecting a wide variety of personalized knowledge about students through these strategies, it is suggested that, just as one might keep a binder with student information and artifacts about academic information, a teacher could also keep a binder that includes notes about the personalized information one is collecting about each student.

## Tier 2 Strategies for Building Relationships

But what about the hard-to-reach kids? It is not unusual for a thoughtful teacher, who is mindful of using inclusive and calm language and who has a purposefully planned classroom culture, to still struggle to connect with some students. When this happens, it’s worth taking time to reflect and determine a strategy for moving forward. Consider whether the issue

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Tier 2 Strategies for Building  
Relationships  
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warrants a whole-class or system-level change, or whether the issue is student specific and warrants a tailored intervention or strategy.

The **Tier 2 Strategies for Building Relationships** tool (p. 24) can help educators as they design interventions that support the development of relationships with individual students. In a school with a successful MTSS, these classroom-based interventions would be the first intervention attempted beyond the schoolwide or classroom-wide approach. Below are a few key characteristics of strong interventions.

- Interventions are time bound and focused on a specific goal.
- Intervention works to create/maintain positive developmental relationships.
- Intervention creates opportunities for one-on-one interaction between teacher and student.
- Intervention is manageable and can consistently be implemented by the teacher.
- Intervention is not a reward or punishment. It is a consistent support/experience offered to the student regardless of behavior.
- Intervention should respect the needs and cultural backgrounds of each student.

Although progress monitoring an “improved relationship” might be tricky to quantify, teachers should have a sense of what improvements they’re hoping to see. Perhaps the teacher and/or the student could journal to capture how their feelings have changed over the course of the intervention. If the intervention is successful, the student and teacher can determine if they want to continue or fade the support. If the intervention does not demonstrate an improved relationship, the teacher should consider a second intervention or consult his/her team to determine if a Tier 3 level support is needed.

### **A Note on Discussing Interventions with Students**

The age of the child and the goal of the intervention should determine the level with which you discuss the intervention with the child. For example, if you’re working to improve your relationship with a kindergartner, you probably wouldn’t say, “I’m going to talk to you for two minutes a day to improve our relationship.” You would most likely design and implement the intervention without them even knowing what you’re doing. On the flip side, there could be value to telling a middle schooler, “Our relationship isn’t what I want it to be, and I’d like to set time aside to improve it. How would you like to do that?” Use your knowledge of the student to help you determine how best to design, implement, and discuss the intervention.

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## Questions That Prompt Reflection

### PURPOSE

This tool is meant to support teachers as they plan reflective conversations with students. The questions can be used in a whole group setting or with individual students in a one-on-one conference.

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Think about the purpose of the conversation you want to have with students. What is your goal? What are you helping students to uncover or understand?
2. Select questions that will support them as they do the thinking.
3. Be an active listener and allow their thoughts to drive future questioning.

Questions to Support Planning	Questions to Support Reflection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is our goal?</li> <li>• What steps will we need to take to achieve our goal?</li> <li>• What might be difficult? What problems might we encounter?</li> <li>• How can we prevent or plan for those problems?</li> <li>• Who might be able to help us? Whom should we inform?</li> <li>• What strengths should we leverage to achieve our goals?</li> <li>• How will we know if we achieve our goal?</li> <li>• What signs will tell us we are off track?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did that go for us? What went well?</li> <li>• How did we do at working with our peers?</li> <li>• What was challenging? Why?</li> <li>• Did we succeed? How do we know?</li> <li>• If this didn't go how we planned, why?</li> <li>• What could we have done better?</li> <li>• How did this experience feel? What did we like or not like?</li> <li>• What help might we need in the future? Who could support us?</li> <li>• How is this the same or different for other experiences we've had?</li> </ul>
Questions to Debrief a Behavior	Questions to Support Identity Understanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you feel right now? Would it help to have a few minutes to calm down?</li> <li>• What just happened? Tell me in your words?</li> <li>• What happened before this incident? How were you feeling before the incident?</li> <li>• What changes did you notice in your body? What could you do next time when you notice these changes in your body?</li> <li>• Why do you think you responded that way?</li> <li>• How do you wish you had responded?</li> <li>• What was different about today? What was the same?</li> <li>• What damage did you do today?</li> <li>• How can you repair the damage you did?</li> <li>• What do you need to feel better? Whom could you ask for help with that?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where/when do you feel most comfortable?</li> <li>• Who makes you feel most like yourself?</li> <li>• What makes you feel most like yourself?</li> <li>• When you imagine yourself as an adult, what do you see?</li> <li>• What is happening when you are happiest?</li> <li>• Who is your family?</li> <li>• Who are important people in your community?</li> <li>• Who/what inspires you?</li> <li>• What are some of the good things in your life?</li> <li>• What are your greatest strengths?</li> <li>• What things would you like to be better at?</li> <li>• What are you proud of?</li> </ul>

# Interactions Tracking Sheet

## PURPOSE

This tool supports educators in tracking and reflecting on their interactions across their class over the course of the day.

