We asked visitors to our NEA Today Facebook page how they build friendly rapport with students without compromising authority. Here’s their feedback.

“Show an interest in their lives and hobbies. Ask how their weekend was. Ask what they do for fun. Learn what is important to them and then use it in teaching. ... One size cannot fit all, every kid is different and how you build rapport with them is different!”
—TANYA WILSON-SMITH

“It is extremely important for young teachers to remember that their students are not their peers. This is especially important in high school, obviously. This means that the interactions needs to be adult to child. ... The way to build a friendly rapport is to remember the role of a teacher is to guide learning. Use your subject matter to relate to students.”
—JOY WITHROW-GILLIHAN

“Be current and know about the things that interest them. Build relationships and take an interest in them. Use humor when you can. Be firm and consistent. Let them know when it is serious and you mean business. Other times it can be more relaxed. It is important they know the difference.”
—CAROL GRAHAM

“I sit among the students and make myself accessible to them. Why hide behind the desk or behind a podium unless it’s necessary to lecture? Step out every once in a while. My kids love that I have as much energy as they [have].”
—WENDY ADAMS

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“Capture their hearts. Smile, laugh, and share things about yourself but remind them that they are not only representing their class but their family as well. Be consistent and fair in all things.”
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“Meet them where they are. Understand them before you expect them to understand you. Never sit at your desk while they’re working. Constantly let them know you’re there if they need help. Listen more than you talk. Ask good questions—not just about the content, but also about their opinions, and their thoughts. Don’t send them out the second they get mad or irritated. Do whatever you can to keep them in your classroom, because you only see them for such a limited time anyway. And most important, feed them. Bring in little treats once in awhile. When we feed them, ESPECIALLY when they’re hungry, we build trust and a feeling of safety.”
—ROSITA LEILANI CASTELLANO

“I tell my students often that I care about them and how smart they are and I expect the best from all of them. We share lots of laughs and learning.”
—LAURALEE KEPHART