Toronto District School Board
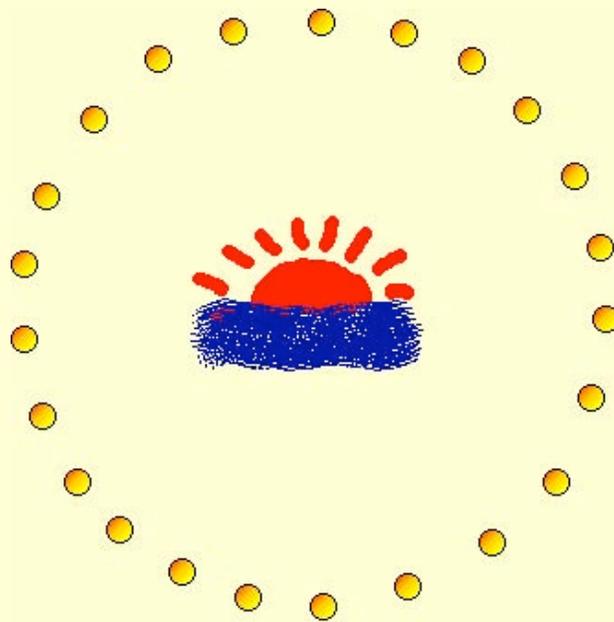
Building Effective Classrooms

Ideas & Resources for
Beginning Teachers & Mentors

WELCOME

"What do we want our students to remember about being in our classrooms?"

To me this simple question gets at the *"heart and the art"* of teaching and learning. As teachers we are the single biggest influence upon the classroom environment. We have direct influence over exactly 50% of the equation in our interactions with students....ourselves!

By intentionally building an inclusive classroom culture where divergent thinking is encouraged and where the thoughts and contributions of all students are valued, we are directly contributing to both the human development and academic success of our students.

While this booklet provides some practical strategies and resources about the why and how of building effective classrooms, the intention is that you will personalize and adapt these ideas to suit your context and the needs of your students. Like so many things in teaching and learning there is no one right way. My goal is that you will find your *"voice"* as a talented and caring educator.

Thank you for the difference you will be making in the lives of our students!

All the best,

Jim

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Will you Teach Me?

*Will you teach me how to sail through space
upon a comet's tail?
Will you teach me how to fly, to sail the
skies on wings untried?
Will you teach me how to soar, to see things
never seen before?
But most important of all, will you teach
me how to fall?
Will you teach me how to cry, to release
feelings deep inside?
Will you teach me how to laugh and travel
off the beaten path?
Will you teach me how to dream, to face
the future sight unseen?
Will you teach me how to be, the only thing
I can be.....me?*

By: Anonymous Middle School Student

THEMES OF SUCCESS

As you begin your teaching career, I'm excited to share with you the "voices" of over 2000 Beginning Teachers & Mentors who were asked this question:

As you think about your commitment to making a difference for students, tell a story about the best experience you have had so far this year.

Below you'll find the powerful themes that have emerged as your colleagues have reflected upon what contributes to our success as teachers and what is impactful upon the lives of our students. To me these voices reflect the "heart and the art" of teaching and learning.

Themes from our Success in the Classroom

Connecting with Students	⚪ Establishing an authentic personal connection with students (currency) ⚪ Modeling caring, patience and humour ⚪ Building inclusion promotes acceptance of and for students ⚪ Developing a classroom community
Passion for Teaching	⚪ Harnessing personal experiences/passions and connecting these with teaching ⚪ Trying something "new" (risk taking) ⚪ Drawing upon internal resources and applying them to the classroom ⚪ Bringing personal excitement/passion to work
Attributes Based Approach	⚪ Empowering students by seeing attributes they possess (instead of deficits) ⚪ Using students as a resource by accessing their strengths ⚪ Listening and responding to student needs ⚪ Seeing progress with a challenging student is so rewarding
Importance of School Culture	⚪ Collaborating at school with administration, colleagues, parents and students ⚪ Sharing/celebrating success is so powerful ⚪ Developing positive relationships with colleagues benefits both students and adults ⚪ Creating a supportive environment increases willingness to take a risk/experiment

✳ Thank you to the over 2000 Beginning Teachers & Mentors who have shared their stories of success in their classrooms

TRIBES: AN OVERVIEW

What is Tribes?

Tribes is a process that intentionalizes the teaching of social-collaborative skills within the academic context of the classroom.

Tribes classrooms and Tribes schools are predicated on 4 Mutual Agreements:

* *Attentive Listening*
* *Mutual Respect*
* *Appreciation/No Put Downs*
* *Right to Pass/Participation*

The ultimate goal of a Tribes classroom is to create a learning community where students can excel both personally and academically. In a Tribes classroom the teacher "sets the stage" by explicitly teaching and modeling the Mutual Agreements.

The development of this learning community includes the following stages:

* *Inclusion* (presenting self to the group in a positive light and building a sense of belonging and trust)
* *Influence* (accepting differences, making decisions and managing conflict)
* *Community* (working together creatively)

In a Tribes classroom a vast repertoire of teaching strategies are utilized. These strategies reflect current research around cooperative learning, multiple intelligences and brain compatible learning and are integrated within the context of the grade and subject curriculum. Embedded within a Tribes classroom are structured opportunities for students to work individually, in pairs and in small groups (often called Tribes).

Ownership of the learning and the classroom environment is a shared responsibility of both the teacher and the students. This shared leadership encourages initiative, values innovative ideas, and stimulates academic growth. In this collaborative classroom culture, conflict is reduced and more time is spent on learning tasks.

What Tribes is Not?

* A "stand alone" series of activities or energizers
* A "miracle cure" for solving all class/school issues
* Easy – it actually takes a great deal of effort to initially establish and reinforce the Mutual Agreements

TRIBES RESOURCES

Gibbs, J. (2001). *Tribes: A New Way of Learning and Being Together*. Windsor CA: CenterSource Systems, LLC

Gibbs, J. (2001). *Discovering Gifts in Middle School: Learning in a Caring Culture Called Tribes*. Windsor CA: CenterSource Systems, LLC

http://www.tribes.com

BUILDING INCLUSION

Inclusion is a sense of belonging. It is the feeling that the classroom is a safe place, where the contributions of all students are valued. Opportunities for students to learn about each other and about you as their teacher help foster this sense of inclusion and help build a classroom community.

Below are some practical activities that I've used with students in the first week(s) of school to help foster inclusion as we worked towards creating a community of learners in the classroom.

Encouraging and Valuing Personal Response

STEP BY STEP

(1)   Have each student sit at his or her own desk or on an individual space on the floor.

(2)   Tell the class that you are going to play a song and that you would like everyone to listen quietly to the music while it is playing. It's worthwhile to discuss as a group, the idea that people have different musical preferences and often respond to music in different ways. Tell students that you would like them to think of how the musical selection makes them feel as they are listening to it.

(3)   Play the song. (I chose to use, *'One Heart, One Love'* by Bob Marley). At first, there may be some talking or student distraction. Insist on quiet, reflective listening.

(4)   Play the song a second time and ask students to think about what colours they would use to reflect the feelings and moods they experience as they listen.

