



THE  
COLORADO  
EDUCATION  
INITIATIVE

## Using Colorado's Student Perception Survey to Inform Practice:

Instructional Strategies  
from Students and Teachers



**Grades 6-12**

JANUARY 2016


# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABOUT THIS GUIDE</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>STUDENT LEARNING</b>	<b>3</b>
<u>My teacher makes learning enjoyable.</u>	3
<u>What I learn in this class is useful to me in my real life.</u>	4
<u>My teacher teaches things that are important to me.</u>	4
<u>My teacher knows the things that make me excited about learning.</u>	5
<u>In this class, we learn a lot every day.</u>	6
<u>In this class, it is more important to understand the lesson than to memorize the answers.</u>	7
<u>When the work is too hard, my teacher helps me keep trying.</u>	8
<u>My teacher accepts nothing less than my best effort.</u>	9
<u>My teacher knows when we understand the lesson and when we do not.</u>	10
<u>If I don't understand something, my teacher explains it a different way.</u>	10
<u>My teacher explains difficult things clearly.</u>	11
<u>In this class, we have a say in what we learn and do.</u>	12
<u>My teacher talks to me about my work to help me understand my mistakes.</u>	12
<u>My teacher writes notes on my work that help me improve.</u>	13
<u>When we study a topic, my teacher makes connections to other subjects or classes.</u>	14
<b>STUDENT-CENTERED ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>15</b>
<u>My classroom is organized and I know where to find what I need.</u>	15
<u>Students feel comfortable sharing their ideas in this class.</u>	15
<u>My teacher respects my opinions and suggestions.</u>	16
<u>My teacher cares about me.</u>	17
<u>My teacher pays attention to what all students are thinking and feeling.</u>	17
<u>My teacher respects my cultural background.</u>	18
<u>My teacher respects me as an individual.</u>	19
<b>CLASSROOM COMMUNITY</b>	<b>20</b>
<u>My teacher would notice if something were bothering me.</u>	20
<u>In this class, I feel like I fit in.</u>	20
<u>Our classroom materials (books, articles, videos, art, music, posters, etc.) reflect my cultural background.</u>	21
<u>I feel like an important part of this classroom community.</u>	22
<u>My teacher knows what my life is like outside of school.</u>	23
<u>My teacher knows what is important to me.</u>	24
<u>I ask for help when I need it.</u>	24
<u>I feel like I do a good job in this class.</u>	25
<b>CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>26</b>
<u>Our class stays busy and does not waste time.</u>	26
<u>Students in this class treat the teacher with respect.</u>	26
<u>The students behave the way my teacher wants them to.</u>	27
<u>Students in this class respect each other's differences.</u>	28

## 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 create strategies that teachers can use to improve their instructional practice based on survey results.

### 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.

### 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 My teacher makes learning enjoyable.

.....  
**DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT RELEVANT AND ENGAGING CURRICULUM** to generate student interest, enjoyment, and connection to academic work.

- Schedule in “Brain Breaks” for students to recharge and maximize their learning.
-  Design “brain breaks” that allow students to use multiple modes of response such as debates, poetry slams, Wikis, blogs, and film.
- Create and choose curriculum that is relevant to students’ lives.
  - Develop an understanding 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 life.
  -  Connect school-based learning with real-world topics.
    - Encourage ways to think about learning, effort, and organization that are connected to what students experience outside of school.
  -  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 on the benefits and drawbacks of off-campus lunch) using inquiry-based learning.
- Use a variety of interactive mediums (such as videos, 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.
  - Express 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 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.



## 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 lives outside of school.

- Set an authentic purpose for the work students are doing.
- Make connections to students' lives outside of school in order to give students relevant points of connection to the material.
- Create and choose curriculum that is relevant to students' lives. This can help increase student motivation and engagement.
  - 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.
- 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.
    - 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 the local context in mind.
- Field trips (such as [History Colorado](#)) and local history projects can help make learning authentic for students.
- Invite guest speakers (including students' family members) 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.

