



THE
COLORADO
EDUCATION
INITIATIVE

Using Colorado's Student Perception Survey to Inform Practice:

Instructional Strategies
from Students and Teachers



Grades 3-5

JANUARY 2016

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide was created to help teachers respond to the feedback they receive from students who complete Colorado's Student Perception Survey. The Colorado Education Initiative (CEI) worked with teachers and students across the state to develop a comprehensive list of instructional strategies that teachers can use to improve their instructional practice based on survey results..

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Colorado's Student Perception Survey

CEI created the Student Perception Survey to provide teachers with actionable feedback from their students. The survey includes 34 items — marked  **SPS item** — that measure elements of student experience that correlate most closely to a teacher's ability to positively impact student growth. The survey is organized by four elements:

Student Learning

How teachers use content and pedagogical knowledge to help students learn.

Student-Centered Environment

How teachers create an environment that responds to each student's background, strengths, and interests.

Classroom Community

How teachers cultivate a classroom learning community where student differences are valued.

Classroom Management

How teachers foster a respectful and predictable learning environment.

CEI partnered with teachers and students across Colorado to create instructional strategies that align to each Student Perception Survey item. Teachers from all content and grade levels shared instructional strategies and practices for building a strong classroom community. Similarly, students in grades 3-12 discussed what made their classrooms places where meaningful learning occurred and where they felt part of a supportive community. What follows is the collection of both teacher and student suggestions as they connect to each of the Student Perception Survey items.

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How to use this guide

This guide is organized by the four survey elements and the items within each element. Each item has a few overarching strategies followed by specific action items. Throughout the guide, both overarching strategies and action items repeat; this is deliberate as many of the practices described apply to multiple items.



indicates strategies that have been developed based on feedback from students.

STUDENT LEARNING

These items focus on how teachers use content and pedagogical knowledge to help students learn.

 **SPS item** The schoolwork we do helps me learn.


FOCUS ON CLEAR AND CHALLENGING LEARNING GOALS to ensure high expectations for all students.

- Backwards plan using the [Colorado Academic Standards](#). Start with academic goals before choosing assessment and instructional methods.
 - See the Colorado Education Initiative [Colorado Academic Standards resources](#).
- Ensure that all students are able to access the curriculum at their level.
- Use [Bloom's Taxonomy](#) to scaffold for higher-level thinking.
- Familiarize yourself with and use [Depth of Knowledge](#) levels to plan instruction to meet all students' needs.
- Provide extension activities for students who are ahead of the rest of the class.

PLAN MEANINGFUL AND VALID ASSESSMENTS to provide accurate information to inform future instruction.





- Use [KWL charts](#) (Know, Want to Know, Learned) throughout a unit to gauge students' prior knowledge and understanding.
- Use [formative assessments](#) throughout instruction to see where there may be areas of strength and growth. This information can be used to inform future instruction. See "[The Best Value in Formative Assessment](#)" for more information.
 - Use a variety of checks for understanding to help students return to central objectives and give you a sense of what is needed to improve student learning.
 - ☐ [Exit tickets](#).
 - ☐ Writing three things you learned today.
 - ☐ Informal questioning.
 - ☐ [Fist to Five](#).
 - ☐ Thumbs-up/thumbs-down.
 - ☐ Whiteboards.
 - Have students [self-assess](#) using [rubrics](#) or checklists. This not only provides insight into student understanding of academic material, but also allows students to have awareness of their own processes.
 - Deconstruct rubrics with students so they know specifically what is expected of them.
 - Post student exemplar work or a teacher-created sample of what is expected. Use [document cameras](#) to project exemplar work.

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT RELEVANT AND ENGAGING CURRICULUM to increase student engagement and help students apply school-based learning to their lives.

-  Have students create rather than simply consume information (such as game boards, websites, personal letters to historical figures, and science and reading fairs).

SPS item What I learn in this class is useful to me in my real life.

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT RELEVANT AND ENGAGING CURRICULUM to help students connect school learning to their life outside of school.

- Use simulations to place students in learning scenarios.
- Create and choose curriculum that is relevant to students' lives. This can help increase student motivation and engagement.
 - Develop an understanding of [culturally responsive teaching](#) strategies to honor students' cultural backgrounds and practices.
 - Post word walls, visual content, resources in languages other than English, and pictures and stories of individuals and communities from diverse backgrounds on walls and shelves to represent the various identities, families, and community backgrounds of students.
- Point out the relevancy of curriculum to help students understand how it is important to their lives.
 -  Connect school-based learning with real-world topics such as [Dynamath](#).
 - Incorporate community-based problem-solving projects (such as a student project on the benefits and drawbacks of off-campus lunch) using project-based learning.
 -  Link learning to college, career, and what it means to be a citizen.
-  Use current events and local happenings to connect to school-based material. For example, word problems can be written with a local context in mind.
 - Field trips (such as [History Colorado](#)) and local history projects can help make learning authentic for students.
- Invite guest speakers to help students understand how various skills can be used outside of school.
-  Design activities so that students are writing about their lives and what they want to accomplish.
 - Share how you use the content you teach in your life outside of school.
 - Give students choice in terms of activities and curricular materials, such as choosing a text to read.

SELECT APPROPRIATE LEARNING TASKS AND MATERIALS to engage students in big ideas and key learning.

- Make connections to students' lives outside of school in order to give students relevant points of connection to the material.

SPS item In this class, we learn a lot almost every day.

MAXIMIZE LEARNING TIME so students are engaged in learning material for the majority of the day.

- Plan for and teach bell to bell. Students should be engaged soon after the class begins and throughout the entirety of the period.
 - Explicitly teach an entry routine for yourself (attendance, housekeeping) and for students (getting supplies, turning in work, etc.).
 - Use a ["Do Now"](#) to immediately engage students, review past material and preview new material.
- Set up choices for students when finished with work such as going to a station for supplemental work, helping peers, choosing a book, or earning extra credit.
- Schedule in ["brain breaks"](#) for students to recharge and maximize their learning.

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PLAN MEANINGFUL AND VALID ASSESSMENTS to ensure you reteach skills and content that are not mastered by students and teach new skills and content for students who have mastered the material.

- Have students [self-assess](#) using [rubrics](#) or checklists. This not only provides insight into student understanding of academic material, but also allows students to have awareness of their own processes.
 - Deconstruct rubrics with students so they know specifically what is expected of them.
 - Post student exemplar work or a teacher-created sample of what is expected. Use [document cameras](#) to project exemplar work.
- Use [peer assessment and review](#) to help students internalize the requirements for high-quality academic work and to provide insight into student understanding.

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SCAFFOLD AND DIFFERENTIATE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION to ensure that all students have access to and are learning skills and content.

- Use [Bloom's Taxonomy](#) to scaffold for higher-level thinking.
 - Familiarize yourself with and use [Depth of Knowledge](#) levels to plan instruction to meet all students' needs.
- Support multilingual learners by creating an academic, language-rich environment that surrounds students with oral and written texts needed to succeed in an academic environment.
- Use the principles of sheltered instruction to structure pedagogy and curriculum for all of your learners, especially multilingual learners. This includes development of both content and language objectives, judicious use of students' native languages for support, and explicit teaching of learning strategies.
- Create a resource-rich environment that supports all students (including multilingual learners).
 - Share strategies, processes, and reminders (such as reading comprehension strategies, estimation, and thesis statement development) with [posters](#) around the room. Students can help create these "how-to" posters during and after working through and mastering a skill or process. Remind students about these resources on a regular basis to encourage independence in learning.

