



Strategies for Creating a Positive Learning Environment

1. Greet students as they enter the program space every day.

Create a welcoming environment by personally greeting students.

- Make eye contact with students and demonstrate verbal excitement to see them. Show interest, ask questions so you can follow up, be genuine and show compassion.
- Light up with enthusiasm when students arrive. You may be one of the few sources of happiness they experience in a day. You can give every student positive human contact and show that you care about each one as a person.
- Make no exception for students with behavioral issues. Assure them that each day is a fresh, new canvas and that today will be great. Catch them doing something good, and give them a positive response. If you draw attention to the interactions you want, any negative behavior may begin to improve.

2. Create unique verbal cues and physical interactions with students.

Develop a special verbal cue or physical action that encourages positive student–adult interactions and trust.

- Create an amusing call and response for students that engages their active listening skills and participation.
- Develop a special physical action as a way of welcoming students to the program space or recognizing student successes (examples include a high five, fist bump, dance movement or special handshake).
- Encourage student input in creating the verbal cue or action.
- Have music playing as students enter and make it fun, like you are announcing the arrival of a star athlete or celebrity.

3. Build interpersonal relationships.

- Use positive language when addressing students.
- Share appropriate personal anecdotes that show you can relate on matters big and small.
- Make notes to yourself on exchanges, and revisit those notes before the students arrive so you can demonstrate your investment in them.
- Be genuine and reflect the good you see in students' choices. Be there to actively listen when they need you.
- When dealing with discipline, ask the students what they learned and how they can do better next time, and agree on an appropriate consequence. Focus on the behavior and reassure the student that you love having them there, it's the behavior that needs to change to make a safer environment for everyone.

4. Communicate and collaborate with all team members.

- Actively participate in staff meetings and team-building activities.
- Share best practice tips and ideas with colleagues.
- Celebrate team successes.
- Have crossover events to build team collaboration.
- Write and share positive notes on the good work team members are doing.

See more strategies on the next page!



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- 5. Create a safe and consistent environment for students.** Provide clear behavior and learning goals so students recognize that program staff have high expectations of them. Create a sense of order and consistency in program areas.
 - Enter the program area and immediately engage in a warm-up or personalized learning activity.
 - Point out materials and resources that have been prepared for the day's activities.
 - Help students engage with program staff and peers without being disruptive.
 - Hold weekly discussions on how well students have met program expectations; have a chart on the wall to show progress. If students hit the weekly mark, do something fun or offer a choice of incentives.
 - Create a leadership academy where students help one another as they work through their activities.
- 6. Recognize the efforts of peers, students, parents and community.**
 - Create and participate in showcases of program success.
 - Build relationships that encourage parent involvement.
 - Respect community partners as members of your team.
 - Bring rewards and treats to show appreciation for everyone involved.
 - Create a community day, where parents and community members can celebrate the work students have done. Partner with a local grocery store or restaurant to get food donations, and publicly acknowledge the donations.
- 7. Allow students to get to know you.** Students enjoy learning about adults in their lives. Give an opportunity to share information about yourself.
 - Give a mock quiz about yourself to students and allow them to guess the answers before discussing your actual responses.
 - Hold a trivia day where you divide students into groups and have them compete to answer questions about you correctly, or have students fill out a questionnaire early on and make trivia questions out of their responses.
 - Play “Two Truths and a Lie” about yourself. As students figure out which one is the lie, allow an appropriate amount of fun banter over the possibilities.