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Fill in the student names for your class roster.
2. During a class period or over the course of a day, track your interactions with each student, using a simple key.
  - For example:
    - + = positive interaction
    - = negative interaction
    - = neutral interaction
3. Complete the reflection question and plan next steps.
4. Revisit this activity throughout the year to analyze patterns and changes in interaction types and frequency over time.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Interactions Tracking

Student Name	Interactions Tally	Quick Notes
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		
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20.		
21.		
22.		
23.		
24.		
25.		

Reflection Space	
1. Are there any students with whom you had significantly more <b>negative interactions</b> ? List them here:	Why do you think this is? What are some possible next steps?
2. Are there any students with whom you had significantly more <b>positive interactions</b> ? List them here:	Why do you think this is? What are some things that you are doing with these students that you could do with other students?
3. Are there students with whom you had <b>minimal interactions</b> (of any kind) or mainly <b>neutral interactions</b> ? List them here:	Why do you think this is? What are some possible next steps?
4. Note any other trends or noticings:	Reflection and next steps:

NOTE: This tool can be adapted for intervention purposes, such as tracking interactions with a particular student or small group of students. The tracking sheet could be revisited over progress monitoring intervals to analyze changes in interactions.

# Birthday Recording Sheet

## PURPOSE

This tool supports educators in creating interactions and a classroom community where students are individually seen and recognized.

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Review your class roster and place student birthdays on the calendar recording sheet. Write the day of the month on the line, followed by the student name.
2. Individually, connect with each student about their preference for having their birthday acknowledged.

## TIPS:

1. Think about how you might consistently acknowledge birthdays with your students. For example, you might make sure that each month, birthdays appear on the month-at-a-glance calendar in your classroom or a list of special events for the week.
2. Plan to individually acknowledge birthdays and stay attuned to the individual preferences of your students; not all students want a public or large acknowledgement. Keep in mind special circumstances that may impact student preferences – for example, a student who has been held over may not want to draw attention to their age in relation to their classmates or a student may have a negative experience associated with that date. Understand that acknowledging birthdays is often a way to create a sense of belonging, but it could also trigger a negative response in some students.

**August** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**October** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**December** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**February** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**April** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**June** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**September** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**November** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**January** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**March** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**May** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**July** \_\_\_\_\_  
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# Personalized Knowledge Recording Sheets

