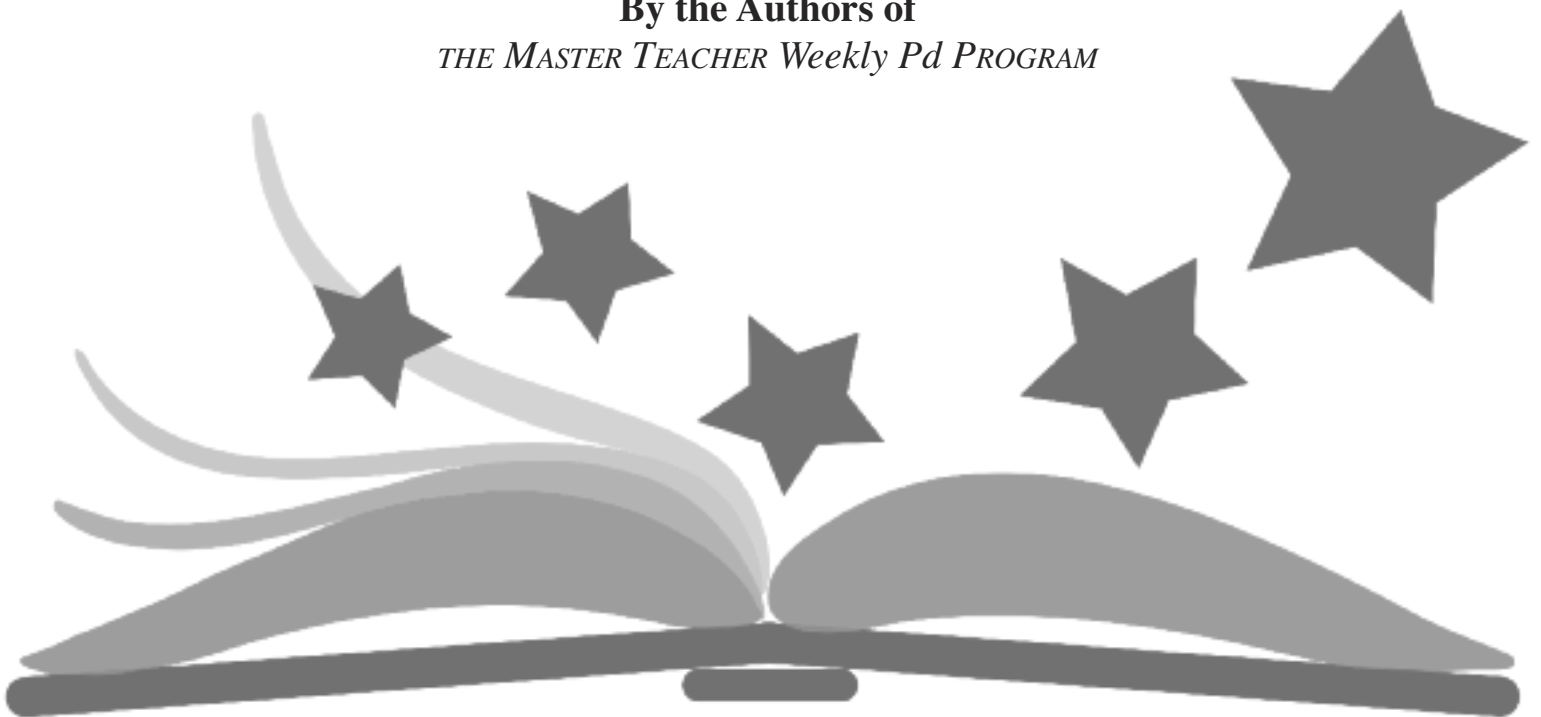


YOUR PERSONAL LEARNING GUIDE FOR

CREATING *the* ENVIRONMENT *to Maximize Student Learning*

By the Authors of
THE MASTER TEACHER Weekly Pd PROGRAM



THE
MASTER TEACHER[®]
Develop • Support • Honor



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Introduction

In 2009, we published a groundbreaking study conducted by The DeBruyn Institute for Teaching Excellence and Kansas State University. The published work was titled *Voices from the Field: What Is a Master Teacher?* It is the first and only study that has ever been done on what makes this “miracle” that we in education have come to call a “Master Teacher.”

The study was also unique because we polled acting teachers, principals, and superintendents to weigh in on the most significant attributes that contribute to teacher effectiveness and excellence. As a result of our study, 69 characteristics of teaching emerged. With one resounding voice, educators collectively concluded that the **#1 characteristic** of a Master Teacher was that he or she:

Creates the environment that advances student learning.

