

MASTER Teacher Tips...

Student Relationships

It's easy to make mistakes when you think students aren't telling you the truth. Here are three vital tips you can use to make accurate assumptions—then ask questions to clarify your beliefs. First, the biggest giveaway to telling falsehoods is a series of inconsistencies in the story. Second are changes in patterns of speech or deviations from a usual pattern of behavior. For instance, students may use a monotonous tone, change inflection more frequently, and/or use fewer hand and body motions. Third, know the most common indication is a smile when it's not appropriate. These signs can serve you well—and help you handle an untruth—or know the truth when you hear it.



If students have a valid complaint, don't hurry to apologize. Rather, let the students vent their feelings. And be sure to wait until you are sure that they have finished saying all that's on their minds. Then apologize. If you apologize too quickly, a student may think you're insincere. Too, if students don't get feelings off their chest while talking with you, they won't drop the issue. Rather, they will vent their emotions to someone else. Try this technique to build and maintain good student relationships.



One of the best ways to develop good relationships with students is to work at developing empathy. An effective method of achieving this goal is to listen to students carefully, then respond as often as possible with sentences that begin with...

- "I can appreciate..."
- "I can identify..."
- "I can understand..."
- "I see that you..."

When you use these beginnings, you signal to students that you understand—and you care.



Points To Ponder...

privately...or with colleagues

1. Describe the impression you want to give students the first time they see you.
2. Give an example of a first impression you formed about someone. Include the way it has affected your subsequent relationship.
3. How do you make students comfortable in your classroom?
4. Share techniques you use to ensure that students know you genuinely care about them.
5. How would you describe your commitment to teaching?



Instinct is the nose of the mind.

—Madame de Girardin



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The First Seven Seconds

...And Tips For Student Relationships

Of the first day

When we see our students for the first time, we may not realize how vitally important the first seconds of contact really are. Yet, the truth of the matter is that the first seven seconds we have with students have immediate as well as lasting effects. Understanding this reality can help us prepare—and can alter our entire year with students. Therefore, if we intend to get off to a good start and have a good year, we would be wise to consider the facts and respond accordingly.

The research is very clear.

Roger Ailes is one of the world's foremost experts on communication. He has advised presidents. He has counseled some of the most successful Fortune 500 business professionals regarding how to improve communication skills. And, of course, he is the CEO of both CNBC and America's Talking. For almost three decades, his influence has grown, and now its dimensions are both wide and deep. The advice of Roger Ailes should not be discounted by any professional educator.

Ailes says that the truths of good communication are available to all of us. And foremost among these truths are his findings on "the first seven seconds." He reminds us that the research is very clear: We start to make up our minds about other people immediately—within the first seven seconds of meeting them. Ailes says it's a very primitive action, but "consciously or unconsciously, we're signaling to other people what our true feelings are." And we are sending a message regarding "what we really want to have happen in an encounter" or in our relationships with them.

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Therefore, in the first seven seconds, we begin to say things to ourselves which have lasting impact.

For instance, we ask ourselves, "Do I need to be alarmed by this person? Is this a good person? Is he or she friendly? What are this person's intentions?" In effect, we rapidly go through a series of options and "arrive" at and "settle" on a general perception of that person. Without doubt, students do the same with us. If we think not, we are mistaken. And this is one mistake that may prove costly to both us and our students.

After the first seven seconds, we just process our perceptions.

There is a second truth. Ailes says that once the first seven seconds have passed, it's extremely difficult to reverse that first impression. This reality can have catastrophic consequences for teachers who don't understand the signals they send to students. "After that initial seven seconds," he says, "we're just fine-tuning everything that we perceived." If later behavior doesn't fit with positive first impressions, we ask ourselves, "Gee, I liked him before. Why don't I like him now?" However, we try to make our later impressions conform to the framework of the decisions we made in the first seven seconds.

For teachers, this second truth is very important. If students' first reaction is to distrust us or believe that we are unfair or uncaring, it's going to be hard to change their minds. However, when we come across as enthusiastic, caring, and genuine in the first seven seconds, the seeds we want to sow are planted.

Ailes' third truth emphasizes the need for the ability to make students comfortable. He insists this is the number one talent of all great communicators. Students should be able to look into our eyes and immediately know we like them and, therefore, wouldn't do anything to hurt them. When such is the case, we will automatically produce an ineffable quality: likability. Ailes calls likability the "magic bullet." If students like us, they will forgive just about anything we do wrong. However, he says likability is hard to define.

To be considered likable, one must exhibit four enduring characteristics—integrity, respect for others,

trustworthiness, and honesty. What is more, likable people tend to be optimists, which makes sense. After all, it's hard to like anyone who responds by saying "horrible" when asked "How was your day?" But Ailes says the *most important element* shared by people who are liked is that they like other people—and genuinely care about the well-being of others. This characteristic makes them likable. He also insists that, in general, people who try hard to be likable aren't. Therefore, our task the first day is to be ourselves and make sure students know our intent is to open doors of opportunity for them.

The Master Teacher knows there are four essential qualities we must master.

The Master Teacher doesn't discount the importance of beginnings. And the first seconds of class are among the most important of all. To deliver the message we want, we must master what Ailes considers to be four essential qualities. First and foremost, we must be prepared. Students must have confidence that we know what we are talking about—and know that we've prepared ourselves to teach them.

Second, The Master Teacher knows we must have the ability to make students comfortable and safe with us, their classmates, and what we are teaching. We need to recognize that teachers who are comfortable and make others comfortable don't overreact to events by being negative, getting upright, or blowing up. Keeping our emotions in check helps make students feel comfortable and safe being with us.

Third, The Master Teacher believes we must be committed. Ailes says commitment is critical because when we care, we perform at a higher level. Finally, The Master Teacher is aware that we must be interesting and enthusiastic. We must use our individuality and creativity. After all, an interesting and enthusiastic teacher stimulates students' curiosity and passion for learning. It all begins with the first seven seconds.

Robert E. Johnson

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