Can you believe it’s March already, and there are only 3 months left of school! Below are updates for this past week.

**The “Write” Stuff**

As part of her 3rd quarter final exam, Shiloh is asking her students to respond to a writing prompt about the Cold War: Explain Americans’ fear of communism and how this leads to our foreign policy during the Cold War. Show cause and effect. Prior to the exam, Shiloh guided the students through a brainstorming activity and walked them through the pre-writing strategy, What-Why-How. Students are expected to work on a rough draft and bring it to class during the final exam.

During large group instruction, Greg periodically stopped to allow time for his students to process the information.

After Koren’s students completed a quiz during their 6th period class, she asked them to complete a self-evaluation of their overall performance this quarter and write three ways in which they could improve. She also had them complete a similar teacher evaluation, identifying three ways in which they thought Koren could improve. If interested, they could turn over the sheet and draw a picture of her. Those pictures were priceless! **NOTE: Below are actual copies of the evaluation instruments Koren used.**

Leah spent a great deal of time and energy this past week designing many quality materials to assist students in writing their draft of a prompt on The Odyssey. Allowing students class time to work on their rough draft allowed her time to monitor (equitably), and afforded opportunities to assist them.

Bobbye

Marc continues to provide several practice opportunities for students to write during their science class. For instance, during this observation he assigned them to work in pairs, and divided a reading passage into four parts. One student was to read a section, and the other was to write a summary. Then they switched roles. While this activity was occurring, Marc equitably monitored each partnership, checking for understanding while simultaneously providing descriptive feedback, as needed.

Juliana effectively juggled three classroom activities at once. Students spent nearly the entire period writing. Some students worked on MyAccess!, some worked on writing letters for a health class assignment, while others had individual conferences with Juliana. During those conferences, Juliana gave descriptive feedback on students’ written work.
**Data Teams – Off and Running:**

We hear that Marc and some of the others are using the data from the data team meeting to help guide conversations with parents and each other – in some cases going back to data from 6th grade. This is very exciting – go data team!

**Looking Back, Looking Forward:**

As the fourth quarter rapidly approaches, let’s pause and reflect on our behavior toward students. In the latest edition of ASCD, Robert Marzano has written an article entitled Relating to Students: It’s What You Do That Counts. He identified four teacher actions that contribute to building a strong relationship. Below is the article in its entirety.

March 2011 | Volume 68 | Number 6
What Students Need to Learn | Pages 82-83
Relating to Students: It's What You Do That Counts
Robert J. Marzano

Positive relationships between teachers and students are among the most commonly cited variables associated with effective instruction. If the relationship is strong, instructional strategies seem to be more effective. Conversely, a weak or negative relationship will mute or even negate the benefits of even the most effective instructional strategies. But exactly what constitutes good teacher-student relationships, and how do you develop them if they don't exist? Both research and theory provide some answers (Goodenow, 1993; Marzano, Pickering, & Hefelbower, 2010; Wentzel, 2009; Wubbels, Brekelmans, van Tartwijk, & Admiral, 1999).

Perhaps the most powerful message from the research is that relationships are a matter of student perception. They have little to do with how a teacher actually feels about students; it's what teachers do that dictates how students perceive those relationships.

This fact can be quite liberating. Teachers will certainly have an affinity for the majority of students in their classrooms, but from time to time they may react less positively to a given student. However, this won't really affect how the student perceives his or her relationship with the teacher. The major factor is how the teacher interacts with the student.

**Developing Positive Perceptions**

The following teacher actions develop the perception in students that they have a good relationship with the teacher.

**Showing Interest in Students' Lives**

Busy secondary teachers with more than 100 students in their combined classes can hardly know details about every student's life. However, teachers can cultivate a positive relationship by knowing students by name; asking them what they thought of recent occurrences, such as a sports game, popular movie, or song; asking them what they're interested in; and simply inquiring whether school is going well for them.