## SPS item My teacher teaches things that are important to me.

**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.

- Model sharing [personal stories](#) with students to encourage them to do the same with you and with their peers.
- Establish a [morning meeting](#) (or similar structure) where teachers and students can share about their lives and reflect upon their learning.
- Give an [interest inventory](#) at the beginning of the year to get to know your students, their interests, and what motivates them.
- Have students write a personal letter at the beginning of the year describing interests and motivations for 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 can discuss or bring in an example of how they use physics in their life 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 their lives outside of school. 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 or digital games).
- Attend students' after-school activities and incorporate them into your curriculum. For example, a math word problem can be developed using a student's sports event.
- Use open house days, family nights, and [parent/teacher conferences](#) to find out about students' lives.

.....

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

- Use [KWL charts](#) (Know, Want to Know, Learned) at the beginning of a unit or lesson to gauge student interest in the material.

- ☀️ Create and choose curriculum that is [relevant to students' lives](#).
  - Develop an understanding 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 curriculum to help students understand how it is important to their lives.
  - ☀️ Connect school-based learning with real-world topics.
- Encourage ways to think about learning, effort, and organization that are connected to what students experience outside of school.
- ☀️ Use current events and local happenings to connect to school-based material. For example, word problems can be written with the 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 knows the things that make me excited about learning.




.....

**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.

- 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.
- ☀️ 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 can discuss or bring in a way that they use physics in their life outside of school.
- Use personal exit tickets to get to know student interests and their lives outside of school. 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 or 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 and incorporate them into your curriculum. For example, a math word problem can be developed using a student's sports event.

.....

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

- Use [KWL charts](#) (Know, Want to Know, Learned) at the beginning of a unit or lesson to gauge student interest in the material.
- 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.
    - 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

**In this class, we learn a lot 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.
- Create explicit procedures that help students know how to support and complete classroom tasks, such as passing out papers or moving between groups. Post these procedures in the classroom.
- Plan transitions between activities ahead of time so that they are seamless and efficient.
- Set up a visible signal/timer on a projector or smart board to indicate transition to the next activity.
- Keep a consistent schedule that is posted in the classroom.


.....

**PLAN MEANINGFUL AND VALID ASSESSMENTS** to ensure you reteach skills/content that students have not mastered and teach new skills/content for students who have reached academic goals.

- 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 standards or objectives.
- Use [formative assessments](#) throughout instruction to enable both students and the teacher to see where there may be areas of strength and growth. This new information can be used to help inform future instruction. See ["The Best Value in Formative Assessment"](#) for further clarity.

.....

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


-  Use multiple strategies (such as graphic organizers, flexible grouping, access to leveled reading material, or 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 a [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.
- 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.

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


.....

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

- Incorporate community-based problem-solving projects (such as a student project on 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, science and reading fairs.
- Concentrate on [21st century skills](#) that include collaboration and problem solving.
- 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.


.....

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

- Engage students in [Deeper Learning](#) to motivate, challenge, and help them 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 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, science and reading fairs.
- Promote [joint productive activity](#) with students. Students should have the chance to work with both teacher and other students to solve meaningful problems and create together.
- Encourage analysis of material (such as compare and contrast or 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.

.....


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

-  Use multiple strategies (such as graphic organizers, flexible grouping, access to leveled reading material, or resources in multiple languages) that effectively [break down](#) and scaffold learning tasks to meet the varying abilities and needs of students.
- 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).
  - Establish a [peer support network](#).
- Ask students to revisit and make their thinking explicit. This will help provide information about students' understanding of material and why work is difficult for students.
- Encourage students to do error assessment on their own work. Students can analyze their own and others' work and recognize patterns in errors.


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

.....

**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.
  - Establish a [peer support network](#).
  - 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 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.
    - "[Chunking](#)" helps students learn how to break work into manageable steps.
    - Explicitly [teach study skills and organization](#).
- .....

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

-  Use multiple strategies (such as graphic organizers, flexible grouping, access to leveled reading material, or 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 a [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.
- Share strategies, processes, and reminders 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 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).
  - Establish a [peer support network](#).
- Encourage students to do an error assessment on their own work. Students can analyze their own and others' work and recognize patterns in errors.
- Provide specific written and verbal descriptive feedback.
  - Eliminate vague terms like “Good job!” Instead, provide concrete examples of students' strengths and areas of growth.
  - Provide students a format or protocol for using feedback to make corrections and resubmit work.

### **SPS item** My teacher accepts nothing less than my best effort.

.....

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

- 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 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 asking students to bring a question about the material to you every day).
- Post revision reminders around the room or on students' desks 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 student 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.

