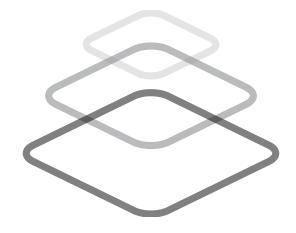# CHAMPS

A Proactive & Positive Approach
to Classroom Management

Jessica Sprick, M.S.
Randy Sprick, Ph.D.
Jacob Edwards, M.A., M.Ed.
Cristy Coughlin, Ph.D.

TASK 6

Design Procedures for Managing Common Transitions

Define clear behavioral expectations for all common transitions that occur within your class.

• • • • •

Transitions from one activity or location in the classroom or school are frequently problematic times for student behavior. Imagine the following scenario:

As students wrap up a classroom activity, Mrs. Walters tells them it is time to transition to their independent reading activities. Student folders with books are lined up along the side of the wall on top of a bookshelf. The teacher directs her 32 students to get their materials and get to work, and most student begin moving toward the bookshelf. With all students expected to get up at once to gather materials, some students hang back because they know they can't immediately reach their books because of the crowd. These students socialize as they wait. There is jostling as some students grab their materials and then have to push through other waiting students on the way back to their desks. Once students get their materials, some remain standing and continue to socialize until everyone is able to get their materials. The transition takes approximately 5 minutes for everyone to get settled and begin working.

Poorly managed transitions are troublesome because of their potential for student misbehavior and because they end up consuming valuable instructional time (Arlin, 1979; Barbetta et al., 2005; Brophy & Good, 1986; Hofmeister & Lubke, 1990; Martella et al., 2003; Olive, 2004). Transitions may be particularly challenging for some students, including students with disabilities, who may lack skills to transition between activities, and students who have experienced trauma, who may struggle if transitions are unpredictable (Buck, 1999; Souers & Hall, 2016).

> *Poorly managed transitions are troublesome because of their potential for student misbehavior and they end up consuming valuable instructional time.*

One type of transition is when students move from one task to another during an activity. For example, math lessons may start with teacher-directed instruction, then students get out their math books and work on several problems as a class, guided by the teacher. Or a transition may occur from one activity to another—for example, when moving from whole class instruction into cooperative groups. When you clearly define and communicate your expectations for transitions, you will have well-managed and efficient transitions.

It is important to recognize that no two teachers have exactly the same set of expectations for their classrooms. Some teachers may indicate that students can talk quietly to one another when lining up or getting materials. Others may indicate that students should be silent during these activities so they remain focused on the goal of getting to the next location or activity. Therefore, specifically defining your expectations is essential if you hope to have a positive and productive classroom.

That is why this task and Task 2 in Chapter 3 are designed to help you define your specific behavioral expectations for students during common transitions and major classroom activities.

Why should I have to teach expectations? Students should just know how to behave in the classroom. Teachers may mistakenly conclude that the teaching of expectations is not really necessary for three reasons. First, an experienced teacher may have such a clear vision of how her classroom should operate that she may not even realize that her room is a unique and idiosyncratic mix of rules, expectations, routines, policies, and procedures. She may, perhaps unconsciously, think that the way she does things is just the logical way all classrooms should operate, and she may not realize how complex her room actually is. "Why should I have to teach the obvious?" she reasons. What this teacher fails to realize is that her familiarity with this complex mix of procedures and routines is based on years of inventing and shaping it, teaching and living with it. However, this mix—this complex world of Room 19—is brand new to students. It's a world they have never experienced before, and they have no preconceived ideas about how to function in it.

The second reason is that teachers—both veteran and new teachers—think that the older the students are, the more they should know how to behave in the classroom. In other words, first graders may need instruction in behavior, but by the sixth grade, students should not need any: "These students have been in school for 7 years. They should already know how to behave. Why should I have to teach them?" While at first glance this statement seems reasonable, the argument against this assumption is much the same as the one above—every classroom is unique. A sixth-grade student has probably experienced at least one teacher with a low tolerance for noise and movement and one with high tolerance, at least one teacher who lets students sharpen their pencils whenever they want and one who requires students to ask permission. In fact, the older students get, the less they know about your unique mix of rules, expectations, routines, and procedures.