(5)   Before repeating the song a third time, provide each student with a large, white poster size paper. Have as many colours of markers as possible available for students to use. Encourage students to select colours that might represent their feelings associated with the song. Ask them to begin to abstractly draw while the song is playing. Their drawings may be in response to the lyrics, tempo, beat or any other responses the song evokes. Emphasize freedom of expression and risk taking to encourage creativity and individualism of responses.

(6)   Play the song at least one or two more times to allow students to continue to reflect and add to their abstract creations.

(7)   Process the lesson in Community Circle. Each student may hold up his or her creation and explain the feelings and the reasons behind what is on each individual paper.

(8)   Facilitate a discussion around the uniqueness of everyone's contribution. "So often in school we have right or wrong answers...wasn't it nice to do an activity where the response was so open-ended?"

(9)   Display students' work in a collage or ring them around the classroom above the top your bulletin boards. This can be a visual reminder of the diversity in your classroom community.

POSSIBLE REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Content	What did you notice about the personal responses we each had to the music?
Collaborative	How does this activity reflect the diversity of our classroom community?
Personal	How did it feel to complete an activity where there was no right or wrong answer?

BUILDING INCLUSION

Goals/Strengths/Beliefs

STEP BY STEP

(1) On a piece of chart paper or large cartridge paper, model an activity that you would like students to participate in. Create a personal chart outlining your goals, strengths, and beliefs. This activity is great to do on the first day of school.

NAME	
GOALS	STRENGTHS
-personal	-personal
-social	-social
-academic	-academic
BELIEFS	
-about life and learning	

You can generate more than one entry for each category – the more the better! Examples of what you could write include:

GOALS
‣ To keep my desk from being a disaster (personal)
‣ To really get to know all of my Gr. 5 students (social)
‣ To learn more about early civilizations (academic)

STRENGTHS
‣ I love kayaking (personal)
‣ I'm a good listener when people are upset (social)
‣ I love reading and using technology to help me learn (academic)

BELIEFS
‣ Life's too short
‣ All students can learn in a classroom filled with life, laughter, and caring

(2) Have the students work on their individual charts. Circulate, ask questions, comment on how every one is working so diligently, and stress that this is a personal exercise-there are no 'right' or 'wrong' responses.

(3) Share both informally and formally. You could do this sharing in community circle, or by having 3 or 4 students sharing their charts each day. I like to bind the charts together, using rings from the chart stand, and hang them in a place where students can flip through them at their leisure throughout the year. They're great for students to reference when they're filling out page 3 of their report cards!

POSSIBLE REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Content	What goals/strengths do you have in common with other students in our class community?
Collaborative	How does this activity promote mutual respect in our classroom?
Personal	What next steps that might be helpful in order to accomplish your goals for this year?

BUILDING INCLUSION

Helping Hands

STEP BY STEP

(1)　Begin by forming a Community Circle. Tell the students a brief (2 - 3 minute) story of a time when either you helped someone or someone helped you. Stress, in the telling of the story, the feelings that you had when you were helping or being helped.

(2)　Explain that helping each other in our classroom is one of the most powerful things that we can do to build a classroom community.

(3)　Model the activity by asking for a student volunteer to share a story about helping. Have the student come up to the chart stand and trace the outline of his or her hand on chart paper. While the student is telling his or her story (or after) draw symbols that represent the story inside the hand. For example, if the student tells about falling off the slide and a friend comforting him and taking him to the office, you could draw a slide, tears, a stick figure of the friend, and the office door inside the hand.

(4)　Retell the story to the student volunteer by referencing the symbols that you have drawn in his or her hand on the chart paper. Emphasize the feelings evident in the story.

(5)　Arrange the students in pair groupings. Have them start by tracing each other's hands on blank papers. One student takes on the role of the 'storyteller'. The other student's role is to record the symbols that represent the story being told. Students switch roles so both have an opportunity to tell their helping hands story.

(6)　Once each pair has finished sharing, have students cut out their hands. Display the hands prominently at the front of your classroom, perhaps in a circle for nice symbolism.

(7)　You can formally share the helping hands stories by asking for volunteers or having a sharing circle. You can informally share by asking students to describe their helping hands throughout the following week at opportune moments.

POSSIBLE REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Content	What made your "Helping Hands" story important to you?
Collaborative	How did you know your partner was being an attentive listener?
Personal	How does it feel to be helpful to someone else?

*Adapted from Bennett, B., Rolheiser, C., Stevahn, L. (1991) *Cooperative Learning - Where Heart Meets Mind.* Toronto ON: Educational Connections

BUILDING INCLUSION

Class Database

STEP BY STEP

(1) In order to create a class database, think of 5 or 6 categories/fields of information that you would like students to share with you and each other. You could determine these categories by brainstorming ideas with the students or you could already have the categories chosen in advance.   On a large (several meters) piece of butcher paper, create the database template and record the titles of the chosen categories. Non-threatening categories will encourage everyone to respond.

Possible fields could include: Favourite Food / Peaceful Place / Favourite Subject / Hair Colour / Favourite Animal / Favourite Book or Movie or TV Show etc..

It's a good idea to avoid categories like Best Friend which may build exclusion not inclusion.

(2) Upon completion your database could look like this:

NAME	Mr. S.	Sri	Ahmed	Dana	Ana	etc...
FOOD	Lasagna	Pizza	Burger	Fries	Pizza	....
PLACE	My home	Beach	My room	Cottage	School	
HAIR	Brown	Black	Black	Red	Blonde	
ANIMAL	Dolphin	Cat	Cat	Whale	Panda	
SUBJECT	Writing	Computers	Art	Music	Math	

(3) Generate questions that students will be able to answer by using the database (examples below):
How many people like Pizza?
What are the favourite subjects of students at the beginning of Grade 5?
With older students, you can ask more sophisticated, correlational-type questions. For example;
Are students with brown hair likely to be cat lovers?

(4) Extension: Input the data in FileMaker Pro and teach the students how to use the FIND command to answer their questions. It's best to start with an actual database (on paper) to ensure greater understanding.

### POSSIBLE REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Content	What things did you find that you had in common with your classmates?
Collaborative	Which Mutual Agreements are important in this activity? Why?
Personal	What might be some other things about myself that I'd like to share with my classmates?

BUILDING INCLUSION

Appreciation Fans

STEP BY STEP

(1)   After the first couple of weeks at school, the following activity is a great way to cement and celebrate the inclusion you are building in your classroom. Before the activity, you could read the students a story from Chicken Soup for the Soul or tell them a story involving Appreciation and Put Downs.

(2)   Have each student write his or her name on the top of a blank piece of paper. Have students then fold the paper over and back several times (like an accordion or fan). Model this for students. The paper will look like this:
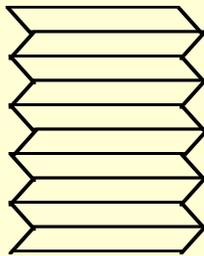
(3)   Model for students how to write appreciation statements. Encourage specific statements that are relevant to the student that is being written about. For example, "I really like it when you play with me at recess." This statement is much more meaningful than a statement such as, "You're nice."