## **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 enable both students and teachers to see where there are areas of strength and growth. This new information ought to be used to help inform future instruction. See [“The Best Value in Formative Assessment”](#) for further clarity.
- 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](#).
  - Write three things you learned today.
  - Use questioning to probe for understanding.
  - [Fist to Five](#).
  - Thumbs-up/-down.
  - White boards.
- 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 student 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.
  - Avoid using general comments, like “Good job!” Students need to know which parts were good and why.
  - Give ample feedback in the midst of projects and assignments, not just when a final product is submitted.



## **SPS item** If I don't understand something, my teacher explains it a different way.

.....

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

- 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.”
- Ask students to revisit and make their thinking explicit. This will help provide information about students’ understanding of material and where you may need additional and different explanations.
-  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.
- Provide both verbal and written instructions.
- Use simulations to place students in authentic learning scenarios.
- Incorporate multiple modes of learning (auditory, visual kinesthetic, etc.) into your pedagogy and curriculum.
-  Design authentic assignments (such as debates, poetry slams, Wikis, blogs, film, and articles) that allow students to use these multiple modes of response.

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


-  Use an alternative method of explaining the misunderstanding (such as drawing a diagram to explain a concept).
-  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.
  - 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 explains difficult things clearly.

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

- Use simulations to place students in authentic learning scenarios.
- Incorporate multiple modes of learning (auditory, visual kinesthetic, etc.) into your pedagogy and curriculum.
- Use anchor charts to help make thinking visible for students.

**SCAFFOLD AND DIFFERENTIATE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION** to ensure that all students have access to and are learning 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.
  - Design levels of challenge purposefully. Students should be supported to do work that is not too easy, and not too difficult. Work within the [Zone of Proximal Development](#) to help support students to learn new 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.
  - 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 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.

*“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, we have a say in what we learn and do.


**ESTABLISH A STUDENT-CENTERED CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT** that encourages student choice in classroom processes and curriculum.

- Get to know students' interests, strengths, and motivations in order to know how to provide students with options and choices in curriculum and pedagogy that are worth wanting. Choices for students should promote a sense of [control, purpose, and competence](#).
  - Give an [interest inventory](#) at the beginning of the year to get to know your students. This will help to determine what students are interested in and can help guide a series of curricular choices to make available to them.
  - Have students write a personal letter at the beginning of the year describing interests and motivations for learning.
  - Ask students about their experiences in school and about particular classes to gauge what they might want to learn.
- Give students choices about curricular materials.
  - Provide students with different book genres and titles to choose from.
    - ☐ Offer [book clubs](#) or literature circles, which are great ways to involve students in choosing their own texts.
    - ☐ Hold a reading fair. This is similar to a science fair, but books are presented on project boards.
    - ☐ Let groups choose a topic to research and decide on the process of completing the research.
- Offer project-based learning to enable students to make individual choices about process and product. For example, students in science and social studies classes can choose research topics.
- Model multiple ways for students to go about completing academic tasks and meeting standards. Students can express themselves in and show what they know in a variety of ways.
  - See Principle II of [Universal Design for Learning](#) for further information about providing students multiple means of action and expression.
- Allow students to choose when they might want to turn in an assignment while providing parameters for these decisions. For example, give students three dates to choose from to turn in a project.

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

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

- Encourage students to do error assessment on their own work.
- Post revision reminders around the room or on students' desks to help students revise on their own and learn a common process of revision.
- 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.

-  Encourage students to reflect upon, learn from, and [revise](#) their thinking and performances. 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).
- 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 student 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.
  - Give ample feedback in the midst of projects and assignments, not just when a final product is submitted.
- Use [rubrics](#) to help students understand academic expectations and to clearly see how they can reach goals.
- Build in time for student self-evaluation and encourage students to use comments to revise and improve upon their work.

 If you notice a consistent misunderstanding in student work, invite students in to work with you one on one.

### **SPS item** My teacher writes notes on my work that help me improve.

.....  
**ENCOURAGE A CULTURE OF GROWTH AND REVISION** that encourages students 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 student 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 the student work and focus in.
  - Give ample feedback in the midst of projects and assignments, not just when a final product is submitted.
- Use [rubrics](#) to help students understand academic expectations and to clearly see how they can reach goals.
- Build in time for student self-evaluation and encourage taking teacher comments into consideration.