The third reason teachers may think that teaching expectations is unnecessary is that they feel many behavioral expectations should be taught at home. However, many teachers quickly learn that children do not necessarily learn the behaviors they need for the classroom at home. In her book *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, Ruby Payne (2018) insists that educators must have a clear understanding of the hidden rules in any setting. These rules are the unspoken cues and habits of a group and do not necessarily coincide with expectations for students at schools. It is important to understand that each set of rules allows students to be successful in that particular environment, so it is not necessarily a matter of *unlearning* previously learned rules. More importantly, students need to learn how to nimbly shift between environments where different rules are in operation so that they can thrive in any circumstances they may encounter. A term sometimes used for this phenomenon is *code switching*.

Plan to teach students the behaviors necessary to be successful in the school setting, regardless of previous learning or conflicting home or community expectations and without disrespecting student and family backgrounds, values, or beliefs. Understanding the hidden rules that occur in a school and classroom environment will allow teachers to promote successful behaviors among students by directly teaching them all the behavioral expectations that are necessary for success at school. When behavioral expectations differ between school and home or community, it is important to explicitly teach the differences (i.e., code switching) and the rationale for the expectation at school. Avoid labeling behaviors that are inappropriate in school as "wrong" because they may be appropriate in other settings. This information is particularly crucial

> ***Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access***
>
> *Students come to school with habits and rules they have learned for how to be successful in different environments. While these may not coincide with your classroom expectations, do not label these differences as bad or wrong. Be explicit in teaching students and providing rationale for how to be successful in your classroom.*

when working with students and families in poverty situations or who come from different cultural backgrounds than your own.

Remember that your classroom expectations are unique. Your classroom is no less complex than a basketball team. As coaches know, if you want a team to be successful, you have to teach and practice over and over to mastery. This chapter and the next will help you recognize the complexity of your expectations and help you set up a plan to teach the individuals in your class to function successfully as a team.

Be aware that your expectations for student behavior will be different for each major type of instructional activity and transition. For example, your expectations for conversation (whether students can talk or not) in cooperative group activities are probably very different from your expectations for conversation when you are giving a test. During some transitions, you may be OK with students talking to one another, but in others you may prefer that they don't talk so they can focus on transitioning as quickly as possible. Part of the rationale for clearly defining and then teaching behavioral expectations for each major transition and activity relates to the sheer number of idiosyncratic expectations students encounter in the school! If you were to follow a student throughout the day, it is feasible that the student may encounter anywhere from 25 to over 100 different types of behavioral expectations as they move through different settings and activities.

Identify Common Transitions That Occur in Your Classroom

The first step in defining your behavioral expectations for all common transitions is to make a list of the major types of transitions that your students will engage in daily (or on a regular basis). Common transition times include switching from one subject to another, getting textbooks open to a particular page, and trading papers for correction. Use Reproducible 2.2, CHAMPS Transitions List (not shown) to list transitions. Be sure to identify all the specific transitions and categories of transitions for which you will have different behavioral expectations. A list of transitions might include the following:

- Before the bell rings
- Getting out paper and pencils
- Getting a book and opening to a particular page
- Moving to and from a small group location
- Students leaving and entering the classroom (e.g., grade-level teachers grouping across classes for math instruction or students who leave the room for counseling groups or specially designed instructional groups)
- Putting things away (clearing desks)
- Handing in work (e.g., after an in-class assignment or quiz)
- Trading papers for corrections
- Cleaning up after project activities
- Moving as a class to a different, specific location (e.g., library or playground)
- Handing things out (e.g., an assignment sheet or art supplies)
- Opening and dismissal routines (expectations for these transitions were discussed in the previous task)

An elementary school teacher who has the same group of students all day will probably have more variety in types of transitions throughout the day than does a middle school teacher.

Consider Level of Support When Designing CHAMPS Expectations for Transitions

When defining your behavioral expectations, pay close attention to the level of support your students need, and pay careful consideration to structural elements. Remember that structure refers to the level of organization, orchestration, and predictability created by the teacher. The more support your class requires, the more specific and tightly orchestrated you need to make your expectations for transitions. For a low-support class, you probably don't need to specify the routes for students to take to the small-group instruction area. On the other hand, for students who need high support, you should include the expectation that students take the most direct route and that they keep their hands, feet, and objects to themselves so they do not disturb students who are working at their seats (Evertson et al., 2003; Jenson et al., 2020; Jones & Jones, 2007; Shores et al., 1993; Stichter et al., 2004).