(4)   Then ask students to exchange their fans with their classmates. Each person writes an appreciation statement on the other person's fan. The students may choose to sign or not sign the appreciation statements they write for others.

At first, many students will begin by choosing fans that belong only to their close friends but if a positive classroom atmosphere has been created, they will reach out to others. A goal, often stated by the students, is to get everyone's signature on their fans. It's a great idea for you, as the teacher, to have a fan as well and participate by writing appreciations to students on their respective fans.

A powerful way to process this activity is to ask the personal reflection questions listed below.

Many students will want to take their fans out at recess time to get friends from other classes to write an appreciation statement and then sign their fans. They also enjoy taking their fans home to share with their parents. Younger students could keep their fans as part of a scrapbook and read them when they need a put up. This is a great activity to re-visit 2 or 3 times throughout the year.

POSSIBLE REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Content	What is one statement on your fan that you would like to share in community circle?
Collaborative	Why is the Appreciations/No Put Downs agreement so important for this activity?
Personal	How did you feel when you read the appreciations that people had written on your fan? How did it feel to write appreciations on other people's fans?

MORE INCLUSION STRATEGIES AT A GLANCE

Summer Postcards

✱ Get a class list with mailing address and phone numbers. You can send students and parents a post card in August introducing yourself to them.

✱ On the postcard you could include what you've done over the summer, how much you are looking forward to meeting them and what they should bring with them on the first day of school

Ideal Classroom

✱ What does the ideal classroom look like, sound like, feel like? On chart paper divided into these three areas, students work in groups to brainstorm ideas for each section.

✱ As a class, use the ideas generated in groups to make a set of classroom norms. Or together classify what the students have said under the 4 Tribes Agreements.

✱ Post the completed chart for future reference and as a visual reminder for all.

Community Circle

✱ Circle provides a great opportunity for sharing, reflection and community building.

✱ The class sits (or stands) in a circle and as you go around the circle students take turns speaking, keeping in mind the 4 Tribes Agreements.

✱ Topics to discuss should initially be non-threatening (e.g., favourite food, favourite movie, something I learned today etc..)

More Strategies from the Tribes Book*

✱ Joy (p.234)	✱ Five Tribles (p.249)	✱ Life Map (p.291)
✱ Gallery Walks (p.238)	✱ Teaching Listening (p.251)	✱ Open Forum (p.286)
✱ Sharing From a Sack (p.261)	✱ Meet Someone Special (p.252)	✱ Extended Name tags (p.284)
✱ I Messages (p.376)	✱ My Name in Print (p.257)	✱ This is Me (p.287)
✱ Boasters (p.271)	✱ Interview Circle (p.258)	✱ Reflecting Feelings (p.369)
✱ Bumper Sticker (p.268)	✱ People Hunt (p.280)	✱ Spider Web (p.246)
✱ Silhouettes (p.228)	✱ Something I Cherish (p.273)	✱ Energizers (p.387-395)

*Gibbs, J. (2001). *Tribes: A New Way of Learning and Being Together*. Windsor CA: CenterSource Systems, LLC

BUILDING INFLUENCE

Forming Tribes

Remember the 3 stages of development: Inclusion / Influence / Community

IS YOUR CLASS READY TO FORM TRIBES?

* *Do students understand and respect the agreements?*
* *Do they know each others names?*
* *Do you feel that you have a solid understanding of the "social dynamics" of the classroom?*
* *Have the students already had many successful experiences working in various "trial tribes"?*
* *Do you feel ready? (Have you built inclusion in the classroom? Do you feel included in the culture of the classroom? Do all of the students feel included?)*

GROUPING STUDENTS IN TRIBES: THE STEP BY STEP PROCESS

(1)   In Circle, discuss criteria for what makes a group work successfully. What kinds of people make working in a group easier? Why might you like to work with some people? Record the criteria suggested by students and add your own points (if necessary).

Process with the class. Ask questions such as is a group where everyone is the same more effective than a group where there is a diversity of strengths, skills, culture, gender, and background experiences?

Some possible criteria are included below:
‣ people who get along together
‣ good listeners
‣ people who have a good sense of humour
‣ people with different talents (good artist, good speller, computer skills etc.)
‣ maybe there are people you don't know very well that you would like to work with
‣ people who could help you
‣ people you feel you could help

Post the criteria the class decides on and reference this on the day the students select their group members.

(2)   Give each student an index card or piece of paper. Ask each student to print his or her name in the centre of the card or paper.

(3)   Ask each student to look at the list of criteria outlining what makes a group work successfully. Then ask each student to think of 6 other students he or she would like to work together within a tribe (3 male...3 female) based on this criteria. Ask students to print the names of these six other students on their cards. On the back of the card they may list the rationale for each person they chose. Below is an example:

‣ Faheem - My best friend...he's soooo organized and I'm not
‣ Maleeha - She's always smiling and she's a great artist
‣ Zuhra - I don't know her well, but I think she is a kind person

BUILDING INFLUENCE

Forming Tribes (cont...)

Example Card

	Courtney	
Faheem		Behtash
	JIM	
Maleeha		Zuhra
	Jana	
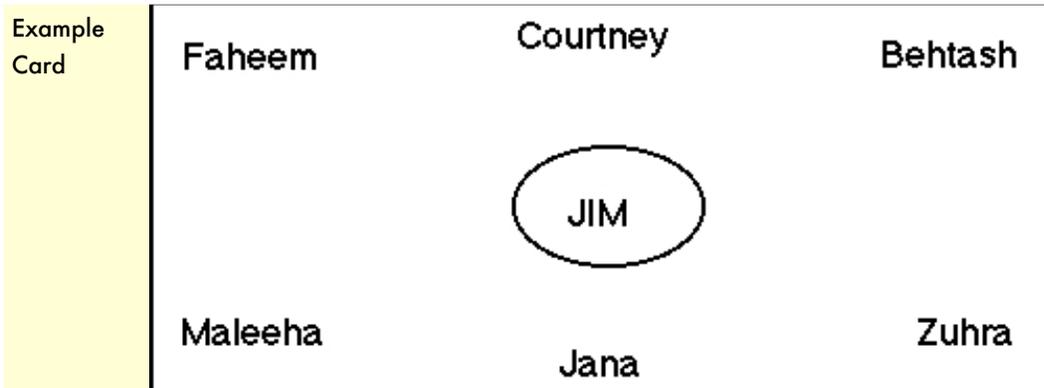
GROUPING STUDENTS IN TRIBES: THE STEP BY STEP PROCESS (cont...)

(4)   Collect all of the cards. Remind students that they will each be in a Tribe with at least one other person they chose, but not with everyone. Keep the students' original index cards even after you have formed the Tribes for further clarification, if needed.

(5)   If you are making 6 tribes of 5 (6 x 5 =30) begin by selecting six students that you recognize as leaders and positive role models. You'll likely note that many of these 6 leaders have probably also been named by many of the students. Spread these six cards out on a table or on the floor.

(6)   Select the cards of 6 students who would benefit from working with one of these leaders (i.e. a student who is very quiet, needs the organizational skills that a leader would be able to model, would benefit from the positive behaviour traits that leaders would provide, etc.) Place each of these six student's cards under one of the leader's cards.