## PURPOSE

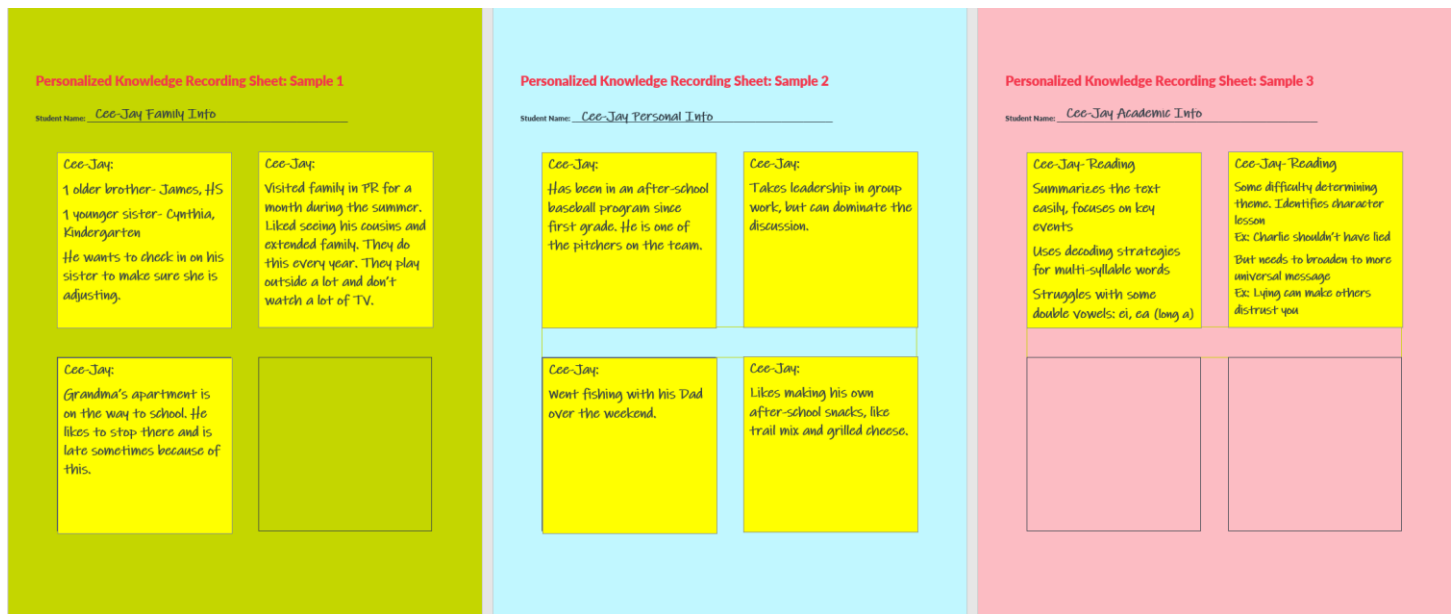
This tool supports educators in collecting an array of personalized knowledge about students that can be used to build relationships and personalize interactions and instruction.

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Print a Personalized Knowledge Recording Sheet for each student in your class.
2. Keep a few sticky notes with your daily lesson plans or on your clipboard.
3. Formally or informally collect notes on personalized student information that is revealed throughout the day. At the end of the day, transfer the sticky notes to each student's page.

## TIPS:

- It is suggested to keep these in a binder with a tab for each student, so that it can be easily referenced and added to throughout the school year.
- Recording notes on sticky notes allows you to reorganize personalized information as it is collected. For instance, you might develop a page with information that you have learned about a student's family. Another page might be about a student's interests outside of school. You might even choose to include a few pages with notes specifically about academics.
- As you flip through the student pages in your class, you will be able to identify which students you have collected more or less information about. You can then proactively initiate interactions and authentic conversations with those students.
- You may choose to print the recording sheets on different-colored paper to denote different areas of personalized knowledge, such as Family (green), Personal (blue), and Academic (pink) notes. See the following example for how this could look as a section for each student in a binder.



**Personalized Knowledge Recording Sheet: Sample 1**  
Student Name: Cee-Jay Family Info

**Sample 1 - Family Info (Green background):**

- Cee-Jay:** 1 older brother- James, HS 1 younger sister- Cynthia, Kindergarten. He wants to check in on his sister to make sure she is adjusting.
- Cee-Jay:** Visited family in PR for a month during the summer. Liked seeing his cousins and extended family. They do this every year. They play outside a lot and don't watch a lot of TV.
- Cee-Jay:** Grandma's apartment is on the way to school. He likes to stop there and is late sometimes because of this.

**Personalized Knowledge Recording Sheet: Sample 2**  
Student Name: Cee-Jay Personal Info

**Sample 2 - Personal Info (Blue background):**

- Cee-Jay:** Has been in an after-school baseball program since first grade. He is one of the pitchers on the team.
- Cee-Jay:** Takes leadership in group work, but can dominate the discussion.
- Cee-Jay:** Went fishing with his Dad over the weekend.
- Cee-Jay:** Likes making his own after-school snacks, like trail mix and grilled cheese.