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DESIGN RELEVANT AND ENGAGING CURRICULUM to increase student motivation to learn and explore new ideas.

- Backwards plan using the [Colorado Academic Standards](#). Start with academic goals before choosing assessment and instructional methods.
 - See [The Colorado Education Initiative Colorado Academic Standards](#) resources.

“My first-grade teacher was awesome because we would do lots of things where we didn't know we were learning. It was just really fun. We would be playing card games and we thought we were just playing cards, but we were actually learning math!”

 **SPS item** **My teacher makes sure that we think hard about things we read and write.**

FOCUS ON CLEAR AND CHALLENGING LEARNING GOALS to ensure high expectations for all students.

- Have explicit conversations with students about what it may look like when learning goals are met and what the process of meeting these goals could be.
 - Provide [rubrics](#) to give students a sense of what is expected of them and what it will look like if they are successful in meeting learning goals.
 - Model expectations for academic work. Use exemplary student work and teacher-created models to clearly show success in meeting learning goals.
- “Sandwich” the instruction, having students read and discuss [learning targets](#) at the beginning of the lesson to focus the learning, and again at the end, measuring the degree to which they reached the learning target.

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT RELEVANT AND ENGAGING CURRICULUM to ensure students are challenged and motivated to learn the material.

- Incorporate text-based problem-solving projects (such as a student project on the benefits and drawbacks of off-campus lunch) using inquiry-based learning.



Design activities so that students are writing about their lives and what they want to accomplish.

SELECT APPROPRIATE LEARNING TASKS AND MATERIALS to engage students in big ideas and key learning.

- Encourage analysis of written material rather than only literal interpretation such as comparing and contrasting or cause and effect.
 - Familiarize yourself with and use [Depth of Knowledge](#) levels to plan instruction to meet all students' needs.
- Teach and model [close reading](#) and [text-dependent questioning](#) for students.
- Provide specific written and verbal descriptive feedback.
 - Provide students with a format or protocol for using feedback to make corrections and resubmit work.

 **SPS item** **When the work is too hard, my teacher helps me keep trying.**

SCAFFOLD AND DIFFERENTIATE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION to ensure that all students have access to and are learning skills and content.

- Design levels of challenge purposefully, working within the Zone of Proximal Development to help support students to learn new skills and content.



Use multiple strategies (such as graphic organizers, flexible grouping, access to leveled reading material, and resources in multiple languages) that effectively [break down](#) and scaffold learning tasks to meet the varying abilities and needs of students.

- Use [Bloom's Taxonomy](#) to scaffold for higher-level thinking.
 - Familiarize yourself with and use [Depth of Knowledge](#) levels to plan instruction to meet all students' needs.
- Support multilingual learners by creating an [academic language-rich environment](#) that surrounds students with oral and written texts needed to succeed in an academic environment.
- Use the principles of [sheltered instruction](#) to structure pedagogy and curriculum for all of your learners, and especially multilingual learners. This includes development of both content and language objectives, judicious use of students' native languages for support and explicit teaching of learning strategies.
- Create a resource-rich environment that supports all students (including multilingual learners).
- Share strategies, processes, and reminders (such as reading comprehension strategies, estimation, and thesis statement development) with [posters](#) around the room. Students can help create these "how-to" posters during and after working through and mastering a skill or process. Remind students about these resources on a regular basis to encourage independence in learning.
- Develop a plan to support students who are struggling with material.
 - See the principles of [Universal Design for Learning](#) for strategies to re-engage and support struggling students.
 - Set up a regular time to work with students who need support (such as at lunch or after school).
 - Establish a [peer support network](#).
- Provide specific written and verbal descriptive feedback.
 - Provide students with a format/protocol for using feedback to make corrections and resubmit work.

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ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT to ensure a shared sense of purpose to work and learn together.


- ☀ Be patient and not condescending. Notice when you may be assuming something about a student (such as why a student has stopped trying or working) and *listen* first.
- Help students to take responsibility for their own decisions and explicitly teach problem-solving skills.
- Encourage a [growth mindset](#) in yourself and in students.
 - Take the [mindset quiz](#) to determine what kind of mindset you have (fixed or growth mindset). Have older students take this quiz as well.
 - Foster students' academic mindsets, [encouraging and modeling the value of perseverance and failure](#). Teach an ["I can" attitude](#) coupled with the knowledge that we can all grow in our intelligence, skills, and knowledge.
- Spend extra time with students during lunch, after school, or at other designated times to encourage additional effort and let them know you want them to succeed.
- Teach time management strategies to enable students to effectively learn material.
 - Use ["chunking"](#) to help students learn how to break work into manageable steps.
 - Explicitly [teach study skills/organization](#).

“My teacher gives a few books to choose from, and the class gets to vote on which books to read.”

 **SPS item** In this class, it is more important to understand the lesson than to memorize the answers.


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DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT RELEVANT AND ENGAGING CURRICULUM to help develop a sense that school-based material is useful for understanding and living within society.

- Develop authentic tasks for students to complete such as blogs, editorials, and magazine articles.
- Incorporate problem-solving projects (such as a student project about the benefits and drawbacks of off-campus lunch) using inquiry-based learning.
-  Have students *create* rather than simply *consume* information such as game boards, websites, personal letters to historical figures, and science and reading fairs.
- Concentrate on [21st century skills](#) that include collaboration and problem-solving.
- Promote [joint productive activity](#) with students, giving them the chance to work with both the teacher and other students to solve meaningful problems and create together.




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SELECT APPROPRIATE LEARNING TASKS AND MATERIALS to engage students in understanding the big ideas of a discipline rather than just the facts.


- Use [essential or inquiry questions](#) to help guide curriculum development. These questions should be debatable and engaging to students, promoting deep understanding of a discipline rather than only factual recall of information.
 - See the [Colorado District Sample Curriculum Project](#) for teacher-created units across all grades and content areas guided by essential questions.
-  Have students *create* rather than simply *consume* information such as game boards, websites, personal letters to historical figures, and science and reading fairs. (S)
 - Promote [joint productive activity](#) with students. Students should have the chance to work with both the teacher and other students to solve meaningful problems and create together.
- Encourage analysis of material (such as compare and contrast, and cause and effect) rather than only literal interpretation.
 - Familiarize yourself with and use [Depth of Knowledge](#) levels to plan instruction to meet all students' needs.
- Use [talk moves](#) — [prompts](#) designed to elicit responses from students to help check for understanding and encourage participation such as revoicing a student's words or asking students to restate what a peer said.
- Use project-based and inquiry learning to promote real-world problem-solving and conceptual understandings.
- Assess the process, not just the product.
 - Have checkpoints throughout a project that keep students accountable.
 - Emphasize the skill of problem-solving over getting the correct answer.

SPS item My teacher uses a lot of different ways to explain things.

SELECT APPROPRIATE LEARNING TASKS AND MATERIALS to explain skills and content from multiple angles to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to learn.