(7)   Continue to add the remaining student cards under the 6 selected leaders, making sure that each card has a name requested by someone in the group.

(8)   Make any adjustments necessary to achieve a balance of gender, culture, personalities, etc.

(9)   Check once more to make sure that each card is still matched to one choice!

(10)   Record the list of students for each tribe before gathering up the cards

(11)   Congratulations...you have started building influence!

(12)   Decide on how you will share the new Tribes with the students. Refer to the Tribes text as there are many ideas that will positively engage students in finding and accepting their new group members (e.g., using Barnyard Babble or puzzle pieces to find new group members, etc.)

BUILDING INFLUENCE

Conflict Mediation

Below are a series of steps/strategies to help resolve conflicts between students. These can be used by a teacher and/or by students themselves trained in peer mediation. The language is geared towards students in Grade 4 - 6 but could be adapted to younger or older students.

WHAT IS A MEDIATOR?

- a Mediator is someone who keeps things fair
- a Mediator's role is to help people solve a problem or conflict
- a Mediator does not tell anyone what to do. A Mediator helps people talk in a way that will help them solve their own problems

STEP BY STEP

(1)   Meet with the people who have a problem or conflict. Ask each person the following questions before beginning the mediation.

Do you agree to:
- solve the problem or conflict?
- tell the truth?
- speak when it is your turn only?
- respect each other with no name calling?
- take responsibility for your part of carrying out the agreement which is reached?

If the students involved in the mediation do not agree to each of these points, then the conflict can not be mediated at this time.

(2)   Choose one person to speak first. This person is invited to briefly tell his/her side of the story without being interrupted. Before beginning, remind the other participants that they too will get an equal turn to speak.

It is helpful to involve only the students directly involved in the problem or issue.

Encourage each participant to use the following phrases:
- I want or wanted
- I feel …

Each student involved gets a turn. Intervene (if needed) to remind participants of the agreements they agreed to follow.

BUILDING INFLUENCE

Conflict Mediation (cont...)

(3)   After everyone has spoken, ask each person in turn to suggest an idea as to how to solve the problem.

Your job is to write down all of the suggestions at this point, whether you agree or not. Your paper could look like this:

Swear at them

Ask them to meet with you to solve the conflict ✓

Chase them away

Tell the teacher on yard duty ✓

CONFLICT: They stole snow from our fort

Phone their moms or dads

Steal snow from their fort

Go to the Office

Get a gang after them and fight

Give them an "I Message" ✓

You then read aloud all of the strategies that were written down. You also discuss the appropriateness of each with respect to school safety expectations (e.g., Get a gang after them and fight). You may want to add an idea or two to the brainstormed list after this discussion.

Everyone in the group then discusses the solutions and selects the most appropriate ones to solve the problem. Check off the chosen solutions that all participants agree to and then write out the solutions that you have reached consensus on below the brainstormed list or on the back of the paper

(4)   At the top of the page you could write "we agree to …." and list the strategies where consensus was reached

   ‣ have each student sign the paper
   ‣ you (as mediator) also sign the paper
   ‣ each student should shake hands or give a cheer to acknowledge the mediating of the problem
   ‣ as mediator, congratulate each person
   ‣ ask each person to tell his/her friends that the problem has been mediated so that rumours will not be spread

(5)   Photocopy enough agreement sheets to give a copy to each student involved, and the school principal or vice-principal (if appropriate).

BUILDING INFLUENCE

Key Issues in Implementation

ISSUE	STRATEGIES/IDEAS
Establishing Community Circle	* Continue to prompt/remind students of the 4 mutual agreements during circle * Model the length of time for sharing by each person by giving an example * Remind students that there will be reflection questions at the end of circle * Give students a focus question to listen for * Assign a place in circle (especially for younger students - Kdg. or Gr. 1) * Use table circles (sharing in their Tribes group) in addition to whole class circle * Provide "talk time" (e.g., Think/Pair Share) prior to circle * Respect the students' right to pass during circle...let participation evolve over time rather than making it an immediate issue * Use popcorn style (e.g., occasionally have the students toss the koosh ball to determine whose turn it is next)
Living the Mutual Agreements	* Use real incidents (e.g., Saturday class defacing classroom students desks) to help students understand how actions can affect other people's feelings * Brainstorm group solutions to specific problems (e.g., Lumpy Rug - instruct students to make snowballs of concerns, place snowballs under a rug, discuss solutions to the concerns as a class - gradually the rug gets smoothed out) * Use conflict mediation with students when problems/issues arise * Reinforce positive behaviours of "kids in the middle" (see page 31) * For younger students use an inanimate object (e.g., Scoop the Pelican) to communicate observations and reinforce positive values
Putting the Class into Tribes	* Build towards creating Tribes (e.g., task specific groups where success is likely, sharing needs/materials in a group, etc.) * Remember that students don't always have to do everything in their tribes and continue to use other cooperative grouping strategies (remind class of this too!) * Allow students who need time away from the group to do so with mutual respect * Allow time for reflection and group processing (e.g., what worked well/things to consider for next time)

BUILDING INFLUENCE

Key Issues in Implementation (cont...)

ISSUE	STRATEGIES/IDEAS
Challenging Students	✱ Create a safe place ✱ Praise the positive ✱ Take an interest/make a personal connection/search for his or her strengths ✱ Start with the audience (i.e. the other students) and then work on the "islands" (i.e. challenging students) one by one ✱ Show that you're human too (and can make mistakes) and that your feelings can get hurt too ✱ Make expectations/routines clear ✱ Perseverance & small steps (progress may be one step forward, two steps back)
Rotary / Special Education Settings	✱ Start small and simple ✱ Reinforce mutual agreements consistently and often ✱ You must be committed to modeling the agreements ✱ Collaborate with other school staff to ensure consistency ✱ Apply Tribes strategies to teach curriculum and to review learning ✱ Bring support staff (e.g., EA, SNA, CYW) on board
Middle & High School Settings	✱ Worry about what you can do in YOUR classroom – you can't control others ✱ Use grown up, "real world" terms for Tribes activities while maintaining the Tribes principles ✱ Keep open dialogue with students and other teachers
Time	✱ Look for cross curriculum connections with Tribes Strategies ✱ Make tribes part of your classroom routine – it will become part of your classroom culture ✱ Realize that you cannot do it "all" yet make every effort – small steps, baby steps ... you can do it!

*My sincere thanks to all those who have attended Tribes Implementation sessions and contributed their ideas.

BUILDING INFLUENCE

Transferring Responsibility

One of the major objectives of tribes is to call forth positive leadership qualities and self responsibility in children. This means that an intentional transfer of control needs to be made from the teacher to the tribe, and from the tribe to its members. As a sensitive teacher you can look for opportunities to have the tribes increase their capacity to function independently." (pg. 113, Tribes)

Here are some of the ways in which responsibility can be transferred:

- Intervene only as necessary while the groups are working together

- Encourage members to remind one another about the agreements

- When students ask you a question, refrain from answering it immediately; turn it back to the class or group by asking, "Who can help clarify the instructions?" "What other ideas do people have?"