In classes that need high support or that are especially large, work to reduce the number of students who are moving at the same time during transitions. It would be preferable to have one student from each cluster or row gather materials for their group while the other students work on a task than to have the whole class move at once. However, for a class with a low need for support, you might allow more students to move at one time as long as they can do so efficiently and without interrupting the instructional momentum of the class.

Also keep in mind that it's always easier to lessen highly structured procedures (gradually!) than to try to implement more structure because students are making bad choices. If students need high structure, it is probably advisable to limit student-to-student talking during transitions at the beginning of the year. However, 2 or 3 weeks into the year, after you've had a chance to see how the students behave, you might revise your expectations. "Class, starting today, once you've lined up at the door, you can have a quiet conversation with the person directly in front of you or behind you until I call for attention to give the next direction."

Clarify Expectations for Voice Levels

One strategy that makes the whole CHAMPS process more efficient is to develop voice levels. This allows you to specify, as part of a clarifying conversation, the voice level students are expected to use during a particular activity.

Below is a sample way to define voice levels using a numbered scale:

0 = **No sound/No talking**
Examples: Taking a test, listening to a concert
1 = **Whisper** (no vocal cords)
Example: Asking another student a question during an independent work time in which conversation is allowed
2 = **Quiet conversational voice** (only people near you can hear)
Examples: Two or three students walking down the hall, four students working in a cooperative group

3 = Presentational voice (an entire class can hear you)
   Examples: A student giving a report, a teacher teaching a class
4 = Outside voice (you can be heard across a playing field)
   Example: Cheering at a football game

Of course, you should modify this list to suit your style. If you are going to use voice levels, plan to make and post a chart that students can easily see from anywhere in the room. Then as you transition into an activity, you can specify to students that the activity is an independent work period, for example, and your voice level expectation is 1. Students can look at your chart and know what is expected.

As you consider what voice level may be appropriate for a particular transition, consider whether students need to talk during the transition and, if so, about what. This relates to the next consideration, which is the amount of time the transition should reasonably take. When students are given permission to talk throughout transitions, it can significantly increase the length of time it takes for them to reach the desired outcome of the transition, especially if you have highly distractible students. You may also have increased concerns with peer conflict or bullying behaviors, as it can be difficult to monitor all peer interactions during transitions that require movement from all students in the room. However, in some transitions, such as cleaning up materials at the end of the day, student talk may be acceptable if the voice level is manageable and students can complete the transition in a reasonable amount of time (see the next item below).

Consider Time to Transition

For each transition, think carefully about how long the transition should reasonably take. While maintaining positive behavior is one major goal associated with your CHAMPS expectations for transitions, an equally important goal is ensuring that transitions do not take up valuable instructional time. Studies on transition time have documented that students may experience as many as 15–20 transitions between activities each day that can collectively consume up to 70 minutes of instructional time (Olive, 2004). If you can design transitions to be as efficient as possible, you can free up additional instructional time or time for other activities designed to strengthen classroom community.

You may have a group of students who are responsible enough to handle the low-structure routine of all students moving at one time to get needed materials. However, if you have more than 15 students in a class, having all students move to get needed materials may likely take several minutes, especially if materials are all located in one part of the room (e.g., a bookcase, art cabinet, computer cart). If a procedure is likely to take up valuable instructional time when conducted with lower structure, consider using higher structure for that particular transition to ensure that it is performed efficiently. For example, while you continue to teach or students work on small group, partner, or independent work, have a "materials manager" who is finished with the work or who needs a bit of a movement break pass out the materials for each student or group. By using this procedure, no instructional time is lost in the transition.

If you are uncertain how long a transition should take, talk with colleagues about how long a procedure takes with their most responsible group of students. For example, you might ask

how long it takes their most responsible group of students to line up, hand in work, or get to carpet or lab stations. If a colleague reports a transition time that sounds much quicker than you can envision with your current procedures, ask if they would be willing to share their procedures with you. They could record a video of the transition, or you could find a time to come and observe the class performing the transition if the other teacher is willing.