- Anticipate potential areas of misunderstanding and plan questions or activities around these areas. Rely on data from prior years or semesters to build your understanding of common misconceptions and areas of difficulty.
-  Use an alternative method of explaining the misunderstanding such as drawing a diagram to explain a concept.
- Incorporate the principles of [Universal Design for Learning](#), which “provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone — not a single, one-size-fits-all solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs.”
 - See, in particular, Principle one, “Provide Multiple Means of Representation.” This includes providing options for perception, language, mathematical expressions, symbols, and comprehension.
- Ask students to revisit and make their thinking explicit. This will help provide information about student understanding of material and where you may need additional and different explanations.
-  Use a variety of interactive mediums to engage students in the material such as technology, role-plays, peer instruction, games, [think/pair/share](#), games, field trips, friendly competitions, and case studies.
- Provide both verbal and written instructions.
- Use simulations to place students in authentic learning scenarios.
-  Design authentic assignments (such as debates, poetry slams, Wikis, blogs, film, or articles) that allow students to use these multiple modes of response.

SCAFFOLD AND DIFFERENTIATE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION to provide students with multiple access points to the curriculum.

-  Use multiple strategies that effectively [break down](#) and scaffold learning tasks to meet the varying abilities and needs of students.
- Design levels of challenge purposefully, working within the [Zone of Proximal Development](#) to help support students to learn new skills and content.
- Increase the rigor of [questioning](#). Develop more in-depth, conceptual questions as a lesson or unit moves along. Students can even help [develop these questions](#) and use them in discussion with one another.
- Create a resource-rich environment that supports all students (including multilingual learners).
 - Share strategies, processes, and reminders (such as reading comprehension strategies, estimation, and thesis statement development) with [posters](#) around the room. Students can help create these “how-to” posters during and after working through and mastering a skill or process. Remind students about these resources on a regular basis to encourage independence in learning.

SPS item My teacher knows when we understand the lesson and when we do not.

PLAN MEANINGFUL AND VALID ASSESSMENTS to provide accurate information about student knowledge and understanding of content and skills.

- Ensure that student assessments are [high quality](#) and [directly measure student learning](#) of the standards.

- Use both diagnostic (pre) and summative (post) assessment to allow both teachers and students to track progress with academic goals.
 - Set up a visual, progress monitoring chart in the classroom to allow students to see their learning. This chart could be organized by standard or objectives.
- Use [formative assessments](#) throughout instruction to see where there may be areas of strength and growth. This information can be used to inform future instruction. See [“The Best Value in Formative Assessment”](#) for more information.
- Use a variety of checks for understanding to help students return to central objectives and give you a sense of what is needed to improve student learning.
 - [Exit tickets](#).
 - Writing three things you learned today.
 - Use questioning to probe for understanding.
 - [Fist to Five](#).
 - Thumbs-up/-down.
 - Whiteboards.
- Use [document cameras](#) to project student work during a lesson to get student and teacher feedback.
- Have students [self-assess](#) using [rubrics](#) or checklists. This not only provides insight into student understanding of academic material, but also allows students to have awareness of their own processes.

SPS item Our classroom materials and supplies have a special place and things are easy to find.


..... ENSURE FLEXIBLE, STRATEGIC USE OF CLASSROOM SPACE that allows students to efficiently access materials and supplies.

- Organize resources and materials to ensure students can effectively and efficiently access them as needed.
 - Use baskets, bins, and old containers (such as shoeboxes and jars) to store classroom materials.
 - Color code and clearly label containers to allow for easy use (late or missing assignments, book bins, etc.).
- Create a student area and label all the items they may need or use for the class.
- [Explicitly teach students](#), within the first few weeks of school, how to access and work with classroom material and supplies. Consider what supplies and materials students need on a regular basis and for special occasions. Ask yourself:
 - What are your expectations for how students access materials and supplies?
 - What methods (such as modeling or role-playing) will you use to teach students how to efficiently and effectively access supplies?
 - How will you gauge student understanding of the expectations for this activity?
 - How will the expectations be displayed in the classroom?
- Reteach classroom procedures for accessing and using supplies when necessary.
- Consider room use procedures such as:
 - Teacher's desk and storage areas.
 - Student desks and storage for belongings.

- Storage for class materials used by all students.
- Pencil sharpener, wastebasket, sink.
- Learning stations, computer areas, equipment areas, centers, display areas.
- Keep classroom routines, procedures, and expectations consistent throughout the year. Evaluate whether a policy needs to be changed based on changing needs or student feedback.

In this class, we learn to correct our mistakes.

ENCOURAGE A CULTURE OF GROWTH AND REVISION that prompts student to see mistakes as a natural and necessary part of learning.

- Encourage students to do error assessment on their own work. Students can analyze their own and others' work and recognize patterns in errors and areas of strength.
- Encourage a [growth mindset](#) in yourself and in students.
 - Take the [mindset quiz](#) to determine what kind of mindset you have (fixed or growth mindset). At the beginning of the school year, have older students take this quiz as well.
 - Foster students' academic mindsets, [encouraging and modeling the value of perseverance and failure](#). Teach an "[I can](#)" attitude coupled with the knowledge that we can all grow in our intelligence, skills, and knowledge.
-  Encourage students to reflect upon, learn from, and [revise](#) their thinking and performance. Use a [Creative Process](#) that places an emphasis on reflection, feedback, evaluation, and revision.
 - Allow students to [self-assess](#) using [rubrics](#) or checklists.
 - Use [peer assessment and review](#) to help students internalize the requirements for high-quality academic work and to provide insight into student understanding.
 - Explicitly model a process of revision for students using your own work. Model the language for students to identify and talk about their understandings and misunderstandings of material.
 - [Conference](#) with individual students, focusing on strengths as well as areas of growth. Encourage conversations where students are allowed to express misunderstandings (such as students have to bring a question to you every day about the material).
- Post revisions and reminders around the room or on students' desks. These are tools to help students revise on their own and learn a common process of revision.
- Provide written, descriptive [feedback](#) on work, letting students know you read their work and that you value what they wrote.
 - Place sticky note questions on students' work to encourage them to review their work and provide suggestions about areas of growth.
 - Use a comment "sandwich" where areas that need improvement are mixed in with positive comments.
 - Decide where the most pressing concerns are with a student's work and focus in.
 - Give ample feedback in the midst of projects or assignments, not just when a final product is submitted.
- Build in time for student self-evaluation and encourage students to use teacher comments to revise and improve upon their work.

SPS item My teacher tells us what we are learning and why.

FOCUS ON CLEAR AND CHALLENGING LEARNING GOALS that provide students with insights into the what, why, and how of their learning.

- Ensure that students know what they are learning and why. Regularly post objectives and review them explicitly with students.
- Model expectations for academic work. Use exemplary student work and teacher-created models to clearly show success in meeting goals.
- Set an authentic purpose for the work students are doing. Saying “this is important” and explaining why will enable students to feel as though the work they are doing matters.
- Use [KWL charts](#) (Know, Want to Know, Learned) throughout a unit to gauge students’ prior knowledge and understanding.
- Backwards plan using the [Colorado State Standards](#). Start with academic goals before choosing assessment and instructional methods.
 - See [The Colorado Education Initiative Colorado Academic Standards](#) resources.
- [Engage students](#) in developing and making sense of goals and objectives.
 - Use progress monitoring templates or protocols so students can monitor their own learning and are more aware of where they are at any time within the unit. Students can then have ownership when they see the purpose in the work they are doing.
 - Deconstruct the goals, [learning targets](#), or performance tasks prior to beginning the unit to ensure all students know what they are responsible for knowing and being able to do.
- Have explicit conversations with students about what it may look like when learning goals are met and what the process of meeting these goals could be.
 - Provide [rubrics](#) to give students a sense of what is expected of them and what it will look like if they are successful in meeting learning goals.
 - Model expectations for academic work. Use exemplary student work and teacher-created models to clearly show success in meeting learning goals.
- Post objectives in student-friendly language and refer to them throughout the lesson.
- Sandwich the instruction, having students read and discuss [learning targets](#) at the beginning of the lesson to focus the learning and again at the end, measuring the degree to which they reached the learning target.

