Thrive as a New Teacher: Seven Keys to a Positive Learning Environment in Your Classroom
(Based off of the Book by Tom Hierck)

Presented by: Amanda Mix, District RtI Math/Science Specialist
Website: http://amandamix.weebly.com/
E-mail: Amanda_Mix@isd31.net   Phone: 333-3100 Ext. 44222
What does an average work week look like in education? Are we promoting or achieving a positive learning environment?

We analyze data daily like AIMSweb’s TEN/TEL, M-COMP, R-CBM’s, or MCA’s, OLPA’s, CoGat, MAP, ACT, SAT, and FAST to determine MMR, AYP, SP, SG, and A. Gap. Thank you NCLB! Oh, hello, ESSA. We have TAT, CST, SGT, and RtI meetings to focus on RtI, LLI, RR, RCorps, MCorps, and REWARDS interventions. RtI is, now, RtI^2? No, it’s MTSS. We use PD for PLC’s, Number Talks, CBM’s, SMARTBoards, Six Traits, RIT Scores, Lexiles, S.T.E.A.M., GATE, PBIS and Effect Sizes while using resources like TpT, MDE, NCTM, CCSS, TC, and Pinterest. We are constantly hoping that our P.O’s and CEU’s will go through and talk to PTO’s, PAC’s, and ST’s on a regular basis. We write goals SWP’s, SIP’s, FSP’s, CIP’s, IEP’s, SGP’s, TGP’s, and QCOMP while keeping track of MM’s, staff meetings, and e-mails. By the end of the week, it’s OMG, TGIF! Time for some TLC through R&R.
The original seven keys identified and targeted a schoolwide audience and were used to implement a “Pyramid of Behavior Interventions” (pg. 2).

This pyramid was modeled after the philosophy behind the RtI Academic pyramids and followed the same acquired percentages.

1. Common expectations
2. Targeted instruction
3. Positive reinforcement
4. Support strategies and interventions
5. Collaborative teams
6. Data-driven dialogue
7. Schoolwide system approach
The Pyramid

“If we believe educators make a difference for kids, then we must also believe that students can move from red to yellow zone behavior to green zone behavior. Our role is to support and facilitate that transition” (pg. 4).

Image from: http://www.monroe.k12.al.us/departments/curriculum_and_instruction/response_to_instruction
It is necessary to have...

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**Focus:** “The challenge for educators is to remember to look at the whole pyramid and avoid the trap of focusing only on the problems at the top” (pg. 5)

**A Must-Have Attitude:** “The solution lies not in changing the students we have coming to our schools, but in changing our approach to working with them” (W. Hulley, pg. 6).

**A Positive Classroom Culture:** “The beliefs and commitments made by individuals as they come together as a collective” (pg. 7). The pronoun is “we.”

**Positive Relationships:**

1. Teacher Presence (absence awareness)
2. Resilience
3. Student Acceptance (they are more than their story)
4. Be human/you (it’s okay to not be okay)
Effect Size Information:

Based off of John Hattie’s model.

(Link)

(Hattie, 2015)
Class Culture vs. Class Climate (pg. 110):

- Culture is what we do (behaviors and characters), climate is how we feel.
- Culture takes purpose to change; climate can change in moments.

(A teacher’s classroom climate has an effect size of 0.80.)

The rich classroom climate mindset says (pg. 111):

- “I focus on what students need to succeed and build it into the learning and social environment every day.”

High Positivity vs. Low Positivity (pg. 113)

- “Managing student stress levels is critical because students from poverty typically experience chronic stress, which impairs cognitive flexibility, behavioral change, working memory, and thinking skills.”
Amended Seven Keys for the Application of Teachers

90/90/90 Schools (Douglas Reeves):
(Free/reduced, Ethnic Minority, Meet the district/state in reading or standards)

1. A focus on academic achievement
2. Clear curriculum choices
3. Frequent assessment/multiple opportunities for improvement
4. Emphasis on nonfiction writing
5. Collaborative scoring of student work

1. Classroom expectations
2. Targeted instruction
3. Positive reinforcement
4. Data-driven decisions
5. Differentiation and enrichment
6. Collaborative Teams
7. Connection to the schoolwide system.
**Key #1: Classroom Expectations**

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**Philosophy:** “Students co-create and condense classroom expectations and codes of conduct into a few easy-to-remember, positively stated words or phrases. Students know the expectations and the adults model them. Behavior expectations link to academic expectations, setting a positive tone. Everyone in the class uses a common language” (pg. 19).

