

I-5: Create a welcoming environment

Introduce Welcoming Values in Explicit Lessons

Examples of explicit lessons (Elementary and Secondary)

Present beginning-of-the-year explicit lessons/discussions (with some ongoing reinforcement) to set your expectations.

<i>For younger students this might include lessons on:</i>	<i>For older students this might include lessons on:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Hurtful words” • Classroom manners • How to collaborate • “Hands are for helping” lesson • Using "I" statements and accountable talk • Choreographed respectful interactions between students • Making good choices • How to encourage each other (“you can do it,” “keep trying,” “good job.”) • How one person's actions and words can impact the entire group • When it's important to go to the teacher, and when you should work an issue out with a classmates instead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offensive language (dealing with race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, etc.) • How to respond to being stereotyped • How to handle conflict (see more below) • How to support each other in taking risks • Peer mediation techniques • Using "I" statements and accountable talk • Expressing feelings • Controlling anger • Helping others • Tolerance • Responding to teasing and prejudice • Conflict resolution • Character building • Self-esteem • Dealing with bullying

Teach lessons on appreciating diversity

Acknowledge and celebrate student difference to teach students to appreciate diversity within their classroom. Most students have misconceptions about people different from them. Proactively teach the social and interpersonal skills that allow students to appreciate diversity. Even in ethnically homogenous classrooms, all classrooms will be heterogeneous in terms of students’ skills and abilities.

- Explicitly acknowledge and discuss sensitivity towards student differences like ELL and Special Education status.

Example: One Mississippi teacher knew that all students in her classroom needed to support one another before they could strive toward academic success together. In an incident she relates below, this teacher made sure she didn’t just reprimand her students’ unkind remarks; she took simple but important steps to ensure it wouldn’t happen again.

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After the beginning of the year I was told that I would have an autistic student in my room for certain subjects. As much as I tried to create a culture of respect in my classroom, my students did make fun of this student by mimicking his behavior and laughing at times. I first began to counteract this activity by addressing it with my class when he was out of the room, and then by bringing in professionals who knew more about autism and could educate my students on his disability. Once my students knew more about why he acted a certain way, they no longer resorted to taunting him because their prejudices were broken down. It also showed them that I was intent that they be respectful to a diverse group of people besides each other.

- Teach lessons on multiple intelligences. See I-5 Tools section for a sample PowerPoint for this type of lesson.

Teach lessons on violence and harassment

Students need to explicitly learn what tolerance is, why it matters, and how to “be” a tolerant person. The following link provides resources for how to address issues of sexual harassment, bullying and violence prevention in the classroom. For resources on teaching peace and tolerance, visit the I-5 Tools section.

Teach the concept of mutual respect

Do not assume that students inherently know what it means to “respect one another”; to the contrary, students must be explicitly taught what this means and how to do it.

Teach “Accountable talk”:

- “Enrique gave his view, but I see it differently.”
- Using “I statements”
- Discussing actions and ideas instead of the person (“I disagree with that idea...” instead of “I disagree with him.”)
- Acknowledging others viewpoints (“In addition to what Juanita said, I would add...”)

Teach students to respectfully provide feedback to each other:

- This tells students that you care what they think and teaches them to care value their peers’ views.
- Encourage them to offer feedback in a constructive manner by depersonalizing the process so that it is focused on the ideas and not the person.
- Have the student join his or her peers in evaluating the work so they feel part of the process rather than singled out for criticism.
- Rather than focusing on just one student’s work, call upon students to evaluate all the different solutions that have been presented, compare and contrast them, and select the ones they think make the most sense.
- Train them to say “Thank you for your feedback.”

Teach lessons on how to work together so student groups can function effectively

Students often need to be taught how to work with peers – how to listen and speak to each other (and even the volume with which to do so), how to monitor each other’s behavior to ensure they remain on task, and how to maximize each other’s skills and ideas.

Students must have had practice working and interacting in groups. You will need to explicitly teach them how to:

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- hear competing views
- defend their own views
- enjoy exposure to multiple perspectives
- learn to defer, dissent, cooperate, share, and communicate
- engage actively rather than passively
- rely upon and learn from one another
- collaborate and divide labor
- mediate conflict
- recognize and encourages peers' success
- reflect on their individual performance and the group's performance, and to consider ways of improving both.