



## Communications and Trust

*I have made a ceaseless effort not to ridicule, not bewail nor scorn human actions, but to understand them - Spinoza*

Evidence that the student **does not trust** the teacher:



Student is unwilling to share reasons for not doing the work.



Sits in the back of the room, furthest away the teacher.



Explodes when asked to do things, rather than talking or trying.



Comments may include content like "Yeah, right."



Looks away or shrinks when teacher approaches.



Remember a time when you felt anxious and unsure of yourself? What helped? What made it worse? Feeling upset brings a lot of coping mechanisms with it, including anger. Did you realize that when you were upset and unsure? Most of us don't. We get upset with one part of us (headache, heart hammering, stomachache) and then try to cope with the situation. Thinking about it often makes us feel worse, and most of us can't think about it at the time, with clarity. There is a grand canyon to our brain, and we often do not "think" when we are feeling, or even remember what triggered our actions. Later, we look at the situation and try to make it add up so we can live with our reactions. We seldom learn from these experiences, because they are too fraught with emotion, with self-preservation.

We verbally convey feelings with different kinds of statements. Many of them destroy trust

**Questions:**

"Are you certain you did the assignment?"

**Accusations:**

"You're looking on her paper aren't you!"

**Commands:**

"You two stop talking this very minute!"

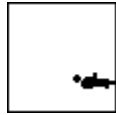
**Judgments:**

"You're not exactly the smartest person."



## Solutions

- Often, we do not realize just how uncertain students may feel. When students are hurting the most, striking out the most, we have trouble seeing their humanity, their pain. Our pain at the unfair, disrespectful treatment gets in the way. We, too, cannot recognize how we feel when being attacked, even if it is our position that is under fire. It is difficult, but very important to give students a way to save face and time to back down.
- For this to work, the teacher needs to build a sense of trust with the student. Part of that work is realizing the likely outcomes of trusting others. Remember, if you trust your cat not to get on your bed, on the table, to refrain from eating food you leave out while you are away, you will feel betrayed. You have expectations that do not fit the ability and personality of the cat. It is the same with students. The students most in need of being trusted and learning to trust are scared, hardened by what life has handed them, have no goals or boundaries and don't understand love or trust. If you understand limitations you will not feel angry, betrayed, hurt. When a student cannot trust, it is because of being let down, hurt, betrayed. It shows a need to learn to trust adults. Understanding that, set up expectations and boundaries in line with this.
- Trust is built through a sense of safety, and these come from structure and consistency.
- Consistency doesn't mean being the same or acting the same. It means being honest about how you are feeling.
- Consistency is treating everyone the same? That is impossible. It is treating each as s/he needs to be treated. We do not feel the same about each student. Our heart declares that with certainty. It is hopeless to try and treat everyone the same. It is more of the same lie. Teachers who are professionals care as much as they can and then provide the experiences and support that helps each student maximize learning opportunities.
- Trust, in this sense, is not a two way street. You need not worry if you can trust the student. You provide the model of a person who can be counted upon and who can be trusted. You place the trust, let go, and believe the student will do well, fully aware of the lack of experience and ready to build more skills and try again.



## Boundaries, Trust and Safety

When we set boundaries, we take several steps that contribute to successful teaching and learning.

- 1) We take a look at what we need to feel safe.
- 2) We think about and give words to the interactions we feel will help us learn in the classroom.
- 3) We give ourselves and students words to describe satisfaction or unhappiness with the situation.
- 4) We describe the role and expectations that belong to student and those that belong to teacher.

Part of boundary setting is recognizing basic needs. . . and one of the primary ones is the need for structure --- safety --- boundaries.

<p>All of us have basic needs. When those needs are met, we can grow and mature.</p> <p>When our needs are not met, we stop to think about the missing essentials rather than ideas or constructing meaning.</p> <p>Maslow has this picture of basic needs to help us visual this.</p>	
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The purpose of boundaries is to protect and take care of ourselves. . . to feel safe so we can build healthy learning communities and use our time and energy to learn. Boundaries give us the words to be able to tell other people when they are acting in ways that are not acceptable to us. They also give us a sense of safety, since it gives students a way to share how they are perceiving us and one another. <http://www.connect.net/georgen/maslow.htm>

**Boundaries** in the classroom include the **rules and procedures** we need to be successful, to maintain a learning environment and to allow enough safety for all of us to grow. The structure, remember, sets the safety. It is the foundation on which the learning community rests. It can be flexible enough to account for individual differences and consistent enough to provide a sense of safety.