SPS item My teacher asks questions to be sure we are following along.

PLAN MEANINGFUL AND VALID ASSESSMENTS to consistently check on student understanding and encourage participation.



- Use [formative assessments](#) throughout instruction to see where there may be areas of strength and growth. This information can be used to inform future instruction. See [“The Best Value in Formative Assessment”](#) for more information.
- Use a variety of checks for understanding to help students return to central objectives and give you a sense of what is needed to improve student learning.
 - [Exit tickets](#).
 - Writing three things you learned today.
 - Informal questioning.
 - [Fist to Five](#).

- Thumbs-up/-down.
- Whiteboards.
- Use a [think, pair, share](#) protocol to help all students participate and hear peer ideas.
- Develop questions about content and skill ahead of time, and write these into your lesson plan.
 - Use [Bloom's Taxonomy](#) to help guide scaffolding for higher-level thinking.
 - Familiarize yourself with and use [Depth of Knowledge](#) levels to plan instruction to meet all students' needs.
 - Increase the rigor of [questioning](#). Develop more in-depth, conceptual questions as a lesson or unit moves along. Students can even help [develop these questions](#) and use them in discussion with one another.
- Anticipate potential areas of misunderstanding and plan questions or activities around these areas.
- Use [talk moves](#) — [prompts](#) designed to elicit responses from students to help check for understanding and encourage participation, such as revoicing a student's words or asking them to restate what a peer said.

SPS item My teacher talks to me about my work to help me understand my mistakes.

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ENCOURAGE A CULTURE OF GROWTH AND REVISION that encourages students to see mistakes as a natural and necessary part of learning.

- Use anchor charts to gather background information from students.
-  Encourage students to reflect upon, learn from, and [revise](#) their thinking and performance. Use a [Creative Process](#) that places an emphasis on reflection, feedback, evaluation, and revision.
 - Allow students to [self-assess](#) using [rubrics](#) or checklists.
 - Use [peer assessment and review](#) to help students internalize the requirements for high-quality academic work and to provide insight into student understanding.
 - Explicitly model a process of revision for students using your own work. Model the language for students to identify and talk about their understandings and misunderstandings of material.
 - [Conference](#) with individual students, focusing on strengths as well as areas of growth. Encourage conversations where students are allowed to express misunderstandings (such as asking students to bring a question about the material to you every day).
- Eliminate vague terms like "Good job!" Instead, provide concrete examples of students' strengths and areas of growth.
 - Decide where the most pressing concerns are with a student's work and focus in.
 - Give ample feedback in the midst of projects or assignments, not just when a final product is submitted.
-  If you notice a consistent misunderstanding in student work, invite students to work with you one on one.

SPS item My teacher writes notes on my work that help me do better next time.

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ENCOURAGE A CULTURE OF GROWTH AND REVISION that encourages student to see mistakes as a natural and necessary part of learning.

- Provide written, descriptive [feedback](#) on work, letting students know you read their work and that you value what they wrote.

- Place sticky note questions on students' work to encourage them to review their work and provide suggestions about areas of growth.
- Use a comment "sandwich" where areas that need improvement are mixed in with positive comments.
- Eliminate vague terms like "Good job!" Instead, provide concrete examples of students' strengths and areas of growth.
 - Decide where the most pressing concerns are with a student's work and focus in on those.
 - Give ample feedback in the midst of projects or assignments, not just when a final product is submitted.

SPS item The schoolwork we do is interesting.

DESIGN RELEVANT AND ENGAGING CURRICULUM to generate student interest in academic work and encourage deep, connected learning.

- Create and choose curriculum that is relevant to students' lives.
 - Develop an understanding and repertoire of [culturally responsive teaching](#) strategies to honor and build off of students' cultural backgrounds and practices.
 - Post word walls, visual content, resources in languages other than English, and pictures and stories of individuals and communities from diverse backgrounds on walls and shelves to represent the various identities, families, and community backgrounds of students.
- Explicitly point out relevancy of material to help students understand how it is important to their lives.
 -  Connect school-based learning with real-world topics such as [Dynamath](#).
 - Incorporate community-based problem-solving projects (such as a student project on the benefits and drawbacks of off-campus lunch) using [project-based learning](#).
 -  Link learning to college, career, and [what it means to be a citizen](#).
-  Use current events and local happenings to connect to school-based material. For example, word problems can be written with a local context in mind.
 - Field trips (such as [History Colorado](#)) and local history projects can help make learning authentic for students.
- Incorporate community-based problem-solving projects (such as a student project about the benefits and drawbacks of off-campus lunch) using inquiry-based learning.
-  Use a variety of interactive mediums such as technology, role-plays, peer instruction, games, [think/pair/share](#), field trips, friendly competitions, and case studies to engage students in the material.
- Embed movement into lessons and activities.
-  Have students *create* rather than simply *consume* information such as game boards, websites, personal letters to historical figures, science, and reading fairs.
- Develop an enthusiasm for the subject you are teaching. Having fun while teaching likely means an enjoyable learning environment.
- Give students choice in terms of activities and curricular materials, such as choosing a text to read.
-  Change up the classroom environment. Move your class outside or into a different classroom if possible.
-  Use humor to encourage opening up and to lighten the mood.

STUDENT-CENTERED ENVIRONMENT

These items focus on how teachers create an environment that responds to each student's backgrounds, strengths, and interests.

 **SPS item** My teacher wants us to share what we think.

.....

ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT that encourages sharing of interests and vulnerability.

- Ask students to revisit lessons and make their thinking explicit. This will help provide information about student understanding of material.
- Encourage and model discussions to promote student negotiation skills.
- Encourage all students to participate every day.
 - Establish a [morning meeting](#) when teachers and students can share information about their lives and reflect upon their learning.
 - Have students write freely about a topic, then speak with a partner or group about their writing.
 - Set up time for journal writing so that students can express themselves in different ways. Use these journals as connections to academic material (such as to teach writing skills) or as places where private thoughts and feelings can be written out.
 - Establish a show-and-tell time for students to represent their ideas and interests with objects from their home lives.
 - Use a [think, pair, share](#) protocol to help all students participate and hear peer ideas.
 - Use a hand-raising protocol that changes based on classroom activity. Alternatively, use Popsicle sticks to help call on students in an equitable way.
 - Model sharing [personal stories](#) and ideas with students.
- Recognize and honor the diversity of opinions and perspectives from your students.
 - Develop an understanding and repertoire of [culturally responsive teaching](#) strategies to honor and build off of students' cultural backgrounds, practices, and perspectives.




Establish an anonymous question box for students to share thoughts about the class.

 **SPS item** My teacher teaches us to respect people's differences.

.....

ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT that encourages students to value and celebrate people's differences.

- Design a [multicultural classroom](#) that addresses different communities, cultures, perspectives, and learning styles. This ought to be a regular part of your curriculum, not an add-on that only happens once in a while, which can further tokenize certain communities.
 - Consider the stereotypical representations you may be portraying in your classroom through posters, books, etc. Replace classroom materials and decorations with more complex portrayals of marginalized groups. Develop an understanding and repertoire of [culturally-responsive teaching](#) strategies to honor and build off of students' cultural backgrounds, practices, and perspectives.