- Ask group members to assume helpful tasks and roles

- Have group members keep attendance, make contact with students who are absent, and help students returning to class catch up with group and class assignments, etc.

- Have the class make a list of classroom maintenance tasks, and have groups assume responsibility for these different tasks for a period of time.

- Have tribes take part in helping to plan parties, field trips, and other class activities

- Ask tribes for suggestions to improve lesson plans, academic projects, and the learning environment

- Have tribes give feedback to you, as a teacher

THIS SOUNDS GREAT BUT HOW ABOUT SOME REAL WORLD ADVICE?

- Be a model for the strategies and norms you are trying to encourage in your classroom

- Laugh

- Think about how to deflate rather than inflate any conflicts that occur

- Begin each day with community circle

- Talk/share with your colleagues

- Have a balance in life

- Look for opportunities to observe and learn about and from your students

We are all here because we share a deep belief in children. We can support each other. Everyone, children and adults alike, has so much to give.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

On the following pages you'll see specific ideas for connecting cooperative learning strategies with the curriculum. More information about each strategy can be found in the Tribes book.

A sincere thanks to the literally thousands of teachers who have generously contributed their ideas and insights during professional learning sessions.

The more we share.... the richer we become!

Community Circle
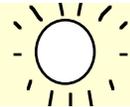
PRIMARY (K - 3)

- Identifying feelings
- Reflecting on a trip or presentation
- Patterning in Math/Music
- Developing problem solving solutions related to social skills
- Articulating "What did I learn today?"

JUNIOR (4 - 6)

- Sharing on Monday morning e.g., "How was your weekend?"... interesting experiences/stories
- Discussing current events
- Reflecting about a story or play
- Reviewing Canada Facts

INTERMEDIATE & SENIOR (7 - 12)

- Discovering in Science; after a lesson, meet in circle and discuss "Today I discovered..."
- Debriefing after an issue/crisis in the classroom
- Reviewing or introducing concepts/information
- Creating progressive Graffiti Art

ALL AGES

- Expressing/accepting varying opinions
- Practicing/reinforcing the Tribes Mutual Agreements
- Reviewing units of study
- Solving a problem
- Connecting to Oral Language Expectations (e.g., speaking and listening)
- Building Inclusion by sharing favourite colours, foods, sports etc.
- Brainstorming (any topic)
- Reflecting/Appreciating/Processing

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Jigsaw

PRIMARY (K - 3)
- Highlighting spatial orientation (puzzle pieces)
- Researching a topic (e.g., Animals) using sentence or word strips

JUNIOR (4 - 6)
- Learning/reviewing math concepts - standard units/non-standard units, mass, length
- Reflecting on works of Art or pieces of Music
- Presenting 'Novel in an Hour (or 2)'
- Using clues to guess the identity of a mystery person

INTERMEDIATE & SENIOR (7 - 12)
- Reviewing units and word definitions within chapters in specific subject areas
- Researching careers
- Reviewing for a test/end of a unit
- Reading text (non-fiction) - each group member reads a section and shares his or her part

ALL AGES
- Creating tableaux in Drama
- Applying jigsaw strategy to any content area

Put Yourself on the Line / Fold the Line Reading / Paraphrase Passport
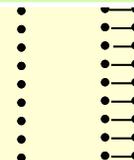
PRIMARY (K - 3)
- Graphing - e.g., birthdays
- Lining up to leave the classroom

JUNIOR (4 - 6)
- Speaking in role/identifying roles (Drama)
- Emphasizing concepts in math e.g., Venn Diagram - "grey areas", middle of the road, both, etc.

INTERMEDIATE & SENIOR (7 - 12)
- Preparing for Exposition writing (learning to identify points of view)
- Structuring a post-reading activity - Do you identify more with the protagonist/antagonist?

ALL AGES
- Practicing listening skills and paraphrasing
- Reviewing content in any curriculum area

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Life Map
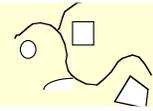
PRIMARY (K - 3)
- Mapping plant growth in science
- Retelling a story
- Depicting seasonal changes e.g., the changes that an apple tree experiences

JUNIOR (4 - 6)
- Mapping Music concepts (e.g., melody)
- Mapping human growth and development in Health
- Mapping various cycles e.g., water cycle, life cycles, rock cycles
- Introducing each other in French e.g., Je m'introduis, Je me presente
- Outlining the biography of a Famous Canadian
- Representing recycling e.g., Life of a Can

INTERMEDIATE & SENIOR (7 - 12)
- Outlining character development
- Mapping life of an organism
- History - Biography of Sir John A Macdonald, Life of a Loyalist Soldier, Life of a Country
- Representing changes in communities e.g., changes over decades

ALL AGES
- Representing the school year 'Life Map'
- Timelines

Think Pair Share ?

PRIMARY (K - 3)
- Predicting future events in a read aloud

JUNIOR (4 - 6)
- Solving math problems - use a strategy with a partner, then pairs will present
- Review vocabulary in French - cloze activities

INTERMEDIATE & SENIOR (7 - 12)
- Discussing questions and answers for multiple choice questions and reviewing test taking skills
- Reviewing content of a lesson

ALL AGES
- Sharing opinions / Paraphrasing / Brainstorming

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Snowball
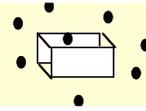
PRIMARY (K - 3)
- Building sentences
- Creating Journal/story starters i.e., "It was a dark and stormy night..." , after 4 people write/draw, one person finishes the story

JUNIOR (4 - 6)
- Solving 4 step problems in Math (Problem/Strategy/Solution/Checker)
- Teaching Put Ups/ Put Downs
- Reviewing synonyms, antonyms, etc. in Language/French
- Wonder questions after a lesson is taught (e.g., Grade 6 Health)

INTERMEDIATE & SENIOR (7 - 12)
- Practicing language skills - writing a letter (introduction, body, etc.)
- Review of a specific topic or content area prior to a test (you provide the questions, students look in notes for answers, next student checks for understanding

ALL AGES
- Brainstorming before a unit
- Review any lesson / topic / unit

Mind Mapping
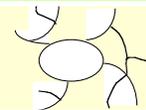
PRIMARY (K - 3)
- Retelling a story

JUNIOR (4 - 6)
- Charting a Book Talk; characters, traits, plot, setting, etc.
- Representing and organizing word families (e.g., root words, suffixes, prefixes, etc.)
- Presenting facts about an Early Civilization

INTERMEDIATE & SENIOR (7 - 12)
- Planning an essay
- Site Map for building web pages about a topic
- Charting career planning (e.g., different occupations associated with a specific subject)

ALL AGES
- Brainstorming any topic
- Representing information after watching a video
- Review of Learning (any topic)

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

4 Corners - Where Do I Stand?
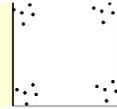
PRIMARY (K - 3)

- Graphing - How much do you think it weighs?
- Recognizing different types of colour in an art lesson
- Identifying with a specific feeling/character in drama
- Making predictions about what will happen next in a story

JUNIOR (4 - 6)

- Teaching Metaphors
- Debriefing a lesson - What part did you like best? (explain)
- Grouping/classifying (reptiles, amphibians etc.)
- Reviewing mapping skills (NSEW)
- Identifying and relating to characters in a novel - Which Character do I identify with most?
- Reviewing Grammar - put a word in the corner where it belongs (adjectives, verbs etc.)
- Math - Developing solutions to questions, Data Management

INTERMEDIATE & SENIOR (7 - 12)

- Math concepts - Stand by a concept you know/don't know well - teach/learn from others
- Deciding on a favourite part of a unit (culmination of a unit)
- Practicing debating skills
- Identifying learning styles
- Discussing Expositions (strongly agree/agree/disagree/strongly disagree)
- English Class - Symbolism, Reflection (main ideas, feelings etc.)