 If you notice a consistent misunderstanding in student work, invite students in to work with you one on one.



## When we study a topic, my teacher makes connections to other subjects or classes.

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

- Plan cross-curricular activities with other teachers to allow students to see skills and content in various disciplines.
- 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 or 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.

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

## STUDENT-CENTERED ENVIRONMENT

These items focus on how teachers create an environment that responds to individual students' backgrounds, strengths, and interests.

 **SPS item** **My classroom is organized and I know where to find what I need.**



**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/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 and 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 a classroom procedure 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, and sink.
  - Learning stations, computer areas, equipment areas, centers, and 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.

 **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 ideas about academic work and the classroom environment.

- Encourage student 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, and 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 free writes and private thoughts or 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.
- [Co-construct](#) classroom agreements, policies, and procedures with students at the beginning of the year.
  - Provide students time to comment on and negotiate classroom rules together (such as a class bill of rights).
- Encourage risk-taking from students. Wrong answers can be reframed to move everyone toward greater understandings.
- 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 student track the number of students who speak during class conversations.
- 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.
-  Establish an anonymous question box for students to share thoughts about the class.

## SPS item My teacher respects my opinions and suggestions.

.....



**ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT** that encourages sharing of interests and ideas about academic work and the classroom environment.

- Encourage and model discussions to promote student negotiation of ideas.
- Develop a class motto and activities that encourage trust and respect.
- 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,” to decide what they think of the statement.
  - 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.
- [Co-construct](#) classroom agreements, policies, and procedures with students at the beginning of the year.
- Provide students time to comment on and negotiate classroom rules together (such as a class bill of rights).
- 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 student track the number of students who speak during class conversations.
- Develop an understanding and repertoire of [culturally-responsive teaching](#) strategies to honor and build off of students’ cultural backgrounds, practices, and perspectives.

## 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.

- 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.
- Check in with students about how they are feeling on a daily basis.
  - 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.
- 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.
- Be aware of a student's behavior, especially if it has changed. Ask if he or she needs a break from class or needs to talk to you in the hallway, etc.
- Show and model compassion toward all students.
- Prioritize learning in the classroom so that you show that you are caring about students' academic well-being.
-  Keep your promises to students.

## SPS item My teacher pays attention to what all students are thinking and feeling.

.....


**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.
- Have personal conferences with students to help grow your relationship.
- Talk to other teachers about student concerns during both formal and informal meetings.
- Check in with students about how they are feeling on a daily basis.
  - 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.

### SPS item **My teacher respects my cultural background.**



**ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT** that values student differences and cultural practices.

- Students can create a [History of Me](#) presentation to illustrate who they are in terms of multiple disciplines.
- Allow student choice in parts of lessons to enable students to show you who they are.
- Ask students how they connect to the curriculum (such as text-to-self connections) in order to discover more about them.
- Have regular parent/guardian conferences to get to know students, their families, and communities.
- Conduct home visits, especially in the beginning of the year, to get to know students, families, and communities.
- 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 and can work to further tokenize certain communities.
  - Consider a more holistic view of culture that includes not only holidays and food but other cultural practices.
  - Consider the stereotypical representations you may be portraying in your classroom through posters, books, etc.
  - Replace classroom materials and decorations with varied portrayals of marginalized groups. Post word walls, visual content, resources in languages other than English, 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.
  - 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 literature. Avoid tokenizing certain groups by weaving content about underrepresented groups (people of color, LGBTQ communities, people with disabilities, etc.) with that about traditionally overrepresented groups. See [Lee and Low Books](#) and [Bank Street Center for Children's Literature](#) for student 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 were.
- 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.


- Coordinate classes with a counselor who can help lead conversations about difference and diversity among students.
- Compare and contrast student differences as a bridge to academic work.
- Include multimodal materials (such as print-based texts, video, and social media) that highlight differences among individuals and communities (such as 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's Welcoming Schools](#), [Rethinking Schools](#), [BIONIC club](#) (Believe It or Not I Care), [Teaching Tolerance](#), and [EdChange](#).

## **My teacher respects me as an individual.**

### ..... **ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, SAFE, AND CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT** that values student differences and cultural practices.

