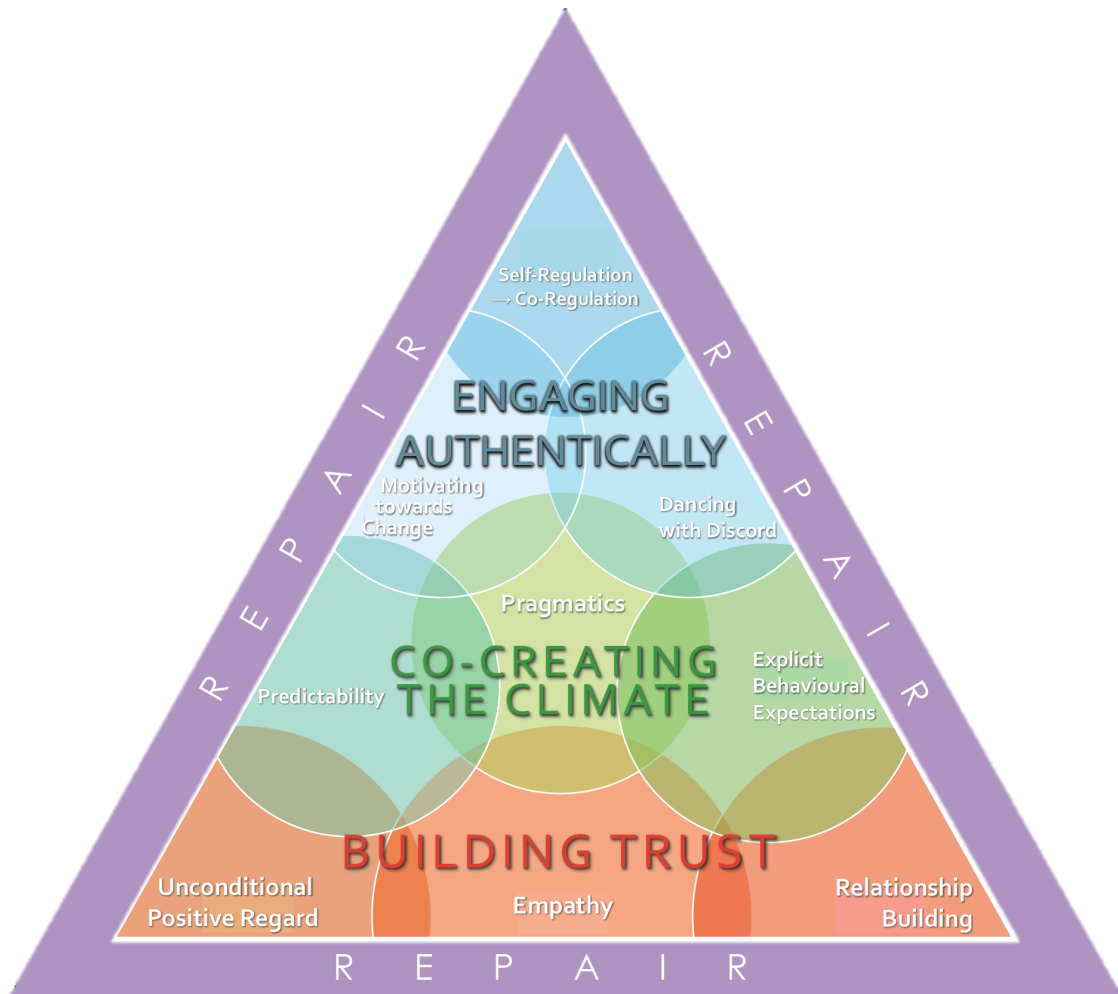


THE HIGH IMPACT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

H I E S



2020

PARKVILLE COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING, VICTORIA

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

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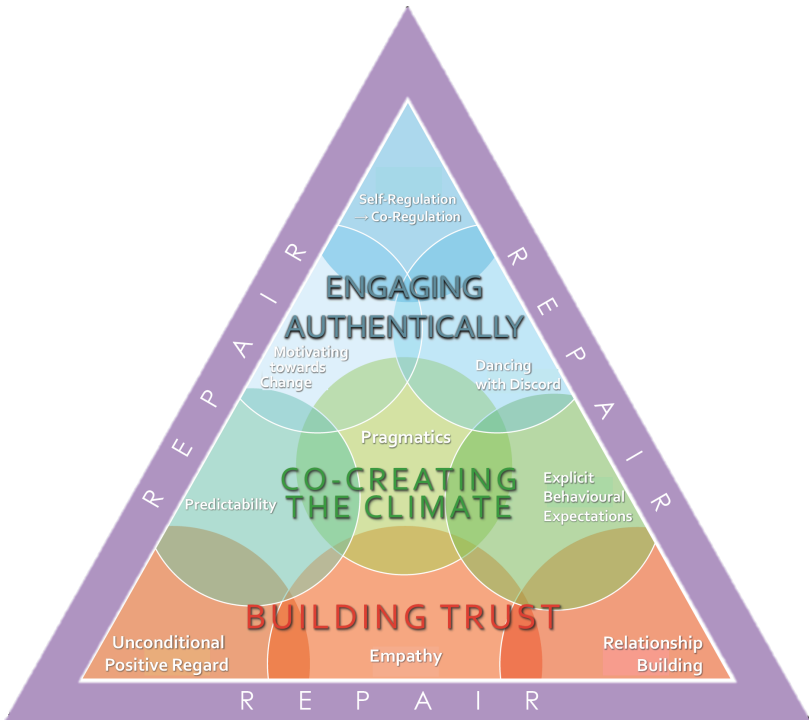
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What are the High Impact Engagement Strategies?

The HIES began as a significant whole-school initiative of Parkville College to begin to document the key strategies and underpinning theories that informed the School's approach to trauma-informed practice and therapeutic teaching over the past 8 years.

Parkville College was established in 2012, and operates across a range of custodial settings in Victoria, Australia. Parkville College educators privilege a unique, but consistent approach to engaging and working with all students. Students arrive at Parkville College with a variety of educational experiences. The School serves a population of young people who have experienced, and continue to experience, interpersonal and sociopolitical adversity and trauma.

Parkville College strategically employed a combination of approaches from Teaching, Social Work and Psychology to create its relationship-based approach, recognising and meeting the complex needs of its students. The HIES are designed to support educators to maximise the growth and development of all students by establishing safe and strong pedagogical relationships and learning environments.

While much is available to schools regarding effective teaching practices (see the High Impact Teaching Strategies: HITS; State of Victoria, 2019), these instructional strategies presuppose a strong working relationship with students. Equivalent documents to the HITS focusing on the importance of relationships were not available. This pointed to the need for the HIES as a guide for schools to engage all students using culturally responsive and therapeutic practices.

Through a year of focus groups, consultation, research and reflection, the HIES evolved into 10 strategies forming a suite of whole-school approaches used by school staff to increase student engagement and promote a positive learning climate. In combination, these 10 strategies form an integrated, school-wide approach to intervention for engaging all students and their communities. This approach also recognises the fundamental role of families and communities in education. People who are important in students' lives are vital partners in learning.²

How would I use the HIES as a ...

Teacher and/or educator

The HIES are designed for use by all educators at all stages of their career (including teachers, leading teachers, education support, paraprofessionals, as well as school leadership and administration). This HIES provide opportunities to reflect on relational aspects of your practice which may be impacting on interactions with students or the climate in your classrooms. They offer a framework for critical and reflective practice—as students and their communities grow and change, and educators respond to their needs.

School leader

School leadership plays a crucial role in modelling and demonstrating the HIES to all students and staff, supporting educators in their growth and development from graduate to leading.

School community

Schools do not operate in isolation. They reflect and should respond to the communities they serve. The HIES operate within a culturally responsive pedagogy; and necessitate close connections with communities and cultures, and the rich diversity that exists within them.

Community organisation and institution

The HIES provide concrete and practical strategies beneficial for all organisations that work with young people.

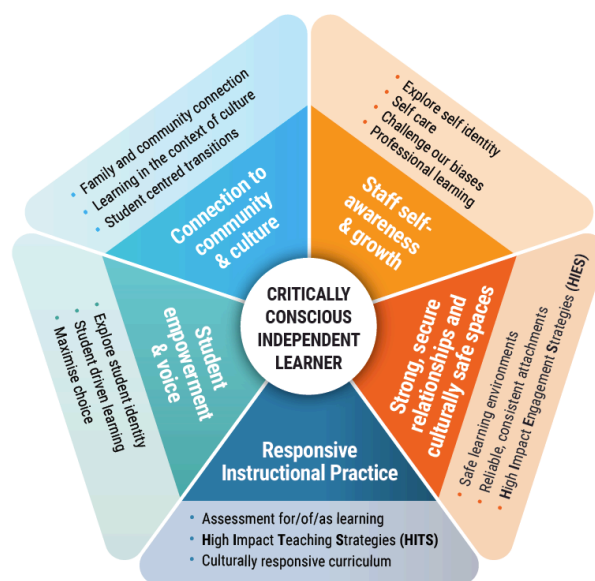
Why do the HIES?

To make the school fit the student, rather than the student fit the school.

The HIES form part of Parkville College's commitment to best practice for its students and their communities.¹ The HIES are a component of the Parkville College Model: a culturally responsive, evidence-based pedagogy which centres its whole school focus on the promotion and support of the *Critically Conscious Independent Learner*. The HIES form a key component of fostering *Strong Secure Relationships and Culturally Safe Spaces*, as they place the student and their relationship with the educator as the starting point for creating safe learning environments.

The Parkville College Model

A culturally responsive evidence based pedagogy



Universal access to education for children and young people is a widely held aspiration.³ However, there are varied approaches to educational objectives and structures which can disproportionately marginalise some cohorts of young people. Parkville College believes schools have a responsibility to direct education towards growth and the full development of the human personality, and to work toward the dismantling of oppressive practices.⁴ The HIES form part of Parkville College's whole school commitment to upholding these as an obligation to all of its students and their communities.

Parkville College students come from schools all across Victoria. Children with complex lives, trauma, histories of exclusion and marginalisation are present in every classroom. To promote a strengths-based climate for all, the School needs to employ a whole-school approach that prepares for and works with this complexity from the beginning, rather than as a later stage intervention. This is what the HIES are designed to do: Equip educators with the tools to create a universal, strengths-based climate for engagement.

As a Universal approach, the HIES support schools to focus on practices that enable every student to engage. The HIES are a suite of strategies that support educators to continually respond, grow and develop alongside their students; to make the school fit the student, rather than require the student to fit the school. This differs from Universal strategies that enable most students to engage, and then rely on Targeted or Specialised responses for those for whom the Universal is not working.

¹ Parkville College (2020). *The Parkville College Model*.

² Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). (2014). *Australian professional standards for teachers*. AITSL.

³ Education Council. (2019). *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*. Alice Springs: Education Council.

⁴ Children Youth and Families Act (CYFA), 2005, p. 9; Education Training and Reform Act, (ETRA), 2006, Ch. 1.2.1; Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948., Convention on the rights of the Child, (UNCRC), 1989

Using the HIES – The whole is greater than the sum of its parts

While schools are busy and dynamic environments with competing demands, the 10 HIES **must be understood and practised as a whole**. The HIES are a holistic whole-school approach for Universal engagement. The 10 HIES are of equal importance, but have been grouped into logical stages of engagement, each with a specific purpose.

The HIES are grouped into three stages of engagement, starting with **Building Trust**, creating a platform for **Co-Creating the Climate**, which in turn allows for **Authentic Engagement** to occur.

These groupings reflect the interrelationships between each High Impact Engagement Strategy. The three stages are framed and supported by the key strategy of **Repair**. The HIES are interconnected, sharing common themes and components, and **cannot be implemented in a School in isolation**; rather all 10 are required in combination to be effective.

BUILDING TRUST

Empathy, Unconditional Positive Regard, Relationship Building

For students to learn, they must first feel safe—with the educator and in the classroom. The vehicle for establishing trust is the building of positive relationships between educator and student. The Building Trust stage provides a foundation from which the other HIES are supported.

CO-CREATING THE CLIMATE

Pragmatics, Predictability, Explicit Behavioural Expectations

The learning environment is a place that should *reflect* the students and their communities. It is co-created by educators and students. It is the task of educators to provide a space in which students want to be and see themselves reflected, so they can thrive and learn. The Co-Creating the Climate stage is a constant process of collaboration that is responsive to the growth and change of students. An effective classroom climate is created with—not imposed upon—students.

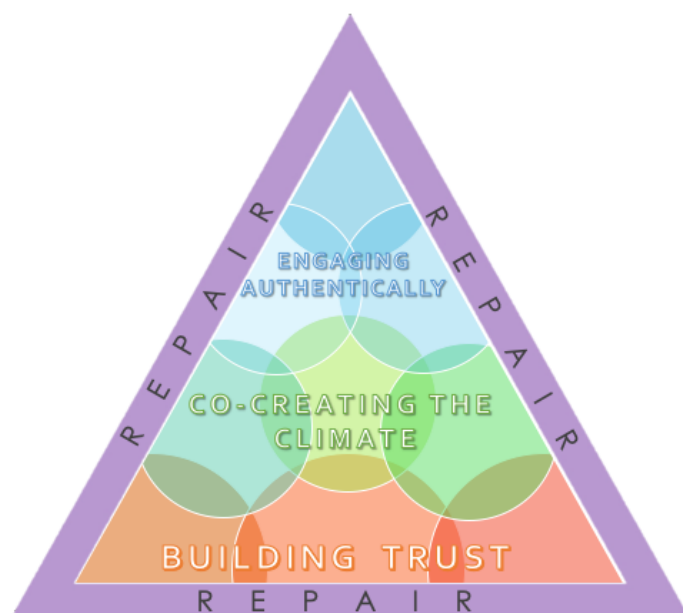
ENGAGING AUTHENTICALLY

Motivating towards Change, Dancing with Discord, Self-Regulation→Co-Regulation

Engaging students authentically requires the strategic use of all previous HIES as well as the application of these more nuanced and technical strategies. Authentic engagement allows educators to learn from their students as they learn from you, creating mutual growth and development. Students are empowered to *challenge* educators, as they are challenged themselves. The way educators use these strategies allows them to continually engage students—as they change, and as they resist change.

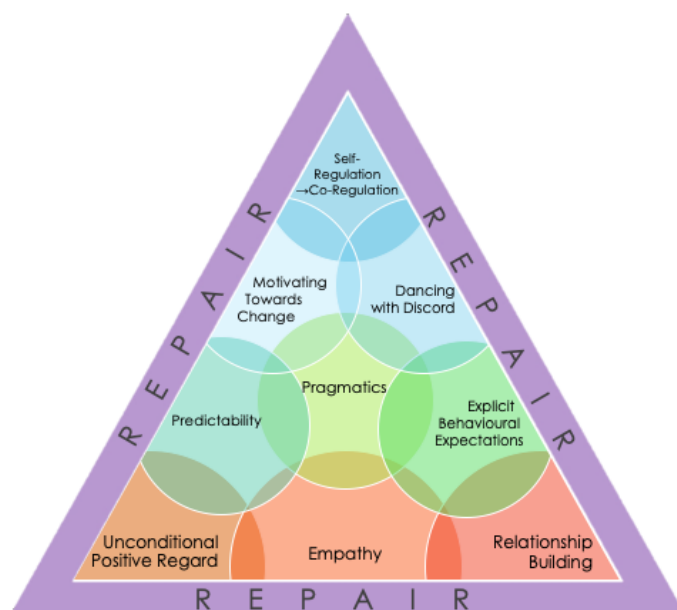
REPAIR

Although the HIES have been grouped into stages, the HIES are dynamic and constantly driven by student needs. It's logical but not necessarily linear. There will be setbacks, challenges, and conflict. Educators need not despair, nor give up. Repair is the circuit breaker that allows the engagement process to re-commence. Educators can go back and re-focus on strategies that need more attention. Thus, repair is the linking and framing strategy that reinforces the work in each of the stages.