ALL AGES

- Expressing feelings / opinions
- Reflecting on any learning experience
- Reviewing/introducing units of study

EXAMPLE LEARNING SKILLS REPORT CARD COMMENTS

Below are comments I used for the Learning Skills section when I taught Grade 4. They are meant as "samples" and starting points as you consider creating comments for the Elementary Report Card that reflect the growth and progress of the individual students you work with (and learn from!)

Mostly E's

Student is able to share her thoughts and ideas in community circle and in class discussions. She puts forth a positive effort to complete assigned work in class and her homework is consistently done on time. In her relationships with her classmates, Student is respectful, helpful and cooperative. She is an outstanding model for our Tribes Mutual Agreements of Attentive Listening, Mutual Respect, Right to Pass and Appreciation/No Put Downs. Her kindness and warmth are valued gifts she brings to our classroom community.

Student participates fully in community circle and in class discussions. He consistently follows our Tribes Mutual Agreements of Attentive Listening, Mutual Respect, Right to Pass and Appreciation/ No Put Downs and is very respectful towards his classmates. He often helps other students if they require assistance and encourages them to follow the Mutual Agreements. Student works independently and uses his time in class very efficiently. He consistently completes all homework assignments. I wish to congratulate Student on his progress this term and thank him for being an outstanding part of our classroom community.

Some G's & Some S's

Student's insightful nature is genuine asset to our classroom community. As the term has progressed he has become a more self-motivated and self-directed learner. He is now using his time in class more efficiently. His homework is still not consistently done on time but an improvement in this area has been noted as the term has progressed. I encourage Student not to rush his work in class or at home. In his relationships with his classmates, Student needs to work on consistently following our Tribes Mutual Agreements of Attentive Listening, Mutual Respect, Right to Pass and Appreciation/ No Put Downs. I wish to congratulate him on his positive start in Grade 4!

Student participates actively in community circle and in class discussions. She follows our Tribes Mutual Agreements of Attentive Listening, Mutual Respect, Right to Pass and Appreciation/No Put Downs and is respectful towards her classmates. She works fairly independently and uses her time in class efficiently. Student has completed her homework assignments on a more consistent basis this term. I continue to encourage her to seek my assistance if she has questions or is unsure about an assignment or topic. I wish to congratulate Student on her progress this term and thank her for being a positive part of our classroom community.

EXAMPLE LEARNING SKILLS REPORT CARD COMMENTS

Addressing N's

In her relationships with her classmates Student is not always able to see how her words and actions can affect others. I encourage her to consistently follow our Tribes Mutual Agreements of Attentive Listening, Mutual Respect, Right to Pass and Appreciation/No Put Downs.

In her interactions with her peers, Student is very quick to see how someone else has not followed our Tribes Mutual Agreements but it is more difficult for her to acknowledge her own role in a conflict. I encourage Student to worry less about the thoughts and actions of others and focus instead on all of the positive qualities she possesses.

Student's effort to complete assigned work varies. If Student feels he is not able to do something he often gives up before fully attempting the task. When he does persevere he can experience success.

I believe Student genuinely cares about being successful at school and know he is capable of showing respect to all students and teachers. If he follows our Tribes Mutual Agreements of Attentive Listening, Mutual Respect, Right to Pass and Appreciation/No Put Downs this can happen. I appreciate Student's spirit and sense of humour and encourage him to make positive choices.

His homework is not always done on time or to the best of his abilities. He needs to continue to work on his organizational skills (ex. planner, completing important assignments). I encourage Student to seek my assistance if he is unsure about an assignment or topic.

Another positive development has been Student's increased social awareness. He is learning to "stop and think" about what is happening and to express his feelings in words rather than actions. I wish to congratulate Student on his progress in these areas.

At times, Student gets carried away and crosses the boundary of acceptable behaviour either by using inappropriate language or excessive physical force. Student does not have to prove to others he is "tough." If he simply is himself he will earn the respect of all students and teachers. I am confident he can do it!

LEARNING SKILLS SELF EVALUATION

Below is the reflection sheet I had my students (Grade 4 - Grade 8) complete at the end of each term. I included it in the package I sent home with the Report Card and found it quite helpful as part of the student's portfolio for parent / teacher / student conferencing.

NAME _____

E = Excellent

G = Good

S = Satisfactory

N = Needs Improvement

Independent Work		Use of Information		Class Participation	
Initiative		Cooperation with others		Problem Solving	
Homework Completion		Conflict Resolution		Goal setting to improve work	

COMMENTS
(Mutual Respect, Attentive Listening, Appreciation/No Put Downs, Right to Pass/Participation)

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT _____

ALIGNMENT WITH ONTARIO CURRICULUM (K - 8)

GRADE	CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS
KINDERGARTEN	**PERSONAL & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT - OVERALL EXPECTATIONS** ‣ demonstrate a sense of identity and a positive self-image; ‣ demonstrate a beginning understanding of the diversity in individuals, families, schools, and the wider community; ‣ demonstrate independence, self-regulation, and a willingness to take responsibility in learning and other activities; ‣ demonstrate an ability to use problem-solving skills in a variety of social contexts; ‣ identify and use social skills in play and other contexts; ‣ demonstrate an awareness of their surroundings.
GRADE 1 - GRADE 8	**ORAL COMMUNICATION - OVERALL EXPECTATIONS for All Grades** ‣ listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes; ‣ use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes; ‣ reflect on and identify their strengths as listeners and speakers, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful in oral communication situations. **ORAL COMMUNICATION SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS for Each Grade** ‣ Listening to Understand (includes Active Listening Strategies) ‣ Speaking to Communicate (includes Interactive Strategies) ‣ Reflecting on Oral Communication Skills and Strategies (includes Metacognition)

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

MUSICAL / RHYTHMIC
- I like to listen to musical selections on radio, CD's and DVD's.
- I am sensitive to music and sounds in the environment.
- I can remember melodies.
- I listen to music when studying.
- I enjoy singing.
- I keep time to music.

VERBAL / LINGUISTIC
- I like to tell jokes, stories or tales.
- Books are important to me.
- I like to read.
- I often listen to radio.
- I write easily and enjoy it.
- I quote things I've read.
- I like crosswords and word games.

LOGICAL / MATHEMATICAL
- I compute math problems easily.
- I enjoy math and using computers.
- I like strategy games.
- I wonder how things work.
- I like using logic to solve problems.
- I reason things out.