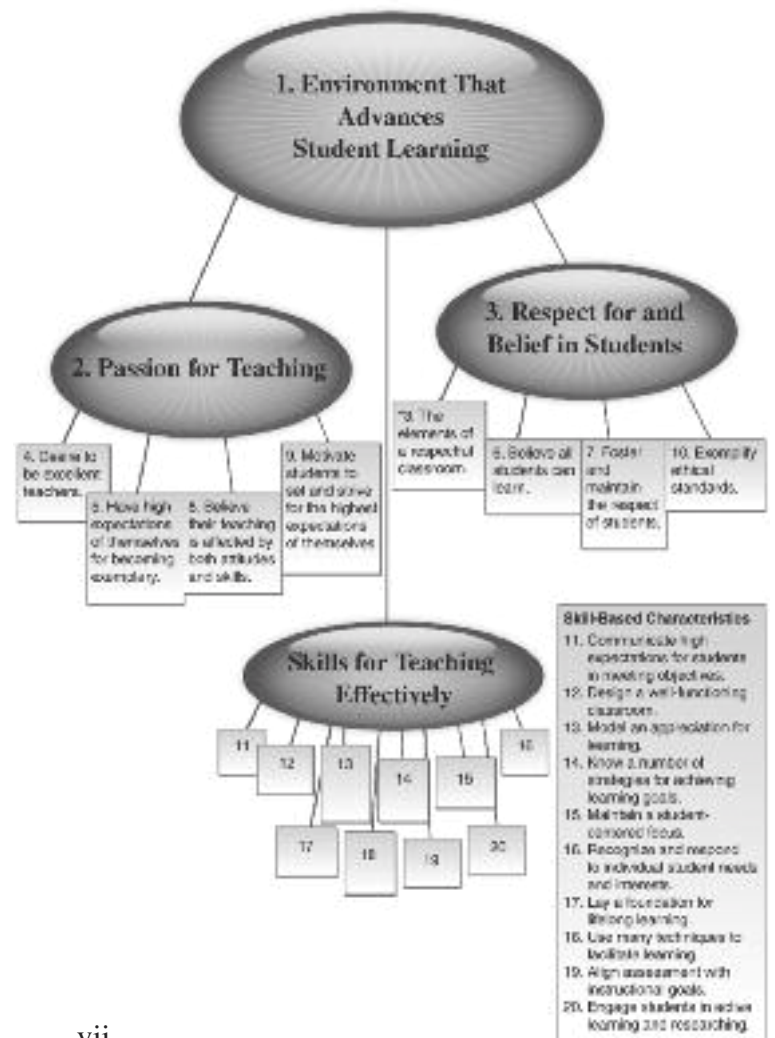
As an educator yourself, this conclusion probably does not surprise you. Yet, while you might be able to guess what makes up this special environment, a closer look at the first 10 characteristics in the study, as well as the next 10, gives us a more precise picture. We call it the *The Learning Environment Mobile*.

The environment that enhances student learning operates as a mobile—balanced equally with **Passion for Teaching** on one side and on the other with **Respect for and Belief in Students**.

Under **Passion for Teaching** are these teacher characteristics:

- Desire to be excellent teachers.
- Have high expectations of themselves for becoming exemplary.
- Believe their teaching is affected by both attitudes and skills.
- Motivate students to set and strive for the highest expectations of themselves.

**Figure 13-3 from the *Voices from the Field* book—
The Learning Environment Mobile**



Under **Respect for and Belief in Students** are these characteristics:

- The elements of a respectful classroom.
- Believe all students can learn.
- Foster and maintain the respect of students.
- Exemplify ethical standards.

All of this is anchored with the weight of **Skills for Teaching Effectively**.

We have designed this with the image of a mobile because a mobile is fluid. It will move and change with prevailing winds. Yet, a proper mobile always stays balanced. So it is with the classroom environment that enhances learning. As long as the teacher keeps the key elements of passion for teaching in balance with respect for and belief in students and properly weighs them with the skills for effective teaching, the environment will do its job to advance student learning.

In addition, we draw from research of The Kettering Foundation completed in the 1980s on the elements of climate and culture in order to narrow the focus for this book. Our objective is to distill for you the key elements of creating the environment in which maximum learning can occur. The elements include:

1. Respect
2. Trust
3. Caring
4. Continuous Academic and Social Growth
5. Opportunity for Input/Ownership
6. High Morale
7. Cohesiveness

This book is composed of 35 separate lessons—each followed with space to journal and reflect. We hope these lessons will inspire you and give you the strategies you need to inspire your students.

Remember, it is never too late to establish the right environment—even if you are well into the school year. Little learning can happen without it.

CHAPTER 1

RESPECT

“When people honor each other, there is a trust established that leads to synergy, interdependence, and deep respect.”

—Blaine Lee

A Recipe For A Respectful Classroom

Respect is the lifeblood of teachers. We want it. We need it. We must have it to maintain our commitment and continue our efforts to function at higher and higher levels day after day. In truth, respect is the recognition and appreciation most people seek.

