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The Impact of Teacher Student Relationships

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The Problem: Poor Teacher-Student Relationships

In our current state of education, teachers and student relationships are negatively impacting not only the education of students but how teachers teach. Damaged teacher student relationships lead to a lack of learning, lower academic achievement, and contribute to many students hatred of education. Schools should implement training for teachers on making learning fun, having a positive attitude, providing structure, and teaching with a passion. Those are the main ways teachers and students can build a solid foundation with one another and build positive relationships with one another.

My Story

My name is Teontay Bryson and I'm an African American male who attends St. Louis Park High School. I am going into 10th grade. I don't remember too much about my elementary experience. I do remember how teacher and student relationships affected how I would behave in school. What my teachers didn't know about me as an elementary student was that my father was absent from my life. Not having my dad around, left me feeling unwanted. I believe that feeling unwanted was the main cause of my behavior problems in school. When I was at school, I wanted to make friends and get along with my peers. I was looking for attention wherever I could get it, and this often led to me getting in trouble. My teachers didn't understand what was happening in my life. They didn't understand the reason why I was acting out. Instead of talking to me they were trying to control me.

I would be doing well academically but the behavior was getting in my way at school. My teachers didn't take the time to understand why I was acting out, rather they sent me out of the classroom and shamed and isolated me from my classmates. In elementary school, I struggled to build relationships with my teachers.

Throughout middle school and even in high school my relationships with my teachers started to change. In middle school I had a social studies teacher that treated me differently than I was treated in elementary school. This teacher took the time to understand me, rather than calling me out publicly in front of my peers when I struggled with my behavior, she pulled me aside and had private conversations with me. For the first time, I wanted to behave better and make her proud. In my freshman year of high school, I had two teachers I felt I connected with. These teachers believed in my potential as both a student and young man and I felt they authentically cared about my success. These middle and high school teachers were a big factor in me being able to accomplish the things I wanted to accomplish. Feeling like I had teachers who cared about me, who wanted me to succeed, who supported me academically and personally

made a difference in my behavior and attitude toward school. When teachers are willing and able to help you and understand your situation then that's the best feeling to feel at school. It's a feeling of purpose, that you have someone to believe in your dreams in life. I have experienced some teachers who just expect me to be a certain type of way because of the color of my skin. These teachers would be surprised if I got questions right or if I turned my work in first with all the questions right. These teachers were often substitutes but maybe these racial biases played a role in my elementary schooling experience.

Research

The American Psychological Association states that not only having a good relationship with your teachers improves your academics but it also improves the social life of a student. Students are more able to come out of their comfort zone when they have a good relationship with their teacher. That's what I think we need in school today, for people to step out of their comfort zone when it comes to school. I believe students need to feel they can step out of their comfort zones in order to reach their full potential.

I understand that teachers can't be the only ones contributing to building a relationship with students. Students, of course, would have to contribute to their relationship with teachers. Some ways for students to contribute toward building a positive relationship with teachers include: following class rules, sharing with the teacher a little bit about your life, and demonstrating mutual respect for the teacher. Teachers would have to lay the foundation down that's where providing structure comes in. Some ways for teachers to contribute toward building positive relationships with their students include: teaching with passion, being willing to help students one on one, sharing aspects of their personal lives with their students, listening to and learning from their students, working to understand the root cause of disruptive student behaviors rather than simply controlling students' bodies.

When it comes to having a good teaching environment limiting classroom sizes are a start, administrators should consider adding classrooms where teachers teach collaboratively

with one another through co-teaching and adding more teacher advisors. With a good environment comes good teaching and learning. The environment you're in has an impact on what type of person you are. Teacher and student relationships are impacted by the environment. Some ways to build a positive environment include: ensure curriculum content is relevant to student interests and lives, infuse teaching with a variety of activities for different types of learners, and invite students into the process of designing the physical space--let them hang their work or motivational quotes and photos.

Another one of the Thrive Ed Student Interns and I asked our peers to talk about how teacher and student relationships has affected their schooling experience. Most of their answers were the same saying that their school experience was good if they had a good relationship with their teacher, they were able to get through because of the teachers that were willing to help through them through whatever situation they were going through. They also said that when they were having a bad relationship with their teacher, they didn't care about school. In a Google Form Survey, 100% of student interns said that their relationship with their teacher impacts their learning.

Do you think your relationship with your teacher impacts your learning?

13 responses



Conclusion

Having good relationships with teachers makes students feel like they have a purpose while at school. When students can have a feeling of being excited to go to their next class because of the teacher, this helps students be successful in school. Teachers have the potential to be leaders that students look up to, besides their parents or guardians. Throughout the year, teachers are the people you are often spending the most time with and they can influence your life negatively or positively. I was so lucky that my schooling trajectory changed when I had middle and high school teachers that saw through my behavior and saw me and the potential I have. If students have positive relationships with their teachers, then they will be more likely to work toward and achieve their dreams in life.

Works Cited

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