Complete Planning Forms to Clearly Outline Your CHAMPS Expectations for Common Transitions

The foundation for defining your behavioral expectations is the CHAMPS acronym, which reflects the major issues that affect student behavior. The issues incorporated in CHAMPS and the basic questions to be addressed for each issue are:

C	**Conversation**	*Can students talk to each other? If so, about what, and how loudly?*
H	**Help**	*How do students get their questions answered? How do they get your attention?*
A	**Activity**	*What is the task or objective? What is the end product?*
M	**Movement**	*Can students move about?*
P	**Participation**	*What does the expected student behavior look and sound like? How do students show they are fully participating?*
S	**Success**	*Success comes from following CHAMPS expectations. Or, S can stand for Special Considerations—any expectations that do not fit into other categories.*

Reproducible 2.3 is a template of a CHAMPS Transition Worksheet. Download the form and print multiple copies. Then document your behavioral expectations by filling out one worksheet for each major type of transition you identified on the Classroom Transitions List (Reproducible 2.2). These worksheets use the CHAMPS acronym as your guide to defining the important issues for students. See pages 95–100 for samples of CHAMPS Transition Worksheets for lining up and getting needed materials in low-, medium-, and high-support classrooms.

Remember, details are important. The more specific you are in your own mind about what you expect from students, the more clearly you will communicate your expectations to your students. In addition, the more specific your expectations are, the more consistent you are likely to be in enforcing them (Barbetta et al., 2005) and in acknowledging students when they meet your expectations. The completed worksheets will provide the content for your lessons about your behavioral expectations. Specific information on teaching your expectations is covered in Chapter 4.

UPDATE YOUR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT PLAN

ITEM 5: CHAMPS EXPECTATIONS FOR CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND TRANSITIONS

- Use CHAMPS Transition List (Reproducible 2.2) to list the common transitions that occur in your classroom.
- Once you have completed CHAMPS Transition Worksheets (Reproducible 2.3) for each transition on your list, attach them or include them in a binder with a paper record of your Classroom Management Plan, and/or include the filled-out digital versions in a file that contains your Classroom Management Plan.

TASK 7

Prepare for Common Areas and Special Circumstances

Identify expectations for student behavior in all common areas and for circumstances like assemblies and substitutes.

• • • • •

Students need to know behavioral expectations for common areas such as hallways, cafeteria, playground, bus waiting areas, and buses, as well as for special circumstances like assemblies and substitutes.

Know Your School's Expectations for Common Areas

If your school has clearly defined behavioral expectations for common areas, ensure that you carefully review the handbook or other material where these expectations are archived prior to the first day of school. In some schools, expectations will be taught during some sort of fair or by other personnel like the counselor and principal. In other schools, you may be responsible for teaching lessons about expectations in these areas. Even if you are not directly responsible for teaching lessons on behavior in common areas, you should be prepared to answer student questions if they arise and provide periodic reminders about expected behavior to students prior to their entering a common area or situation.

STOIC Framework

If it is difficult to maintain a 3:1 ratio of positive to corrective interactions because of excessive misbehaviors, adapt structures in your classroom to increase the likelihood students engage in appropriate behavior, and explicitly teach expectations, social-emotional, and behavioral skills.

expectations and behavioral skills. The S and T of STOIC can be powerful in reducing the numbers of misbehaviors you see from your students, allowing you more opportunity to provide positive feedback, and ensuring that you are able to maintain high positive ratios of interaction.

In summary, strive to maintain at least a 3:1 ratio of positive to corrective interactions with your students. This is important for each class as a whole, but also for each individual student. The next tasks in this chapter provide practical ways that you can boost your positive interactions with students, creating a more positive classroom environment and strengthening your relationships with students.

TASK 2

Build Positive Relationships With Students With Noncontingent Attention

Create a positive relationship with each student by using every opportunity possible to provide each student with noncontingent attention.
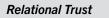
● ● ● ● ●

Imagine three different students in a hypothetical classroom. The first is a highly talented, good-looking, socially adept student. The second student struggles academically and behaviorally and is not particularly liked by peers. The third is an average student. Each of these students, and all the others in the room, should feel equally valued and respected by you not because of what they accomplish or how they behave, but just because they are one of your students. All of these students have strengths and deserve to have educators who work with them recognize, acknowledge, and foster those strengths. So, how do you give each of these students the kind of attention they need to feel valued and respected?