- Stock your classroom library with [anti-bias, multicultural children's literature](#). Avoid tokenizing certain groups by weaving content about underrepresented groups (people of color, LGBTQ communities, people with disabilities, etc.) seamlessly with that about traditionally overrepresented groups. See [Lee and Low Books](#) and [Bank Street Center for Children's Literature](#) for children's book ideas.
- Model celebrating and supporting differences with students.
 -  Encourage students to think about how it might feel if a peer did not respect them for who they are.
 - Design activities and lessons that encourage [multiple perspective taking](#) and invite students to recognize diversity of background and belief systems. [Children's books](#) are a great way (even with older students!) to introduce the idea of perspective taking.
 - Highlight student work that shows differences in perspective and interpretation.
- Observe a more experienced teacher who actively promotes acceptance and celebration of differences in the classroom.
- If you need additional support, consider coordinating classes with a counselor or other trained staff or community member who can help lead conversations about difference and diversity amongst students.
- Teach a unit on building community, [integrity](#), and [empathy](#).
- Seek out resources and professional learning opportunities that address issues of difference, diversity, and social-emotional learning within schools.
 - See [Colorado Education Initiative Safe and Welcoming Schools](#), Rethinking Schools, [BIONIC club](#) (Believe It or Not I Care), [Teaching Tolerance](#), and [EdChange](#).

SPS item My teacher knows what makes me excited about learning.

ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT that encourages students to share both academic and out-of-school interests.

- Give an [interest inventory](#) at the beginning of the year to get to know your students and begin to incorporate their interests into the curriculum.
- Have students write a personal letter at the beginning of the year describing interests and motivations for learning.
- Use personal exit or entry tickets to get to know student interests. Ask students, "What is something you are excited about this weekend?"
- Find out how and what your students learn outside of school, such as sports and digital games. This will give you a sense of how they may learn best and what they get excited about in school.
- Attend students' after-school activities. Reference these activities in your conversations with students and, when possible, incorporate them into your curriculum. For example, a math word problem can be developed using a student's sports event.

DESIGN RELEVANT AND ENGAGING CURRICULUM to incorporate student interests into the curriculum.

- Create and choose curriculum that is [relevant to students' lives](#).
 - Develop an understanding and repertoire of [culturally-responsive teaching](#) strategies to honor and build off of students' cultural backgrounds and practices.
 - Post word walls, visual content, resources in languages other than English, and pictures and stories of individuals and communities from diverse backgrounds on walls and shelves to represent the various identities, families, and community backgrounds of students

- Explicitly point out the relevancy of curriculum to help students understand how it is important to their lives.
 - ☀️ Connect school-based learning with real-world topics such as [Dynamath](#).
 - Incorporate community-based problem-solving projects (such as a student project on the benefits and drawbacks of off-campus lunch) using [project-based learning](#).
 - ☀️ Link learning to college, career, and [what it means to be a citizen](#).
- ☀️ Use current events and local happenings to connect to school-based material. For example, word problems can be written with a local context in mind.
 - Field trips (such as [History Colorado](#)) and local history projects can help make learning authentic for students.
- Tailor lessons to students' personal interests.

SPS item My teacher talks about things we learn in other classes, subjects, and years.


.....

SELECT APPROPRIATE LEARNING TASKS AND MATERIALS that purposefully make connections to other classes, subjects, and years.

- Determine what students know from previous learning experiences.
 - Use diagnostic (pre) assessments to determine student understanding of knowledge and skills.
 - Purposefully plan instruction to connect to and build off of current student understanding.
 - Explicitly mention student knowledge and skills during class time to engage students in building their knowledge and skills.
- Engage students in [Deeper Learning](#) to motivate, challenge, and help students to transfer and apply skills and content knowledge to new situations.
- Use [essential or inquiry questions](#) to help guide curriculum development. These questions should be debatable; engaging; and span subjects, classes, and disciplines.
 - See the [Colorado District Sample Curriculum Project](#) for teacher-created units across all grades and content areas, guided by essential questions.
 - See the [Literacy Design Collaborative](#); [Math Design Collaborative](#); and [Elementary and Secondary Solutions](#).
- [Collaborate with teachers](#) in other departments to integrate subjects and create interdisciplinary units.
 - Get together with colleagues to identify where there is overlap and connection between disciplines to create cross-curricular activities. For example, ELA and Social Studies class can jointly study a text, physics, and math.
 - Create assignments that satisfy two or more subjects and classes.
 - Develop common terminology and expectations across subjects and classes.
- [Align your curriculum](#) to what students need to know by the end of the year in order to be prepared for the next grade.
 - Create [curriculum maps](#) to specifically lay out the scope and sequence of what students will learn throughout the year and help make connections across disciplines.
 - Explicitly show students the vertical scaffolding from grade level to grade level and/or content area.


SPS item If I am sad or angry, my teacher helps me feel better.

ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT that ensures students feel supported in their social and emotional lives.

- Develop positive, authentic relationships with students that encourage a community atmosphere based on trust and respect.
 - Consider using [Peace Circles](#) to help develop inquiry and listening skills in students.
 - Use the principles of [Restorative Justice](#) to encourage students to resolve conflicts on their own and continue to build community in the classroom.
- Establish a [peer mediation](#) system in the classroom.
- Communicate often and readily with students.
 -  Be patient and not condescending.
 - Take the time to listen to students carefully. Check the assumptions you may have about *why* they are feeling sad or angry.
 - Validate how students are feeling and set up next steps with students so that they can continue participating in the class.
 - Use sticky notes to let students know, "I am here for you." Acknowledge that they may be down and give them the opportunity to speak or write to you.
 - Set up a system for students to take a break, go get a drink, etc., in order to compose themselves and come back to the classroom ready to learn. Students should be aware of this system and can use it without consequences.
- Talk to other teachers about student concerns during both formal and informal meetings.
- Create a list of resources (such as counselors, community partners, and other students) for students to use when they are upset.

SPS item My teacher would notice if something were bothering me.

ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT that ensures students feel supported in their social and emotional lives.

- Communicate often and readily with students.
 -  Be patient and not condescending.
 - Take the time to listen to students carefully. Check the assumptions you may have about *why* they are feeling bothered.
 - Validate how students are feeling and set up next steps with students so that they can continue participating in the class.
 - Use sticky notes to let students know, "I am here for you." Acknowledge that they may be down and give them the opportunity to speak or write to you.
 - Set up a system for students to take a break, go get a drink, etc. in order to compose themselves and come back to the classroom ready to learn. Students should be aware of this system and can use it without consequences.
- Check in with students about how they are feeling on a daily basis.
 - Use an emotion thermometer during [morning meetings](#), where red represents high emotion, yellow means feeling "so-so," and green equals low emotion. Students can identify where they are on the scale and talk through this rating.

- Give students the opportunity to journal and free write about personal things.
- Make an effort to make verbal contact with every student as he or she enters the classroom. Greet students at the door and ask how they are.
- Be aware of a student's behavior, especially if it has changed. Ask if the student needs a break from class or needs to talk to you in the hallway, etc.
- Show and model compassion toward all students. Pull students out into the hall when you notice something is off.

SPS item The people we learn and read about in this class are like me.

.....


