










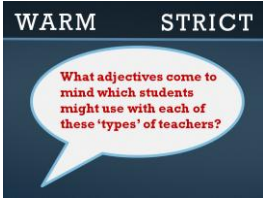

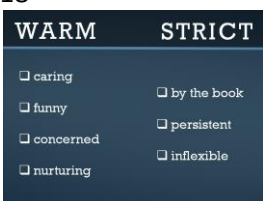



Building Character and Trust



Objective: The following leader notes and corresponding PowerPoint are provided by the Curriculum and Instruction Department to school leaders as a support in training faculty members on timely and important subjects. Please feel free to use as is, or revise to best fit the needs of your faculty/staff.

<p>1</p> 	<p>Teachers have opportunities every day to make their classrooms places of safety and security for their students. Or maybe we should say teachers have the <i>challenge</i> every day to do this. Each and every one of the literally hundreds of interactions teachers have with students contributes to the overall perception students have of the climate in that teacher’s room. Curriculum, of course, is essential for learning. There’s no doubt about that. But, students learn best in classrooms where they feel comfortable and safe.</p>
<p>2</p> 	<p>When we talk about climate, we’re really talking about the ability teachers have to develop trust in the classroom. That trust goes two ways but, it’s a fact, teachers need students to trust them, whether or not they are able to trust their students. That is, it is far more important for the teacher to be more dependable, more constant, more stable, more predictable (the list could go on and on) than the students. And, ultimately, it is the teacher’s responsibility to create an atmosphere of safety, security, and trust in the classroom. But how to do it? We’re going to talk about a few strategies that can help . . .</p>
<p>3</p> 	<p>First, let’s talk about the power of positive framing.</p> <p>Research shows that people are much more motivated by the vision of a positive outcome than by the fear of a negative one. Positive framing offers teachers a way to intervene, discipline, and correct behavior in a positive and constructive way, rather than a critical and punitive one. Let’s look at five fairly simple ideas that can help us develop and then benefit from positive framing in our classrooms.</p>
<p>4</p> 	<p>Living in the now means focusing on what is actually underway in a classroom. It may be tempting to discuss with students things – negative things, problems, mistakes, errors – from the past that they cannot fix. But that’s very unproductive. Students need a pathway OUT of error, not reminders of it. When working with a class that is struggling to behave like you want, give instructions that describe their way OUT of the problem rather than describing what has been going wrong.</p> <p>For example, consider the difference between the following teacher reactions to a class in which students are off task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher 1 – “Everybody stop talking to your neighbors. We are not here to learn about anything I’m sure you may be chatting about.” • Teacher 2 – “Class, I need you to refocus on our concept right now. Remember there are three important things you need to remember. . . (reference the concept being studied). <p>Notice the difference?</p>