In this task, specific suggestions are offered for how to build positive relationships with students. The focus is on noncontingent attention—a fancy way of saying that you will give some time and attention to each student regardless of how that student behaves or performs academically. Mike Booher, a former Safe & Civil Schools trainer, refers to noncontingent attention as *reach outs*, because you are in essence reaching out to make a connection with every student, regardless of their performance, circumstances, or efforts.

It is very important for you to make an effort to provide every student with attention that is not contingent on any specific accomplishment. Contingent positive attention (as described in Tasks 3 and 4) involves interacting with and giving feedback to students when they have accomplished or demonstrated improvement on important behavioral or academic goals (O'Leary & O'Leary, 1977; Sheuermann & Hall, 2008). Noncontingent attention, on the other hand,

involves giving students time and attention not because of anything they've done, but just because you notice and value them as people (Alberto & Troutman, 2012; Carr et al., 2000). Simple daily ways of giving noncontingent attention include greeting your students as they enter your room and showing an authentic interest in the thoughts, feelings, and activities of each student.

The benefits of noncontingent attention are fairly obvious. Like all of us, students need to be noticed and valued. When they feel noticed and valued, they are more likely to be motivated to engage in appropriate behaviors and try their best. They are also more likely to feel comfortable being vulnerable, making mistakes in learning, or coming to you in a time of need. The benefits to you include the following:

Relational Trust
Noncontingent interactions are important for building relational trust with your students. When you invest in your students through these types of positive interactions, students are more likely to view your actions and efforts as having positive intent, and they are more likely to want to act in a spirit of cooperation with you.

- You will feel more connected to your students.
- Students will have a model of pleasant, supportive social interactions—you!
- Student behavior and effort will improve.
- Each day will be much more pleasant, resulting in an improved classroom climate for you and the students.

You may wonder how simply saying "hello" and making an effort to talk to students can improve their behavior. Dr. Vern Jones (2007), a leading expert on student discipline and motivation, explains noncontingent attention with the bank analogy. Each time you interact with a student and show an interest in them as a person, you make a deposit. When you have invested enough (had enough of the right type of interactions so that the student feels valued by you), the student is more likely to want to follow your rules and strive to achieve your Guidelines for Success. In addition, if you make enough deposits, there will be reserve capital for those times when you may have to make a withdrawal because of student misbehavior. Whether the withdrawal consists of a gentle reprimand, a discussion, or a corrective consequence designed to help improve the student's behavior, the more you have invested in the student, the more likely they are to understand that you are trying to help them by correcting them. Students who struggle with chronic misbehavior will also recognize that you see them as more than just the sum of their faults because they know you have gotten to know them beyond their misbehaviors or struggles at school.

"Mrs. Jacobsen cares so much about me that she is taking the time to help me learn to be responsible. I want to do what she is asking me to do." When nothing has been invested, the student may feel that you are simply trying to control their behavior. "Mrs. Jacobsen wants me to sit down and be quiet because she doesn't like me. Well, the heck with her. I'll do whatever I want, whenever I want. She can't make me sit down." Noncontingent attention helps you build a spirit of cooperation between yourself and your students. In addition, by building a relationship with your students, you increase the likelihood that they will feel connected to you and to their school. This connectedness has been shown to correlate with long-term student success (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009; Klem & Connell, 2004: Thapa et al., 2013).

Showing an interest in students and acting friendly does not mean you should try to be a friend or a peer. You are the teacher, and you do not want to be so friendly that you seem to be an equal or that you do not hold high expectations for all of your students (paired with

any needed supports). You are the person in charge of the classroom and the one who needs to intervene if there are rule violations. However, as the person in authority, you want to continuously find ways to communicate that you value and are interested in every one of your students as individual people.

Ways to Build Positive Relationships With Students

This next section provides detailed explanations of some ways to give your students non-contingent attention.

Greet students.

This is the simplest but one of the most important ways to provide noncontingent attention. As students enter your room first thing in the morning or at the beginning of class, provide a friendly greeting. "Hello, Jonathan. Good morning, Will. Francine, how are you today? You know, I'm tired this morning, too. You and I may have to nudge each other to stay awake in class. Maria, Jacob, Tyrone, good to see you." You may not be able to greet every student each day, but you should try to greet enough students each day so that over the course of a week every student has been greeted at least a few times.