THE HIGH IMPACT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

H I E S



Research Methodology

Our objectives were to:

- identify, describe and document Parkville College's whole-school approaches used by its educators to increase engagement through strong relationships and anti-oppressive practices.
- document best practice examples of Parkville College's approach to engaging its students since its inception in 2012, which has combined approaches drawn from trauma informed practice, culturally responsive practice, attachment theory, humanistic psychology, and counselling.

In 2018, the 10 High Impact Engagement Strategies were identified by school leadership. This participatory research then employed focus group discussions with Parkville College staff as the methodological tool (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick & Mukherjee, 2017). In 2019, the authors hosted ten two-hour moderated discussions across a 20-week timeframe conducted with 67 Parkville educators, from across all 5 campuses.

In the moderated sessions educators were asked:

- To **define** the HIES in question,
- To describe / provide examples of how the strategy is **demonstrated by the educator**
- To describe / provide examples of how the strategy is **not demonstrated by the educator**
- To describe / provide examples of what they look for in their students, when this strategy is demonstrated by the educator

Educators were also asked for detailed examples and stories from their practice. These formed the basis or entirety of the **Illustrative Examples**. The examples of each of the HIES are records of first-hand experience, and provide practical examples of how to apply the Strategies in practice. The examples vary across the document, from educators *Excelling* at their application, to others highlighting areas for growth and reflection. To support this reflection, a **Continuum of practice** was devised for each of the HIES.

The moderated discussion sessions were then cross-checked for inter-rater reliability with educators. The authors collated and synthesised the descriptions based on the educators' contributions. A scoping review (Colquhoun et al., 2014) was also conducted for each of the HIES to determine their **effectiveness** to support the educators' practice examples.

The resources and HIES were linked in logical stages of implementation: *building trust, co-creating the climate, engaging authentically* and *repair*. This helped to articulate how the 10 interrelated HIES fit together as a school-wide approach to engaging students (see diagram above).

How to use the HIES

The HIES as resource is designed to provide a shared language, theoretical underpinning, and approach for engaging students across a school.

The 10 HIES resources are linked into logical stages of implementation (see above):

BUILDING TRUST, **CO-CREATING THE CLIMATE**, **ENGAGING AUTHENTICALLY**, and **REPAIR**

Within each of the 10 separate strategies, the following components are provided.

- A **Strategy Overview** including a definition, review of evidence of effectiveness, and any considerations about its implementation.
- A section on **"This strategy is demonstrated when..."** providing key indicators of what this strategy does and does not look like in practice for educators and students.
- **Resources** which allow educators to explore the underlying concepts and practices in more detail
- **Examples that illustrate this strategy** providing authentic case studies exemplifying the HIES in practice across a school setting
- A **Continuum of Practice** to support educators and their School Leadership teams to self-assess, map progress and determine areas for growth and development as a school

The resources are designed to develop educator practice, with a strong focus on relationship-centredness thus creating safe learning environments and strong educator-student relationships.

Note: The HIES documents are intended for use by all school staff, therefore the choice of 'educator' within the text is intentional. This applies to all who work within a school, from office staff to the Principal, ensuring consistency in the approach to building a positive climate.

Key Themes

The 10 HIES are underpinned by a multidisciplinary research literature including education, allied health, culturally responsive practice and trauma informed practice; the marriage of which forms the whole school wide approach that is the HIES. Through the focus group discussions with staff and leadership of Parkville College, common themes emerged that underpin and inform the 10 strategies and how they interlink.

Self-Awareness

Educator is conscious of self, what they are bringing into the classroom, including their personal bias and experiences, state of emotional regulation, body language, tone of voice and affect. Educators actively employ self-regulation practices both in and outside of the classroom, to be aware of self and ensure calm in the classroom.

Knowledge of Students

Who they are, what is important to them and how they learn. This includes knowledge and understanding of the social and political contexts students live within, and how these may have impacted on their educational journey. This knowledge of your students informs your planning, classes, interactions and your ability to be prepared for and strategically navigate conflict (see Dancing with Discord, Predictability, and Relationship building).

Outreach

A core tenant of relationship building and maintenance. Outreach is the intentional and targeted practice of an educator spending time with a student outside their timetabled class to strengthen their relationship (yard duty, in another class, phone calls home, before class etc.).

Strengths-Based

All language, feedback and reporting relating to students is to be strengths- rather than deficit-based. Strengths can be praised publicly, and areas of relevant weakness are addressed individually and framed as areas for growth and development.

High Expectations

Students will meet your expectations, if you set them low or high. High Expectations are to be reflective of the student and who they are individually and their goals, rather than thrust upon them by the educator or school.

Respect

The educator models respect to all, while earning it from students. When educators demonstrate Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR), care and respect for students, this *provides* them with the tools to demonstrate respect, rather than educators demanding it.

Time and Space

Educators are conscious of time and space, in their relationship, in their classroom, and in their interactions with their students. Educators should always ask themselves: is this the right time and/or space for the student or for me?

Listening Actively

Educators listen actively to students and their needs; they enter into a two-way dialogue with students, rather than pushing an agenda or bias.

Meet Students Where They Are

Educators are conscious to check in with and move at the pace of their students. This promotes student agency, voice, and empowerment.

Authenticity

Educators are honest and authentic to who they are, and do not pretend to be something or someone they are not.

Modelling Vulnerability

As the educator, you are willing to learn from the students as they learn from you. Acknowledging when you do not know something but are willing to learn; Admitting fault or when they have made a mistake: Both of these practices model to students how they can do the same when necessary (see Repair).

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BUILDING TRUST



1 Empathy

Overview

Showing empathy to students is a way of demonstrating our genuine care and concern for them and their learning, as well as showing them we are interested in their perspective (Swan & Riley, 2015). Empathy goes beyond sympathy in that it compels us to listen, to try and understand the perspective of another by putting ourselves in their shoes. However, we acknowledge that our understanding will always be incomplete. It steers away from sentiments of pity or implied inferiority which can result from sympathy and which can leave young people feeling disempowered. Empathy is instrumental in ensuring our students know that they are seen and heard, and that we are here to walk beside them (Rogers, 1967). Empathy is instrumental in creating an environment that enables our students to learn and develop.

Related HIES

- ALL



2 Unconditional Positive Regard

Overview

Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR) means having a warm and genuine feeling of regard for another (Rogers, 1961), and having the capacity to separate a student from their behaviour (Stokes & Turnbull, 2016). As a therapeutic approach, UPR focuses on building self-concept through interpersonal and social relationships (Cooper, 2011). Educators enact UPR by consistently treating students kindly, carefully, genuinely, with respect and acceptance while, at the same time, holding students to high standards.

Related HIES

- ALL



3 Relationship Building

Overview

The relationships children build help them to define both who they are, who they want to be, and assist them to know how and why others, such as teachers, consider them to be important (The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004; Johnson, 2008; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, Oort, 2011). The onus is on the educator to cultivate, maintain and repair authentic relationships with students as part of an ongoing process, so that effective and empowering learning can occur for all (Duong et al., 2019).

Related HIES

- ALL

CO-CREATING THE CLIMATE



4 Pragmatics

Overview

Pragmatics is a linguistic term referring to the awareness of how verbal and nonverbal communication is used for social purposes. Educators who have strong pragmatic awareness are attuned to the subtle cues and messages conveyed in social interactions, and use this awareness to effectively engage students. This includes, for example, an awareness of the socio-culturally relative expectations of appropriate body language, social actions (e.g. greetings), as well as an interactional style perceived as respectful and age-appropriate.

Related HIES

- Empathy, Unconditional Positive Regard, Relationship Building, Self-regulation → Co-regulation



5 Predictability

Overview

Predictability refers to the creation of nurturing school environments in which all students and families feel safe, even when other aspects of their lives are in a state of flux. In these environments, all students are aware of structures and routines, and that adults behave in ways that are consistent, reliable and equitable (Kotiw, 2010). Advance warnings and predictable structures help all students, but particularly those for whom organisation is difficult or who have experienced trauma (Haas, 2018). Educators exhibit predictability at the level of the timetable, classroom organisation, and lesson structure; but also in the way they interact with students (they are congruent and predictable in their manner), and how students are treated consistently by different educators across different classes.

Related HIES

- Dancing with Discord, Explicit Behavioural Expectations and Relationship Building



6 Explicit Behavioural Expectations

Overview

Explicit behavioural expectations are clear, concise instructions that guide staff, students and carers to reinforce the behaviours that need to be demonstrated to make schools successful learning environments (Locke McCryndle, 2015). When framed in positive language (e.g. respect one another's space) rather than as rules (e.g. no hitting), explicit behavioural expectations can be taught and reinforced to help students be successful rather than simply to enforce student compliance (Drevon, Hixson, Wyse, & Rigney, 2019; Learn Alberta, 2019). Positively framed examples of success can be co-authored with students and families to ensure they are culturally and developmentally relevant, and to remove implicit bias of desired or expected behaviours being aligned with white, middle-class norms (Romero, 2018).

Related HIES

- Relationship Building, Empathy, Dancing with Discord, Motivating towards Change

ENGAGING AUTHENTICALLY



7 Motivating Towards Change

Overview

It is normal to resist change. Change can be difficult and resistance to it can be borne out of fear of the unknown or of failure. This is evident in the school experience of many students. "Motivational interviewing" (MI) assumes resistance to change and seeks to facilitate a collaborative conversation between teachers and students towards a change the student wishes to make. The conversation helps students resolve ambivalent feelings and insecurities to find their internal motivation to make the changes toward their goals (Durand, 2015; Keeley et al., 2018; Kittles & Atkinson, 2009). MI has been described as the opposite of giving unsolicited advice (Morton et al., 2015). MI involves two components: The *relational* component of MI requires empathy, supporting student autonomy and collaborative problem solving, while the *technical* component requires the interviewer (educator) to use skills to engage, explore, evoke and reinforce change talk to support a student through the change process. Such as open-ended questions, paraphrasing, summarising, affirmations and reflective thinking that allow the student to self-identify the changes (Keeley et al., 2018; McQuillin & Lyons, 2016; Pas et al., 2016).

Related HIES

- Relationship Building, Dancing with Discord



8 Dancing with Discord

Overview

Discord typically means disagreement between people, but can also mean disagreement between what a person desires and their actions. Dancing with discord, formerly rolling with resistance (a concept from Motivational Interviewing), recognises that simply confronting someone directly does not always work. Rather than fight the discord, you acknowledge it and roll with it. Educators use this strategy to help students change habitual behaviour when it causes problems for themselves or others. This strategy is used hand-in-hand with HIES 7 Motivating towards Change. While Dancing with discord may seem purely spontaneous, it requires a combination of preparation, and the ability to respond in the moment. When used well, educators are comfortable with discord rather than side-tracked by it. It also avoids escalation of conflict in the classroom, by giving students space to express themselves and navigate anxiety or ambivalence openly.

Related HIES

- Relationship Building, Unconditional Positive Regard, Empathy, Motivating Towards Change, Explicit Behavioural Expectations



9 Self-Regulation → Co-Regulation

Overview

Self-regulation involves a range of skills including the ability to maintain attention, seek-help, delay gratification, and verbally and non-verbally express emotions, thoughts and behaviours with effortful control, persistence, and will-power (Baron, 2017; Bruhn et al., 2016; Housman et al., 2018; Osher et al., 2016). For a student to learn they need to be able to self-regulate (Baron et al., 2016). Students learn how to calm themselves (self-regulation) through adults modelling how to regulate emotions and feelings (co-regulation) in early childhood. This is initially facilitated by caregivers, and later, teachers and other supportive adults (Housman, 2017). For students who have experienced insecure attachments and trauma, this early modelling may not have occurred and as a consequence they may find it challenging.

Related HIES

- Predictability, Unconditional Positive Regard, Empathy

REPAIR



10 Repair

Overview

The purpose of repair is to restore the relationship between the educator and the student after a negative interaction, to reconnect and re-engage the student. By modelling this vulnerability and acknowledging fault, repair provides examples for how students can repair in the future, should they need to (Cook et al., 2018). The educator initiates the repair, but it always remains on the students terms. The process models the vulnerability required to acknowledge fault and provides the steps to do so, as well as modelling how to maintain healthy relationships through turmoil. To repair the relationship so that engagement can continue, an educator might offer the student or class an apology, articulate awareness and self-reflection of missteps and collaborate with students on strategies to avoid a repeat of the situation. Without repair, the relationship can fracture, trust can be broken, and the student may feel alienated, thus promoting disengagement (Beaulieu, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2016).

Related HIES

- ALL, especially: Empathy, Unconditional Positive Regard, Relationship Building



Educators show empathy when they listen to someone's feelings and interpret their actions with care (despite perhaps being affected by the situation). Educators manage their reactions and process a response with an open mind. Empathy is also shown when educators avoid taking behaviours personally or allowing it to affect their view of the student.

Strategy overview

What is it?

Showing empathy to students is a way of demonstrating our genuine care and concern for them and their learning, as well as showing them we are interested in their perspective (Swan & Riley, 2015). Empathy goes beyond sympathy in that it compels us to listen, to try and understand the perspective of another by putting ourselves in their shoes. However, we acknowledge that our understanding will always be incomplete. It steers away from sentiments of pity or implied inferiority which can result from sympathy and which can leave young people feeling disempowered (Rogers, 1967). Empathy is instrumental in creating an environment that enables our students to learn and develop.

How effective is it?

Teacher–student relationships have a strong impact on student learning (effect size of 0.72; Hattie, 2009). Teachers who demonstrate social-emotional competence (of which empathy is a critical component) can effectively engage students to promote educational success (Domitrovich et al., 2017). Fundamental to demonstrating empathy is allowing student voice. The prioritisation of student voice and responsiveness to individual and cultural differences are associated with improved student outcomes (correlation of 0.31; Cornelius-White, 2007).

Considerations

- Educator's knowledge of self and what they are bringing into the room every day is critical (i.e. self-awareness and self-reflection)
- Students with limited experience of adult empathy, (or experience in empathy being used as a tool for harm and abuse) may initially push back against an educator's attempt to listen and be empathic
- Empathy needs to be demonstrated in culturally responsive ways, i.e. engaging students in response to different cultural norms and expectations, and seeking to know and understand their students in the context of their culture and community

This strategy is demonstrated when the educator:

- Seeks to know who students are, how they learn and how they came to be where they are (AITSL, 2017; Standard 1)
- Understands that behaviour is a form of communication: Try to identify the possible reasons behind or for the behaviour
- Is curious and use strengths-based rather than deficit-oriented language to interpret behaviour
- Creates time to listen to students and remain present and patient
- Leans in to learn more when they do not understand the student's behaviour; being comfortable modelling their own vulnerability
- Stays in the moment with students (see Self-regulation → Co-regulation)
- Models and demonstrates to all students how to be empathic with others; empathy happens continually.

This strategy is not demonstrated when the educator:

- Shows sympathy (pity or sorrow) for the student's situation
- Pretends to know a student's circumstances or try to relate it to their own (e.g. saying "I understand what you mean," "I get it," when they do not)
- Makes assumptions about the student's situation
- Dismisses the concerns of students (e.g. "it'll be fine," "don't worry about that.")
- Jumps into counsellor mode and try to fix or contain a problem by offering solutions
- Expects that students will get over trauma (grief, separation, displacement) within a specified timeframe
- Empathises with one student over another (e.g. empathising only with the perceived victim)
- Excludes a young person based on politics or external pressure

This strategy is demonstrated when students:

- Feel safe
- Feel heard and understood, even when there are competing voices that need to be heard
- Feel a sense of belonging
- Feel included rather than excluded
- Are treated equitably, rather than equally (or worse: unequally)

Resources for understanding empathy

- Brené Brown on Empathy. *RSA Short Stories*.

Resources for teaching empathy

- Reach Out. Empathy: Gratitude — keeping track and giving back.
- Reach Out. Empathy for resilience

Examples that illustrate this strategy

Example 1 - Empathy through curiosity

A student with whom I have a strong working relationship expressed interest in learning more about where their ancestors are from and asked for some resources so they can write a piece on it. Over the weekend, I spent three hours making learning resources tailored to this student.

When the student arrived at class on Monday, and found the work laid out for them, they promptly grabbed the worksheets, tore them up, and threw them across the room, declaring:

"This is sh*t, and you're a sh*t teacher."