<p>5</p> 	<p>Next, you should assume the best. There are consequences when students don't follow directions or misbehave, but we shouldn't jump to the conclusion that students are ill-intentioned. It may be that they are simply distracted. They are, after all, just kids. When you have to tell students what they've done wrong (or simply not done at all) frame it positively. "We didn't do that correctly, class. Remember how I've asked you to do it. Now, let's try it again so we don't have to lose part of our free time."</p> <p>Importantly, when we assume the worst in students, we appear weak. Students will begin to believe that we assume they are going to constantly misbehave because simply because we are constantly referring to it. This makes us appear to lack control and we may even acknowledge and communicate that lack of control in the language we use.</p> <p>Instead, thanking students (in advance) for their cooperation when we give instructions is an easy way to make it clear that we expect that we will be met with complete compliance. It reassures students that the teacher is in charge and has faith in them.</p>
<p>6</p> 	<p>You can get compliance, even without identifying specific students. In fact, it's often effective to publicly correct student behavior while still allowing a little anonymity. For example, saying "Some people have still not opened their books yet" assumes you know they all <i>intend</i> to and <i>will</i> but just haven't yet. You can maintain a good relationship with those students who haven't (but will) and allow them to save face. Without naming names, no student has to assume the defensive.* Naturally, when there is no good-faith effort by students, it may not be possible to maintain that initial anonymity, but naming names shouldn't be your first move. Try for 110% compliance first.</p> <p>*Not all students will become defensive, but some will interpret being named publicly as a challenge they have to meet.</p>
<p>7</p> 	<p>Narrating the positive is another effective strategy for building and maintaining trust. This is done by letting the entire class know when things are going well. "Okay, now. I see the pencils moving. Some of you have already got the ideas flowing," you might say after giving an assignment. If, on the other hand, you say, "Not everyone has started – let's get going people!" you can create a negative climate. And, again, it may make the teacher appear weak and out of control. Narrating the positive normalizes positive behavior.</p> <p>Most importantly, we've all heard that perception can turn out to be reality. A class that hears (from the teacher) about what is going well, is much more likely to do well than one in which those who are not performing become the focus.</p>
<p>8</p> 	<p>Present a challenge . . . There's no doubt that kids love a challenge. How can we take advantage of this as teachers? We just need to remember that most students get motivated when competing; whether it is against other groups in the class, other classes, the clock, or a particular standard identified by the teacher. Offering a chance for a little friendly competition of some kind – and in the spirit of fun and learning – can liven up a classroom and motivate students.</p>
<p>9</p> 	<p>Let's take a second and review these five principles which help create "positive framing." Turn to your neighbor, or neighbors, and talk for a minute. Each of you can identify one of the five areas in which you think you're doing a pretty good job and another in which you could improve. What can you do RIGHT NOW in that improvement area to create a more positive frame in your classroom?</p>

<p>10</p> 	<p>The Big Mo. That’s what “positive framing” is really all about . . . building positive momentum in the classroom. By following the five steps we’ve talked about – living in the now and offering students a way forward rather than harping on the past, assuming the best about students, allowing for some anonymity rather than public “accusations and blaming”, narrating what is going well in class, and presenting a challenge – we create the positive momentum that effective classrooms enjoy.</p> <p>Everyone wants “Big mo,” but it takes patience, concentration, and work on the part of the teacher to achieve it.</p>
<p>11</p> 	<p>Really effective teachers make a distinction between acknowledgement and praise. That is, the difference between students who are doing what is expected (which merits positive acknowledgement) and students who exceed the quality standard set by the teacher (which merits praise). Too often, teachers are tempted to praise students for doing things that are simple, basic expectations. You know, things like bringing their book to class, or coming on time. When students are praised for these things, it reinforces in their minds that the teacher didn’t really expect it, and is surprised to see it . . . and it sends a message to students that have always done it, that their compliance wasn’t really appreciated. That is not the message we want to send. When students meet basic behavioral standards, we can thank them, notice them, acknowledge them, but not praise them. Save that for what’s truly exceptional.</p>
<p>12</p> 	<p>This is a new way of thinking about things for many of us. It’s best explained by the author in “Teach Like a Champion.” I’m handing out a one-page reading in which he explains it. It will only take a minute or two to read, and I’d like each of us to do that. As you read, think about what he’s saying and mark any sentences, phrases, or words which seem particularly meaningful. In a minute, we’d like to hear from a couple of you about your thoughts.</p> <p>[Allow time to read and then conduct a brief “share-out” from those willing to share.]</p>
<p>13</p> 	<p>Another important habit to develop is that of making praise public, and keeping correction as private as possible. We’ve already touched on both these things, so let’s think about it in a slightly different way as part of “positive praise.” Research shows that praising the BEHAVIORS of students is much more effective at motivating and encouraging them than praising them for, say, being smart, or creative, or . . . you get the idea. Praising hard work encourages students to work hard. Praising someone for being “smart” may actually have a negative effect; it may move a student towards apathy and laziness – especially if they do not think they ARE smart.</p> <p>As part of precise praise, focus on giving public attention to SPECIFIC BEHAVIORS and keeping corrections as quiet, private, and minimal as is possible. NOTE: This also helps you achieve “Big Mo.”</p>
<p>14</p> 	<p>Let’s say a word or two about when students make mistakes with academic material. Obviously we acknowledge students for having learned something, but what about when they haven’t? The basic rule is this: For WRONG answers – don’t chasten (of course) but also don’t excuse. Someone has misunderstood so the next move is to fix that. And the corollary rule: For a CORRECT answer – don’t flatter or fuss. The focus is on learning what hasn’t been learned. This is, in fact, quite normal! First you get it wrong, then you get it right. That needs to be okay in our classrooms.</p>
<p>15</p> 	<p>Most of us probably have struggled with whether or not we’d like to be the “warm” teacher – friendly and supportive, or the “strict” teacher – with high standards and fussy procedures. Students might not use these exact words, but they do talk about teachers as being “nice” or “mean” – and sometimes this is what it comes down to.</p>

