

## Create a Positive School Climate

Students typically spend 7–8 hours a day, if not more, at school; thus, it's important that school be a place where students feel welcome, acknowledged, and safe, not to mention motivated and energized to learn. Here are a few tips and suggestions for making your classroom and school into a positive place that your students look forward to coming to each day!

- 1. Kindness Matters** Greet students sincerely and enthusiastically by name each day, and wish them well when they depart. Begin requests with “please” and thank students for fulfilling these requests. These simple actions can have an exponential effect on the school climate—not only will they make students feel valued, they also will set a good example for students in how to treat one another.
- 2. A Smile a Day** In the hubbub of a busy school year, tension and stress often prevail and seep into daily interactions with students. Be conscious of this risk and make an effort to “flip the script,” even in tense situations—smile instead of frowning, speak calmly and warmly instead of sharply, and take time to consider an issue or request instead of instantly reacting. Small changes like this can lighten the mood and give you and your students a fresh and positive perspective.
- 3. Celebrate** If students ace a test, complete a difficult task, or excel on a project or activity, celebrate their success! This could be in the form of a simple spoken or written acknowledgement, a certificate or award, or a special event (a poetry reading, a scholars’ luncheon, a gallery walk, etc.) planned for the classroom or the school.
- 4. Make New Friends** When having students work in groups to complete assignments, activities, or projects, vary the groupings each time so that students have an opportunity to get to know and work with as many classmates as possible. Provide ice breakers for groups to start their collaborations with; circulate around the room as groups work and help facilitate conversations that are stalling or include any students who appear to be left out.
- 5. What’s Important To You?** Carve out some class time each week or month to allow students to share what’s important to them, whether it be a school issue, a community issue, an assignment or project, or even a hobby, sport, or club they’re participating in. This can help students foster relationships with one another—they may discover they share common interests with a classmate —as well as build a sense of collegiality and mutual understanding in the classroom.