DESIGN RELEVANT AND ENGAGING CURRICULUM to provide students with representations of people, communities, and experiences that are similar to their own.

- Allow student choice in parts of lessons to enable them to show you who they are.
- Ask students how they connect to the curriculum (text-to-self connections) in order to discover more about them.
- Develop an understanding and repertoire of [culturally-responsive teaching](#) strategies to honor and build off of students' cultural backgrounds, practices, and perspectives.
 - Research famous people in various professions who are typically underrepresented. See "[Planting Seeds, Growing Diversity](#)" for further information.
 - Consider the stereotypical representations you may be portraying in your classroom through posters, books, etc.
 - ☐ Replace classroom materials and decorations with more complex portrayals of marginalized groups.
 - ☐ Post word walls, visual content, resources in languages other than English, and pictures and stories of individuals and communities from diverse backgrounds on walls and shelves to represent the various identities, families, and community backgrounds of students.
 - Design activities and lessons that encourage [multiple perspective taking](#) and invite students to recognize diversity of background and belief systems. [Children's books](#) are a great way (even with older students!) to introduce the idea of perspective taking.
 - Highlight student work that shows differences in perspective and interpretation.
 - Include multimodal materials (print-based texts, video, social media, etc.) that highlight differences among individuals and communities (religion, ethnicity, gender, etc.).

SPS item My teacher knows what my life is like outside of school.

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ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT that encourages students to share their everyday experiences and out-of-school interests.

- Have regular parent/guardian conferences to get to know students, their families, and communities. Consider inviting students to these meetings. If they cannot attend, create mechanisms such as a letter to the student from parents that lets students know that these meetings occurred and to understand what took place.
-  Design activities so that students are writing about their lives and what they want to accomplish.
- Students can create a "History of Me" presentation to illustrate who they are in terms of multiple disciplines.
- Conduct home visits, especially in the beginning of the year, to get to know students, families, and communities.

- Take attendance with questions that require students to answer a question about their lives. For example, ask students, "In one word, what did you do over spring break?"
- Ask students to bring in objects or other representations of their lives outside of school. Relate this to curriculum so that students see the connection to their lives and school. For example, students might discuss or bring in an example of how they use physics in their lives outside of school.
- Greet students at the door and use an entry ticket, asking students to answer a quick question about their lives (after-school activities, etc.).
- Use personal exit or entry tickets to get to know student interests. Ask students, "What is something you are excited about this weekend?"
- Ask students relevant questions about their lives to explicitly demonstrate that you know about their lives outside of school.
- Use open house days, family nights, and [parent/teacher conferences](#) to find out about students' lives.
- Keep in contact with parents through email, phone, or notes home to maintain an open line of communication.

SPS item My teacher knows what is important to me.

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ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT that encourages students to share both academic and out-of-school interests as well as their social and emotional states.

- Establish a [morning meeting](#) (or similar structure) when teachers and students can share about their lives and reflect upon their learning.
- Ask students to bring in objects or other representations of their lives outside of school. Relate this to curriculum so that students see the connection to their lives and school. For example, students might discuss or bring in an example of how they use physics in their lives outside of school.
- Set up time for journal writing so that students can share what is important to them. Provide open-ended and more specific prompts to give students a chance to show you what's important to them. For example, ask students to tell you about a time when they were scared.
- Use personal exit tickets to get to know student interests and about their lives outside of school. Ask students, "What is something you are excited about this weekend?"
- Keep a bulletin board with school activities and student events.
- Attend students' after-school activities. Reference these activities in your conversations with students and, when possible, incorporate them into your curriculum. For example, develop a math word problem using a student's sports event.

.....

DESIGN RELEVANT AND ENGAGING CURRICULUM to incorporate students' interests into the curriculum and value what is important to them.

- Create and chose curriculum that is [relevant to students' lives](#).
 - Develop an understanding of and repertoire of [culturally responsive teaching](#) strategies to honor and build off of students' cultural backgrounds and practices.
 - Walls and shelves should represent the various identities, families and community backgrounds of students.
 - Incorporate word walls, visual content, resources in languages other than English, and pictures and stories of individuals and communities from diverse backgrounds.

SPS item Students feel comfortable sharing their ideas in this class.

.....

ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT that encourages sharing of interests and vulnerability.

- Encourage all students to participation every day.
 - Establish a [morning meeting](#) when teachers and students can share about their lives and reflect upon their learning.
 - Have students free write about a topic, then speak with a partner or group about their writing.
 - Set up time for journal writing so that students can express themselves in different ways. Use these journals as connections to academic material (such as teaching writing skills) or as places where free writes and private thoughts or feeling can be written out.
 - Establish a show and tell time for students to represent their ideas and interests with objects from their home lives.
 - Use a "[think, pair, share](#)" protocol to help all students participate and hear peer ideas.
 - Use a hand-raising protocol that changes based on classroom activity. Alternatively, use Popsicle sticks to help call on students in an equitable way.
 - Model sharing [personal stories](#) and ideas with students.
- Consider how much you may be speaking in class versus your students. Track this using a timer for a week, audio record class periods, or have a coach or evaluator (or even a student) track the number of students who speak throughout a class period.
- Have a coach or evaluator (or student) map who is called on or who speaks during class conversations. This can be illuminating in discovering patterns and identifying students who may be disengaged. Plan for when more controversial topics can be brought up in class, but note that these hot moments can often emerge without warning. Model how to discuss these topics with vulnerability, and honor your students' voices and experiences.

.....

ENCOURAGE A CULTURE OF GROWTH AND REVISION that prompts student to see mistakes as a natural and necessary part of learning.

- Encourage risk-taking from students. Wrong answers can be reframed to move everyone toward greater understanding.
- Encourage a [growth mindset](#) in yourself and in students.
 - Foster students' academic mindsets, [encouraging and modeling the value of perseverance and failure](#). Teach an "[I can](#)" attitude coupled with the knowledge that we can all grow in our intelligence, skills, and knowledge.

“One of my favorite teachers, she was someone who trusted me. She trusted me to help her.”


CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

These items focus on how teachers cultivate a classroom learning community where student differences are valued.

SPS item My teacher cares about me.

.....

ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT that ensures students feel supported in their social and emotional lives.

- Create a relationship-driven classroom environment that both teacher and students have a stake in creating and maintaining. This environment includes:
 - Emotional and physical safety.
 - Students who are recognized for their unique talents and strengths.
 - Freedom from name calling, teasing, bullying, and criticism.
 - See *Relationship Driven Classroom Management*, by John M. Vitto, for more ideas on creating a relationship-driven classroom.
- Develop positive, authentic relationships with students that encourage a community atmosphere based on trust and respect.
 - Consider using [Peace Circles](#) to help develop inquiry and listening skills in students.
 - Use the principles of [Restorative Justice](#) to encourage students to resolve conflicts on their own and continue to build community in the classroom.
- Establish a [peer mediation](#) system in the classroom.
- Communicate often and readily with students.
 -  Be patient and not condescending.
 - Take the time to listen to students carefully. Check the assumptions you may have about *why* they are feeling bothered.
 - Validate how students are feeling and set up next steps with students so that they can continue participating in the class.
 - Use sticky notes to let students know, "I am here for you." Acknowledge that they may be down and give them the opportunity to speak or write to you.
 - Set up a system for students to take a break, go get a drink, etc., in order to compose themselves and come back to the classroom ready to learn. Students should be aware of this system and can use it without consequences.
- Have personal conferences with students to help grow your relationship.
 - Talk to other teachers about student concerns during both formal and informal meetings.
 - Create a list of resources (such as counselors, community partners, and other students) for students to use when they are upset.
- Check in with students about how they are feeling on a daily basis.
 - Use an emotion thermometer during [morning meetings](#) where red represents high emotion, yellow means feeling "so-so," and green equals low emotion. Students can identify where they are on the scale and talk through this rating.
 - Give students the opportunity to journal and free write about personal things.