I was confused. I felt hurt and upset, and was inclined to send the student out of the room. However, on this occasion, my confusion became curiosity. This curiosity in the moment, allowed me to question, and see the student behind their behaviour and with empathy. *What was going on for this young person? Why was this happening? What could I do in this moment?*

I asked them calmly, trying to maintain a neutral tone:

"Oh, is there something wrong? I thought you said you wanted to learn about this?"

They told me repeatedly to "get away," and "I'm not doing this stupid work."

I tried one more time:

"Sorry, I must have got that wrong. I can see you don't want to do this, but can I get you something else right now?"

The student refused and asked to leave.

I chose not to take this situation personally by being annoyed that I'd spent personal time preparing these resources.

I was curious and genuinely concerned and decided to follow up with the student after class. When I asked about what was happening for the student, they revealed they had a really bad phone call that day and that someone close to them was unwell; it had nothing to do with me or the learning resource I created. I apologised anyway, in case something I did might have contributed to their ill feelings:

"I'm sorry to hear your news and that class wasn't great earlier. I hope you know I love having you in class, it is always better with you there. Do you reckon if you feel like that again you could give me the heads up and we'll work together so class doesn't make it worse?"

The key lesson I learnt from this situation was to take the time to empathise with the student. This allowed their learning to get on track much faster than if I had simply sent the student out of the room that day.

(see *Dancing with Discord, Repair*)

Example 2 - Empathy through leadership

I walked into the staffroom and overheard a conversation between two of my colleagues. The language they were using to describe a student was less than productive. One teacher was describing a lesson that had not gone well, and they were very frustrated. Some of the language I overheard included "He's just a sh*t."

I could hear that my colleague was really frustrated and could empathise with how they were feeling. As educators, we all get frustrated at work and that's ok. However, I was also really worried about the language they were using to describe the student. I was also concerned that they seemed to not really be reflecting on why the student might have not been engaged in the lesson or on whether there were aspects of the lesson itself that might have contributed to the situation.

I decided to join the conversation and help my colleagues to reframe their thinking. First, I wanted to demonstrate that I was empathic to their feelings. I said;

"It sounds like you've had a really frustrating time."

The teacher agreed and described some more detail of how the lesson progressed.

I then said, "If you're feeling this way, it sounds like a bit of what the student was feeling might have rubbed off on you. Why do you think they were feeling that way?"

This began a deeper conversation on the student and what was going on for them.

I continued to facilitate a discussion where we explored the teachers' reasons for what they were feeling, and why this situation was so triggering for that teacher on that day. In return, this helped the teacher think about the student and what was going on for them. This dialogic method turned a "vent" into a more thought-provoking discussion, and as a result, more productive way to approach similar situations in the future with empathy.

Continuum of practice

Graduate

Educators demonstrate consistent self-awareness of their own emotions while helping students with theirs. Educators also support students in exercising control of their impulses while at the same time maintaining a healthy relationship with students.

Evolving

Educators demonstrate the ability to develop and sustain healthy relationships with students, and communicate their emotional state with colleagues in ways that demonstrate empathy for students.

Embedding

Educators demonstrate emotional resilience when responding to students in situations of stress. They also are able to put in place preventative strategies that mitigate future risk. They are able to show empathy to all students, even when there are competing needs (e.g. in bullying situations).

Excelling

Educators reflect on the environmental changes needed to create climates of empathy in our schools, and then take action to lead the change process.

(Adapted from Carthy & MacGilloway, 2015, p. 2659)

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Educators show Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR) when they continuously and consistently communicate a warm acceptance of the student, even if they are not ok with the student's behaviour. UPR means demonstrating, via our actions and attitude, that we are working to understand the students' way of communicating their experiences. We do this because it promotes growth and learning for the student, and it models for the student how to practice self-regard.

Strategy overview

What is it?

Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR) means having a warm and genuine feeling of regard for another (Rogers, 1961), and having the capacity to separate a student from their behaviour (Stokes & Turnbull, 2016). As a therapeutic approach, UPR focuses on building self-concept through interpersonal and social relationships (Cooper, 2011). Educators enact UPR by consistently treating students kindly, carefully, genuinely, with respect and acceptance while, at the same time, holding students to high standards.

How effective is it?

The effect of UPR in schools was first tested by Rogers in 1969 and more recently confirmed by Rogers, Lyon and Tausch (2014). Both studies found educators who use UPR, along with empathy and genuineness, are able to create supportive learning environments where students feel safe, valued and trusted; scaffolding that is essential to facilitating and maintaining high levels of learning. More recently, Bockmier-Sommerings, Chen and Martsch (2017) found that educators' use of UPR leads to high levels of student engagement with learning tasks, and the creation of environments where students can grow and thrive.

Considerations

- Educators can hold a student to an expected standard while still demonstrating positive regard (e.g., "I'm sorry that I did not have the class prepared in a way that worked for you today. However, when you threw that table, that wasn't ok. What can I do to help next time so that doesn't happen again?").
- Educators may not "like" the behaviours, but they should acknowledge that students express themselves using a continuum of behaviours (all behaviour is communicative)
- UPR and praise are not the same.
- A whole school/community approach to using UPR is essential, otherwise others can disrupt a teacher's use of UPR
- UPR is dependent on educators believing that kids can change
- If attachments aren't formed strongly, it makes it difficult for students to accept UPR from adults; However, you can support secure attachment at any age
- UPR is not just in the moment; It is a reflective tool, and you may need to take bite-sized actions over time to build trust
- Applying UPR to teacher practice is not the same as being a counsellor

This strategy is demonstrated when the educator:

- Accepts and respects the student, regardless of their behaviour
- Separates the behaviour from the student (their identity and values); Putting aside any personal views helps students to do the same
- Works to understand what a student's behaviour is communicating
- Holds and communicates high expectations to students
- Gives constructive feedback in a strengths-based way
- Embraces and genuinely cares for a student to help them to make positive changes at their pace
- Acknowledges student's concerns/feelings and delivers genuine and congruent messages to students
- Creates healthy boundaries and is not afraid to say no (not overpromising, but not dismissing concerns either)
- Has challenging conversations with students to address behaviours of concern, and teach positive alternatives, *because* they hold them in high regard and have a genuine belief that people can change
- Uses repair with students when misunderstandings occur (see Repair)
- Genuinely listens to students
- Is aware of own self-biases and nonverbal reactions (see Pragmatics) in difficult situations, and engages in self-reflection

This strategy is not demonstrated when the educator:

- Demonstrates *conditional* positive regard (i.e. Now I know your circumstances, I'm willing to be more tolerant; or Now I know you've hurt another student, I'm not going to be as respectful of you)
- Only gives positive and/or indirect feedback
- Avoids difficult conversations about student behaviours of concern
- Approves of, ignores, or responds inconsistently to behaviours of concern
- Gets into a power struggle with the student
- Blames a colleague so you look like the "good guy"

This strategy is demonstrated when students:

- Feel listened to and understood
- Expect that relationships with educators will *not* be broken when they exhibit behaviours of concern
- Test our compassion and commitment, realise that we hold them in positive regard, and cease the behaviour
- Feel they can trust their educators

Resources

- Parkville College (2018). *Teaching and learning*.
- Parkville College (2013). *Therapeutic terminology*.

Examples that illustrate this strategy

Example 1 - Including rather than excluding

My ability to apply UPR was tested early in my teaching career. I had a student in my class who would every day physically dominate the space, bully and sometimes physically assault other students. I found the behaviour so confronting that I found myself dreading his coming to class. As a result, our relationship was poor; he was distrustful of me and barely acknowledged my presence. Therefore, any attempt I made to challenge this behaviour was ineffective.

My initial instinct (and the desire of the school) was to exclude this student for the benefit and safety of others. However, upon reflection I realised that excluding him would only move these behaviours *out of the classroom*, and that they would continue in another setting. Instead, I decided to include the student, despite his behaviours, and sought out new strategies to build a relationship through which I could help motivate change. I couldn't shake the feeling that if the student knew how to act any other way, he would—it must have been incredibly isolating for him. So, I focused on getting to know him, I spent lots of time with him—quantity over quality. I never condoned or encouraged his antisocial behaviours, but I waited until he knew I respected, cared, and wanted to help before I would challenge him.

Eventually we built a very strong relationship, and the student began to engage more in classes as he could see the time I had spent getting to know him and that his interests were being incorporated into the lessons. This allowed me to begin to challenge, intervene and propose alternative behaviours to his antisocial ones, as he knew it came from a place of concern and that I had his best interests at heart.

This challenge was both personal and professional and taught me that every moment is a teaching moment and all behaviour is communication. Through truly applying and maintaining UPR, and pushing through my initial biases and pressures from the school, I was able to include this student in spite of his behaviour. In doing so, I built the trust in our relationship that he needed to be successfully shifted in his behaviour so that he could include himself.

Example 2 - Modelling and demonstrating respect

At the start of the Term I was just getting to know my students. One day I was greeting them at the door and shaking their hands, when I accidentally addressed one of the girls Tahlia, as Nikaya. This moment created a rupture that would take four months to repair.

I immediately apologised but was met with a blank stare. From this seemingly small mistake onwards, Tahlia refused to acknowledge me, shake my hand, look at me, or respond to anything I'd ask or say, in front of all the other students. I apologised a number of times in private and in front of others, but to no avail. Every day I would try and she would ignore and reject me.

This went on for weeks, causing constant rejection and the associated feelings of discomfort and embarrassment, particularly as it was in front of the class.

I reflected that this probably parallels how I made her feel at the beginning of the Term, calling her by the wrong name in front of her peers. I decided to use this as a teaching moment, to model and demonstrate UPR, by showing up every day with genuine interest in getting to know her, apologising, seeking to include and trying again. This was despite the discomfort and embarrassment I was experiencing as she rejected me.

After four months, she eventually gave me a fist bump. This was an enormous shift. This then turned to a regular greeting and eye contact. I apologised a final time, acknowledging my mistake and hoping to never repeat it. The following week as she entered the classroom, she returned my handshake.

This experience taught me that if my respect and care for Tahlia had been conditional and I had allowed her attempts to reject me to get to me, I would never have been able to repair this situation. Instead the classroom would have remained an unsafe and unproductive place for her as she did not feel welcome or respected, and I could have contributed to her disengagement from my classes. (see Repair)

Continuum of practice

Graduate

Educators express a positive attitude towards *all* students and create classroom conditions designed to build trust.

Evolving

Educators demonstrate the ability to hold students to high standards of behaviour while maintaining positive regard.

Embedding

Educators model to students how to separate their behaviour from their identity so that they practice self-regard, and challenges other educators to support student behavioural change.

Excelling

Educators reflect on the changes needed to create a whole school climate that supports unconditional positive regard, and then take action to lead the change process.

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Educators spend time with students, both in and outside of class, in order to build and sustain positive relationships. Relationships grow when educators are honest, authentic, sincere and demonstrate empathy, so that genuine, mutual trust can develop. By building strong relationships, students begin to see the care the educator has for them as a whole person, not simply as a student.

Strategy overview

What is it?

Strong, secure working relationships with educators help students to define both who they are, who they want to be, and assist them to know how and why others, such as teachers, consider them to be important (The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004; Johnson, 2008; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, Oort, 2011). The onus is on the educator to cultivate, maintain and repair authentic relationships with students as part of an ongoing process, so that effective and empowering learning can occur for all (Duong et al., 2019).

How effective is it?

Hattie (2018) found teacher-student relationships have an effect size of 0.52. Strong student-teacher relationships impact school climate, convey genuine care for students, unleash student talent, and influence academic and social outcomes, student attendance, motivation, student behaviour and teacher retention (Allen et al., 2011; Cookson, 2017; Gallagher, 2013; Justice, 2018; Marzano, 2003; Prewitt et al, 2019; Summers et al., 2016).

Considerations

- The stronger the relationship, the stronger the engagement and the more meaningful school will be for students
- Relationships should be built in a culturally safe way, in response to different cultural norms and expectations, the educator should always be seeking to respond to their students
 - The strong relationships you have built with students should be reflected in class (the curriculum, the layout, the selected resources and artwork) and help to reinforce these relationships
 - All those questions you asked and conversations you had were purposeful and targeted; and the student can see that reflected in lessons and classrooms
- It is harder to build relationships when threat is imminent; you need to build them when the student is calm
- Relationship building looks different when built one-to-one versus as part of a group - both have benefits and challenges
- Team teaching is a vehicle for modelling healthy relationships
- Positive climate is stronger when there is a whole school commitment towards relationship building
- Relationships can be ruptured and repaired (it is important for the educator to model how healthy relationships work)
- Relationship can become a vehicle for / stable platform to challenge and motivate change
- Relationships are dialogical—teacher learns from student as student learns from teacher (Friere, 1996)
- Relationships can be established through an existing relationship. Students who have an attachment with one teacher may transfer that trust to another: *"You're cool by association."* You can build upon the relationships that students may have already formed with teachers or students: e.g. *"You're Simon's brother?"*

Resources

- Commonwealth of Australia and Education Services Australia. (2018). [Student Wellbeing Hub: Building positive relationships](#).
- Downey, L. (2012). *Calmer classrooms: A guide to working with traumatised children*. Child Safety Commissioner.
- Parkville College (2019). Induction and enrolment processes.
- State Government of Victoria. (2019). [Respectful relationships](#).

¹ Cowan (2020). For young people who are unfamiliar with healthy relationships it is all the more damaging to establish a 'friends' style relationship as a professional in a position of power, because your relationship as a professional function will eventually end. When relationships are 'friendly' (rather than friendships), students learn that it is possible to have multiple, caring, reliable, trustworthy relationships/adults in your life.

This strategy is demonstrated when the educator:

- Finds out something about the young person before they meet
- Remembers names, interests, and identifies common interests
- Sets boundaries and expectations in partnership with students, and models these appropriately, including the sharing of personal information
- Outside the classroom:
 - shows curiosity; builds rapport; gets to know students (asking where they're from, background, community, identity); actively engages during yard duty lunchtime activities, extra-curricular groups / clubs (i.e. targeted time with young people to learn more about them); is available to students; provides outreach; phones home
- Inside the classroom:
 - provides meaningful content (based on what the educator has learned about the student and their interests) including resources; actively promotes student voice; allows conversations to flow from student interests
- Models how to have and navigate a healthy relationship
- Puts in time with students, reinforcing prosocial behaviours
- Keeps conversations strengths-focussed
- Is calm, consistent, persistent in building relationships over time (Cowan, 2020) – this is predictable and creates safety for a student
- Follows through on promises. (see Predictability)
- Creates "fresh starts" – Every day is a new day

This strategy is not demonstrated when the educator:

- Fails to distinguish between being friends vs. friendly ("we're paid to be here, they're made to be here")¹
- Pretends they're interested in something they're not
- Does not meet a student where they are. Either pushes before they are ready or ignores their needs.
- Demands respect rather than earning it
- Gives students "stuff" to build a relationship
- Sees a teacher-student relationship as one of maintaining the teacher's power; or uses an authoritarian approach
- Builds relationships only with students who apply themselves
- Is too nervous to test the boundaries in front of the class
- Avoids building relationships with certain students

This strategy is demonstrated when students:

- Are confident and at ease because they trust you and know who you are and how you operate
- Feel mutual respect
- Feel listened to and valued
- Are more willing to ask for help or make a mistake
- Are given choice and agency
- Understand what a healthy relationship is (friendly vs. friends)
- Trust you; are willing to ask for help or guidance, even in the presence of peers
- Become curious and ask the educator questions

Examples that illustrate this strategy

Example 1 - Building relationships with students who have experienced trauma and insecure attachment

When I studied teaching, we didn't learn very much about trauma and insecure attachments, and how these impact on learning. It wasn't something we readily discussed in the staff room or covered in professional learning. However, by working with students who present with trauma and insecure attachment, I sought to understand more about these issues, and the challenges these create for some students' ability to trust in me, feel safe in the classroom, or engage in the curriculum.

Due to past or ongoing experiences of abandonment and trauma at the hands of primary caregivers, these young people did not believe that I had their best interests at heart, and that I genuinely cared for them (without an ulterior motive). Most importantly, it was likely these students believed that I could eventually abandon them myself. These young people would push me away before I could get to know them. Or—counterintuitively to me at the time—after we had managed to build a relationship, they would engineer a rupture, pushing me away, seemingly out of nowhere.