- Have beginning of the year introductions that enable students to get to know one another.
  - Play Differences Bingo. Students must get initials of their classmates to score a “bingo” based on their differences.
  -  Have all students design a piece of a large puzzle to put together to demonstrate the importance of community.
- 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 and can work 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 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.
- 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 were.
- Design activities and lessons that encourage multiple perspectives taking and invite students to recognize diversity of background and belief systems. See this framing activity for ideas on how to do this with students.
- [Children's books](#) are also a great way (even with older students!) to introduce the idea of perspective taking.
- Highlight student work that shows differences in perspective and interpretation.
- Compare and contrast student differences as a bridge to academic work.

### ..... **ESTABLISH A STUDENT-CENTERED CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT** that encourages student choice in classroom processes and curriculum.


- Get to know students' interests, strengths, and motivations in order to know how to provide students options and choices in curriculum and pedagogy that are worth wanting. Choices for students should promote a sense of control, purpose, and competence.
- Give an interest inventory at the beginning of the year to get to know your students, their interests, and what motivates them. This will help to determine what students are interested in and can help guide a series of curricular choices to make available to them.
- Have students write a personal letter at the beginning of the year describing interests and motivations for learning.
-  Ask students about their experiences in school and about particular classes to gauge what they might want to learn.

## CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

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

### 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.
- 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.
- Gives 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 he or she needs a break from class or needs to talk to you in the hallway, etc.

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

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


- Have beginning of the year introductions and [icebreakers](#) that enable students to get to know one another.
- 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.
- Allow students a say in the classroom rules and policies.
- 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 and can work 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 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.
- Research famous people in various professions who are typically underrepresented. See [“Planting Seeds, Growing Diversity”](#) for further information.
  - 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 literature. Avoid tokenizing certain groups by weaving content about underrepresented groups (people of color, LGBTQ communities, people with disabilities, etc.) with that about traditionally overrepresented groups.
- 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 were.
- Design activities and lessons that encourage [multiple-perspective taking](#).
  - [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.
- Compare and contrast student differences as a bridge to academic work.
- Include multimodal texts (such as print-based texts, video, and social media) that highlight differences among individuals and communities (such as 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's Welcoming Schools](#), [Rethinking Schools](#), [BIONIC club](#) (Believe It or Not I Care), [Teaching Tolerance](#), and [EdChange](#).
- 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” and “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** Our classroom materials (books, articles, videos, art, music, posters, etc.) reflect my cultural background.

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


- Include multimodal materials (such as print-based texts, video, and social media) that highlight differences among individuals and communities (such as religion, ethnicity, gender, etc.).
- Within the first few weeks of school, design activities to get to know students, their families, and communities.

-  Allow student choice in parts of lessons to enable them to show you who they are.
  - Give students the opportunity to contribute to classroom materials. Tell students to bring in texts from home, posters, design art, etc. Rotate materials throughout the year to reflect all of your students' cultural practices.
  - Ask students how they connect to the curriculum (such as text-to-self connections) in order to discover more about them.
  - Use relevant anecdotes that reflect students' background as a segue into lessons.
  - 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 and can work to further tokenize certain communities.
    - Develop an understanding and repertoire of [culturally responsive teaching](#) strategies to honor and build off of students' cultural backgrounds, practices, and perspective.
    - 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. Walls and shelves should represent the various identities, families, and community backgrounds of students.
    - Stock your classroom library with anti-bias, multicultural literature. Avoid tokenizing certain groups by weaving content about underrepresented groups (people of color, LGBTQ communities, people with disabilities, etc.) with that about traditionally overrepresented groups.
    - Engage students in conversations about their cultural backgrounds and practices. This [My Multicultural Self](#) lesson can help students explore their cultural identities and see their cultural practices as tied to their perspectives of the world.
    - Draw on student cultural backgrounds to facilitate class discussions and make real-world connections.

### **SPS item** I feel like an important part of this classroom community.

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

- Create jobs for students and have them rotate through these jobs throughout the year.
- Establish a show and tell time for students to represent their ideas and interests with objects from their home lives.
- Have beginning of the year introductions and [icebreakers](#) that enable students to get to know one another.
- 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.
- Allow students a say in the classroom rules and policies.