A highly effective classroom is one that creates an environment that advances student learning. A critical ingredient of such a classroom—perhaps the most important ingredient—is respect. One thing is certain: Good classroom management and high levels of achievement for student and teacher alike are best achieved when a climate of respect permeates the classroom. In fact, every aspect of the classroom functions better in a climate of respect. The question is this: What is the recipe for the respectful classroom? Fortunately, there are some important ingredients and steps we can follow.

A teacher must first believe all students are worthy of respect.

Respect starts with what we believe about students. Therefore, we must be willing to examine our beliefs about each student carefully, objectively, and honestly. First, it’s vital that we believe that the

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atmosphere in the classroom is set and directed by us. We also must believe that all students are worthy of respect and deserve to receive it from us. If we believe that students deserve our respect and we give it freely and consistently, we have taken the first step to set the stage for a respectful classroom. It sounds logical and easy. But the minute we fail to believe that students are worthy of respect and consequently deny them respect, it will prove to be a mistake.

Second, we must believe all students can learn—and that we are the catalyst for their learning. Make no mistake: These beliefs are vital ingredients in the recipe for a respectful classroom. Students are quick to pick up on whether we believe in them and their abilities. They are also quick to recognize how confident we are that they can be successful. It is not enough to say that we believe students can learn. Our actions must align with our words. When we maintain high expectations for all students despite any learning impediments, we show students that we respect them and our own abilities to help them achieve. Once we demonstrate this kind of respect, students will give us the respect we need from them. However, our respect for students must come first.

Respecting the unique gifts and abilities of students is vital.

Third, recognizing and responding to individual differences is vital to the recipe for respect. Every student needs to believe he or she fits in and belongs. Indeed, we should strive to have each student feel that he or she is “special in our eyes.” If respect cannot be given to every student until he or she meets our expectations, we will not create a respectful classroom.

We must accept that all students have unique interests and unique approaches to how they learn. In addition to the multiple intelligences students have, each student also takes what is often a predictable approach to academic work and learning. One student will look at the world from a conceptual framework, another from a practical one. A third student may approach a problem from a requirement or “rules” point of view, while still another student functions without regard to constraints and is entrepreneurial in his or her approach. The teacher who is building a culture of respect is always on the lookout for ways to honor and, when appropriate, even showcase the individual learning

approaches of students. At the same time, these teachers help students learn to do the same for one another. Honoring intellectual diversity in the classroom generates respect. Such action reinforces and motivates intellectual striving among all students and teaches students to respect classmates and the teacher at the same time.

A fourth ingredient in the recipe for a respectful classroom is for us to demonstrate that we are continually learning, including learning from students. This is not hard to do. The technology arena alone gives us countless ways to learn from students as their natural curiosity and their “play” approach to technology cause them to experiment with new ways to access new information and collaborate with peers. Showing our students that we are learning from them doesn’t take anything away from us as learning leaders. Quite to the contrary, it shows students that we are learners and willingly support and embrace new ideas and concepts that make the classroom a better, more productive, and more exciting place to learn and grow. Revealing that we are learning from our students is one of the best ways to validate and respect them. When we demonstrate this action consistently, we can hold even higher expectations for students and ourselves.

**The Master Teacher understands
that respect is a tonic
that students crave.**

The Master Teacher clearly understands that he or she is the one who must implement the recipe for respect in the classroom. It begins with what we believe about how students should be treated. Every teacher action, every classroom procedure, and every classroom rule stems from this belief.

The Master Teacher is respected by students and creates an atmosphere of respect because he or she first demonstrates respect for students. He or she knows that the validation that comes from respect for students is a tonic both students and teachers need to maximize achievement. Once people are validated by respect, they never want to lose it. Students are no exception to this reality—and neither are we. Such treatment is too special to lose. Students will work to safeguard a respectful classroom and the teacher who makes it possible.

To Learn More:

DeBruyn, R. L., & DeBruyn, T. H. (2009). *Voices from the field: What is a master teacher?* Manhattan, KS: The Master Teacher.

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Personal Learning Journal

This is your personal journal for creating the environment to maximize learning. It focuses on a four-step learning process specifically designed to enhance lifetime learning. Every step is important. To actually acquire and remember knowledge, it's important to write what you learned as well as what you already knew. Likewise, it's essential to know what worked and didn't work—and to reflect. When reflection is followed by adjustments, that is, what you will do differently as well as when you will do it, long-term learning and improvement are enhanced.

Simply write your journal entry after reading each message, and apply what you've learned in the classroom. This journal will help you retain the material and provide you with notes to review at a later date.

I. Learning/Planning

a. What did I already know about this topic?

b. What did I learn that was new?

II. Action/Application

a. What did I do that worked?

b. What did I do that didn't work?

c. What did I *not* do—and what happened?

III. Reflection/Assessment

a. What will I do with what I've learned from my experience?

b. What do I still need to learn on this subject?

c. How can I get this information?

IV. Change/Adjustment

a. What will I do differently the next time?

b. When will I use what I've learned? (first day or week of school, before grade cards go out, etc.)

c. What impact do I think it will have on my students and/or colleagues?