Elementary teachers should greet their students throughout the day—greet a few students when they come in from recess or after music class or when they return from lunch. Middle school teachers should attempt to greet at least five to eight students per class as students enter the room. You can also make a point of greeting your students when you see them in the hall. They may barely respond (some students will be self-conscious if they are with friends), but they will notice if you don't take the time to acknowledge them.

Some teachers get creative in the ways that they personalize their greetings with students. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Task 5, some teachers use a personalized handshake with each student or a chart that allows students to select their preferred greeting (e.g., handshake, salute, dance party, fist bump). However, even if your routine is simply smiling at the student and greeting them by name, this moment of connection is a powerful way to start each day or class in a positive way.

Learn how to correctly identify your students.

As you begin learning your students' names, take extra care to learn the correct pronunciation of each name. Although this is of vital importance to demonstrate that you honor and value your students, many teachers do not make this simple effort. We've heard many examples where teachers have even made jokes about what a name sounds like, which should never occur. When teachers are not familiar with the pronunciation of a student's name, they may be less likely to call on that student or engage with them in class. Further, when teachers consistently mispronounce names, students are at risk for feeling shamed, anxious, or embarrassed (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Wan, 2017).

Let your students know on the first day of school that it is important to you that you learn to call them by their preferred name and that you want them to help you learn to say it the correct way. You may wish to record your students introducing themselves and their names. For any names that are difficult for you to pronounce, listen to the recording each day and repeat the pronunciation until you have acquired it. For older students, it's also a good idea to also ask students their gender pronouns (he/his, she/hers, they/theirs). If you aren't sure of a student's pronoun, you might ask them directly at a private moment or refer to them by name only. You might inquire by sharing your own: "I use the pronouns he, him, and his. I want to make sure I address you correctly, so if you use specific pronouns, please let me know or correct me if I use one incorrectly." Another option is to pass around a sign-in sheet at the beginning of the year and ask students to indicate their preferred name and pronoun in writing.

> **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access**
>
> *Each student deserves to have teachers who learn and use the correct pronunciation of their name and the pronoun they use to reflect their gender identity. This simple effort demonstrates that you honor and value the student's individuality and background.*

Show an interest in students' work and other interests.

During independent work periods, when no one needs immediate assistance, go to individual students or cooperative learning groups and look at student work or have a quick discussion to learn more about the students. Taking a few moments to look at what a student is doing demonstrates that you are interested in the student and their work. Sometimes you may offer praise in this context; other times you can simply say something like, "I am looking forward to reading this when you are finished, Tammie." You can also ask about what students are working on or learning in other classes or in activities outside of school, such as sports or music. Having students share things they are proud of or excited about can provide an important point of connection.

Learn more about students' cultures and other aspects of their personal identities they would like to share.

Invite students to share with you or the class about aspects of their cultural identity or family background. Explore the rich differences of your students and show that you value them beyond just academic considerations. Showing this interest can benefit whether they were born in another country or region of the United States, have particular racial or ethnic backgrounds that inform how they view their identity, or view their urban or rural background as important to who they are.

As described in Chapter 2, Task 3, use some display space in the classroom to display art, artifacts, and information that reflect students' unique interests and identities. Ask students who speak another language in their home setting to share some common greetings or phrases, like "please" and "thank you," and work to incorporate these into your interactions with students and their families.

> **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access**
>
> *Invite but do not require students to share about their cultural identify or family background. These efforts demonstrate that you are interested in your students and that you value their diverse experiences and perspectives, and can help you better understand students' needs and interests.*

Recognize that sharing about family or personal identity may be uncomfortable for some students, such as those who have difficult home lives, live in foster care, or struggle with issues of self-worth. Provide opportunities for those who would like to share, but do not force students to engage in these activities. For example, if you have a writing project where students can research and write about an aspect of their family background or culture, provide an alternative writing prompt that does not put these students in an uncomfortable position. For example, you could provide an option for students to write about a personal interest or to research and write about another culture they are interested in.

Use "trust generators" to build rapport with students.