**Advocating for Students**
Students believe that teachers are advocating for them if the teachers appear to want the students to do well in class. Certain teacher behaviors work against this perception. For example, a teacher who announces that he or she will reward no more than five As at the end of the semester is doing little to foster the perception of advocating for students. Such behavior says to students that the teacher is more committed to an arbitrary criterion than to student success. Teachers can promote the perception of teacher advocacy by setting up times when students can talk individually with them, asking struggling students if they need assistance, and helping struggling students determine what they need to work on most.

Never Giving Up on Students
Promoting this perception means that even when students don't perform well or when they get behind in their assignments, the teacher continues to offer ways to help them catch up. The teacher might establish small-group tutorial sessions that students can attend or enlist peer tutors from among those students who have mastered the material. Never giving up on students also includes being a cheerleader for some students, telling them to "hang in there" and keep trying. Teachers might also relate personal stories of when they had a particularly tough time with a class.

Acting Friendly
Fostering the perception of a friendly relationship has nothing to do with how "friendly" a teacher actually feels. Many teacher behaviors promote this perception of friendliness. For example, a teacher might banter or joke with students; smile or make eye contact; or, when appropriate, place a hand on a student's shoulder or pat a student on the back.

The Keystone of Effective Teaching
These teacher behaviors can, with rare exceptions, make all students feel that they have a positive relationship with their teachers. Teachers should engage in these behaviors daily, especially with their disenfranchised students, who are most in need of this positive support.

References

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*Picture This:*

Using this picture, what might students write about in your particular subject area?
Teacher and Student Evaluations:

TEACHER EVALUATION

Teacher name: ______________________ Course: __________ Date: ______

Directions: Circle the number rating that fits with the teacher’s performance.

4 = always/most of the time   3 = sometimes   2 = once in a while   1 = rarely

NOTE: If circles ‘1’, write how the teacher can improve in that area.

How can I improve?

1. The teacher demonstrates knowledge of the subject matter.
   4   3   2   1

2. The teacher explains the materials clearly and gives clear directions.
   4   3   2   1

3. The teacher speaks clearly and audibly (loud enough).
   4   3   2   1

4. The teacher uses a variety of methods and activities.
   4   3   2   1

5. The teacher demonstrates a genuine concern for students.
   4   3   2   1

6. The teacher makes it mandatory for students to be engaged.
   4   3   2   1

7. The teacher encourages student participation.
   4   3   2   1

8. The teacher is organized and prepared for class.
   4   3   2   1

9. The teacher gives clear and reasonable assignments.
   4   3   2   1

10. The teachers grades fairly.
    4   3   2   1

11. The teacher is available for extra help outside of the class period.
    4   3   2   1

12. Rate the overall performance of the teacher.
    4   3   2   1

USE THE BACK SIDE OF THIS PAPER TO DRAW A PICTURE OF YOUR TEACHER.
STUDENT EVALUATION

Name: _______________________ Date: __________ Class period: _____

Directions: Circle the number rating that fits with your performance in this class. If you circled 1, write how you can improve in that area to be more successful in this class.

4 = always/most of the time   3 = sometimes   2 = once in a while   1 = rarely

NOTE: If circles ‘1’, write how you can improve in that area to be more successful.

What grade do you expect to make in this class? A  B  C  F  How can I improve?

1. Attendance (here every day and on time)  4  3  2  1 _______________________________

2. Bringing supplies  4  3  2  1 _______________________________

3. Paying attention  4  3  2  1 _______________________________

4. Taking notes  4  3  2  1 _______________________________

5. Keeping notes & assignments organized  4  3  2  1 _______________________________

6. Using notes to study for tests  4  3  2  1 _______________________________

7. Staying on task during class  4  3  2  1 _______________________________

8. Completing class work assignments  4  3  2  1 _______________________________

9. Completing homework assignments  4  3  2  1 _______________________________

10. Seeking extra help on assignments I don’t understand.  4  3  2  1 _______________________________

11. Working well with others  4  3  2  1 _______________________________

12. Working well individually  4  3  2  1 _______________________________

13. Good behavior  4  3  2  1 _______________________________