Use humor to encourage opening up and to lighten the mood.

- Make an effort to make verbal contact with every student as they enter the classroom. Greet students at the door and ask how they are.
- Model sharing [personal stories](#) and emotions with students to encourage them to do the same with you and their peers.
- Notice a student's absence and acknowledge that he or she was gone.
- Show and model compassion toward all students.



Keep your promises to students.

SPS item In this class, I feel like I fit in.

ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT that invites all students into the community.

- Set and model expectations about how to treat others in the classroom. [Co-construct](#) these agreements with students in order to increase buy-in and respect student opinions about their classroom community. Make these expectations visible to students and refer back to them often.
- Design a [multicultural classroom](#) that addresses different communities, cultures, perspectives, and learning styles. This curriculum ought to be a regular part of your curriculum, not an add-on that only happens once in a while and works to further tokenize certain communities.
- Consider the stereotypical representations you may be portraying in your classroom through posters, books, etc. Replace classroom materials and decorations with more complicated portrayals of marginalized groups. Include multimodal texts (print-based texts, video, social media, etc.) that highlight differences among individuals and communities (religion, ethnicity, gender, etc.).
- Seek out resources and professional learning opportunities that address issues of difference, diversity, and social-emotional learning within schools.
 - See [The Colorado Education Initiative Safe and Welcoming Schools](#), Rethinking Schools, [BIONIC club](#) (Believe It or Not I Care), [Teaching Tolerance](#), and [EdChange](#).
- Develop a plan moving forward for students who are struggling with material.
 - See the principles of [Universal Design for Learning](#) for strategies to re-engage and support struggling students.
 - Set up a regular time to work with students who need support (such as at lunch or after school).
 - Use the student's name instead of "you."
 - Establish a [peer support network](#). If you are busy working with other students and a student is having difficulty, he or she can ask a peer for support.
- Encourage students to work together as often as possible. Incorporate community-based problem-solving projects using inquiry-based learning to give students a chance to work toward a common goal together.
- Use team-building activities throughout the year. For example:
 - ["Circle Up"](#) activities.
 - "Agree/disagree" activity. Design a series of statements for students to consider. Have them move to either side of the room, designated "agree" or "disagree."
 - Place paper plates on the floor. Ask students to maneuver through the plates while blindfolded and directed by another teammate, perhaps someone who they do not know that well.

- Have students write three statements about themselves on a piece of paper. Tell students to throw the paper into the center of the room, choose one that is different from their own, and figure out who “owns” these statements.
- Place a poster paper around the room, one with each student’s name on it. Ask students to circle the room and write one positive statement about that student.

SPS item I feel like an important part of my classroom community.

.....

ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT that invites in and supports all students in the learning community.

- Have beginning of the year introductions and icebreakers that enable students to get to know one another.
- Develop a class motto as one way to unify the class and incorporate activities that encourage trust and respect.
- Co-construct classroom agreements, policies, and procedures (such as a class bill of rights) with students at the beginning of the year. Provide students with time to comment on and negotiate classroom rules together.
- Create [jobs for students](#) and have them rotate through these jobs throughout the year.
- Design a [multicultural classroom](#) that addresses different communities, cultures, perspectives, and learning styles. This curriculum ought to be a regular part of your curriculum, not an add-on that only happens once in a while, which can further tokenize certain communities.
- Seek out resources and professional learning opportunities that address issues of difference, diversity, and social-emotional learning within schools.
 - See [The Colorado Education Initiative Safe and Welcoming Schools](#), Rethinking Schools, [BIONIC club](#) (Believe It or Not I Care), [Teaching Tolerance](#), and [EdChange](#).
- Encourage students to work together as often as possible. Incorporate community-based problem-solving projects using inquiry-based learning to give students a chance to work toward a common goal together.
- Use team-building activities throughout the year. For example:
 - [“Circle up”](#) activities.
 - “Agree/disagree” activity. Design a series of statements for students to consider. Have them move to either side of the room, designated “agree” or “disagree.”
 - Place paper plates on the floor. Ask students to maneuver through the plates while blindfolded and directed by another teammate, perhaps someone who they do not know that well.
 - Have students write three statements about themselves on a piece of paper. Tell students to throw the paper into the center of the room, choose one that is different from their own, and figure out who “owns” these statements.
 - Place poster paper around the room, one with each student’s name on it. Ask students to circle the room and write one positive statement about that student.

SPS item I ask for help when I need it.

.....

ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT that values asking for support and recognizes mistakes as an integral part of a learning community.

- Encourage a [growth mindset](#) in yourself and in students. This suggests that intelligence, skills, and knowledge are things you can develop rather than a set of fixed traits.

- Take the [mindset quiz](#) to determine what kind of mindset you have (fixed or growth mindset). At the beginning of the school year, have students take this quiz as well.
- Foster students' academic mindsets, [encouraging and modeling the value of perseverance and failure](#). Teach and model a "[can do](#)" attitude coupled with the knowledge that we can all grow in our intelligence, skills, and knowledge.

 Commend and praise those who ask for help. This helps establish help as connected to learning and something that is valued in the classroom.

- Establish a [peer support network](#) so students can help one another.
- Provide visuals (posters, Post-its on desks, etc.) that explain various steps students can take when they need help, such as asking a friend or writing down a question while waiting for the teacher.
- Make use of props — such as cups to flip when you need help; colored cards on a desk that mean "I get it," "I need help," or "my partner needs help" — to encourage students to show you when they may need help.
- Make students aware of specific cues from the teacher as to when they can ask for help. For example, when a teacher sits after direct instruction, students know that the teacher is available for individual help.
- Use [CHAMPS](#) strategies to teach students appropriate ways to ask for help, depending on the classroom activity.
- Hold office hours so students can get individual help when it is not class time.
- Assume that every student needs help at some point during the lesson. Be sure you are regularly conferencing with students.

SPS item I feel like I do a good job in this class.

PLAN MEANINGFUL AND VALID ASSESSMENTS that can be used to show students their progress in class.

- Use both diagnostic (pre) and summative (post) assessments to track progress with academic goals and plan targeted instruction.
 - Set up a visual chart in the classroom to allow students to see their learning. This chart could be organized by standard or objectives.
- Have students [self-assess](#) using [rubrics](#) or checklists. This not only provides insight into student understanding of academic material, but also allows students to have awareness of their own processes.
- Provide specific written and verbal descriptive feedback.
 - Eliminate vague terms like "Good job!" Instead, provide concrete examples of students' strengths and areas of growth.
- Focus on student successes and strengths.
 - During class discussions and conversations with students, build on and value students' ideas. Use student responses as entry points into the learning objective.
 - When returning assessments, write the number students got correct instead of the number of mistakes.
- Send a positive postcard, email, or phone call home to recognize student successes in the classroom.

“My teacher reads to us every day after lunch. It's a nice break.”

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT


These items focus on how teachers foster a respectful and predictable learning environment.

SPS item Our class stays busy and does not waste time.