Every year there was always a small group of students for whom this was very challenging. They were sceptical, distrusting and at times hostile to my attempts to get to know them or engage with them. I would be met with one-word answers, pushed away, ignored or met with phrases like:

- "Why do you want to know about that? You don't really care."
- "Why do you care?"
- "Why are you here, teaching us? What's the point?"
- "Why are you being so nice to me, I know you're pretending, you don't really care."
- "You have to say that, but you don't mean it."

I had to work harder. For these students in particular, I used a calm, consistent and persistent approach and moved at their pace to get to know them as they got to know me. I would be prepared, and calmly reply:

- "You don't have to answer any questions you don't feel comfortable with, but I just ask because I'd like to get to know you a bit better so I can make class more interesting and a place you want to be."
- "I am genuinely interested in how you are going."
- "Good question. Well I think the classroom is a place where I learn from you as much as you learn from me, so I just thought I'd try to get to know you a little bit better."
- "I care because I care about you and I want class to be somewhere you want to be."
- "I care because, you are a part of a broader community that I am also a part of and I think you deserve as much access and inclusion in it as possible and education is a way for that."
- "That's ok, you don't have to believe me, but I do care and I will keep trying to show you until you do."
- "I'm not here to make your life difficult, I want to make class a place you want to be."

However, another great learning for me was something I had previously assumed: that relationships are not built nor maintained in a *linear* fashion. Relationships can rupture, and at the time it may seem to be more for no reason. The point is to be ready to repair and rebuild when this occurs.

Continuum of practice

Graduate	Evolving	Embedding	Excelling
Educators treat students respectfully and show connectedness with their students through genuine effort to get to know them individually.	Educators model and teach strategies to support students to develop and maintain authentic and respectful relationships.	Educators reflect on student, parent and colleague wellbeing and resilience and consider preventative strategies or supports they can use to strengthen relationships.	Educators reflect on all relationships across the school (student-student, teacher-student, teacher-teacher, caregiver-teacher, etc.) and take actions to address any barriers to a whole-school positive climate informed by authentic and respectful relationships.

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Example 2 - Building relationships, building trust: Deeper relationships through a culturally responsive approach

I took a job, covering another teachers' maternity leave, to teach year 9. I arrived mid-year to a class of young people who had largely known one another since year 7, had well established social networks and a strong connection to their leaving teacher. The handover she provided was glowing. She spoke of hard working, engaged students who loved spirited debate. The class was diverse, many students spoke at least two languages.

I anticipated being new would be a challenge, but it was greater than that. I wrongly assumed that the students would warm to me purely with the passing of time; that we would find our rhythm and they'd love my classes. This assumption was false, and conveniently placed all the responsibility out of my hands and into the hands of time and the students.

There was never any great disruption, aggression, table flipping or fighting. The discord that I observed was all passive. (see *Dancing with Discord*). As the students would enter class, I'd get a few "hellos", but mostly they would organise themselves in groups, move tables and chairs around to sit and speak with one another, to the exclusion of me.

A few would attempt some schoolwork, others would ignore it, or gently push it to the floor, or draw on top of it. I would manage to engage a few, who would occasionally turn their attention to me or the schoolwork, but mostly not. I remember intense feelings of discomfort and wanting to leave. Feeling the odd one out.

I didn't know what to do, I thought I could just wait it out. That was proving ineffective. I then thought about combating it, but also didn't think that would work. It wasn't until speaking with another teacher, who knew my students' previous teacher well, about how she managed to engage them so effectively.

"Well. How well do you know them? Do you know anything about them? Do you know who they are? Do they trust you?"

".. I guess not."

This illuminated me to the fact that I had to be more reflective and acknowledge my role in this. I realised a lot of my reluctance and waiting was fuelled by worry, I didn't want to do the wrong thing. But this amounted to me doing nothing, which has the same result. I'd ask myself:

"My life experience is vastly different to a lot of these students, what am I bringing into the classroom every day and how do they see me? How can I make this a safe, culturally and physically, environment for each student?"

"What if I ask / say the wrong thing and I upset a student on the very first day?"

"What if I ask where they are from or who their family is and it turns out their recently in Care, or their parents are going through a divorce, or they've just immigrated and they feel I'm targeting them?"

I had been expecting the students to just come to me and meet me on my terms. I hadn't been meeting them, responding to their needs, who they are or learning from them. It was their school after all



Educators use their understanding of the rules of social interaction (pragmatics) to effectively engage and support students in the classroom. By strategically using an awareness of socio-cultural conventions such as body language, awareness of space, distance, time, as well as tone of voice and choice of language, teachers effectively interact with students, model appropriate social engagement, and help students to feel comfortable in the learning environment. In turn, teachers support students to further develop their own social communication skills.

Strategy overview

What is it?

Pragmatics is a linguistic term referring to the awareness of how verbal and nonverbal communication is used for social purposes. Educators who have strong pragmatic awareness are attuned to the subtle cues and messages conveyed in social interactions; and use this awareness to effectively engage students. Some examples of pragmatics include an awareness of the socio-culturally relative expectations of appropriate body language, social actions (e.g. greetings), as well as an interactional style perceived as respectful and age-appropriate.

How effective is it?

Educators with keen social-emotional awareness work to create optimal learning environments that allow students to learn and develop confidently (Collie, 2017; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Reyes et al., 2012). While research has focussed mainly on the effectiveness of developing students' social pragmatic skills (see Adams et al., 2012; Müller et al., 2018), there are growing investigations into the importance of educators' pragmatic awareness (Talvio & Lonka, 2019). This awareness is dependent on the socio-cultural context, and thus underpinned by Culturally Responsive Practice (Dobia & Roffey, 2017).

Considerations

- How educators and the school community create socio-emotionally responsive learning environments requires a dialogical approach through a socio-cultural lens, where expectations and understandings are co-constructed by students, educators, and the local community (Dobia & Roffey, 2017).
- If educators assume that their own rules of social interaction are shared by their students, they can miss or misinterpret what their students are trying to communicate. This is because educators whose life experiences have been primarily within contexts of dominant social norms (white/middle-class/heterosexual/without disability) need to engage in a high level of critical reflexivity in relation to pragmatics.
- Dominant ways of being and learning are often perceived to be self-evident and universal by those who have not known anything else. Students whose ways of being are in conflict with dominant social norms often learn to culturally code-switch (Molinsky 2007). However, this is a complex skill for which educators should explicitly support students, while also recognising other ways of being and learning that enrich classroom environments. For example, if a student is not making eye contact with you while you're speaking to them, what are you assuming? *What might be another explanation? How comfortable do you feel in asking the student about this? Co-constructing classroom norms and communication protocols with students needs to always begin with critical reflection on the educator's own positioning and ways of being.*
- Educators with strong pragmatic awareness are cued into and work to respond to the unique socio-cultural rules and conventions appropriate for each student, and that differ according to the context.
- Using pragmatic awareness is therefore a two-way process, where students and educators co-create a way of working together that is respectful, welcoming, and culturally safe for all.
- "Good teachers know how they are perceived by students" (Talvio & Lonka, 2019, p. 334).
- The use of pragmatics to create a warm, welcoming learning environment is closely linked to an educator's self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, and relationship skills (Collie, 2017).

This strategy is demonstrated when the educator:

- Seeks to know their students and cater to their needs in a culturally safe way (using conversations with students, independent research, consulting community groups and family)
- Has an awareness of self and biases – *What seems natural to you? What expectations of the interaction are you bringing into the room?*
- Is aware of own feelings and mood and what they bring into the classroom, and reflect on how to modulate this to be most effective in each interaction
 - Greets students at the door and helps students to navigate and be comfortable in the space (i.e. like when you are visiting someone's home and want to know what to do, where things are and how to navigate it appropriately)
- Considers their own body language:
 - works to regulate emotions to communicate in a calm way
 - takes a relaxed pose, an open stance
 - kneels (Parkville College Squat), to match students' eye level or lower
 - making self appear smaller and non-threatening
 - sits next to (side-by-side), rather than face-to-face
- Uses space purposely: doesn't have their back to anyone, doesn't walk behind or sneak up on anyone
- Is aware of the teachers-students ratio in the room—not overwhelming students
- Considers timing of conversations: Is aware of whether it is the right time for this interaction / conversation, with this student
- Uses a measured, easy and calm tone of voice
- Is warm and approachable
- Interprets the pragmatic behaviours (body language, speaking style, tone of voice) of students (i.e. to infer the wellbeing/interest/comfort of students in real time) and adapt one's own communication according
- Is genuine and authentic in their interactions (e.g. using humour and laughter if this is authentic to you) and in doing so models prosocial interactions with other students and educators
- Discusses and reflects on socio-cultural differences in communication styles with students, as well as regarding multidimensional aspects of identity (e.g. gender, sexuality, religion, disability, socio-economic factors)
- Checks in on what is ok and appropriate with students:
 - "I'm not going to be upset if you don't want to do something, I'll just get you something else, if you just ask me."
- Models respect to all, while earning—rather than demanding—respect from students
- Uses language that is clear and responsive to the needs of students so they can comprehend, have time to process, and participate in interactions fully
- Uses open questions to encourage discussion, and some follow-up closed questions to clarify understanding
- Adapts their own language complexity (including vocabulary, grammar, explanations/stories, figurative language) to allow for optimal comprehension and participation of students
 - Is comfortable to sit in silence when necessary
 - Allows for processing time
 - Uses gesture and visuals to support comprehension
 - Uses pauses and repetition

Resources

- Department of Education, Victoria (2017). [Emotional intelligence](#).
- Campbell, Lea; McGuire, Magdalena; and Stockley, Ché. (2012) [I Just Want to Go to School: Voices of Young People Experiencing Educational Disadvantage](#). Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service, Jesuit Social Services, and MacKillop Family Services.
- Culturally Responsive Practice training
- Parkville College Squat resource

This strategy is not demonstrated when the educator:

- Is unaware of time / timing (i.e. the right time to have that conversation)
- Is ignorant of social conventions of the cultures apparent in their student group
- Assumes every student's response will be the same
- Lacks emotional intelligence / social competence
- Demands / assumes respect
- Assumes a students' disengagement is a sign of insolence or disrespect
- Fails to introduce oneself, or greet students inappropriately
- Is perceived as sarcastic and/or passive aggressive
- Is perceived as patronising and/or belittling (e.g. talking too slowly, too over-articulated or over-animated)
- Is unaware of having too many adults in one room (compared to students)
- Sneaks up behind students or wanders the room taking covert notes
- Stands over students, or uses height or physique to demonstrate power
- Invades students' personal space
- Yells at students
- Talks for long interrupted sessions without allowing student dialogue
- "Dumbs down" language inappropriately

This strategy is demonstrated when students:

- Feel a sense of control, agency, and comfort in sharing the classroom space
- Know what is expected of them, and that their needs will be met
- Feel welcomed and their perspective/voice valued
- Feel comfortable to speak and participate appropriately
- Express their needs in a prosocial way
- Participate in an appropriate/productive way (not dominating or feeling unsafe to participate t)
- Respond to situations appropriately, openly communicating
- Are aware of, and strategically use, social codes and rules appropriately

Examples that illustrate this strategy

Example 1 - Making the classroom a welcoming space

As a new science teacher, I attended an induction program where an analogy was shared. The person who delivered the induction said that when they teach, they try to consider their classroom in the same way as their home. When you visit someone's house, it is a far more comfortable experience if the host is considerate. They should tell you where the amenities are located, and if there are any specific rules:

e.g. "you can take what you'd like from the fridge," "that's Grandad's chair, please sit over here," "are you warm enough?"

When reflecting on one of my classes this term, this analogy really resonated with me. I recently had a science lesson that went poorly, and I realised it was because I had forgotten to follow this advice. I had planned to conduct an experiment in the lesson. While I would normally greet students at the door and outline the structure of the lesson and tasks, I was instead preoccupied with setting up my equipment, so I left the students to enter the room alone.

It became noisy and chaotic. I then became preoccupied with reminding students to be quiet, while still distracted setting up the planned experiment. I soon realised that students had started to take equipment out of the cupboard, and there were a few safety risks that immediately caused me to raise my voice and yell for the students to stop. This immediately changed the climate of the class, with students being annoyed and heightened for being yelled at. The more I yelled, the louder the students became. I was yelling for students to be mindful of hazards and processes, for which I should have already made preparations.

It took a long time for us to get back on the same page. As I later reflected on the lesson I realised the importance of the concept of hospitality, and the need to pre-teach for success. I had failed to set the tone, I hadn't been consistent and the students didn't know what to expect of me or themselves. They were left to navigate the situation on their own. I knew the next day that I would need to have a repair conversation, and set the tone for the next class. It gave me an opportunity to apologise.

This class was a clear learning experience for me; one that reiterated the importance of ensuring that students know what is expected of them in the space; which relies on my being prepared, consistent and predictable in how I set up the classroom, and how I interact with my students.

Example 2 - Being conscious of cultural bias

When I went to school, most of my classmates were born in Australia. Some were born to parents from other countries, but most of the students behaved the same as me, or we were certainly expected to. We lined up outside the room; we stood behind our seats until the teacher said sit down; and we spoke only when asked a question. We didn't do a lot of group work, but when we did, the teacher would roam between groups ensuring everyone was on task. You dared not disobey.

Thankfully today's classrooms are a little different. Well, I at least try to be different in my teaching. In my current class, 35% of the students were born overseas many with English as an additional language. Over the last few years, I've really learned a lot about my cultural assumptions. I've attended some Culturally Responsive Practice training which has encouraged me to reflect on what I learnt at University and my current practice. This reflection highlighted for me how much I've been trying to force my own cultural practices and expectations on my students, rather than broadening my understanding and responding to and including their cultural practices.

Over the last few years, the school's population has changed along with the local community. This year my class has a large proportion of students from the African continent. One of the things I've noticed is when they come to lessons they spend at least the first 5 minutes (sometimes as long as 10) chatting and joking with one another, occasionally including me in these conversations. I would describe their entry into my classroom as high energy, with lots of yelling and laughing. They sometimes use expressions I don't know such as "lit", "dope" and "gucci". I've heard some teachers also start to use these expressions, but I've avoided doing so because a) it doesn't sound authentic to me and b) I'm yet to encounter a group of teenagers who would find it endearing for a teacher to adopt their colloquialisms without knowing what they mean. In class, they will often interject and finish each other's sentences.

My "fresh-out-of-teacher-college" self would have asked students to wait, not interrupt and raised my voice over theirs: demanding compliance to my own cultural expectations. However, as I have grown and become more reflective (and having seen this method fail to include all), I now approach every cohort with curiosity rather than assumptions. I get to know my students, who they are and what they need. I know this high energy is not a gesture of disrespect, it's just how they communicate and settle into class.

Upon reflection of my own experience of schooling, the regimented, ordered and didactic approach to my education probably didn't even meet my needs either (nor were the students' needs considered). It's just how we used to be taught.

Continuum of practice

Graduate

Educators model and demonstrate appropriate social behaviours in the classroom, including appropriate use of body language, social actions, teacher-student talk ratios, creating a welcoming and safe learning environment

Evolving

Educators explore different students' socio-cultural rules and conventions to co-create a shared and co-constructed learning environment, responsive to the socio-emotional needs of all students. Educators effectively use their nonverbal and verbal communication to support students with specific language, communication and/or socio-emotional needs.

Embedding

Across the whole school environment –when working with students experiencing difficulty with social communication—educators assist their colleagues to adapt their own communication to better cater to each student. Educators also assist students to develop and refine their social communication skills so they can interact effectively and appropriately in the learning environment.

Excelling

Educators actively seek out the socio-cultural conventions and norms important to cultural groups within the local community, to ensure all learning environments are welcoming and safe for students. Educators also reflect upon structural, environmental or attitudinal changes in the school community needed to facilitate clear communication by students and staff, and take action to lead the change process.

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Educators are predictable when they provide students with structure, boundaries, rhythm and regular routines. Predictability also means engaging—both verbally and non-verbally—in predictable, consistent interactions with students, carefully considering their words and body language when communicating. Preparing/supporting students through changes to routines will help students to develop self-regulation and structure, and build resilience.