Psychological research has identified a set of actions that people can use to develop more authentic, vulnerable, and trusting connections with others (Brafman & Brafman, 2010). Reciprocal self-disclosure—sharing information about yourself with your students and encouraging your students to share information about themselves with you—can enhance trust and strengthen relationships (Cayanus & Martin, 2008). Zaretta Hammond, author of *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, calls these self-disclosure acts *trust generators*. Use the following trust generators to help build rapport with your students (Hammond, 2014):

- *Selective vulnerability.* Share your own vulnerable moments—for example, discuss a personal challenge you've overcome, lesson you've learned, or mistake that you've made in the past. Your students will be more likely to respect and connect to you.
- *Familiarity.* Make a point of regularly crossing paths with your students in the school and community. For example, attend community or sports events that you know are popular with your students. People naturally develop a sense of familiarity with someone who they see often in a particular setting on a regular basis.
- *Similarity of interests.* Share hobbies, sports, or other things you like to do that are similar to a particular student's interests. Also share social causes that you are passionate about, such as caring for the environment or advocating for equity.
- *Concern.* Show concern and personal regard for issues and events important to your students. Ask follow-up questions about recent events, such as births, illnesses, or other life transitions.
- *Competence.* Demonstrate competence by conveying genuine willingness to make sure students understand important concepts. Take efforts to make learning less confusing, more exciting, and more successful.

Identify students' strengths.

Every student has strengths and deserves to have educators who work with them identify and celebrate those things that the student does well. For some students, their strength may be in a specific subject or activity, while others may exhibit strengths with particular habits, attitudes, or skills.

There are many benefits when teachers actively work to identify student strengths. Students are more likely to feel connected to their teachers when they believe they are seen as more than the sum of their faults or challenges. They may be more likely to work hard and persist

through challenges when they are bolstered by feelings of accomplishment and pride in who they are or what they can do. You can think of this like a snowball effect—once the ball gets rolling in a positive direction, it will keep building momentum and rolling.

A few times each year, consider listing a few strengths for each of your students. Make efforts to find ways to acknowledge the student for those strengths or create situations where the student can demonstrate the strengths. When identifying student strengths, reflect on questions such as:

> ***Motivation***
>
> *When teachers actively work to identify and foster student strengths, this can be a powerful motivating factor that helps the student persist through challenges and try new things.*

- *What positive qualities does the student bring to the classroom?* (Yasin is conscientious of other students and is always willing to share.)
- *What skills or talents are you aware of?* (Glenn is talented at building structures and figuring out how machines work.)
- *What special efforts do you notice from the student on a regular basis?* (Bailey is often eager to help other students fix their mistakes when revising assignments.)
- *Is there a particular area of content that the student is drawn to?* (Micah loves learning about anything to do with animals, while Jan is obsessed with baseball statistics.)

Remember that some students may have strengths that are typically unrecognized or undervalued in the traditional classroom. For example, a student may have a strong connection to their spiritual belief system and may be very knowledgeable about and committed to regular practice of their faith. Another student may have amassed a lot of knowledge about car maintenance and repair from spending time with and learning from an older sibling.

See Figure 6.1 for an example of how a teacher listed student strengths and identified ways to connect to or build on those strengths.

Figure 6.1 *Student Strengths*

Student	Strengths	Ways to Acknowledge or Build Upon
Marcella A.	• Comes to class on time every day • Helps peers when they are frustrated or don't understand something	• Send a postcard to family thanking them • Give Marcella a class job as a peer helper
Eleanor V.	• Puts careful thought and effort into work • Fantastic volleyball player	• Ask Eleanor to select some work she is proud of that we can display • Ask her questions about her volleyball practice/games
Dante O.	• Wants to learn new things • Avid reader	• Have Dante write extension questions and connect to those in lessons • See if Dante wants to read to students in younger classes
Talia R.	• Has strong opinions and beliefs • Great organizational skills	• Invite Talia to join the debate club and speak to her strengths • Ask Talia to describe to me how she keeps herself so organized so that I can provide some examples to the class

If you are a specials or secondary teacher and are unable to create such a chart for all of your classes due to the number of students you see each day, consider just focusing on the students who are struggling behaviorally or academically in your classes. Also consider focusing on students who are quiet or average-performing and might have a tendency to get less overall attention from you—positive or corrective.