**Teaching Role** - An important part of setting boundaries is to remember that who we are as a person is different than our role as teacher. In simple terms, it is distinguishing between who we are at home and at work. Sort through this list to get a picture. H = home T = teaching role N = Never








wear shorts	smoke	dress professionally	name call when angry
refrain from eating	wear hose	wear a tie	chat on the phone
gossip	use slang	make plans for week-end	listen attentively
chew gum	focus	write lesson plans	be on time
stay organized	pray	discuss religion	facilitate understanding
grade work	sleep	attend meetings	demand respect

Of course, some of these ways of being or acting can occur both places, and many of the things that are fully aligned with teaching are difficult to put into simple phrases. This provides an idea about boundaries, how we determine them and how they help us develop the *MANTLE of teaching* - - - - fully who we are, but different...



## Self Awareness

Evidence that student does not know how to tell others how s/he feels:

-  Student blames others for things that are going wrong and does not see his/her part in it.
-  When home or personal issues come up the student fidgets, does not want to share.
-  Avoidance is the most common response when pressed, including feeling sick, going home.
-  Lack of insight does not seem credible; instead, a feeling of closed discussion occurs.
-  The youth says "I don't know" or "How should I know?" usually with anger in the voice.
-  Hair trigger rage may result when the student is asked about self or feelings.
-  May spend time reporting behaviors of others since unable to communicate with or tell peers.



Remember a time when you were upset, wanted to talk about it, but just didn't seem to have all the pieces in place yet? Have you ever found yourself going over a situation you were involved in, looping through it again and again, still uncertain of why you did something or said something? ...Wishing you had kept your mouth shut? It can be difficult to understand ourselves and realize why we behave as we do.

**Factors** that could result in a student not verbalizing feelings and ideas:

- 1) low intellectual skills; 2) speech deficiencies; 3) voluntary social introversion; 4) social alienation;
- 5) communication anxiety; 6) low social self-esteem ; 7) closed family system-McCroskey & Bond



## Solutions

- Learn to LEVEL, to discover what is underneath emotional outbursts
  - LEVELING is one of the best ways to acknowledge feelings to ourselves and then share them with others. We level when we let someone know we are hurt -- or afraid -- or that we are angry . . . were angry.
  - It means naming the feeling and telling how we really feel. It is exploring it for ourselves and sharing our bewilderment or discovery with others.
  - LEVELING:
    - Gain cognitive control - be thinking
    - Review cognitive and visceral messages
    - Honor what you discover
    - Name the feeling
    - Share the naming with those who need to know and those who will honor it.
- Start some form of journalizing -- can be cutting out pictures and making cartoons if not ready to write.
- Some students work well by taking out clips in movies and making a collage of how they feel.
- Role playing if helpful for students since they can act out feelings they can't name.
- Peer mentoring and counseling has very high marks as an effective way to reach teens.
- There are truly profound human dilemmas in film and literature. Disney often features basic human emotions. It may work to have students look at clips and name the interactions to start looking at their own.

**Remember:** The journey to self-understanding is life long. Many students in early adolescence lose sight of who they are. It is a powerful time to help them learn reflection and insight as part of each day. There are many ways to do this, and it is a powerful area of content and context for all the material to be learned in the Jr. High and High School curriculum. It is also a journey that is easier for some than others, more important and pressing to some and painful for others. Students who have a gift for it are said to possess *Interpersonal Intelligence*.



## Boring

Evidence that material is too simple:



Student states: "I've already done that a million times. Duh! We do this every year"



Student starts assignment immediately and is finished before other students begin.



The work is hurried, haphazard and little attention is given to detail.



The student knows all the answers when called upon.



Exasperation shows on the student's face and in movements.



Remember hearing the same story over and over again and wondering if your friend or sweetie could possibly get some new material? There are youngsters who may feel that way about school and you. Once we understand something, it is no longer challenging. A good way to think about this, too, is to ask yourself how excited you are to have someone micromanage your driving. Once we have it, it becomes rote or we wish to move to greater challenges.



