

My educational philosophy is that students will be more willing to learn if we get to know them on a personal level. Many students long for the attention of someone who cares. They may not get attention at home or they may be overlooked in other classes. A little bit of attention and concern goes a long way.

We all need to hold our expectations of students' achievement high. I believe if we expect little from them they will produce little. If we expect much from them, I believe they will impress us. Students need encouragement and they also need to be pushed to meet their potential. Below is listed how I plan to accomplish my goals.

Plan for how I intend to ensure my classroom has a warm, inviting, and academically challenging climate.

Plan items

- *Develop relationships.*
- *Go over classroom rules and expectations the first day. Be consistent with rules, discipline, rewards, etc.*
- *Get parents involved early.*
- *Let students know I make mistakes, too.*
- *Let students know my morals.*
- *Be fair. Be willing to change.*
- *Be myself.*
- *Learn students' names early. Call them by name often.*

- *Get to know students. Talk to counselor about their backgrounds.*
- *Let students know math is important by showing real world examples.*
- *Acknowledge different learning styles.*
- *Group brighter students with slower students during group work.*
- *Bring in help from other students. Use student aides to help struggling students.*
- *Ask students specifically if they understand. Call them by name. Call on star students as well as struggling students.*
- *Read to students.*
- *Use interesting activities. Use real world examples as much as possible.*
- *Keep asking why. Stimulate thinking and learning.*

In my last position, I was very fortunate to meet and speak with some of the world's best-selling authors on business, success, and motivation. The company I worked for produced seminars that these authors spoke at. The most valuable thing I learned at the company was that relationships are the most important thing we have in life. This is very true in the classroom.

Most of the classes I teach/have taught have mostly honor students enrolled in them. Most of the students are very stable, well-rounded individuals. They learn quickly and are hard workers. I must admit it is very easy teaching these classes. However, one class I had was a very different story. The class was made up of mainly troubled students.

Before school starts, I talk to the school guidance counselor about each of my students. I realize this is very important and I intend to do the same thing every year. I learn about students' strengths and weaknesses. I learn about their backgrounds, their skill levels, etc. I know quite a bit about each student before I even meet them. This proves to be invaluable to me in creating a relationship with my students. I know the first day of class to make sure I make personal contact with certain students to create a climate they would learn in. It has certainly paid off. I have been told by several of my students that I am the first math teacher they have ever learned from. I believe this is because they know I care about them and this makes them want to learn.

The first day of school I go over my classroom rules and expectations. I let the students know that I have high morals and that I expect the same from them in my classroom. I feel this contributes to their feeling of safety in the classroom because they know I will not tolerate any poor behavior. I treat my students with respect, as well. I let them know I care about them as students and as people. This contributes to the feeling of safety because they know they have an ally at the school. I have been very strict on moral issues and the students have respected me for it. I even had one student apologize to me for playing music in his car that had foul language in it when he drove through my parents' neighborhood when he saw me and he knew I heard it. Also, regarding safety, I make sure the procedures for fire, tornado, emergency, etc. are posted in plain view.

Another thing I do the first week of school is to contact a few of the students' parents. I don't do it for all of the students, but after seeing the results of it, I will try to contact more parents

earlier each year. The only thing I do is to either call or write a small postcard telling them that I am pleased to have their child in class and I will be available if they ever need any information or have any questions or concerns. I also state that their child is already working hard (which usually is true the first week!) The results have been amazing! Most of the students, with a smile on their face, commented to me that their parent received the postcard. The students that I sent the postcards out for have been consistently the highest scorers and hardest workers in my classes.

I have often had students say, "Why are we doing this? I know I'll never use this." So, I try to give as many real world examples as I possibly can to let them know they will use much of what they are learning in real life, even though they may not realize it. I also let them know that we are developing problem-solving skills that will serve them in other disciplines as well as mathematics. I have also been working with the art teacher to develop an interdisciplinary lesson for my classes and I hope to do this with other disciplines as well.

Lastly, to create an academically challenging environment, I call on students by name to check for understanding. The students know I may call on them, so this encourages them to pay attention. I also read to the students as much as possible. Many of the students struggle with reading. I recently attended a seminar regarding reading in the content areas and it suggested reading to the students as much as possible to encourage them to read. It also increases their comprehension level when they are read to. Often when I ask a student a question, the answer is just a simple yes or no, so I always ask why the student answered the

way they did. I often find the student didn't really understand the concept and they were just guessing. This has definitely stimulated learning and thinking.

This isn't an all-inclusive list. I realize that as I go on I will need to add things and maybe delete things. However, I still believe that the most important item should be to create relationships first. Relationships with the students, relationships with the parents, and relationships with peers are all important. Secondly, we should hold our expectations high and not waiver from that.