If you find it difficult to list strengths for any of your students because they currently have many visible challenges or have made classroom life particularly difficult, recognize that these are the students who most need you to try and learn about their strengths. Unfortunately, some students rarely or never have their strengths acknowledged at school because their struggles are so visible. Unless someone makes a conscious effort to find their strengths, the student may begin to feel everyone in the school is against them or may even begin to doubt they have strengths. Find times to meet with the student and interact noncontingently, learning more about what the student likes to do outside of school or things they take pride in. You can also try to see if you can reframe current areas of challenge into potential areas of strength if they are channeled in a particular direction. A student who currently struggles with noncompliant and argumentative behavior may have a strength of having strong opinions and convictions. If this student learns to use these convictions in socially appropriate ways, they might end up being a fantastic lawyer or activist for good causes. Examples of common challenges reframed as strengths include:

- Constantly wiggling and out of seat → Lots of energy and athleticism
- Talks to peers during inappropriate times → Has lots of friends and loves social interaction
- Shuts down when struggling academically → Cares deeply about doing well in school
- Blurts out in class → Likes to participate and contribute to discussions

Reframing challenges into potential strengths may help you view the student's behavior in a different light. While the behavior may still be challenging, you can begin finding ways to help channel the student in a more positive direction.

Invite students to ask for assistance.

Occasionally, find private times to ask individual students how they are doing in class. If anyone indicates that they are having trouble, arrange a time for that student to get some additional help from you. For those who say they are doing fine, let them know that if they ever have trouble, they should not hesitate to come see you, and that this is true for academic and non-academic concerns. If you make an offer of assistance to every student in the first couple of months of school, you communicate that you are aware of them as individuals and that you are available to help them.

It may be beneficial to put reminders in your calendar every few months to make efforts to be consciously inviting to students and parents about reaching out to you for assistance whenever needed. You should also advertise information about other adults in the school who are available to help students if they are ever struggling and don't feel comfortable coming to you. For example, every few months provide the names and emails of the principal, counselor, and social worker, along with where to find their offices in the school and any other relevant information. Invite these staff members to come and speak to your class periodically so that students are aware of who they can go to if they need assistance.

Whenever time permits, have a conversation with a student or group of students.

Having a conversation with students demonstrates (more so than just greeting them) that you are interested in them—in their experiences and their ideas. Brief social interactions create an emotional connection between you and your students, and they are not hard to do. For example, if three students enter your middle school classroom at the beginning of the passing period, you can casually chat with them as you stand at the door and greet other entering students. As you are escorting your second-grade class to lunch, you might talk quietly with a couple of students as you go down the hall (unless students are not supposed to converse in the halls). Find out your students' individual interests and ask about them—ask a student about his soccer game the previous evening, for example. Periodically share something about yourself. "My son played goalie for his team in college. What position do you like to play?"

Make a special effort to greet or talk to any student you've recently interacted with regarding a misbehavior.

This kind of gesture on your part communicates that past corrective interactions with the student are now just that—past—and that you do not hold a grudge. It also lets the student know that you are prepared for a fresh start. For example, if immediately before lunch you had to talk to a student about being disruptive, that student should definitely be one of the five or six students you greet when the class comes back after lunch: "Aaron, good to see you. How are you doing?" A greeting in these circumstances actually decreases the probability that the student will misbehave in the next instructional activity. Be careful to avoid statements like, "Aaron, good to see you. I hope we're going to have a better afternoon than we did this morning." While this might seem like an acceptable greeting, it can actually send the student spiraling into a more negative space. It also indicates that you have not really hit the reset button. If you need to speak with the student about how to move forward from a problematic behavioral incident, try to do this before the student's reentry into the environment. Then authentically greet and welcome the student back to class without mentioning the previous negative behavior.

Level of Support and Noncontingent Attention

This task is one of the few tasks in CHAMPS that is not optional based on whether students need more or less support. Whether your students need high, medium, or low support, you owe it to every individual to build a positive relationship by interacting with them as frequently as possible in a manner that is friendly, inviting, and personable. However, recognize that if your students require higher levels of support and/or you find yourself having to correct students more often for misbehaviors, increasing your noncontingent attention can be an important way to ensure that you maintain a positive ratio of interactions. For students who have previously struggled in school or who may view the educational system as stacked against them due to issues like systemic racism, overt and ongoing efforts to get to know these students and show that you value them as individuals are essential so that you demonstrate you want to work with the student to overcome any barriers to their thriving in the educational system.