

THE THREE PS TO JUMP START YOUR CULTURALLY-MINDED CLASSROOM

These power tips and strategies can help you begin to shape the way your classroom looks and feels to your students and parents and start the quest to develop an inclusive, diverse, collaborative community. The list below is meant to assist you in being conscious of the diversity within your classroom culture in reference to the policies you create, procedures you want your students to follow, and the parent-teacher relationships you develop.

Power Tips for Classroom Policy

Rules and consequences often determine the climate of a classroom and establish a safe environment for student learning. In order to establish rules and consequences that meet the diverse needs of your students, consider the following:

- Remember your best resource is your students. Take a survey of your students at the beginning of the year to get to know a little bit about them.
- Have students create the rules with you. If you have rules pre-set, help students to understand why you have the rule and ask them questions about rules they have felt were unfair and why?
- Make sure all cultures and groups of students are represented and given equal voice in making the rules. Consider asking other teachers how they address the different culture expectations in their classrooms.
- Make a plan for how you will address a student who breaks the rule due to a cultural difference, rather than defiance.
- When creating your discipline policy, include students in the discussion to make sure students understand the reason for the consequences. Focus on natural consequences as much as possible. Have a plan for how to address a student concern that a consequence is not fair.

Power Tips for Classroom Procedures

Procedures and routines create the classroom climate and help the school day run smoothly. To establish student focus and a positive class climate, consider the following:

- When making procedures regarding school supplies needed for the classroom, be aware of the limitations of your students. For example, low income students may not be able to buy certain items, even pencils.
- When choosing a procedure to handle absences and missed tests, decide how you will account for instances such as religious holidays and sporting events. Ask yourself what is fair. Make a clear plan and be consistent!

- Constantly ask yourself “Who would be left out?” If you plan a party, is there a religious fast that day? If you plan a field trip, is there a gender neutral bathroom? You may not be able to accommodate everything, but you can try your best!
- Your classroom should be a Safe Zone. Be conscious that every student, regardless of diversity, feels safe in your room. How will you create procedures for bullying and harassment dealing with race, sexual orientation, gender, economic status, and ethnicity?

Power Tips for Working with Parents

Building and sustaining trust is a fundamental attribute towards successful partnerships between school and home. In order to establish trust, consider the following keys:

- Send a Welcome Post Card to each family to start off on a positive note and allow families to feel comfortable and welcome. Be aware that all parents may not read or write English and accommodate, if possible. Write consistent positive notes to go home and/or make regular positive phone calls. Consider writing a weekly newsletter or report on classroom learning and activities.
- Get to know your students and their families by receiving input from them regarding important aspects of school. For instance, you may ask parents what the students enjoy doing in their spare time and incorporate these interests in lesson planning. Knowing your students and their families is important as you build trust. If possible, visit families in their homes to see firsthand how learning is supported there, and what the cultural environment of the home looks like.
- Be accessible to your parents: Return phone calls and emails promptly to show that you value parents and care about their needs. Contact parents early on and before a problem occurs, particularly when there’s good news to report. If you’re comfortable, be flexible with the ways that working parents can communicate with you outside business hours.
- Invite parents to come into the classroom and, if willing, volunteer with a task such as reading groups or field trips.
- Let parents know multiple ways they can reinforce classroom learning at home and support their student, whether with homework or planning for the future.

For more in -depth information regarding specific areas of diversity, please explore the NEA’s Diversity Toolkit at <http://www.nea.org/tools/diversity-toolkit.html>.