VISUAL / SPATIAL
- I visualize clear pictures.
- I think in pictures and images.
- I am sensitive to colour.
- I can find my way around unfamiliar areas.
- I draw and doodle.
- I like illustrated books.
- I easily read maps, charts

BODY / KINESTHETIC .
- I like to touch or be touched when talking.
- I use hand gestures when speaking.
- I like working with my hands on crafts/hobbies.
- I touch things to learn more about them.
- I learn by doing rather than watching.

INTERPERSONAL
- People look to me for advice.
- I prefer team sports.
- I have many close friends.
- I like working in groups.
- I'm comfortable in a crowd.
- I have empathy for others.
- I can 'read' situations and people.

INTRAPERSONAL
- I am aware of my feelings, strengths & weaknesses.
- I attend seminars to learn more about myself.
- I enjoy hobbies by myself.
- I enjoy solitude.
- I have a deep sense of self-confidence
- I have intuitive ability

NATURALIST
- I am happiest outdoors exploring the world.
- I like to know classification of species.
- I see detail or specifics in flora and fauna.
- I like tending to plants and animals.
- I enjoy camping, canoeing and hiking.

EXISTENTIAL
- I engage in reflection and self-study.
- I like to record thoughts in a journal.
- I like to study literature, art, philosophy.
- I enjoy discussing human and life issues in a group.
- I create a private "centering" space.

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES: CLASSROOM IDEAS

MUSICAL / RHYTHMIC

- Rap/songs
- Rhythm band
- Multi-cultural dance
- Movement exploration
- Mood music
- Instrumental
- Echo clapping
- Choral reading
- Mnemonics
- Sounds in nature
- Humming
- Singing

VERBAL / LINGUISTIC

- Think Pair Share
- 3 step interview
- Oral reports/sharing
- Dictated stories
- Choral 'read'
- Role playing
- Speeches
- Debates
- Oral Exams
- Reading
- Journals/Logs
- Jokes

LOGICAL / MATHEMATICAL

- Venn Diagrams
- Advance organizer
- Logic puzzles
- Minute mysteries
- Timelines
- Fishbone
- Mental math
- Experimentation
- Mind maps
- Debates

VISUAL / SPATIAL

- Mind maps
- Graphic organizers
- Video
- Overhead
- Geometry/Geoboards
- Art activities
- Pattern/attribute blocks
- Bulletin Boards/Murals
- Storyboarding
- Dance
- Puzzles

BODY / KINESTHETIC

- Role play
- Walkabout
- Dance
- Lip sync
- Skits/charades/mime
- Construction
- Math manipulatives
- Sign language
- Sports
- Activity centres
- Body Language

INTERPERSONAL

- Think Pair Share
- Jigsaw
- Cooperative grouping
- Drama
- Debates
- Class meetings
- Tribes
- Role Play
- Tutors/buddies
- Shared journals
- Giving feedback

INTRAPERSONAL

- Metacognition
- Learning Logs
- Journals
- Guided visualization
- Audio/visual tapes
- Thinking time
- Poetry
- Goal Setting

NATURALIST

- Observing
- Constructing
- Classifying
- Investigating
- Discerning patterns
- System analyzing

EXISTENTIAL

- Discussions
- Debates
- Journal Writing
- Jigsaw
- Put Yourself on the Line/ Fold the Line

*Adapted from Gregory, G. & Perry, T. (2006). *Designing Brain-Compatible Learning*. Thousand Oaks CA: Corwin Press

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

Finding meaningful activities for the last week(s) of school is often challenging....(to say the least)
Below is an idea that I used with my Grade 5's but could easily be adapted to younger or older students.

Mind Map of the Year

STEP BY STEP

(1)   Students are divided into groups of 2 or 3

(2)   Each group takes a specific subject (e.g., Visual Arts, Social Studies, etc.) and Mind Maps on large chart paper everything they've learned – this takes quite a bit of time but can really engage the students in looking back and reflecting upon their year – the Mind Maps are often very revealing (and surprisingly detailed)

(3)   Once all the Mind Maps are finished, you can cover an entire chalkboard with all of them and (if appropriate) invite next years' class for a presentation by the students of what they'll be learning in your classroom

(4)   As an optional ICT extension, the students can create Slideshows of their year in KidPix, AppleWorks, HyperStudio or iMovie using their Mind Maps as a storyboard

We are often so caught up in all of the end of the year "stuff" that it's a challenge sometimes to reflect on our year and celebrate our success and the success of our students. Below is an idea I used with my Grade 4's on the last day of school.

Golden Frisbee Awards

STEP BY STEP

(1)   What I did was get 30 yellow frisbees from the Dollar Store and with a sharpie inscribe a personal appreciation to each student. Example of the inscriptions were things like: "The Making Mr. S. snort award," "The Mutual Respect Award," etc...

(2)   At the ceremony, I presented each student with their Frisbee and explained why they had been chosen. To the applause of their peers, the students had a choice whether or not to make an "acceptance speech."

(3)   At the conclusion of the "Golden Frisbees" we went outside as a class for about half an hour and played with our frisbees, and just relaxed.

(4)   Everyone received a Frisbee and everyone had an opportunity to feel appreciation, not just from me but from their peers. Our classroom felt like a community. (and I felt like crying – but that's another story!!)

IDEAS TO CONSIDER
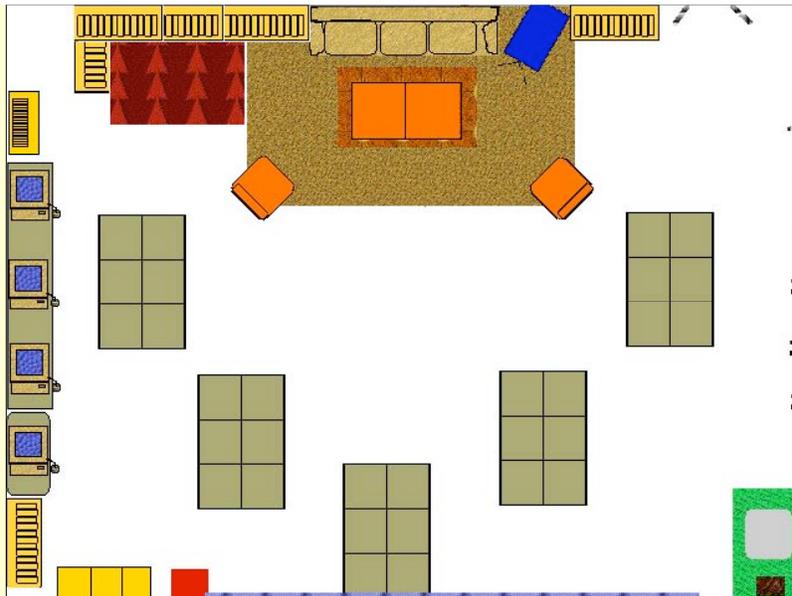
Ideas for Classroom Set Up

"Living Room" for Circle & Teaching	Sponge Painted Bulletin Boards

Sample Floor Plan

* Layout I used in my Grade 2, 4, 5 & 8 classroom

* Open concept arrangement of desks allows for ease of "traffic flow" and for daily community circles

* Each day of the week a different table group has their turn on the couch and chairs

* Whiteboard used for "events" (e.g., agenda of day) and charts used for notes to be kept over time

* Teacher's desk is against back wall to save space

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

Tips for Building Effective Classrooms

A Signal

✳ This may seem like such a small thing, but having a consistent and peaceful way (e.g., chimes) of focussing the attention of the class can help create a positive classroom environment. A big learning for me as a teacher was that I talked too much! Limiting my "teacher talk" to things that were funny and/or relevant encouraged greater attentive listening from my students. Often I would have one of my students ring the chimes and give instructions in order to encourage attentive listening for all members of the class.