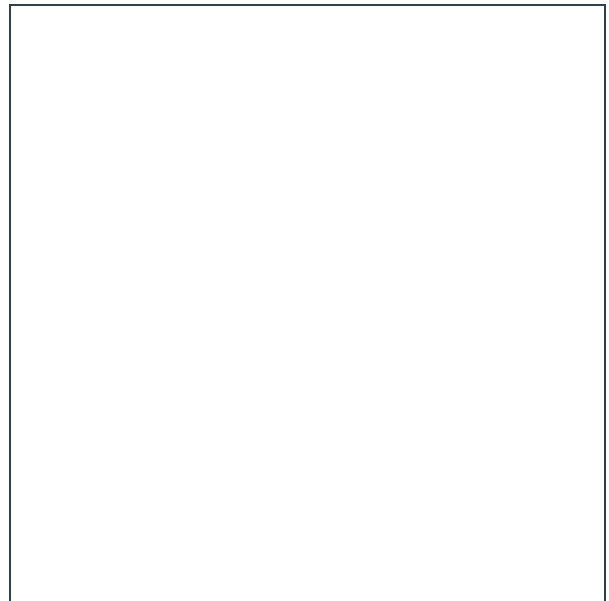
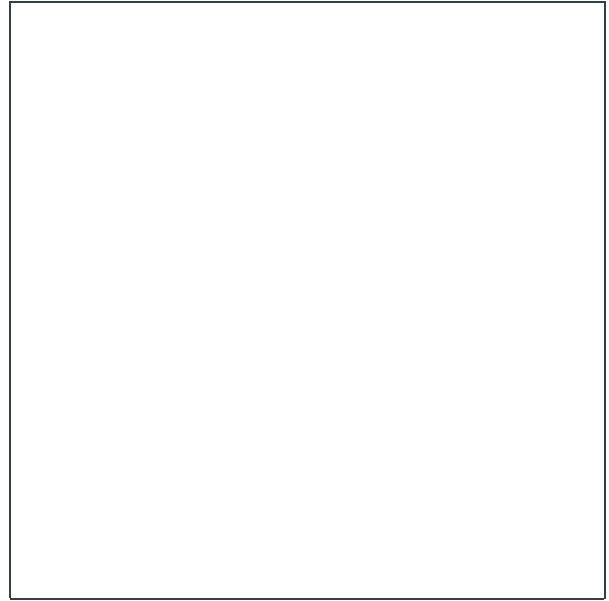
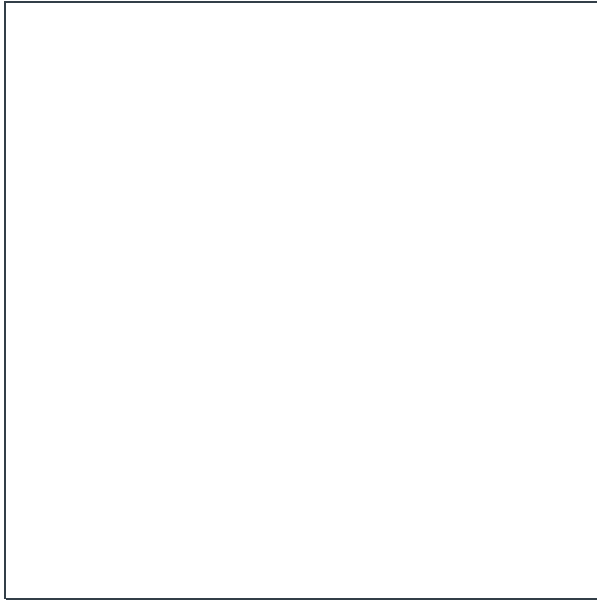
**Personalized Knowledge Recording Sheet: Sample 3**  
Student Name: Cee-Jay Academic Info

**Sample 3 - Academic Info (Pink background):**

- Cee-Jay-Reading:** Summarizes the text easily, focuses on key events. Uses decoding strategies for multi-syllable words. Struggles with some double vowels: ei, ea (long a).
- Cee-Jay-Reading:** Some difficulty determining theme. Identifies character lesson. Ex: Charlie shouldn't have lied. But needs to broaden to more universal message. Ex: Lying can make others distrust you.

# Personalized Knowledge Recording Sheet

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## Box Notes for One-On-One Conferences

### PURPOSE

This tool can be used to capture information that students share during one-on-one conferences.

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Keep this note-taker on a clipboard and use it to capture information about students. Notes can include information shared by students, gaps in academic content, and/or questions or needs that need follow up.
2. Use these notes to guide future conversations, conversations with other teachers, and/or to plan follow-up actions.

<b>Student Name:</b> John Doe	<b>Student Name:</b>
<i>Date of Conference:</i> 11.14.19	<i>Date of Conference:</i>
<i>Needs help with letter sounds - C, CH, P, PL</i>	
<i>Loves football - favorite team is The Bears</i>	
<i>Brother in 6<sup>th</sup> grade named David</i>	
<i>Follow up - Talk to 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. Use football example in math.</i>	
<i>Use C, CH, P, PL flashcards in guided reading.</i>	
<b>Student Name:</b>	<b>Student Name:</b>
<i>Date of Conference:</i>	<i>Date of Conference:</i>
<b>Student Name:</b>	<b>Student Name:</b>
<i>Date of Conference:</i>	<i>Date of Conference:</i>
<b>Student Name:</b>	<b>Student Name:</b>
<i>Date of Conference:</i>	<i>Date of Conference:</i>

## Personal Connection Post-Its

### PURPOSE

This tool supports educators in making personal connections with all students.