-  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 ought to be a regular part of your curriculum, not an add-on that only happens once in a while and can work 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 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. Research famous people in various professions who are typically underrepresented. See [“Planting Seeds, Growing Diversity”](#) for further information.
- 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 literature. Avoid tokenizing certain groups by weaving content about underrepresented groups (people of color, LGBTQ communities, people with disabilities, etc.) with that about traditionally overrepresented groups.
- Seek out resources and professional learning opportunities that address issues of difference, diversity, and social-emotional learning within schools.
  - See [The Colorado Education Initiative's Welcoming Schools](#), [Rethinking Schools](#), [BIONIC club](#) (Believe It or Not I Care), [Teaching Tolerance](#), and [EdChange](#).
- 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,” to decide what they think of the statement.
  - 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 **My teacher knows what my life is like outside of school.**

**ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, 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 for students to know that these meetings occurred and to understand what happened during the meetings (e.g., a letter to the student from their parents).
- 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 talk 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 can 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, having students answer a quick question about their lives (after-school activities, etc.).
- Use personal exit tickets to get to know student interests and their lives outside of school. For example, ask students, “What is something you are excited about this weekend?”
- Explicitly tell students you know about their lives outside of school by asking relevant questions.

- Keep a bulletin board about 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, a math word problem can be developed using a student's sports event.
- 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.

.....

**ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, 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](#) when teachers and students can share about their lives and reflect upon their learning.
- Give an [interest inventory](#) at the beginning of the year to get to know your students, their interests, and what motivates them.
- Have students write a personal letter at the beginning of the year describing interests and motivations for 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 can 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 their lives outside of school. 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 AND IMPLEMENT 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.

### SPS item I ask for help when I need it.

.....

**ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, 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 establishes asking for 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 ask a friend, write down your question while waiting for the teacher, etc.).
- Make use of props — cups to flip when they need help, colored cards on desks 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.
- Allow students to [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.
- Build on and value students' ideas. Use student responses as entry points into the learning objective.
- Acknowledge student mistakes and celebrate their willingness to share examples with class.
- 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 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.
  - 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 and moving between groups).
- Post expectations for procedures in class.
- Plan transitions between activities ahead of time so that they are seamless and efficient.
- Ensure that students know what they are learning and why.
- Regularly post objectives.
- 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 the next activity.
- Keep a consistent schedule that is posted in the classroom.



.....  
**DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT 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 videos, role-plays, peer instruction, games, [think/pair/share](#), field trips, friendly competitions, and case studies) to engage students in the material.

## SPS item Students in this class treat the teacher with respect.



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

- Create a [relationship-driven classroom environment](#) that both the teacher and students have a stake in creating and maintaining. This environment includes:
  - Emotional and physical safety.
  - Students that 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 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 time to comment on and negotiate classroom rules together.
- 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.
-  Show students that you sincerely want them to succeed in school and in other areas of their lives.
- 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.
- 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.

### SPS item The students behave the way my teacher wants them to.


**ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, 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 the 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 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 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 lives.
  - 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.
- Develop intrinsic motivation in students by engaging in discussions with them 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 and/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.

## SPS item Students in this class respect each other's differences.

**ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE, 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 and can work 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 complex portrayals of marginalized groups. Walls and shelves should represent the various identities, families, and community backgrounds of students.
  - 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 literature. Avoid tokenizing certain groups by weaving content about underrepresented groups (such as people of color, LGBTQ communities, people with disabilities, etc.) with that about traditionally overrepresented groups.
- 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 were.
- Design activities and lessons that encourage [multiple perspective taking](#).
  - [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.
- Coordinate classes with a counselor who can help lead conversations about difference and diversity among students.
- Compare and contrast student differences as a bridge to academic work.
- Teach a unit on building community.
- Seek out resources and professional learning opportunities that address issues of difference, diversity, and social-emotional learning within schools.
  - See [The Colorado Education Initiative's Welcoming Schools](#), [Rethinking Schools](#), [BIONIC club](#) (Believe It or Not I Care), [Teaching Tolerance](#), and [EdChange](#).



THE  
COLORADO  
EDUCATION  
INITIATIVE

1660 Lincoln Street  
Suite 2000  
Denver, CO 80264  
303-736-6477  
[coloradoedinitiative.org](http://coloradoedinitiative.org)

**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.

©2016 The Colorado Education Initiative