

# Strategies for Authentic Connection with Students

## Building Level

- Provide **professional development** and learning opportunities on relationship skills, community building, culturally responsive practice.
- Develop daily schedules that **promote non-academic connection time** between people.
- Dot Activity – Put pictures up of students and put a dot sticker on those for whom you believe you would know if they were in trouble and would come to you for help. **Target students** with few dots **for mentoring**.
- **Design spaces** in the building with connection and collaboration in mind.
- Include questions in student, parent and educator **surveys** about strengths and challenges in forming and maintaining safe connections at school. Share the data and work with student driven committees to develop action steps.
- Use **exemplars and peer-learning** opportunities among staff. Praise and reward educators for student engagement as much as for student achievement

## Classroom Level

- Collaboratively develop **classroom norms**: Create a set of non-negotiables developed by students on how we will make sure all students feel safe and included. Make them visible and refer to them often. Incorporate into the learning. Establish practice for how to hold each other accountable when norms are not adhered to in the classroom. **[View this video for more information](#)**
- **Coming together**: Use community circles and morning meetings to check in and make classroom decisions.

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- **Group Reflection:** Good news/ unwelcome news; 2 Strengths and a challenge. Use post-it notes on the wall so that students can submit anonymously.
- **Peer to Peer Praise:** Student shout-outs or salutes; student gratitude and acts of kindness as part of the established routine in the classroom.
- **Collaborating:** Find new ways to pair up or group students. Focus on commonalities: ("Find someone in the classroom with the same birth month as you", "same number of siblings", "wearing the same color as you") Or difference (straight hair and wavy hair; identify as introverted or extroverted) with an emphasis on how diverse teams can produce more creative solutions and better outcomes. Be mindful to do this in a way that does not single out differences in a single student or small group of students.
- **Hellos and Goodbyes**
  - Greetings at the door with handshake, high five or wave
  - Opening check in question
  - Exit tickets can help to get feedback and assess academic progress, and to connect with students (What worked well? What do you need?).
- **Schedule 1:1 check-in** appointment for each student to occur while other students are engaged in independent work time. Designed to be no more than 3 minutes with a quick check in question and should be weekly if possible. [Click here for sample check in questions](#)
- **Open ended follow up questions** to get a more thoughtful answer and promote a back-and-forth dialogue.
- Help students to **explore their own values** and identities. [Click here for more information](#)

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## Individual Student Level

- Use the **2x10 Strategy**- For students with whom you are struggling to connect, engage in a non-academic conversation for 2 minutes each day for 10 days in a row. Read more about this evidence-based practice [Read more about this evidence-based practice here](#)
- For students who crave attention, **increase frequency and duration** of above strategies.
- Take opportunities to allow students to play the role of **leader or helper** in the classroom.
- **Make a list** for yourself of all the things that you like about this student. Add to it each day. **Focusing on the positives** will come out naturally in your interactions with them and they will notice it!
- Share yourself through **identifying commonalities** and reciprocal story telling with appropriate boundaries.
- Provide opportunities to **engage non-verbally** in journal entry, email, google document or on-line chat, especially for more withdrawn students.
- **Always give choices**. The option to choose another question or to pass empowers students to take a risk when they feel safe and on their own terms. Forced sharing or consequences for "passing" should not occur.