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Print enough copies of the template so that there is a box for each student in your class. Write a student's name in each box.
2. Place a sticky note on each box.
3. Over the course of a few weeks, use the sticky notes to leave a personal note for each student in your class. You may identify 2-3 students per day and leave a note of encouragement, gratitude, humor, or a conversation starter.
4. Use all of the sticky notes until every student has received a personal note, then start again!

**Name:**

**Place blank sticky note  
HERE**

**Name:**

**Place blank sticky note  
HERE**

**Name:**

**Place blank sticky note  
HERE**

**Name:**

**Place blank sticky note  
HERE**

**Name:**

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**Name:**

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HERE**

**Name:**

**Place blank sticky note  
HERE**

**Name:**

**Place blank sticky note  
HERE**

## Strategies for Building Relationships with All Students

### PURPOSE

This tool is meant to support teachers as they brainstorm relationship-building strategies for the whole class.

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Use the activities below as a starting point for building relationships in your classroom.

Community Walk	Student Survey
<p>Take the class out for a walk in the community (with proper permission, of course!). Allow students to point out important places in their lives or parts of the community that are part of their daily routines.</p> <p>In areas where the community is spread out by great distances that could be challenging to walk, the class could also compile a list of important places and explore or mark them on an online map.</p> <p>Use the following prompts to help spark discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some places that you pass by on your way to school?</li> <li>• Where are some places that you go on the weekend?</li> <li>• Where do you buy groceries? Where do you go out to eat?</li> <li>• Where do you play?</li> <li>• What businesses or stores do you go to?</li> <li>• Where is the library, the fire station, the post office, etc.?</li> </ul> <p>NOTE: Some local areas may have negative connotations for students. You may also experience students who might not want to leave the school for a neighborhood walk because the school is a safe place for them. It is important for teachers to be prepared to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Demonstrate attunement and responsiveness to these student feelings and behaviors.</li> <li>○ Be prepared for the possibility of agitated or escalated student behaviors.</li> <li>○ Clearly communicate the expectations for participation and the plan for how the teacher will ensure the safety of all children.</li> <li>○ Offer students the opportunity to “pass” on participating in the Community Walk, but contribute to the class’s collective knowledge about the community in an alternate way.</li> </ul>	<p>A student survey is a great way to get to know students, especially early in the school year or semester. Some questions you may want to include are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your full name? What is your nickname? What do you prefer to be called?</li> <li>• What is your favorite and least favorite part about school?</li> <li>• What are your strengths? What are you an expert in?</li> <li>• What was your favorite memory from last year?</li> <li>• Who is in your family?</li> <li>• Do you have any pets?</li> <li>• What is your favorite thing to do outside of school? What do you like to do with your friends? What do you like to do by yourself?</li> <li>• How do you learn best?</li> <li>• What are three words that describe you?</li> <li>• What are three qualities of a good teacher?</li> <li>• What can I help you with this year?</li> <li>• What do you want to be when you grow up?</li> </ul> <p>NOTES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If you choose to keep a binder of personalized knowledge of students, as this toolkit suggests, a copy of this survey would be a great artifact to keep for each student.</li> <li>2. These questions could also be used as conversation starters in informal, individual conversations.</li> </ol>



