

## I-5: Create a welcoming environment

### Value and Celebrate Your Students as Individuals

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#### I. Publicly celebrate individual students

Your goal is to establish a culture in which students support and in fact celebrate one another's collective and individual efforts. To celebrate individual students:

- Feature a display that profiles a student of the week and lists his or interests, hobbies and background information. Display students' artwork. Create a class newsletter that features interviews with individual students.
- Set a tone of acceptance for students at all academic levels by celebrating individual relative growth (e.g. have a "Student of the Week" that features the highest percentage growth from the previous week).
- Institute group recognition for individual achievement. Give students the opportunity to applaud each others' successes in a designated weekly time or weekly community meeting.

#### II. Choose classroom activities that highlight the individuality of your students

##### Activities that Acknowledge and Celebrate Students' Individuality

Activities that Acknowledge and Celebrate Students' Individuality	
<b>Take pictures</b>	Bring a camera to school. Take individual pictures of each student. Have younger students make frames. After school, study the pictures to learn names and faces. Keep one set of pictures at home (nice mementos!). Bring the other set to school. Put them in the student-made picture frames and feature them on a bulletin board. After a few weeks, remove the pictures and either save them to feature individual students as "Student of the Week" or place them in their time capsules to be opened at the end of the school year.
<b>Create a Goal Wall</b>	Communicate to students that their individual goals and dreams are important. Have each student decorate an 8½ by 11 piece of paper with one academic goal for the year. Decorate a space in your classroom with these goals.
<b>Make "Me" Boxes</b>	Ask students to bring shoeboxes to school. For homework, they should fill the boxes with 6 or 7 things that tell about themselves. Students can share the boxes with partners first and then with the whole class. After everyone has shared have students brainstorm topics (connected to Me Box items) to write about during Writing Workshop.

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<p><b>Friendship Quilt</b></p>	<p>Help students create quilt squares using any available art materials. The squares could include: their name, favorite activity, family member names, and favorite book. Have students glue the squares onto larger construction paper squares of different colors. Hole punch all four corners of each square and “quilt” them together with yarn. Display in the room or in the hallway if your school allows.</p>
<p><b>“Who Am I?” Book</b></p>	<p>Have the children share facts about themselves by creating a “Who Am I?” riddle book. Students write 4 or 5 statements about themselves. The last line is the question, “Who Am I?” These books should be added to the classroom library and shared throughout the week. (A variation: have others read randomly chosen books and have the class guess the author.)</p>
<p><b>Create a “We Go Together Bulletin Board”</b></p>	<p>As each student arrives, give him/her a piece from a homemade blank puzzle. Have them draw pictures or symbols and write words that describe them and their families. When all the students have finished, allow them to assemble the puzzle, attaching the pieces to the board. For easy assembly, write numbers on the back of each piece. For more bulletin board ideas, visit: <a href="http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/bulletin/index.html">http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/bulletin/index.html</a></p>
<p><b>True or False?</b></p>	<p>Write four facts about yourself on the overhead in the form of a true/false test. Three of the facts should be true; one should be false. Let the students take the test; survey the results. Go over each question to see what they thought about each statement. This gives you a chance to tell them a little about yourself. On a sheet of paper, have students write three interesting facts about themselves that are true and one that is false. Throughout the first few days, give a few students an opportunity to stump the rest of the class.</p>
<p><b>Praise Boards</b></p>	<p>Feature displays in which students can post positive notes about one another.</p>
<p><b>Student Biographies</b></p>	<p>Have students write biographies of each other. Find a lesson plan for how to do this at: <a href="http://home.cogeco.ca/~rayser3/writing.htm#biogr">http://home.cogeco.ca/~rayser3/writing.htm#biogr</a></p>

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### III. Value Student Input

Invite student feedback and input with student participation in classroom decision-making:

- Empower students with participatory democracy, when possible:
- Periodically let them choose their own work partners.
- Consider letting them choose their own seat assignments when possible.
- Take class votes about collective decisions that need to be made.
- Give students academic choices whenever possible (for more on this, visit the I-2 page).

Solicit feedback through surveys (see sample Student Assessment of Classroom Culture in the I-5 Tools section).