## Solutions

- There are only a couple of gifted students in a lifetime of teaching, but there are at least two or three students in every class who do not seem challenged during part of the instructional time. We have already decided that school is linear --- go from point A to B. Students can bring depth and excitement to current topics by developing application based activities and providing self and others with hands-on practice. Given the opportunity, students can create skill demonstrations and build on abilities, and most really like doing so.
- Examples of enrichment are often given in texts.
- Students can learn to write objectives and proofs. It takes very little time to set this in motion.
- Remind students that the definition for gifted includes creativity. Do not accept or let them accept the notion that they have no power to find and initiate activities.
- Use placement pre-tests and group the study of topics so different pacing is part of the learning process.
- Encourage experts to come into the school community and collaborate with bright youth.
- The internet provides amazing outlets for building on knowledge and increasing depth. It can be very useful for research, looking at different viewpoints, studying cultural disparity, even picking up a language. There are also many lesson plans students could adapt in adding depth to their studies.
- Every teacher book store has a section for enrichment and giftedness. Consider purchasing such materials.
- The Arizona DOE has a facilitator who can provide support and insights in this area.
- Think about setting up college courses for the student and begin the transition to higher education.
- Journal writing, short story creating, poetry and play writing all utilize multiple academic skills. They can be a useful and meaningful diversion. It is a mind set, really. Do you want to support student learning -- facilitate it, or is teaching about students doing what you say, when you say.
- Think of the student from this point of view:
  1. Assume the student is competent.
  2. Know the student and monitor level of expertise.
  3. Share an interest in the task at hand as well as the things the student finds captivating.
  4. Follow the student's lead in creative and extension activities.
  5. Capitalize on uncertainty.



## Coordination

Evidence that eye-hand coordination is an issue:



Student frequently has reversals in the written work s/he does.



Work is very sloppy, with letters not aligned well.



The student seldom turns in any work and when s/he does, apologizes for sloppiness.



Note taking is too labor intensive, so the student make a stab occasionally, but does not stay with the pace of the lecture or instructions.



Clumsiness, bumping into things, dropping materials.



Reading and writing problems can be related to this, with typical remediation processes doing little to improve academic prowess.



Activities that require detail are not attempted.



Key boarding may be sporadic or lack rhythm, with the student getting frustrated and frantic.



Many students who are ADHD also have difficulty with coordination, rhythm, timing.



Remember trying something new and feeling like you were never going to get good at it? This is not the same as something challenging that took a lot of time, but something that eluded you. No matter how hard you tried, it was always difficult, frustrating and just not enjoyable. For me, it is art. Even with lessons, I just cannot make a good piece of artwork. I do not have the eye for it, and cannot get my hands to do what my eye can see.



## Solutions

- Video games help strengthen eye hand coordination (Frogger, Dr. Mario, Tetris, etc.)
- Bicycle riding helps the body work on both sides of brain at the same time and may stimulate coordination and cross brain flexibility
- Focusing fully on the task at hand and keeping it a brief burst that becomes increasingly longer and more difficult, as dictated by success. So ... teaching handwriting, only do 3-5 minutes, initially and consider calligraphy as a good way to approach this. Teaching keyboarding, just do one brief exercise, followed by a break. Repeat through the period.
- Tailor activities and assignments to the ability the student has, and increase expectations as student succeeds.
- Repetition of emerging skills, especially to the tick of a metronome was found to increase concentration and be an effective way to increase student motor ability. It also increased reading and recall, unexpectedly.
- Martial arts can help students find a positive outlet for gaining rhythm and enhance body flow, control, sense of self in space.
- Utilize extra -curricular activities that the student feels passionate about to fine tune movement.
- Increase time in some form of art, including use of clay and more tactile mediums.
- Consider getting services and support from a trained optometrist, occupational therapist or physical therapist.
- Get larger keypads and be certain they are ergonomically set up to function efficiently for this specific student.
- Try different colors of paper for assignments. Some find that green paper helps. Experiment with colored overlays, too. There is information about the way certain colors and combinations give the eye support and help the student decode material.