Strategy overview

What is it?

Predictability refers to the creation of nurturing school environments in which all students and families feel safe, even when other aspects of their lives are in a state of flux. In these environments, all students are aware of structures and routines, and the adults behave in ways that are consistent, reliable and equitable (Kotiw, 2010). Advance warnings and predictable structures help all students, but particularly those for whom organisation is difficult or who have experienced trauma (Haas, 2018). Educators exhibit predictability at the level of the timetable, classroom organisation, and lesson structure; but also in the way they interact with students, and how students are treated consistently by different teachers across different classes.

How effective is it?

DeGregorio and McLean (2013) found that when educators provide predictable structures, they foster attachment and increase self-regulation. For students who have not yet developed internal structure, predictable classrooms offer clear boundaries and minimise anxiety (Downey, 2007). Further, predictable classroom environments and classroom structures are critical for classroom organisation as they allow resources to be better targeted to academic supports, social-emotional skills, or wellness interventions (Dorado et al., 2016; Maikoetter, 2011; & Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, and Sugai, 2008).

Considerations

- New students should be welcomed and inducted into the routines and expectations of the classroom so they can learn about what will be predictable. (see Explicit Behavioural Expectations)
- Teachers need to be mindful that being predictable isn't synonymous with creating boring "hurdles to jump through." i.e. Class routines should not be *painfully* predictable where students then manipulate routines to get unenjoyable tasks completed as soon as possible
- When predictability isn't possible, repair is key.
 - For example, when a teacher is absent, if there is inadequate information transfer between teachers, students may perceive that you have gone back on a promise, rupturing relationships and creating chaos. (see Repair)
- Educators need to remain flexible/adaptable as well as predictable.
- Structural factors can inhibit consistency and predictability. Be cognisant of this and acknowledge when this occurs

This strategy is demonstrated when the educator:

- Is on time, and adequately prepared
- Is aware of their own state of mind/emotional state
- Creates and manages timetables that are consistent
- Communicates changes or disruptions to students
- Acknowledges students (via handshake, check in on them at the door as they cross the threshold of the classroom; see Pragmatics)
- Sets up consistent and predictable routines, lessons and classroom structure – including providing approximate timing for activities; layout of seating; the layout of whiteboards (*Learning Goal, Success Looks Like, Activities, Reflection*); and tables and resources prepared in a predictable and inviting way
- Is consistent in their interaction style with students (see Pragmatics)
- Demonstrates consistency from student to student, and teacher to teacher (All staff are on the same page)
- Gives pre-warning (i.e. pre-teaches) if they are to call upon students
 - e.g. If you are going to ask questions of the students, inform them of your plan prior or at the start of class and confirm it is ok, then give them time to consider and process before answering – and wait time to think
- Consistently repairs when negative situations arise
 - e.g. "X or Y happened, is there any way I can make it better." or "sorry I caused you to feel X." (see Repair)
- Provides predictable consequences for breaking behavioural expectations (see Explicit Behavioural Expectations)
- Where possible, organises cover/relief teaching by a familiar teacher, with pre-teaching to prepare the students

This strategy is not demonstrated when the educator:

- Surprises without pre-teaching
- Is inconsistent in their lesson structure, or interactions with students
- Allows constant changing to plans/routines without adequate pre-teaching and explanation
- Is late and/or unprepared
- Singles students out for positive or negative reasons
- Puts students on the spot
- Is rigid, and inflexible:
 - Predictability is about being able to roll with resistance or dance with discord, and manage change/disruptions in a timely way

This strategy is demonstrated when students:

- Are settled and confident (i.e. not confused)
- Are more involved in the flow of the lesson
- Know what to expect in their day, and can see the links between classes, as work can carry over to the next day/week
- Are aware of the structure, engaged in it and challenge the teacher if inconsistencies arise
- Have their voice sought and valued in structuring routines
- Perceive the classroom and teacher behaviour as consistent and reliable, despite chaos at home or in other parts of their lives
- Are active participants in their learning
- Understand what is expected of them and the teacher

Resources

- Child Safety Commissioner (2007). *Calmer classrooms: A guide to working with traumatised children*. State of Victoria, Child Safety Commissioner.
- Parkville College (2018). Structure and timetable

Examples that illustrate this strategy

Example 1 - Predictability: Anchoring students during chaos

Ali was a student in my home group who started to show signs of disengagement, and difficulty self-regulating at school. After speaking with him, we learnt that he had been temporarily placed in out of home care, and it was unclear for how long this would be. Ali's parents had recently split and his father had an emerging mental health condition that resulted in his being unable to care for his son at that time. Everything was up in the air for this student: nothing set in stone, nothing constant.

It is not always possible to know what is going on for a student outside the classroom. Students can live tumultuous, traumatic and chaotic lives and the only insight we as teachers can have into these is their behaviour in the classroom. In Ali's case, despite the chaos in his personal life, it was clear that the approach of our School helped to anchor him during this period. The school I worked at had a whole school approach to Trauma and was cognisant of its effect on student behaviour and learning. A key tenant of this approach was predictability.

We did this using our classrooms, our whiteboards, our body language, our tone of voice, our responses to behaviours of concern. Consistency was visible across the school. We endeavoured to create an environment of calm throughout the school, to help anchor the chaotic lives of young people, even if only for part of their day. By creating a predictable environment, students like Ali knew what to expect, hypervigilance was reduced, and they were much more likely to be able to engage and learn.

Every day, I would greet Ali, check in, explain the focus of the lesson and provide choices for him based on his state of mind. I ensured I was predictable and consistent, such that he knew what to expect from the class and me. Despite all that was going on in Ali's personal life, he gradually began to settle. He had days where school was more challenging along the way, but slowly his stamina increased, as did his engagement.

Example 2 - Not putting a student on show

When I was studying teaching at University, we were taught that one of the best strategies for keeping students engaged and listening was the element of surprise. We were instructed to ask questions of students at random in front of the class. This was also intended to be a useful strategy for clarifying whether students had met their learning intentions for that class.

I continued this seemingly standard practice in my own classrooms for years with varying degrees of success. Responses differed: some students responded quickly, others were flustered or hadn't been paying attention—I assumed. However, on a particularly memorable occasion, a student who I called upon completely froze, and was unable to answer me. I paused for too long and other students around him began to giggle. The student then had a loud outburst and left the class.

I was taken aback and confused. After the class concluded I went to follow up with the student. After some encouragement, he told me:

"I didn't want you to pick me. I didn't know you were going to pick me. I freaked out."

I responded: "Why were you so worried about getting picked? Was it because you weren't paying attention?"

"I couldn't pay attention! I was trying, but I couldn't think, I was too worried you were going to call on me and put me on show... and then you did! And I went all red, I felt hot. You singled me out, and I froze ... couldn't think of anything.... Then everyone started laughing and thought I was stupid."

Until that moment I was completely unaware I'd made that student feel that way. Upon reflection, I had probably made any number of students feel that way or at the very least anxious, and they just had better coping strategies and ways of concealing it. In any case, I decided that springing questions on students without warning was not contributing to an ideal learning environment.

I apologised to this student, and promised not to do it again. I changed my practice from one of surprise to predictability. Now I ask focus questions which align with the learning intention for that class, and write these on the board where possible. I give students adequate time to consider the questions and consider their thoughts (using Pair-Share strategies). The students can then answer with substantial pre-teaching—rather than just being put on the spot.

Continuum of practice

Graduate	Evolving	Embedding	Excelling
Educators work with students to develop positively-framed and predictable classroom routines and structures. They also respond in predictable ways with natural consequences when boundaries are tested. Educators manage their own reactions to ensure predictability.	Educators connect with students in and out of class, helping students to develop internal structure and reduce stress and anxiety caused by unpredictability. This may include identifying targeted students for who additional predictability is required.	Across the whole school environment, educators work with students to ensure that routines, structures, boundaries and consequences are consistent, fair, equitable and clearly communicated to all students and families and modelled and applied consistently by all staff.	Educators reflect on changes needed to ensure routines, structures, boundaries and consequences are explicit and consistent for students, staff and families, and take action to lead the change process.

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Educators, carers and students work together to construct explicit behavioural expectations (EBE) that set the climate for the school community. These also allow educators to: provide a consistent structure; tailor shared behavioural goals proactively with each student; and repair relationships (consistently) when expectations are not met by students or staff.

Strategy overview

What is it?

Explicit behavioural expectations (EBE) are clear, concise instructions that guide staff, students and carers to reinforce the behaviours that need to be demonstrated to make schools successful learning environments (Locke McCryndle, 2015). When framed in positive language (e.g. respect one another's space) rather than as rules (e.g. no hitting), explicit behavioural expectations can be taught and reinforced to help students be successful rather than simply to enforce student compliance (Drevon, Hixson, Wyse, & Rigney, 2019; Learn Alberta, 2019). Positively framed examples of success can be co-authored with students and families to ensure they are culturally and developmentally relevant and to remove implicit bias of behaviours being aligned with white, middle-class norms (Romero, 2018).

How effective is it?

Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers & Sugai (2008) found explicit behavioural expectations to be one of the most effective classroom management strategies teachers can use. When co-created, explicit behavioural expectations help staff and students know what they need to do to be successful (Gage & MacSuga-Gage, 2017). This in turn can serve as an antecedent preventative measure, reducing behaviours of concern or behavioural mistakes made by students when the expectations are unclear (Borgen, Kirkebøen, Ogden, Raaum, Sørli, 2019; Cooper, et al., 2018).

Considerations

- Educators have responsibility for modelling what positive behaviours look like
- "Educators are paid to be there; kids are made to be there" (Cowan, 2020)
- The concept of "respect" is a loaded (value-laden) term, but not many alternatives are available. Often intent is ascribed to students' actions ("he knew what he was doing.")
- It is critical that the explanation is not left out. The reason for an educator's actions need to be logical and clear
- "Appropriate" / "inappropriate" can also be value-laden
- Expectations should be responsive to each student's socio-emotional development stage, and should be differentiated.
- Strong relationships mean you can challenge behaviours of concern, and repair relationships when ruptures occur. (see Repair)
- Timing of when to challenge behaviour is critical; educators need an understanding of the escalation cycle.

This strategy is demonstrated when the educator:

- Understands that behaviour is communication, and therefore acts as a detective about behaviour, rather than responding in a punitive manner
- Understands what is developmentally appropriate behaviour vs. problematic behaviour
- Shows a genuine interest in students' wellbeing (checking in before class, how they are, and whether they are feeling they can meet the expectations today, and if not how can the educator support them)
- Adopts consistent, whole-school approaches to strategies, language, and routines
- Creates expectations in a dialogical way—*done with* students, rather than *done to*
- Models "do", rather than "saying don't";
- Models mutual respect and genuine effort
- Empowers students and gives students ownership
- Sets differentiated expectations, that evolve in response to growth and development of students
- Considers the right time and place to challenge a behaviour of concern; is intentional and calm in this process.
- Responds with logical consequences (i.e. consistency, rather than arbitrary punishments) that are applied equitably
- Models ability to hold self to account (acknowledges when one does not meet expectations)
- Uses strengths-based language about the students and teachers
- Is accountable for maintaining empathy and UPR when speaking about students (checking in on wellbeing of other staff when problematic and unproductive discussions about students occur)

This strategy is not demonstrated when the educator:

- Has no or low expectations (i.e. a laissez-faire approach)
- Cannot discern between friendly vs. friends (role clarification, appropriate boundaries, adult modelling appropriate relationships)
- Assumes all students are capable of the same level of affect regulation
- Provides no explanation of "why" an expectation exists, assumes and demands a student already knows ("You should know better").
- Enforces rules for the sake of rules, rather than clear and agreed to explicit expectations
- Forgets that the expectations apply to them
- "Schedules themselves out" – avoidance or withdrawal from students
- Abandons expectations (i.e. not dancing with discord, having a backup and other activities)
- Is judged for *not punishing* the student for their behaviour or "not doing anything" (while educator was actively in detective mode / interpreting behaviour / waiting for relationship to be strong enough to challenge)
- Is guided by the 'Car Park Mafia' (Mac Naughton, 2004) (caregivers who talk in the car park and comment on how the school should respond to issues), rather than in line with consistency with school values

This strategy is demonstrated when students:

- Co-creates shared expectations, included in the conversation – mutual dialogue and agreement
- Allow others to learn
- Can express themselves and assume consistency from the teacher
- Can articulate / acknowledge if and when they feel they can't meet the expectations
- Can articulate / acknowledge if educator is not meeting expectations

Resources

- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2017). [Establishing classroom expectations.](#)
- Learn Alberta. (2019). [Classroom behavioural expectations.](#)
- Shor, I., & Freire, P. (1987). What is the "dialogical method" of teaching?. *Journal of Education*, 169(3), 11-31.
- Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2016). [Missouri School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Tier 1 Team Handbook.](#)
- Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities. (2013). [Developing classroom expectations.](#)

Examples that illustrate this strategy

Example 1 - EBE through pre-teaching

Teaching vocational subjects, particularly in the hospitality kitchen, required clear expectations for me and for students, otherwise the consequences were immediate and potentially dangerous. Having a shared set of expectations and language for me and the students created predictability, safety and a productive environment.

In preparation of every class I would pre-teach with all of my students, meaning I would prepare them for what to expect and check in to see if they were ready both mentally and physically, to be in the kitchen. Not just what we were cooking, but what roles each of us could play and how we should conduct ourselves in order to guarantee we completed everything on time and in a safe way.

I also always checked in with each student individually at the beginning and throughout class to keep oversight of their wellbeing. I have occasionally had to cancel classes because a student “wasn’t in the right headspace,” and felt they couldn’t uphold the expectations to maintain a safe environment. In those instances, I would calmly address the situation:

“I think this might not be working today, we might not all be in the right headspace to keep the place safe so let’s finish on a good note, and call it early.”

Afterwards, I would follow up with each student, and check to see how they were feeling, reminding them that class is better when they are there, but I was concerned for everyone’s physical safety. I reiterated that the class expectations being for both myself and them, and my role is to ensure their safety so I had to postpone it for that day and that we would try again tomorrow.

In classes for which I pre-taught, I reiterated the shared expectations in class, and followed up afterwards. These classes were always the most successful, because everyone was on the same page. The expectations had been set together rather than imposed upon students, so students knew what they were working towards, and whether they could meet these expectations on that day.

Example 2 - Creating a shared climate

Early on in my teaching career I learned it was important to set the culture for my classes. I also learned through trial and error I had to bring the students with me through this process. I included them in a dialogue of expectations for self, classmates and teacher. I found including students in this process from the beginning meant I was able to challenge them if their behaviour strayed, because each student had co-created and agreed upon the values.

As a class we had decided upon the class values of “respect,” and “try.” We had a broad discussion of what these meant to each of us, and how it is shown between student and student and teacher and student. Once we committed to these it also meant students were able to challenge me as the teacher, should I deviate from what they had grown to know and expect from me. Over the course of a year there were many examples of deviation, including myself.

One day a student was very heightened, possibly bored and struggling to self-regulate. In his state he opted to tag all over the walls of the classroom, and some of it was particularly offensive to some minority groups. Rather than match his heightened state and scold him in front of the class, I approached calmly and with curiosity, and framed the conversation using the classroom expectations.

“I’m wondering if, remembering back to our class values, you think some of this could make anyone feel unsafe or hurt?”

“I don’t know...”

“Hmm, I’m wondering if some of this might not be that respectful to everyone in the room, what do you think?”

“Maybe. Yeah. Yeah I don’t think everyone will like this”

“Ok, so I don’t want to make you do anything you don’t want to do and if you’re not in the right headspace for work that’s fine. But how about we think of something else we can do now? Would you like some paper, pens or colouring in maybe? And then a bit later we can clean this off together?”

“.... It’s ok, I can clean it now.”

“Thanks so much, I’ll help and then we can do some colouring in.”

An indicator for me that the class was upholding the agreed expectations was when students felt they could hold me to account as well. One day I had forgotten to bring some resources from a previous lesson and a student enquired:

“Miss, you didn’t bring the stuff we needed today... That doesn’t feel very respectful.”