<p>16</p> 	<p>Take about 60 seconds, turn to your neighbor, and jot down a few words that you think might describe a “warm” teacher and a “strict” teacher. Go ahead and think like a student. What would they say?</p> <p>[Allow a minute for responses from participants.]</p>
<p>17</p> 	<p>You may have thought of some of these words to describe a teacher who has particular warmth. What others did you write down?</p> <p>[Allow for brief sharing.]</p>
<p>18</p> 	<p>These are some terms students might use to describe a teacher they think of as being strict. Did you think of others?</p> <p>[Allow for brief sharing.]</p>
<p>19</p> 	<p>The fact is, effective teachers are both warm AND strict. And the surprising thing is, the better they are it, the harder it is for students to differentiate between what might seem like opposites. Because, you see, they’re not.</p> <p>Effective teachers are strict: They enforce standards, give consequences, and set and follow rules and procedures. BUT . . . they do it in a way that is positive and supporting.</p> <p>These teachers distinguish between behavior and people. They explain clearly why certain behaviors are not okay – because they hamper learning – but also make it clear they care about student success. They administer consequences and offer students a way forward, and out of, the negative. And they do it as quickly as possible.</p>
<p>20</p> 	<p>Let’s end by talking a little about the emotional role of good teachers. It’s important. Teachers have a huge emotional role in a classroom and it should be one that fosters safety and security for all students. But teachers have emotions, what are they supposed to do with them?</p> <p>The answer is that they modulate them. They remain even-tempered and calm. Students need to be able to know that their teacher will not explode, no matter what. That creates safety. Teachers do not allow their current mood, problems outside the classroom, or even the emotional state of their students, to create swings in their own emotions. Whether we realize it or not, many students rely on the teacher for emotional stability. And if learning is going to take place, emotional stability in the classroom is absolutely required.</p>
<p>21</p> 	<p>To return to our initial discussion – the importance of trust in the classroom, let’s think about some of the big ideas we’ve talked about. There really aren’t that many, although it may seem like it.</p>

<p>22</p> 	<p>Positive framing refers to the ways we help students stay positive. We narrate what’s working, focus on the way out of past problems, and assume the best about students.</p> <p>Precise praise helps us see the difference between acknowledgement and praise and reminds of the importance of private correction.</p> <p>And finally, we talked about how important it is to be both warm and strict. Surely this isn’t easy, but that doesn’t mean it isn’t necessary. It is. In fact, all three are, if an effective teacher wants to create a classroom of character and trust, that is, a place where learning is easier.</p>
<p>23</p> 	<p>References:</p> <p>Lemov, Doug. <i>Teach Like a Champion</i> (Chapter 7). Jossey-Bass, 2010.</p> <p>Whitaker, Todd. <i>What Great Teachers Do Differently</i> (Chapter 4). Eye on Education, Inc., 2004.</p>