MAXIMIZE LEARNING TIME so students are engaged for the majority of the day in learning material.

- Plan for and teach bell to bell. Students should be engaged soon after the class begins and throughout the entirety of the period.
 - Use a “[Do Now](#)” to immediately engage students, review past material and preview new material.
 - Establish and teach an entry routine.
- Create explicit procedures that help students know how to support and complete classroom tasks, such as passing out papers or moving between groups.
- Post expectations for procedures in class.
- Plan transitions between activities ahead of time so that they are seamless and efficient.
- Hold table groups and partnerships accountable. Set up roles for students to follow during group work (note taker, etc.).
- Set up choices for students when finished with work, such as go to a station for supplemental work, help peers, choose a book, or complete extra credit.
- Set up a visible signal or timer on a projector or smart board to indicate transition to next activity.
- Keep a consistent schedule that is posted in the classroom.




DESIGN RELEVANT AND ENGAGING CURRICULUM to increase student motivation and encourage students to stay focused on learning throughout the day.

-  Use a variety of interactive mediums (such as technology, role-plays, peer instruction, games, [think/pair/share](#), field trips, friendly competitions, and case studies) to engage students in the material.
- Embed movement into lessons and activities.
- Ask questions about not only academic skills and content, but also everyday classroom procedures and routines (passing out papers, moving into groups, etc.) to ensure students are efficient with their time.

SPS item Students in my class are respectful to our teacher.

ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT that encourages respect between teachers and students.



- Create a [relationship-driven classroom environment](#) that both teacher and students have a stake in creating and maintaining. This environment includes:
 - Emotional and physical safety.
 - Students who are recognized for their unique talents and strengths.
 - Freedom from name calling, teasing, bullying, and criticism.

- See *Relationship Driven Classroom Management*, by John M. Vitto, for more ideas on creating a relationship-driven classroom.
- Show and give students respect.
 - Treat students as equal partners in creating and maintaining a safe and welcoming classroom environment for all.
 -  Show students that you sincerely want them to succeed.
- Set and model expectations about how to treat others in the classroom from the first day of school.
 - Establish a clear and meaningful [consequence system](#) with students.
 -  Reward respectful behavior and do not tolerate disrespectful behavior.
 - ☐ Provide rewards that help keep the focus on learning and [maintain a healthy environment](#) for students.
- Post expectations, procedures, and consequences in the classroom so students and teacher can refer to them.
- Consistently reinforce these expectations at the beginning of the year, returning to them when the class norms have been challenged. Intervene early when established norms and procedures have been challenged.
- Establish expectations, rules, and policies that are consistent throughout the grade or school.
- Focus on [positive behavioral supports](#) for students.
- Provide immediate feedback and positive reinforcement, such as surprise celebrations or extra time at a learning station, when students are following established classroom rules and procedures.
 - Plan for and teach bell to bell. Students should be engaged soon after the class begins and throughout the entirety of the period to ensure there is little downtime for misbehavior.
- Use literature (such as *Heart Prints* or *The Bucket Filler*) to teach pro-social behavior.
- Implement social skills instruction around specific areas of need.
 - Co-teach social skills with a counselor to establish a common language throughout the school.
 - ☐ See [Ways to Develop a Teacher-School Counselor Partnership](#).
-  Create social stories with students to help them learn important communication skills and ways of being in certain situations. Put these stories in video or book form and share them with the class.
 - See [Pogoboard](#), [Picto-Selector](#), [Lesson Pix](#), [iCreate](#), and [Voice Thread](#) for examples.

SPS item My classmates behave the way my teacher wants them to.

ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT that encourages appropriate behavior and enables students to commit to a safe classroom focused on learning.

- Create a [relationship-driven classroom environment](#) that both teacher and students have a stake in creating and maintaining. This environment includes:
 - Emotional and physical safety.
 - Students who are recognized for their unique talents and strengths.
 - Freedom from name calling, teasing, bullying, and criticism.
 - See *Relationship Driven Classroom Management*, by John M. Vitto, for more ideas on creating a relationship-driven classroom.
- Treat students as equal partners in creating and maintaining a safe and welcoming classroom environment for all.

- [Co-construct](#) classroom agreements, policies, and procedures (such as a class bill of rights) with students at the beginning of the year. Provide students with time to comment on and negotiate classroom rules together.
-  Show students that you sincerely want them to succeed in school and in other areas of their life.
- Establish a clear and meaningful [consequence system](#) with students.
- Set and model expectations about how to treat others in the classroom from the first day of school.
 - Develop intrinsic motivation in students by engaging in discussions with students about the purpose for the rules, norms, and classroom procedures.
 - Post expectations, procedures, and consequences in the classroom so students and teacher can refer to them.
 - Consistently reinforce these expectations at the beginning of the year, returning to them when the class norms have been challenged. Intervene early when established norms and procedures have been challenged.
 - Establish expectations, rules, and policies that are consistent throughout the grade or school.
-  Reward respectful behavior and do not tolerate disrespectful behavior.
 - Provide rewards that help keep the focus on learning and [maintain a healthy environment](#) for students.
- Focus on [positive behavioral supports](#) for students.
- Provide immediate feedback and positive reinforcement, such as surprise celebrations or extra time at a learning station, when students are following established classroom rules and procedures.

SPS item All of the kids in my class know what they are supposed to be doing and learning.

FOCUS ON CLEAR AND CHALLENGING LEARNING GOALS that students are aware of and can use to guide their classroom work.

- Use rubrics to help students understand academic expectations and to clearly see how they can reach goals.
- [Engage students](#) in developing and making sense of goals and objectives.
 - Use progress monitoring templates or protocols so students can monitor their own learning and are more aware of where they are at any time within the unit. Students can then have ownership when they see the purpose in the work they are doing.
 - Deconstruct the goals, [learning targets](#), or performance tasks prior to beginning the unit to ensure all students know what they are responsible for knowing and being able to do.
- Have explicit conversations with students about what it may look like when learning goals are met and what the process of meeting these goals could be.
 - Provide [rubrics](#) to give students a sense of what is expected of them and what it will look like if they are successful in meeting learning goals.
 - Model expectations for academic work. Use exemplary student work and teacher-created models to clearly show success in meeting learning goals.
- Post objectives in student-friendly language and refer to them throughout the lesson.
- Keep a consistent schedule that is posted in the classroom. This schedule should include both academic and nonacademic tasks (lunch, recess, brain breaks) in order to give students a sense of the flow of the day.

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SCAFFOLD AND DIFFERENTIATE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION to ensure that all students are keeping up with the learning and can access the content and skills.

- Post relevant information online (Schoology, Edmodo, website, blog) to introduce information and prep students for the learning process so students and parents can access information about class expectations outside of school.
- Set up roles for students to follow during group work (note taker, etc.) so that table groups and partnerships are held accountable.
- Set up a visible signal or timer on a projector or smart board to indicate transition to the next activity.
- Keep a consistent schedule that is posted in the classroom.



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About The Colorado Education Initiative

The Colorado Education Initiative is an independent nonprofit working in partnership with the Colorado Department of Education, educators, schools, districts, and other public education stakeholders to unlock the unique potential of every student by incubating innovation, shining a spotlight on success, and investing in sustainable change that improves outcomes for all students. CEI envisions that every student in Colorado is prepared and unafraid to succeed in school, work, and life, and ready to take on the challenges of today, tomorrow, and beyond.

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