Journaling or Conversation Notebooks	Map of My Heart
<p>Teachers use journaling in the classroom in a variety of ways that can support relationship building. Here are some ideas to spark your thinking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students may write daily in an individual journal, either freely or in response to a prompt. The teacher may select a few each day to respond to with a comment, question, or sharing of their own personal story or opinion.</li> <li>• The class may have a shared journal that each student can rotate taking home each weekend to add an entry. The next student to take home the journal can read the previous entries and add their own. The teacher should be included in this rotation!</li> <li>• Students may keep special “conversation notebooks” (or one per class) in which they jot questions or topics of choice that the teacher will directly respond to. Think of it like an “Ask Me Anything” session that is common on social media. Students can skim through previous questions and responses and add their own.</li> </ul>	<p>In this activity, students draw (or are given a template of) a large heart. Students fill in, with pictures and/or words, the people, places, things, and activities that are near to their heart. The teacher should also create and share their own map!</p> <p>Some prompts for this activity might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What makes me happy?</li> <li>• What are some of my favorite things to do?</li> <li>• Who are the important people in my life?</li> <li>• What are some of my favorite memories?</li> <li>• What things or objects are important to me?</li> </ul> <p>NOTE: If you choose to keep a binder of personalized knowledge of students, as this toolkit suggests, a copy of this project would be a great artifact to keep for each student.</p>
Timeline of My Life	Class Roster Redux
<p>Have students create a timeline of important events in their life. Students may choose to structure it by year, age, or grade. You may want to have students choose to include pictures, words, or small anecdotes. Make sure to model your own as you launch this activity with the class!</p> <p>NOTE: Tell students that they should only record events that they feel comfortable sharing. If there is something significant that they do not want to share, they should not feel pressured to include it. However, offer yourself for private conversations, if a student wants to talk and be aware of available supports for both students and teachers in the school.</p>	<p>Instead of calling roll at the beginning of the school year or semester, let students introduce themselves to the class. Have students say their full name, as well as preferred names or nicknames that they typically use. Have each student teach the class helpful tips for pronunciation (which teachers should take note of on the class roster!).</p>
Create Your Own:	Create Your Own:

## Tier 2 Strategies for Building Relationships

### PURPOSE

This tool is meant to support teachers as they brainstorm relationship-building strategies for individual students. These strategies could be considered Tier 2 interventions and should build upon the classwide or Tier 2 supports.

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Implement Tier 1 behavior supports and relationship-building structures with fidelity.
2. Use observations, teacher-student surveys, and reflections to identify students who might need additional support.
3. Select and modify an intervention. Identify goals, time frame, and implementation details.
4. Progress monitor to determine if supports should be faded or increased.

<b>2 x 10 Intervention</b>	<b>Banking Time</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a student who needs extra socioemotional support.</li> <li>• Spend 2 minutes per day with the student, for 10 consecutive school days.</li> <li>• Talk with the student about anything they want to talk about.</li> <li>• Focus on listening and the conversation, as opposed to the time or other things happening around you.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with an individual student for 10–15 minutes, 2-3 times a week.</li> <li>• The point of the session is to focus on the positive.</li> <li>• Follow the student's lead and do not attempt to teach. Listen to the student, narrate what the student is doing, and validate emotions.</li> <li>• The time is not a punishment or a reward and should be helpful, regardless of behavior.</li> </ul>
<b>The Talk Ticket</b>	<b>The Secret Code</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a student who is able to self-regulate but may be shy or may struggle to communicate needs.</li> <li>• Provide the student with 1-3 tickets per day/week.</li> <li>• Tell the student to give you a ticket anytime they need to talk about something. Schedule a time to talk within the day of receiving the ticket.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a student who struggles to self-regulate in front of peers.</li> <li>• With the student, identify a secret code that can be used to communicate that the student wants a break or needs to talk to you. Or, it can be used to communicate that the teacher wants to talk with the student later.</li> <li>• Practice the code and celebrate when it is used correctly.</li> </ul>
<b>The Daily Compliment</b>	<b>The Helper</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a student who may lack confidence.</li> <li>• Commit to giving the student one compliment a day for a month.</li> <li>• The compliment should be specific, different every day, and can be given in public or private.</li> </ul> <p>Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a student is struggling to build a relationship with another student, ask them to write down a daily compliment about that student for one week. Review the compliments and support the student as they share the compliments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a student who may lack confidence.</li> <li>• Assign them an opportunity to help you or another student with a specific task. The goal is to give them a purpose and create an opportunity to work together.</li> <li>• Compliment their work and highlight their contribution to the class.</li> </ul>

# Summary of Understandings

## **Skill 1: Use Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Strategies That Support Positive Interactions**

- The way we talk to students is our primary relationship-building tool. Communication between teacher and student will either build trust and connection or destroy it.
- Teachers should strive for a consistent tone that is calm, interested, sincere, culturally sensitive, and positive.

## **Skill 2: Utilize Strategies for Relationship Building in Daily Interactions**

- Classrooms should prioritize relationships by using dedicated structures for relationship building and by embedding relationship building into the content.
- If a teacher is struggling to build a relationship with a specific student, they should attempt a Tier 2 intervention and add and fade supports as needed.

## References

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