1. Expectations (not rules), and beliefs.
2. Nurture the growth mindset (model)
3. Provide consistent routines that encourages collaborative work (different groups, turning in work).
4. Hold regular class meetings
5. “The students who challenge teachers the most often need teachers the most” (pg. 34).
Key #2: Targeted Instruction

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**Philosophy:** “All staff directly teach classroom expectations to students in a myriad of ways and in various specific settings. Students receive opportunities to develop, practice, and demonstrate appropriate social and academic skills” (pg. 35).

1. Maslow first, then Bloom (Figure 3.1, pg, 36): “Bag of Me” Activity
2. Strong link between behavior and academics.
3. Expectations/building habits take time.
4. Be **intentional** in teaching behavioral expectations (differentiate).
5. **Demonstrate, practice, review, and celebrate.**
6. Learn every student’s DNA (dreams, needs, abilities)
7. Avoid teaching/discipline strategies that undermine the relationship (Ex: seating).
Key #3: Positive Reinforcement

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**Philosophy:** “Students receive timely and specific feedback (formally and informally) on a regular basis. Celebration, recognition, and reward systems are in place to acknowledge, honor, and thank students for displaying positive social and academic skills” (pg. 45)

1. Positive reinforcement yields the desired result, unlike negative consequences.
2. Timely and specific feedback is critical a sound assessment.
3. Direct to Correct to Connect approach helps enhance relationships and teach desired behaviors.
4. Every student has a S.T.O.R.Y. (strengths, talents, opportunities, resources, and yearnings)
5. Remember, 4:1 Positive to negative interactions
6. Feedback from students and hearing their voices are key to developing effective teaching methods
The Importance of Feedback (Effect size is 0.7 or 1.5 year’s worth of growth): John Hattie’s Visible Learning

The Four-to-One Praise Ratio (pg. 51): Make sure to focus on “process praise” not “people praise.” Determine the level of praise in your classroom for what is right for your students.

The “I Wish My Teacher Knew” activity (pg. 54)

Indigenous Student Success:
1. An inclusionary approach (all included)
2. An early start: Pre-K or Kdg.
3. A welcoming environment
4. An eye on progress
5. A positive future vision (the education system must be regarded as safe, respectful, responsive, meaningful, and relevant) (pgs. 54-57).
Key #4: Data-Driven Decisions

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**Philosophy:** “Various formative assessments are in place to track behavior and academic progress. The information collected is specific enough to generate general baseline data and patterns of behavior for individual students. Using these data (options), teachers adjust, modify, or reteach specific skills in proactive ways.”

1. Avoid being data rich, information poor.
2. Most important three-letter word in education is “yet.”
3. Teacher judgement + data = success (flashlight not hammer).
4. Close the gaps: ABC tool (pg. 68), event recording, interval recording, time sampling, duration recording, observation (pg. 66).
5. Practice instructional agility
The Importance of “Yet” (A. Brock and H. Hundley):

Knowledgeable (what) vs. Knowledge-Able (why/how):

1. “Moving students from knowledgeable to knowledge-able means presenting them with authentic learning opportunities from which they can both find answers and generate more questions” (pg. 166).

2. **Verb Examples:** Produce, write, project-based learning, film a video, design, create.

Inquiry-Based Learning = Project-Based Learning (pg. 167, Brock & Hundley):

1. Key knowledge, understanding, and success skills
2. Challenging problem or question
3. Sustained inquiry
4. Authenticity
5. Student voice and choice
6. Reflection
7. Critique and revision
8. Public product

**PBL’s are relevant, engaging, relate to adulthood, and a chance for students to direct their own learning.**
Formative vs. Summative Assessments (Nicole Vagle):

**Formative Assessments (for learning):**

**When:** Simultaneously while teaching

**Examples:** Informal teacher questions, informal observations, rough drafts, student reflective statements, practice student checklists or rubrics, rehearsals, setting up of projects, discussions, visual representations (graphic organizers), exit slips, individual whiteboards, think-pair-share, learning/response logs (in process)

**Summative Assessments (of learning):**

**When:** At the end of the selected time period

**Examples:** Final copy of any student work, final checklists, final rubrics, teacher-made summarizing assessments, high-stakes standardized test, end of unit compilation, portfolios, conferences

(Bailey, 2012)
What Does This Look Like?

Start (Pre-Instruction)

Data/Assessment

Are we going at the necessary pace in the right direction?

End (Summative)

Data/Assessment

Data From Formative Assessments (Ongoing-During Instruction)

Not Event-Based
Key #5: Differentiation and Enrichment

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**Philosophy:** “A continuum of strategies, developed and aligned with classroom expectations, exists to support teachers in working to improve students’ individual and group behavior. The focus of the strategies is to help the students learn to behave and succeed in the classroom. Alternative strategies are in place for escalating levels of misbehavior” (pg. 73).