Continuum of practice

Graduate	Evolving	Embedding	Excelling
Educators co-create behavioural expectations with students and then ensure that they have the skills and tools to model and communicate these positively, clearly, and concisely.	Across the school environment, educators work together with students to ensure that all educators teach routines and expectations that are explicit, consistent, predictable and safe.	Educators work together to develop a consistent, positively-framed approach on how to respond when behavioural expectations are not met, with an emphasis on what needs to occur to repair the relationship.	Educators reflect on changes needed to ensure behavioural expectations are explicit and consistent for students, families, and staff, and take action to lead the change process.

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Educators motivate students by eliciting “change talk” and highlighting discrepancies between a student’s current behaviour and their identified broader goals and values. “Change talk” occurs when a student’s statements (direct or indirect) indicate a willingness, desire, or commitment towards wanting to make a change towards a self-directed goal. Educators help to uncover the student’s own reasons for change to achieve their goals; build an awareness of the discrepancy between the student’s current behaviour or situation and their goal; and in doing so assist the student to locate the internal motivation to make change towards this.

Strategy overview

What is it?

It is normal to resist change. Change can be difficult and resistance to it can be borne out of fear of the unknown or of failure. This is evident in the school experience of many students. “Motivational interviewing” (MI) assumes resistance to change and seeks to facilitate a collaborative conversation between teachers and students towards a change the student wishes to make. The conversation helps students resolve ambivalent feelings and insecurities to find their internal motivation to make the changes toward their goals (Durand, 2015; Keeley et al., 2018; Kittles & Atkinson, 2009). MI has been described as the opposite of giving unsolicited advice (Morton et al., 2015).

MI involves two components: The relational component of MI requires empathy, supporting student autonomy and collaborative problem solving. The technical component requires the interviewer (educator) to use skills to engage, explore, evoke, and reinforce change talk to support a student through the change process. These include open-ended questions, paraphrasing, summarising, affirmations and reflective thinking that allow the student to self-identify desired changes (Keeley et al., 2018; McQuillin & Lyons, 2016; Pas et al., 2016).

How effective is it?

Frey et al. (2017) found MI has been effectively used in schools to improve academic and social outcomes for students. MI has also been found to increase student motivation and positive behaviour (Gutierriz, Foxx & Kondili, 2018; Platt, 2016; Ratanavivian, 2015; Ratanavivian & Ricard, 2017), reduce school truancy (Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009), and promote positive student outcomes and academic achievement (Kittles & Atkinson, 2009; Shinn & Walker, 2010; Simon & Ward, 2014; Snape & Atkinson, 2016; Strait, et al., 2012).

Considerations

- MI was originally a technique applied to Drug and Alcohol counselling to elicit and motivate towards desired change, that has been applied to educational settings. The application of MI in this High Impact Engagement Strategy is directed towards achieving goals related to education and achievement
- Anticipate resistance to change. This is normal for both educators and students
- Both students and educators may be fearful of change
- The desire to change must come from within the student and be central to their values and goals. It is not forced or directed by what the educator thinks the student *should* do
- It is important to understand the *why* for change, in order to inform the *what* and *how* of helping the student get there.
- If the change process is externally imposed or rushed rather than from within, the change is likely to be unsustainable
- Educators need to be culturally aware of the reasons why a student might want to change
- Educators must be aware of and challenge their own biases

Resources

- Upholding the Student-Teacher Agreement
- MI Training Resource

This strategy is demonstrated when the educator:

- Uses active, empathic listening
- Asks curious, open, non-leading questions
- Uses pauses effectively
- Affirms and clarifies their understanding of the students’ values and/or goals; models reflection on these
- Meets students where they are, moves at their pace and capacity
- Allows the student to present their own solutions and “fixes,” rather than the educator providing them
- Asks the student if they need support
- Helps a student to articulate their values by:
 - Facilitating a curious and interested conversation that allows them to come to understand the students’ values and what motivates them
 - Giving the students the “good lines” i.e. actively pausing and allowing the child to say the good things about themselves: “I have been working really hard” rather than “you’ve been working really hard.”
- Highlights discrepancies between the student’s actions and what they want to achieve
- Asks student what they think are the potential pathways to change; Educators do not just offer suggestions their own opinion (i.e. not from the student)
- Celebrates progress and success with the student
 - “You’ve been here x amount of time, you’re really hard- working”
 - “Yeah I guess I am”
 - Reframe: “So working hard is important to you...”
- Uses reflective questioning around a problem
 - “Have you ever felt like this before?”
 - “Has there ever been a time where x has happened and you didn’t do/feel y? what was different do you think?”
 - Highlight discrepancy “You haven’t been coming to class as much in the morning and you want to finish your VCAL”
- Actively avoids arguments (see Dancing with Discord)
- Facilitates links (through conversation) between strengths in other parts of the students’ life and values and goals; draws connections where they might otherwise not see them.
 - i.e. Demonstrates leadership and responsibility by caring for younger siblings etc., but doesn’t see that as significant.
- Gives purposeful feedback towards goals

This strategy is not demonstrated when the educator:

- Pushes too early, or has their own agenda
- Jumps to “fix” or create solutions
- Assumes role of counsellor where not qualified to do so
- Does not listen
- Through their facial expressions or body language, shows the student that they aren’t convinced that the student can make change
- Lacks belief in the student
- Steals all the “good lines”
- Is disengaged and not listening
- Leaves a student in the void between their current behaviours and goals, facilitating a “shame spiral”
- Is not mindful of the setting or surroundings when facilitating these conversations
- Comes to a conclusion for a student; Assumes what supports they need
- Shames the student by highlighting how past behaviour will detract from their ability to achieve their goal
- Allows other students to bully the student when they are making attempts to change
- Uses sarcasm or is dismissive of the student’s goals, attempts at change or progress, however small

This strategy is demonstrated when students:

- Create their own goals
- Are allowed space and time to reflect on their own progress
- Get the “good lines” in the conversation / interaction
- Recognise own effort
- Understand what is motivating their desire to change
- Understand and articulate their own values
- Feels that their goal has been affirmed
- Ask questions like: “But how would I ever”; “If I was to”, “Could I”, “When I”, “Do you think it’s possible if...”
- Articulates needs and conditions that support their goals / ability to change
- Tries something new
- Are proud of themselves, knowing they used their own resources/resilience to make change and “own their success”

Examples that illustrate this strategy

Example 1 - Allow the student to take “the good lines.”

One of the best ways to describe the motivating towards change process is to imagine the conversations as if you were in a play.

The Scene is a student experiencing ambivalence and unresolved feelings towards a change, that they either have made or are in the process of considering. The educator enters into an empathic, non-combative and curious conversation with them, seeking to assist them in locating their internal motivation and resolving this ambivalence.

As the paid professional, it is possible for the educator to cast themselves in both the *leading role* and playwright—writing and saying all the best lines themselves—and casting the student in a *supporting role*.

However, the art and nuance of a motivating towards change conversation is the teacher can “flip the script” creating space for and inviting the student in to have the “good lines.”

This allows the student the space, time and opportunity to identify their internalised motivation and reasons for change, and speak aloud the strengths that will allow them to make them. It’s far more powerful and more likely to sustain change than the educator saying those lines. This acknowledges that the motivation comes from within, is fluid, and that the student is the agent of their own change. The educator facilitates a collaborative conversation to strengthen a students’ own motivation and commitment to change. I’ll show you what I mean.

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: A student is close to completing their Foundation VCAL certificate with only 1 unit of competency to go, however they have recently been attending less frequently and when they do they are reluctant to attempt any of the work. When asked, they say they no longer see the point.

Educator: “Would it be ok if we talked about completing your VCAL? I’ve noticed you haven’t been attending as much?”

Student: “Yeah... I just can’t be bothered”

Educator: “Ok, Well this is an optional thing, you know you don’t have to finish, right? It’s just an option.”

Student: “Ohh.. ok”

Educator: “From our previous conversations it was a goal of yours to finish. Is it still something you want to do?”

Student: “I guess.. uhh.. my life’s just.. stuffs just going on.. there are other things more important at the moment.”

Educator pauses, waits for student

Student: “Like.. I’ve got to help out at home.”

Educator: “Ok, so it sounds like you are having to focus your energy and concentration in other areas at the moment.”

Student: “Mmhm”.

Educator: “So when you originally set your goal to finish VCAL, can you tell me more about why you made that plan?”

Student: “Yeah nah... It’s just too hard at the moment...”

Educator waits

Student: “Well, I want to finish to help my mum. But I’ve got to help at home right now.”

Educator: “So it sounds like you work really hard for your family...”

Student: “Yeah. I guess I do work hard. Family is really important to me. But I just can’t really get into school right now.”

Educator: “But you still came...”

Student: “Yeah. I guess I did still come. That’s good”

Educator: “That’s great. Well how about today we can leave it and maybe revisit it and see how we can help, later in the week, would that be helpful?”

Student: “Yeah ok.”

Although it may appear simplistic, the purpose of this exchange was not to return the student to their previous goal, rather to unpack what has changed in their life, and what their internal motivations and values are. This is so the educator can better understand and support them at their pace. It also provides space for the student to speak aloud their values and strengths, rather than the educator speaking them for them.

Example 2 - Moving at the child’s pace

ACT ONE

SCENE 2: A student in a music class has been writing and recording some very personal and passionate music. The themes are quite violent and aggressive, central to crime and chaos that is reflective of his life. Over the course of the collaborative, non-judgmental conversation, the themes and lyrics begin to shift to reflect other parts of their life, and that of their values and internal motivations.

Student is writing and recording music, and seeking feedback from the educator. As the educator reflects lyrics back to the student, they are curious of their meaning and what is important to the student.

Change-talk begins to appear. This is reflected in the gradual shift in tone and direction of the music itself:

Educator: “It’s great to hear you take the lyrics ‘streetlight’ from the chorus and expand on this idea. I’m thinking how do you *shine in the streetlight* and how can you communicate that further?”

“You say you were raised from the streets. That lyric pulls the listener into a story and the story you are telling us is around violence and being a part of a crew outside of your family. I am wondering why violence is necessary in your story?”

“Think of verses like chapters in a story. This story continues on a path of threatening violence, it sounds like you are trying to protect someone and we as the listener want to know who that is.”

“I can hear you starting to question why there’s violence in your story. You’re starting to develop your story more.”

“Your family is the reason for positive change.”

“I’m thinking: How can you expand on this idea of your family in the next verse?”

See [Recording of above song](#), and the change process.

Continuum of practice

Graduate	Evolving	Embedding	Excelling
Educators notice when students indicate a desire to make a change (notice change talk), and resist giving unsolicited advice. They meet the student where they are and offer to support the student to meet their goals.	Educators demonstrate the ability to help students to create mental timelines towards change and then direct them towards available supports. They “defuse discord” when the student does something that doesn’t align with their goal.	Across the whole-school environment, educators teach students that change can be helpful for growth and development. They help students find congruence between values and actions. They use data (reports, assignments etc.) to help map and motivate student progress and change.	Educators reflect on the environmental changes needed to create climates where students feel motivated towards change, and that are conducive (not coercive) to change; including the modelling and demonstration of these techniques to also develop staff.

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Discord typically means disagreement between people; but can also mean disagreement between what a person desires and their actions. Dancing with discord, formerly “rolling with resistance”, recognises that simply confronting someone directly does not always work. Rather than fight the discord, you acknowledge it and roll with it. Educators use this strategy to help students change habitual behaviour when it causes problems for themselves or others. This strategy is used hand-in-hand with *HIES 8 Motivating towards Change*. While dancing with discord may seem purely spontaneous, it requires a combination of preparation, and the ability to respond in the moment. When used well, educators are comfortable with discord rather than sidetracked by it.

Strategy overview

What is it?

Educators who seek to engage authentically with their students dance with discord every day. Dancing with discord, formerly rolling with resistance, acknowledges that discord occurs daily, is normal and needs to be *worked with* rather than fought *against*. Discord can occur between a student and teacher, a student and a work task or the classroom environment, or when the actions of a student conflict with a goal they have set for themselves. Discord can present for any number of reasons. Discord is like a current. You have to swim *with* the discord together with a destination in mind, rather than against it, in order to get safely across.

Discord can occur as a result of a heightened state, poor mood, anxiety, rupture in teacher-student relationship, as well as a student feeling they are being pushed to make changes for which they are not ready (Wisewoman, n.d.). Dancing with the discord means using the knowledge of your students to anticipate and prepare for discord, in order to prevent it. It also means recognising it in the moment, and working *with* rather than *against* it. This allows educators to de-escalate a situation and avoid an argument, maintaining a calm classroom.

For example, a student may express a desire to do well in a subject, but then not submit an assessment task (Kolbert et al., 2017). Instead of showing frustration or disappointment, educators are able to in the moment dance with the discord, defuse the situation and work to identify the source of the discord. This, in turn, reduces the student’s resistance towards change (Kobs, 2015).

How effective is it?

This approach, one aspect of Motivational Interviewing, has been shown to be effective to guide conversations that will assist students to make behavioural changes that in turn support their learning and reduce student disaffection (Rollnick et al., 2016; Snape & Atkinson, 2017). It has also been shown to be effective as a Tier 2 (small group) intervention (Frey et al., 2013). Ratanavivan and Ricard (2018) found the approach particularly effective for students with complex behaviour, typically enrolled in alternative education programs. It is also effective as a technique to reduce or stop persistent bullying behaviour (Rigby & Griffiths, 2018). The technique may not be as effective with students who are still developing their executive functioning skills, young children, or those who have communication difficulties or lower levels of emotional maturity (Snape & Atkinson, 2017).

Considerations

- Discord and resistance to change is normal
- Dwd may imply simply reacting to situations, but this is not so. It is strategic, deft, fluid, intelligent, purposeful and rooted in your knowledge of the student
- It includes the strategic navigation and preparedness for topics of conversation not just externalised behaviours
- Educators take ownership of the discord: Plan for every student, know them, and anticipate how they will react and have a “backup for your backup”
- Discord often takes two forms, either directed to the educator, or to the context
- Actively avoiding arguments and conflicts is key to dancing with discord: dancing with discord is a key strategy within the de-escalation cycle.
- Behaviour is communication. Secondary behaviours can often exist as coping mechanisms or a means of communicating distress / frustration / anxiety. It is important for educators to see beyond the behaviours to what is trying to be communicated, rather than being distracted by them.
- Jumping in too early to challenge behaviour doesn’t allow the student the chance to regulate their behaviour and can lead to confrontation
- Often shutting something down makes it more disruptive
- People generally have a lot of tricks to avoid uncomfortable situations/conversations
- Dancing with discord can support the building of relationships. Dance, until you have a strong enough relationship to discuss and challenge behaviours within the realms of explicit behavioural expectations (see Relationship Building, Repair)
- Acknowledge longevity of the process: Sometimes this can take a day, or a week.

