

Strategies for Communicating High Expectations to Students

March 15, 2005

TIP # 7

Response Opportunities

INDIVIDUAL HELP

Most teachers believe that the large majority of the time they spend assisting students with independent work is devoted to their lower achieving students. However, research has demonstrated that this is not the case. Indeed there are some needy students who may capture the teacher's attention, but if the student is not demonstrably needy, the teacher tends to most often direct his attention to students he perceives to be principally engaged in the task at hand. Hence, teachers are likely not to be equitable in providing their attention to all students. Some students may be too embarrassed or confused to pursue the teacher's attention and may miss out on this valuable opportunity for gaining understanding. Establishing a safe environment that encourages risk taking and questioning are therefore critical to providing equitable individual help.

Teachers can create classrooms that encourage students to ask questions by:

1. Creating opportunities to get to know their students on an individual/personal basis.
 - Get to know each student individually. Learn something particular about each student that makes her unique.
 - Use eye contact and proximity with all students; model being open and caring.
 - Interact with all students in respectful, challenging, and collaborative ways.
2. Designing opportunities for students to interact with each other in respectful and meaningful ways.
 - Divide the class into smaller groups, and when appropriate, use random response strategies for reporting on the small group's work.
 - Create opportunities for students to present their work to each other and the whole class.
3. Activate student voices.
 - Create opportunities for mutual teacher-student participation so that everyone feels a responsibility and openness to contribute and question.
 - Encourage students to share their thoughts about the subject, acknowledging their statements as they are made.
 - When appropriate, create opportunities for students to personalize content with examples from their own lives so that they can make connections between ideas learned in the classroom and those learned through life experiences.
 - Make it safe for everyone to ask questions by validating the worthiness of all questions.
 - Provide direct and clear feedback in an effort to demonstrate commitment to students' learning.

*Adapted from the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning,
Harvard University.*

<http://bokcenter.fas.harvard.edu/docs/TFTTrace.html>