1. Differentiation works best when educators maximize the capacity of each student (includes enrichment).
2. Teachers’ evidence may include: **RtI, RtI^2, MTSS**, and **CSSS**
3. **BEP, and CICO** help address more severe behavior challenges.
4. “Gifted students” may also have behavior deficiencies, be careful of labels (**Steps on pg. 87**).
5. Colorosco’s six steps to address challenging behaviors (pg. 82, and 89)
Clarification of Terms:

**Enrichment:** Extends the students’ thinking, instead of just acknowledging it (Services for all, for many, for some, for a few).

**RtI^2:** Response to Instruction and Intervention

**MTSS:** Multi-Tiered System of Supports

Image from: [https://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss](https://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss)
Clarification of Terms Continued:

**CICO:** Check-In, Check-Out (pg. 83), helps students build better habits.

**BEP:** Extension of CICO, Behavior Education Program (saw a 75% reduction in referrals) both examples of Tier 2.

**Colorosco’s Six Steps (1994):**

1. Define the problem.
2. Brainstorm solutions.
3. Evaluate possible solutions against a set of criteria.
4. Select an option.
5. Plan the implementation.
6. Review the problem.

**CSSS:** Comprehensive student support systems

**Differentiation for Behavior:**

1. Modify the learning environments.
2. Decrease student uncertainty.
3. Provide opportunities to make choices.
4. Identify positive ways for the student to communicate.
5. **Adapt instruction.**
6. Recognize positive behaviors.
7. Be clear on the expectations.
The Power of Relationships (Trauma Sensitive Teaching)

**Safety First (pg. 103):**

- School grounds/building are safe/secure
- School staff clearly share/implement behavioral expectations/procedures.
- Family is welcomed and communicated with.
- Assigned seating
- Check-in and check-out
- Posting of pictures
- Notes/calls home
- Rituals

**Discipline does NOT “fix these broken kids.”**

“We need to show them a window into a different way of managing how they handle their emotions” (pg. 105).

“Explore alternative ways of managing that intensity, and help them see that they do have some control in their lives” (pg. 106).

“It is these moments that give students hope and fresh insight into what their lives could be” (pg. 108). Be authentic and sincere.
Philosophy: “Grade-level teachers (or cross-grade in small schools) engage in authentic collaboration during designated times to ensure positive expectations and outcomes for all students. A school-based team will receive a referral for a student when his or her misbehavior escalates or academics become a significant problem” (pg. 91).

1. “Collaboration means shifting the conversation from my students to our students” (pg. 104). Example: Data Team
2. Parents need to be a part of this collaboration.
3. Know the difference between compliance and commitment.
4. There is a direct correlation between social competence and school success.
5. We, as educators, need to teach social skills.
Collaboration Team Examples:

Five Step Process for Data Teams:

1. Chart data
2. Analyze data to prioritize needs.
3. Establish SMART goal.
4. (Be aware of what the A should stand for.)
5. Select instruction strategies.
6. Determine results indicators.

When Talking to Parents/Guardians:

1. Focus on the problem, not the people involved.
2. Be open to new ideas.
3. Ask clarifying questions.
4. Find common ground.
5. Don’t force a solution.
6. Pick solutions that both the teacher and the parent agree on.
7. Plan and agree on the next steps.
Whether a student works hard or not is a choice, not genetic.

- It is based on 4 host factors:
  - The prediction on a success possibility, perception about their teacher’s capacity to help them succeed, students’ self assessment, and their overall self concept.

**Creating Gutsy Goals for Mastery**
(a new SMART goal)

- Specific or strategic, Measurable, AMAZING (rather than attainable), Relevant, and Time bound

**Setting Gutsy Goals:**
1. A process goal, a relational goal, and a result goal
2. **Giving a Reason to Believe** (in the teacher/in themselves)
3. Using Micro Goals to Close the Gaps (**Effect size 1.21**)
   - Reaffirm, Give Measurable Progress, Provide Affirmation
The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL):

Identifies five key competencies that teachers should teach, practice, and reinforce through S.E.L. instructional design:

1. **Self-awareness:** the ability to recognize one’s own emotions, interests, strengths, and limitations.

2. **Self-management:** the ability to regulate one’s own emotions and manage daily stressors.

3. **Social awareness:** the capacity to take others’ perspectives and to appreciate similarities and differences.

4. **Relationship skills:** when individuals exhibit prosocial behavior and demonstrate positive social skills in order to develop meaningful relationships.

5. **Responsible decision making:** the capacity to make ethical decisions and develop appropriate solutions to identified problems.
Strategies from the New Teacher Center:

How students can learn social skills while teachers promote academic learning:

1. Help students know themselves.
2. Have students stand in others’ shoes.
3. Teach students to seek and give feedback.
4. Practice listening.
5. Teach collaboration.
6. Treat mistakes as opportunities (Growth Mindset).