This strategy is demonstrated when the educator:

- Treats each student as an individual and prepares for discord accordingly
- Meets students where they are, and moves at their pace
- Has a backup plan for their backup plan, for every student
- Takes ownership of the discord
- Takes the heat out and flips the narrative
- Is curious of resistance / discord, rather than reactive or offended by it: Asks self “What is this really about?”
- Consults broadly with others who have a relationship with the student (friends, family, community) to find out more about them: “Am I missing something?”
- Can use techniques authentic to them (humour, deflection, structured choice, strategic use and choice of conversation) to defuse
- Recognises secondary behaviours and plans for them, provide options rather than directly confronting
 - e.g. student tagging the desk, teacher gently slides piece of paper or book over while chatting
- Can see beyond and is not distracted by or reactive to secondary behaviours so they can focus on what is relevant right now
- Can reframe secondary behaviours back to student. Doesn’t directly confront, attack or correct:
 - Example of repeating remarks from student back (in curious, calm tone or with humour)
- Resists the externally imposed sense of immediacy to address a secondary behaviour (chooses their battles)
- Plans for and strategically navigates conversations and behaviours that are challenging rather than shutting them down (i.e. tricky topics, drugs, crime, problem sexualised behaviour) which can be heightening
- Shows active listening, and reflects back what student is expressing verbally and non-verbally, maintaining a neutral and calm demeanour (see Pragmatics)
- Knows and uses own self-regulation strategies (see Self-regulation → Co-regulation)
- Holds, doesn’t heighten; Is confident, not stubborn
- Provides an opportunity for reflection rather than reaction
- Is aware of the power imbalance between teacher and student
- Uses a tool kit of phrases which can be used to buy time (and give them a moment to think and plan on how to navigate the situation):
 - “Oh that’s an interesting question” to buy time to refocus and reframe
- Understands time and space (is this the right time and place to address this? Is our relationship strong enough?)
- Admits mistakes and apologies; Is willing to be vulnerable (see Repair)
- Prioritises student agency and autonomy:
 - “I can’t make you learn.” “I can’t make you come to school.” “I’m not going to make you do anything. I might ask you. But I won’t force you.”
 - “I’m not going to stop you. I can’t stop you. But I want you to be aware of the results/chain reaction of your choice”
- Gives the student space to make mistakes

This strategy is not demonstrated when the educator:

- Is derailed by secondary behaviours (is reactive, distracted or takes them personally)
- Ignores function of behaviour
- Has a zero-tolerance policy
- Takes things personally (“I spent all weekend planning this for you”)
- Participates in one-upmanship / power struggle
- Engages in didactic arguments or is oppositional with students
- Cannot be vulnerable or admit fault
- Does not allow the student to self-regulate (see Self-regulation → Co-regulation)
- Makes judgement
- Is guided by ‘the car park mafia,’ (McNaughton, 2004) (see Explicit Behavioural Expectations)
- Is authoritarian and punitive (rather than authoritative)
- Removes rewards as a way of responding to behaviour
- Shuts down a topic of conversation rather than strategically navigating (uses natural consequences instead)
- Does not follow up with student or Repair
- Excludes a student from their class
- Forces the student to do what the teacher wants
- Yells, intimidates, and holds power for no reason; Is uncompromising or unwilling to shift their perspective
- Buys into other staff battles with students

This strategy is demonstrated when students:

- Test you and you maintain their relationship
- Relax physically and emotionally (the fight they anticipated never came)
- Become less oppositional
- Can create an alliance with their educators
- Can make choices; reflect on a choice they’ve made; and choose an alternative task or behaviour
- Engage in class and/or articulate what they want
- Have a sense of control
- Shift their perspective
- Can reflect upon and explain their emotions/behaviours (some root causes)
 - “It wasn’t really about the work you gave me ... Things have been hard at home at the moment.”
- Demonstrate that the student-teacher relationship is an alliance
- Are ready to engage with repair (acknowledge longevity of the process sometimes)
- Have their underlying needs being met
- Learn other, more effective ways of communicating needs (from swearing, throwing a chair or threatening, to now articulating their insecurity about a task and asking for help)
- Can tell their teacher what triggers them

Resources

- Johnson, Peter H. (2004). *Choice words: How our language affects children’s learning*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.
- [Wisewoman Fact Sheet](#)

Examples that illustrate this strategy**Example 1 - Insecurity dressed as discord**

All Term 1 had been struggling to engage one of my year 7 Numeracy students. He was not disruptive or argumentative, rather the complete opposite. He was closed off, reluctant to attempt any of the work and mainly kept to himself. More challenging still, he was at best ambivalent to any attempts I made to establish a working relationship with him. When provided class work he would look at it for a moment, then push it away, call it boring or ignore it entirely.

When discussing my challenges to engage this student with a colleague they were shocked:

“Wait, are we talking about the same student?”

“Yes Brody? Quiet, reserved, often appears bored... doesn’t want a bar of me, Brody...”

“... I think you mean, Brody; enthusiastic, confident, gives everything a try and helps others when they’re struggling, Brody. He’s my most engaged student, if I’m honest ... I think you need to come and observe one of my PE classes.”

I attended a PE class where I observed what could have been an entirely different student.

Brody was engaged, talkative, making jokes with both the teacher and his peers. But the biggest difference was his confidence. So confident and comfortable in his own ability in fact that he offered to demonstrate the activity the teacher was explaining to the other students. The activity, long jump, was something he’d never even done before, but was willing to try, in front of everyone. This student was unrecognisable to me. After school, my colleague and I reflected on the differences between the presentations of Brody we knew. We surmised that it might not be purely boredom, rather he lacked confidence in his ability in Numeracy, and that was fuelling his discord with both the curriculum and me. However, with the right support he might become more confident.

So we decided I would do more regular outreach in PE to get to know him and do my best to replicate a similarly comfortable and supportive environment in my numeracy classes, such that he felt secure enough to try new things. In doing this, I discovered our shared love of footy and decided to incorporate it into a lesson about statistics. In the lead up to the class I asked whether it sounded like something he’d be interested in and to my delight he agreed.

However, when it came to the day, and I provided the worksheets Brody looked at them, and attempted a few questions, but when the questions became a bit too challenging he said: “Nah... this is boring.”

Example 2 - Dancing with discord in the moment

My students arrived and I met each of them at the door on the way in.

One student, Alex, left me hanging and refused to shake my hand. I didn’t react, just laughed it off and mimed shaking my own hand, and headed into class after them.

As the students settled into the work on their desks, Alex continued to walk around the room. He then wandered over to his desk and pushed the work off and sat down in a huff declaring:

“.. The hell is this s***...”

I could see something was up and made a note to check in with him quietly once everyone else was underway. However, I didn’t get the chance.

“I’m glad you ask Alex,” I gestured towards the board “...Today I was thinking we’d continue on with...”

“F*** that. No one cares about that.”

I could see Alex was angry and frustrated and that he might not be in the headspace for class right now. I had two options, 1) combat this behaviour head on, escalating the situation and resulting in the argument he is seeking to have; or 2) acknowledge the discord, strategically navigate it to help the both of us to dance with it (roll with it) avoiding an argument and maintaining a calm and safe classroom for everyone.

In a calm, lowered voice, this is crucial (this cannot be patronising or with any hint of judgment or sarcasm) I replied:

“Interesting point, you’re probably right not everyone does care about this...”

“Stop talking! Shut up! No one cares.”

As this dialogue was happening some students had begun their work anyway, and others were listening.

(Still calm, slow, measured and without sarcasm)

“Also a good point, no one wants a class of just me talking...”

“Shut Uuuuup!”

“... Oh I will... How about I get just 5 minutes...”

“SHUT UP! No one cares.”

“... to explain the task, and then nothing more from me?”

“Dude. No one wants to do this. No one’s listening.”

(Still calm, neutral, listening)

“Well let’s see. I’ll quickly explain and then no one has to do anything they don’t want to, I’m not going to force you.”

I managed to explain the task, the dialogue between us continued similarly throughout. Alex continually trying to bring me up to his heightened state, while I continued to acknowledge and strategically navigate the discord while bringing him down to my calm state (see Self-regulation → Co-regulation).

Example 1 - Insecurity dressed as discord (cont.)**Example 2 - Dancing with discord in the moment (cont.)**

Internally, I was devastated. I was so sure he'd love this! But intellectually I knew how big of a step even attempting this work was for Brody, so I didn't let it show. Clearly, I needed to do some more work here and this wasn't going to happen as quickly as I'd hoped. So, I decided not to push it, rather to roll with it:

"Oh ok. You've had enough of this?"

"yeah... Nah.. I don't want to do this."

And he pushed the worksheet off the table.

"That's ok. Thank you for giving it a go though. I know this isn't something you're keen to do right now or at all, but thank you so much for trying it. You don't have to continue with it if you don't want to, I won't make you do anything you don't want to do and by next class I'll make sure I have something better. Sound ok?"

"Yeah ok.."

"Reckon we could chat quickly at the end of class maybe, or in PE about what I could do next class to make it a bit less boring?"

"Yeah that's fine."

His agreeing to even have this conversation, was another huge step.

I could see something was going on for Alex, I didn't know what it was, and this wasn't the time or space to investigate, but I knew he was unlikely to do the class work. My task at the moment was to maintain a calm and productive space for all, and hopefully in doing so reduce his heightened state as well.

Some students began their tasks while others busied themselves with other things. I made the conscious decision to go to Alex first, before I began to check in with other students, because in this instance it felt most appropriate. However, I wouldn't always do this, depending on the non-verbal cues I was receiving from the student. I slowly made my way over to Alex, and crouched by his chair. As I did so he shoved the work at me and it fell onto my lap.

Very quietly I asked (maintaining calm, empathic tone, and ensuring I didn't rush my words)

"It feels like you're not really into this today Alex? Is that right?"

"Obviously. This is shit. Get away from me"

"Ok. I'm sorry I haven't got the class or the work they way you need it. That's my fault. You don't have to do anything you don't want to, I'm not going to force you. How about we leave this for today?"

I paused

"On my desk I have some other options, some puzzles, colouring in, a stress ball or books to read..."

"I don't care."

"No worries, how about I bring some over and you choose, or not, whatever you feel up to, and I'll leave you alone?"

I calmly got up and grabbed some of the self-regulation activities off my desk and placed them, as well as the class work for today, on Alex's desk.

"See if you like any of this, and call out if you need anything else."

I then began walking around to check in with each student.

Alex began to go through each of the resources, pushing the ones he didn't like onto the ground and declaring "boring!" or "this is s***" until eventually, he found something he liked, some colouring.

He started tagging furiously all over the page, but over the course of 5-10 minutes he slowed down, and started colouring between the lines, changing pencils and colouring in. In the final 5 minutes of the class he turned his attention to one of worksheets for the day, attempting a few questions.

At the end of class, I thanked everyone for coming and for trying their best.

Later that afternoon I went to find Alex, to repair and see how he was. He was much calmer by this point. I reiterated my apology and sought input for how we could avoid a similar situation next time. This opened up to a very honest conversation about some things going on for Alex at home, and how it hadn't been the class work he was just angry. I thanked him for his honesty and we discussed alternate ways for him to let me know he was feeling this way, so that we could avoid this in future. (see Repair)

Continuum of practice

Graduate	Evolving	Embedding	Excelling
Educators can recognise and dance with discord and avoid arguments wherever possible. Educators effectively avoid heightening a situation or interaction with a student.	Educators employ knowledge of students and how they respond, to prevent discord / arguments in the first place. Educators are prepared for how a student may respond and employ preventative strategies and tools.	Educators can model and demonstrate to colleagues how to recognise and respond to discord. They assist staff in using their own knowledge of their students to dance with discord in a way that is authentic to them.	At a whole school level, educators lead the practice of recognising, dancing with and preventing discord based on knowledge of individual students, their families and community. Educators seek to engage the whole school community in this continual learning process.

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By actively self-regulating their feelings and emotions, educators co-regulate students to help them manage their responses to challenging situations. Educators remain calm and use their physical and emotional presence to help students calm themselves. It is through co-regulation that students learn to self-regulate. Self-regulation is an executive function that improves a student's ability to stay calm in the moment and respond effectively to the situation.

Strategy overview

What is it?

Self-regulation involves a range of skills including the ability to maintain attention, seek-help, delay gratification, and verbally and non-verbally express emotions, thoughts and behaviours with effortful control, persistence, and will-power (Baron, 2017; Bruhn et al., 2016; Housman et al., 2018; Osher et al., 2016). For a student to learn they need to be able to self-regulate (Baron et al., 2016). Children learn how to calm themselves (self-regulation) through adults modelling how to regulate emotions and feelings (co-regulation) in early childhood. This is initially facilitated by caregivers, and later, teachers and other supportive adults (Housman, 2017). For students who have experienced insecure attachments and trauma, this early modelling may not have occurred and, as a consequence, they may find self-regulation challenging.

How effective is it?

Self-regulated students are better able to work cooperatively, sustain focus, perform better both at and post-school, and have fewer behavioural concerns (Baron, 2017; Baron et al., 2016; Rosanbalm & Murray, 2017). Childhood abuse, trauma, neglect, insecure attachment and diagnosed behavioural disorders can impact a child's capacity to self-regulate in prosocial ways. However, the negative impact of these circumstances can be reduced when students are taught prosocial self-regulation strategies later in life (Bruhn et al., 2015; Senehi, Brophy-Herb & Vallotton, 2018; Sentencing Advisory Council, 2019). Self-regulated teachers have decreased stress levels when responding to student behaviour (Hopkins, 2016).

Considerations

- If you feel angry or upset from an interaction with a student, it is likely the student feels the same
- It is useful for schools to develop a toolkit of teaching resources on co-regulation approaches
- "If yelling worked as a behaviour management tool, it would have worked by now..." (Cowan, 2020)
- Consider students' flight/fight/freeze responses

This strategy is not demonstrated when the educator:

- Matches the dysregulated and heightened state of the students
- Doesn't take time to attune to students
- Allows students' dysregulation to dysregulate them
- Doesn't allow students to self-regulate (particularly if it requires the employ of a secondary behaviour)
- Cannot recognise when a student is heightening or retreating into self
- Misses or misinterprets behavioural cues from students
- Stands over students, raises voice, is out of control
- Pushes on with the lesson plan, when students are not ready to learn
- Cannot recognise their own regulation abilities they have brought into the class
- Over-stimulates students
- Fails to consider and address internalising behaviour (i.e. assumes student insolence or boredom)

This strategy is demonstrated when the educator:

- Helps students to understand and develop their own emotional literacy
- Provides self-regulation exercises and games for students in class
 - e.g. Colouring in, kinetic sand, puzzles, breathing exercises, taking a break, blocks, listening to music etc
- Self-regulates to co-regulate others:
 - Put your own "life mask" on before you help others
- Is attuned to own body and whether feelings of stress or panic are present
- Actively models self-regulation (breathing, walking away, sitting somewhere else to manage moments of stress)
- Is reflective and aware of own "presentation" (i.e. what they are bringing to class)
- Demonstrates calm and composed behaviour (see Pragmatics), despite actual chaos or stress; and in doing so helps to co-regulate those around them
- Does not heighten or match the energy or heightened state of students
- Moderates voice and physical presence (Se: Pragmatics)
- Checks in with students (feeling, emotions), knows their triggers and "when things are too much"; provides them with activities and strategies to cope, so they can practise and become aware themselves
- Explains the process of how the brain functions and how learning is affected when they are heightened:
 - "I can see you're frustrated, and at the moment it might be hard for you to learn, so why don't we take a break do some ... and come back to it."
- Explicitly teaches students when and how to use self-regulation processes: "I can see that X, how about we do Y, because Z."
- Conducts pulse check throughout class (at the start, middle, end, reflection)
- Recognises students' *externalising* behaviours (reacting physically, i.e. using body to try to regulate) and *internalising* behaviours (withdrawing, zoning out, appearing bored)
- Considers and manages the sensory aspects of classrooms and/or experiences: Tries to keep space, sound, light, temperature, smell of classrooms consistent and calming
- Attunes to students' needs and behaviours (employ co-regulation techniques by recognizing dysregulation, before escalation)
- Creates calming environment for students who are withdrawing, so they can feel safe to participate

This strategy is demonstrated when students:

- Feel safe
- Can model demonstrated strategies in times of stress or dysregulation
- Have an increased understanding of their emotional state (emotional literacy)
- Can better recognise their feelings and emotions and possible triggers
- Use strategies to manage their strong emotions and feelings
- Can keep their bodies calm

Resources

- Resources on self-regulation and the brain. (e.g. Hammond, Z. (2014). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain*. Corwin Press.)
- Mind Up Program
- Zones of Regulation Program
- Emotional Thermometer Resources (e.g. *Social Emotional Workshop*)
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- Sensory activities/resources (kinetic sand, colouring in, puzzles, headphones, heart rate monitors, a sensory area, puzzles).

Examples that illustrate this strategy

Example 1 - Explicit Teaching: Self-Reg → Co-Reg by explaining your process

In my Year 7 home group there were several young people struggling with the transition from primary school. They would often arrive dysregulated or become so over the course of our lessons. When this happened, they struggled to regulate their emotions and strong feelings. They would either externalise: running and pacing around the room, become violent, aggressive and or argumentative with those around them; or in other cases internalise: dissociate ("zone out"), and/or appear bored.

Leadership had identified this as a recurring issue and believed additional support and resources should be implemented for students experiencing behavioural difficulties, in the same way they would if they were experiencing difficulties in literacy or numeracy.

To assist students in managing complex emotions in order to self-regulate, we were expected to actively model our own self-regulation to students; and explain the strategies we are using to self-regulate during stress. This provided students with the tools they could employ themselves, as well as simultaneously co-regulating those around them.

One afternoon, two students arrived at class in a dysregulated state after lunchtime. One of the students quickly took their seat and started reading, the other remained agitated and couldn't bring themselves down. The student began pacing and throwing books from the shelf. I decided to calmly approach the student to check in, but they ignored me, picked up a pen and began scribbling their name in some of the class books. Instead of admonishing the student, I stayed calm and non-reactive, as I interpreted the student's scribbling as an attempt to self-regulate.

I began to actively employ and model self-regulation strategies while engaging the student: controlling my breathing, remaining calm, and explaining my process of managing my own stress so the student could see how I was self-regulating:

Out of earshot of the other students, I said: "Is everything ok?"

The student, heightened and unresponsive, continued to scribble, visibly frustrated. I paused, and then asked again:

"Is there anything I can do to help?" to which the student replied "they're pissing me off. Everyone, everyone is pissing me off! You! Get away from me."

With my voice low, I said calmly:

"I'm sorry to hear that. I can see you are frustrated and I am feeling a bit frustrated myself. I'm not here to make your day any worse, so I might just take a few breaths, walk away for a minute to give you space and come back when I am calm and we can try again is that ok? I'll be back."

The student looked up from their book, but did not respond.

After a few moments I quietly returned by the side of the student with some blank pieces of paper and a pen, placed them near the student and began drawing.

I said calmly: "How are we going?... I took some deep breaths and I feel a bit better, but what helps me most is drawing, I can see we're similar like that."

I remained calm and quiet and continued to draw. After a few minutes asked: "Would you like some paper?" For some time, the student continued to vandalise the books, but eventually took some paper. I continued to consciously regulate my breathing and body language to model self-regulation.

Whilst drawing together for a few minutes, the student became gradually less agitated, visible in the slowing rate and lesser intensity of their drawing. So I checked in again:

"How are we feeling now? ... do you feel like taking your drawing to your desk?"

"...Fine. ok" the student said. I then reiterated the process I'd used to self-regulate "thanks for that, drawing together was very relaxing for me and helped me feel less frustrated."

Example 2 - Imagine how they're feeling: Coaching a colleague on Self-Reg → Co-Reg

A fellow teacher, James, stormed into the staff room one afternoon—returning from his class visibly heightened and angry. He slammed his resources loudly on the table and exclaimed: "I can't keep doing this, none of them listen!"

I responded, somewhat startled, but working to regulate my own emotions: "Ok... Talk me through what happened."

James: They just won't settle down, they're all so heightened it's just chaos in there. None of them want to do any work and it's just a waste of time.

Me: When the students were heightened and chaotic how did you feel?

James: Well, frustrated. I can't get them to listen.

Me: How do you think you might come across to them when you feel like that?

James: I guess ... I guess heightened and out-of-control, myself...

Me: And how do you feel now?

James: ... I think my heart is still racing and... I'm pretty agitated... I just didn't have control of the class at all.

Me: Well, when I first started as a teacher, something I was told by a colleague has really stuck with me: In any interaction if you leave feeling angry or upset, chances are the other person feels exactly the same way. Your emotional control (or affect regulation) ends up mirroring one another's. I wonder, how do you think the students might have felt then? And how do you think they're feeling even now?

James: ... I think we were feeding into each other... Everyone was heightened and felt out of control...

Me: *pause*

James: ... I don't think they would have enjoyed it either.... I think... I think I got rattled and waited for them to calm... but I needed to be calm myself.

Me: I think you're right. Even if you don't feel calm, acting it always helps students do it themselves. How do you feel now?

James: ... Better. Still frustrated.. but better.. I think I'll wait a bit... and then go see them in the next class and apologise... Try and reset before our next class.

Me: Good idea... So, how do you want to start your next class?

James: ... Hmm... Well I'll be as calm as I can... I won't yell this time... maybe, maybe some hands-on or tactile activities to start? See how that goes?

Me: Sounds good to me... So, reflecting on that, how do you think I was feeling when you came into the staffroom before, heightened like that.

James: ... Oh...

Me: Yeah, I was feeling pretty rattled. But could you tell?

James: No

Me: See what I mean. Even if you're not calm, fake it till you make it, and help bring the kids with you.

Continuum of practice

Graduate	Evolving	Embedding	Excelling
Educators help students to identify and accurately express their own feelings and emotions. When responding to concerns, educators manage their own physical and emotional presence in a calm and predictable manner.	Educators assist students to identify feelings and emotions in others, explaining these as needed. They are open to students displaying their emotions, so that they can support co-regulation. They assist students to use feelings and emotions to consider alternative views and to help problem-solving and judgement.	When working with students experiencing complex emotions across the whole school environment, educators assist them to transition between emotions and return to a calm state. Educators also assist students to understand triggers and consequences of emotional states. Staff monitor and reflect on their contribution to supporting self-regulation in students.	Educators reflect upon structural, environmental or attitudinal changes in the school community needed to facilitate self-regulation by students and staff, and take action to lead the change process.

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Educators repair fractured relationships by setting up timely follow-up with students outside the classroom, following challenges or disagreements. By conveying empathy, and apologising for misunderstandings without judgement or conditions, educators actively repair relationships with the student. Educators use repair to model vulnerability and prosocial responses to conflict, thus preventing the escalation of a rupture or incident, and avoiding the promotion of disengagement.

Strategy overview

What is it?

The purpose of using repair as a strategy is to restore the relationship between the educator and the student after a negative interaction, in order to reconnect with and re-engage the student. By modelling this vulnerability and acknowledging fault, educators provide examples for how students can repair relationships in the future, should they need to (Cook et al., 2018). The educator initiates the repair, but it always remains on the students' terms. The process models the vulnerability required to acknowledge fault and provides the steps to do so, as well as modelling how to maintain healthy relationships through turmoil. To repair the relationship so that engagement can continue, an educator might offer the student or class an apology, articulate awareness and self-reflection of missteps, and collaborate with students to create strategies to avoid a repeat of the situation. Without repair, the relationships can remain fractured, trust can be broken, and the student may feel alienated, thus promoting disengagement (Beaulieu, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2016).

How effective is it?

Positive teacher-student relationships have been shown to be one of the highest predictors of teachers staying in the profession. Gaining enjoyment from their work; knowing how to repair these relationships when there is a fracture is critical to reduced workload stress (Claessens et al., 2017). When students are left to repair on their own, this can lead to feelings of shame and alienation, which can escalate student behaviour; students are more likely to accept accountability for their behaviour when the educator also takes responsibility for their actions and offers ways to repair any harm these might have caused (Gregory et al., 2014; Gregory et al., 2016).

Considerations

- Repair is not the same as "restorative practice", "mediation", or "getting even".
- Repair is about modelling vulnerability, creating a safe space for young people and owning mistakes. Repair is about bringing students in, not pushing them away.
- Repair is initiated by the teacher. The timing, pace, and choice to participate is driven by the student. It should never be forced.
- Regarding timing – Is this the right time for *the student*, or is this a convenient time *for you*?
- Regarding space, if it relates to only one student, rather than a class, repair should always be done one-on-one
- Repair can be a singular event, or it can be chipped away at over time; It can be performed in creative ways, including using existing relationships or community (see Relationship Building)
- Teachers who are inexperienced can utilise an existing relationship between the student and another teacher, or with the student, or who has experience in repairs to support this process.
- By modelling repair and apologising, you model how a student can do this if and when they make a mistake themselves. This models how to build and maintain healthy relationships through turmoil (you can repair after an argument or mistake, the relationship isn't irreparable).
- Repair is not always "I'm sorry". It can also be "What can I do for you?" "How can we avoid this next time?" "How can we not get here again?"
- Being submissive isn't modelling vulnerability.
- Being authoritarian is aligned with the promotion of consistent boundaries and predictability (see Explicit Behavioural Expectations)
- Can be performed on behalf of others – i.e. repair after school expulsions
- Teachers are cognizant of their student's culture and background (how respect is shown, articulated etc.)

This strategy is demonstrated when the educator:

- Models vulnerability (saying sorry, owning faults), reflects openly and makes it visible for the student:
 - "I made the wrong decision in that moment"
 - "I wasn't sure early on in the class what I was going to do, and I did X, but it didn't turn out how I thought it would. And it clearly didn't work. I'm sorry, I won't do that next time."
- Is targeted and active, planned (prepare before you start a repair)
- Goes to the student (walks with them to the locker, meets at lunch time, outreach in another class, before the next class); checks if it is an ok time to have a conversation
- Is aware of timing – "there's never a perfect time. But you can find the best time." Make best judgement and don't rush it if the student isn't ready
- Teacher leads / owns the repair (it's not the job of the student), but does not push their agenda
- Seeks understanding – what role did I play in that situation/ misunderstanding?
- Is curious about what is going on
- Is "calm, consistent, persistent" (Cowan, 2020)
- Acknowledges when you don't have the answer
- Admits they don't know everything about teaching and don't always get it right
- Acknowledges mistakes and that we are human
- Invites student into the conversation (what you think you're repairing for could differ from the student's perception)
- Has high expectations for student (see Unconditional Positive Regard)
- Shows genuine care and effort in making sure class and measures of success tailored for each student
- Is creative and individualised in how one approaches repair (e.g. Calls home, follows up with student in time appropriate to them, does not exclude them, brings student in doesn't push them away)
- Engages in outreach:
 - Targeted and purposeful interactions the teacher has in other classes and outside the setting your incident might have occurred in;
 - Calls home to provide feedback to family and community, recognising student success after a good class or series of classes
- Demonstrates humility and conveys empathy, apologising for misunderstandings (see Empathy)
- Uses a strengths-based approach
- Seeks to recontract after repair:
 - "How can we avoid this again? What can I do or not do, that would help?"
 - "Next time you're feeling this way, what else could we do, that's not flipping the table?"

This strategy is not demonstrated when the educator:

- Is ignorant of when repair is needed (see Pragmatics)
- Forces student into repair conversation
- Does repair with conditions, assumes restoration is key
- Wants student to lead it, expects the student to come to them and apologise: "I didn't do anything wrong. They should be apologising to me!"
- Is defensive
- Places blame and/or shame
 - "if only you hadn't done X, then it wouldn't have happened!"
- Does not actively reflect on the situation, the student, and their own role
- Repeats the same approach every time without seeking new ideas/help/support
- Performs a repair, relevant to one student, in front of others / in the classroom

This strategy is demonstrated when students:

- Are connected and comfortable
- Verbalise their needs
- Experience a sense of predictability – they know what to expect from you, can predict how you will respond
- Understand how to maintain healthy relationships (through turmoil)
- Feel comfortable in the space, can relax; Can ask for help
- Choose to stay in the conversation
- Are more actively engaged in relationship and in learning
- Students can speak about moving forward, what success looks like

Examples that illustrate this strategy

Example 1 - Modelling vulnerability by acknowledging fault

It was the middle of the week. I was tired and I made an error that caused my lesson to go poorly. However, it was more my delay in acknowledging and repairing my mistake with my students that made it an unforgettable experience that has forever influenced my practice as a teacher.

My students were struggling to engage with the lesson; I'd pitched it too high and wasn't being responsive to their needs. The class was very unsettled. I hadn't checked in whether the previous class had made sense and that we were right to move on. However, I continued to ride it out, even as the class became more and more unproductive and chaotic—I think out of personal pride and ignorance. I had spent all yesterday afternoon planning it, after all.

I became angered. The class wasn't going well for me; students weren't listening, and I felt like a failure. After 45 minutes the lesson finished and I stormed back to my staffroom, blaming the students for my frustration and the failure of the lesson aloud to the other teachers in the staffroom. Looking back, I had failed to critically reflect on this situation at all—the role I had played. Instead I approached the next class with these students in the same fashion and was met with similar disaffection and boredom. This continued for a week.

Zero engagement, zero success, for myself or the students. Frankly I was surprised they continued attending. It wasn't until speaking with a colleague in the staff room, I realised my mistakes. After reflecting I realised I had played a role in this: I wasn't hearing my students. I was ignoring their needs, was not prepared for them, and it took me far too long to do anything about it. I thought if I apologised that I would be admitting weakness or that students might view me as a bad teacher, when really, I had just made a mistake and needed to acknowledge it.

At the start of my next class I bumbled through my first attempt at, something that is now the bedrock of my practice: a repair.

"Hey everyone, thanks for coming today. Look. Umm. I just wanted to say... Look I am really sorry. I want to say sorry, for a couple of things. One, for the last week of classes, I hadn't prepared well enough, I wasn't listening, and you were clearly communicating to me that something wasn't working, but I pushed on regardless.

I'm sorry about that. The second is that it took me way too long to do this: say sorry. It can be really hard to admit when you've got it wrong. I find it very hard. But better late than never? I promise to try really hard to not let this happen again... How about I check in at the start and finish of each class from now on, and make sure we're all on the same page, and I'm getting the lesson right for you? Will that help, do you think? Sound ok?"

This process was both a learning opportunity for me and a teaching moment for the students.

As I reflect on and embody it now in my practice, I regularly think about how rare it is that we admit fault at all, let alone as an adult with an audience of students.

Continuum of practice

Graduate

Educators understand the purpose of repair and recognise when it is needed. They are supported by leadership when necessary, to perform a repair (using appropriate language, timing, and space to do repair).

Evolving

Educators are confident and willing to perform repairs. Educators take ownership in the process, not leaving it to the student. Educators reflect regularly and seek to prevent the need for repair using relationships and knowledge of students and dancing with discord techniques.

Embedding

Educators demonstrate and model to others (in person) how to perform an appropriate repair. They model the vulnerability required, and help others to use their knowledge of individual students to reflect on the potential reasons why a repair may be necessary.

Excelling

Educators reflect on the school-wide, environmental changes needed to create a climate that promotes the modelling of vulnerability to reflect and perform repair. Extending this process to engage school communities and families in repair, should it be necessary.

Resources

- Cowan (2019) Repair Conversation Script

Example 2 - Repair on another's behalf

I learned the significance of repair later on in my career as the Assistant Principal of a Government School. A position I found myself in that I had not anticipated was repairing on behalf of others to rebuild student trust in both education, relationships and their sense of belonging in school. Needless to say, I became quite practised. A situation I became all too familiar with follows below.

A student had been "asked to leave" his private school. As his nearest neighbourhood school, we could expect his enrolment in the coming week.

I attempted to reach out to the family to schedule an enrolment meeting, but struggled. When I eventually got onto the family it became apparent the young person was very upset, and disheartened by the situation and reluctant to attend a meeting or the school entirely. I opted to cancel the meeting and again reached out to the family, enquiring as to whether a home visit would be more suitable?

I visited the family home, first by myself and organised to be joined by his new home room teacher, should the conversation go well and it be appropriate.

I started the conversation with the student and his family, by saying:

"I just wanted to apologise for the way our education system has treated you so far. I'm really sorry. I don't have the full picture, but I can tell you clearly liked your old school and that you aren't overly excited about attending our school. I'm sorry about that, it's not an ideal situation. But I wanted to meet with you and your family to assure you we are looking forward to your attending and your new teachers are excited to meet you. Is there anything we can do right now to support you and start to make school somewhere you want to be after today's meeting?"

By taking this approach, I felt like it was one small step I could take to try to repair the situation for this student. He then opened up, saying that he hadn't been an angel at his last school, and that he was responsible for some of his actions.

This opened up a further constructive conversation about the previous issues he had at his school and how we could work together to avoid them, should similar situations arise. His homeroom teacher was included in this conversation and we were able to effectively plan supports he may need post-enrolment. This included how his teachers could best work with him and address some of his main concerns about starting at a new school.

It was important to lead a repair like this where we took ownership and apologised even though it was for something that we did not have anything directly to do with. This is because in the student's eyes we still represented the wider system and all of its faults. This repair showed me that it is possible to challenge students' perception of school and set our own educational narrative. Repair enables us to do that.

By modelling the vulnerability it takes to acknowledge a mistake or to apologise, we can provide students the tools to do so themselves.

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