Talk Time

✳ Our students come to our classroom with an innate desire to express their thoughts, ideas and feelings. Strategies like Think-Pair-Share, Four Corners and Community Circle can provide opportunities for meaningful student communication and increase interest and involvement in learning. Even something as simple as a discussion topic or "focus question" written on the board as students enter your classroom can help engage students in learning from (and with) each other.

Choices

✳ Often you'll hear the concept of choice applied to classroom management. When I think of choice I think of something more fundamental. Simply put, does every student in your classroom always need to be working on the exact same thing at the exact same time...or can students choose from a variety of tasks? Providing choice can increase student ownership and responsibility for learning. In addition, this approach honours the different learning styles and learning needs that will exist in your classroom.

Inflating vs. Deflating

✳ No matter how many positive proactive strategies we use there will be times in our classrooms when conflict will occur. The 50% of the equation that we can influence is our reaction to the problem or challenge. Simply put, we can either inflate or we can deflate any situation with our words and actions. Speaking in a calm voice rather than yelling is a simple example of how we can control our response. Of course in doing so, we are also acting as a model for our students.

Consequences

✳ Often we associate consequences with negative behaviour from students but a couple questions worth considering are:
(1) What are the positive consequences for students in our classroom?
(2) How do we acknowledge all the positive strengths and attributes our students bring?
Shifting our focus to "positive consequences" doesn't mean ignoring misbehaviour. This approach simply helps reinforce the positive classroom culture that is consistent with creating a learning-focused classroom environment.
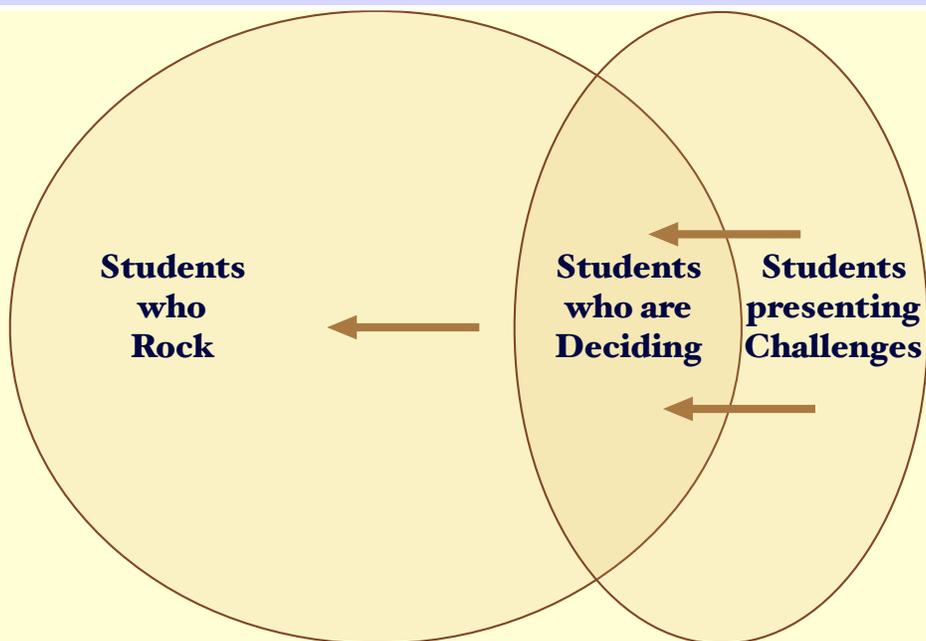
IDEAS TO CONSIDER

Creating a Positive Classroom Culture
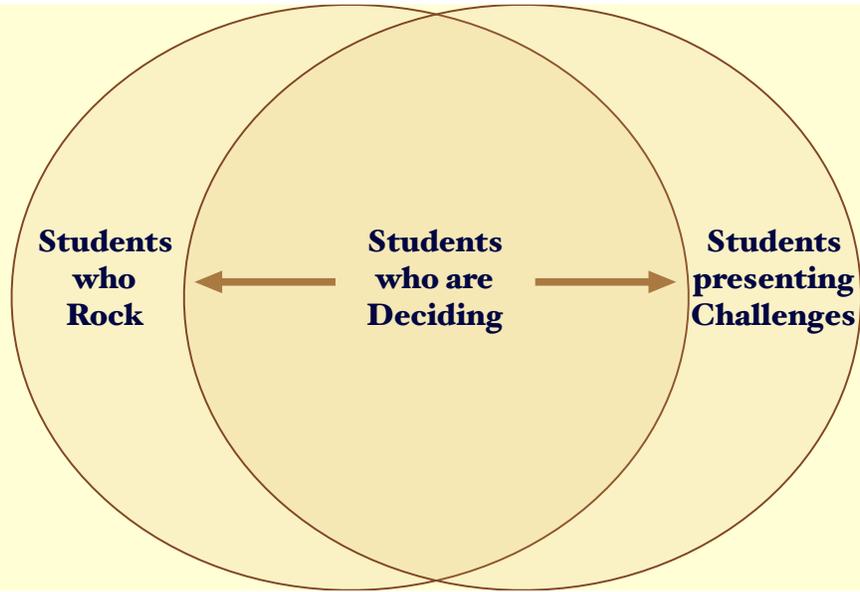
Often we focus our attention on the students at either end of the spectrum and forget about "the kids in the middle" who are literally deciding each day where they align with the classroom culture we build.
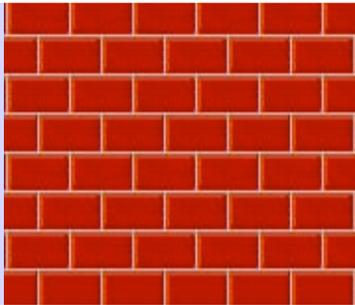
Providing "positive consequences" and meaningful opportunities for inclusion can help create the positive classroom environment that will enable learning to occur for all students.
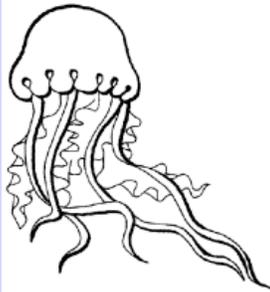
IDEAS TO CONSIDER

Our Role as A Teacher

BRICK WALL	JELLYFISH	SPINE

As a Teacher...

We can be the Brick Wall, and take the rigid "my way or the highway" approach

OR

We can be the Jellyfish and let everybody just do whatever they want

OR

We can be the Spine. As a Spine we stand straight and firm but the spine can also be flexible. A spine bends, just as we may need to do from time to time in our classrooms.

These metaphors for our work are thanks to a memorable presentation many years ago from Barbara Coloroso and my hope is they may help you find your "voice" as you consider building a community of learners in your classroom.