Glow, Ask, Shine Activity Card (Table 7.1, pg. 103)
Chapter 1 Continued: Fixed vs. Growth Mindset

- Students (fixed mindset) are more likely to give up easily.
- Students (growth mindset) keep going (persistent) when work is hard, displaying “grit” (highest achieving students in the world). They view mistakes as a challenge (intrinsic motivation).
- Mindsets can change from fixed to growth.
- Fixed mindsets can be damaging (believing/told you are smart).
- Praise parents gave babies (birth to three) led to predictable mindsets five years later (children).
- Students should be praised for effort vs. fixed praise.

The Power of Mistakes and Struggle Chapter 2:

- Mistakes are a good thing!
  - “Every time a student makes a mistake in math, they grow a synapse” (pg. 11).
  - The brain has two possible responses when we make a mistake:
    a. Increased electrical activity (ERN response) whether we recognize the mistake or not.
    b. A brain signal reflecting conscious attention to mistakes (Pe response)
  - Why? It is a time of struggle where the brain is challenged, and this is the time the brain grows the most.
  - Those with a growth mindset are more aware of mistakes than those with a fixed mindset. Also, have greater brain activity related to error recognition.
Embracing Mistakes (Jo Boaler/Carol Dweck):

“How can we change the ways students/teachers view mistakes?"

• Embrace and celebrate mistakes. (Inform parents)
• Make mistake celebrations a classroom norm.
  ➢ Feel comfortable being wrong
  ➢ Try seemingly wild ideas
  ➢ Be open to different experiences (student posters with brain messages)
  ➢ Play with ideas without judging them
  ➢ Be willing to go against traditional ideas
  ➢ Keep going through difficulties (crumpled paper activity)
  ➢ Abandon testing and grading as much as possible (give the same grade or higher for mistakes)
  ➢ Piaget: True wisdom = moving from equilibrium, to disequilibrium, to a new state of equilibrium

“It starts with us. It starts with you!”

(Kristin Souers, T.S.T.).
Key #7: Connection to the Schoolwide System

Philosophy: “Systems are in place to ensure that all other keys align with school-wide expectations. The systems are secure enough to withstand staff changes, yet flexible enough to accommodate changes in situations and circumstances as they arise” (pg. 105).

1. Teachers should nurture, not control students.
2. Self-determination can be instilled in students.
3. The rush to consequences produces negative outcomes. Determining the cause (and addressing it) produces positive benefits.
4. Persevere with best practice for the students even when others don’t agree.
Additional Points of Consideration:

2. Be careful of getting “tunnel vision” on the “deficits.”
3. Be careful in how you perceive your students (John Hattie).

“Educators should guide, coach, and facilitate rather than control or manipulate student behavior” (pg. 109).

What do students need in order to learn?

1. Positive and nurturing relationships
2. Choice and autonomy
3. A purpose for learning
4. A sense of progress from their efforts

“There are no unmotivated students, only students in unmotivated classrooms” (Eric Jensen).
Names, Labels, and the Need for Control (T.S.T.):

We need to change our perspectives from “adult-centered and deficit-focused” to “student-centered and strength-focused.”

“The kids who enter our classrooms are ours—every single one of them. We must do whatever we can to keep them in our classrooms, in our schools, and in school-period. Leaving is not an option” (pg. 115).

We need to shift our perspective stemmed from a common fear—the perceived lack of control.

Sit on Your Pockets! Analogy

“Most of us don’t teach with the intention of fixating on deficits, but we are trained to operate from that perspective” (pg. 122).
Questions to Ask Yourself (Eric Jensen):

...at the End of a Lesson or Day of Teaching:

• Did I do my best to foster optimism and gratitude today?
• Did I do my best to make this work relevant to both me and my students?
• Did I do my best to foster stronger personal relationships?
• Did I do my best to fully engage and help others?
• Did I do my best to grow personally and professionally today?

Did I do my best?
Additional References in This Presentation:

1. Jo Boaler and Carol Dweck: Mathematical Mindsets
2. Annie Brock and Heather Hundley: The Growth Mindset Coach
4. Eric Jensen: Poor Students, Rich Teaching
5. Eric Jensen: Poor Students, Richer Teaching
6. Kristin Souers and Pete Hall: Fostering Resilient Learners: Strategies for Creating a Trauma Sensitive Classroom
7. Nicole Dimich Vagle: Design in 5: Essential Phases to Create Engaging Assessment Practices
8. MTSS Image from: Colorado Department of Education, https://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss