Teaching is not as easy as presenting information and assigning work; teaching, like any form of communication, is a two-way street. There needs to be some kind of understood relationship between the teacher and the students so that the exchange of language and information results in students actually learning. That is why it is important to build a relationship with students.
On day one of any class teachers usually know little about their students and vice versa. One of the best ways to solve this problem is for the teacher to use icebreaker activities. The website wilderon.com says the benefits of icebreaker activities include:

- Creates a positive group atmosphere
- Helps people relax
- Breaks down social barriers
- Energizes and motivates
- Helps people to ‘think outside the box’
- Helps people to get to know one another

For a complete list of icebreaker activities visit the website and list at http://wilderdom.com/games/Icebreakers.html and http://www.kimskorner4teachertalk.com/classmanagement/icebreakers.html.
Treating the Classroom as a Community

In Thomas Sergiovanni’s book, Building Community In Schools, he says, “we become connected for reason of commitment rather than compliance” and “People are bonded to each other as a result of their mutual bindings to shared values, traditions, and ideals.” This means that students:

- Need to feel connected to the class
- Will not listen to us just because we are the teacher
- Need to understand and share our goals and beliefs

As a teacher you might ask why this is important. It is important because in a survey of students only 55% felt that, “I am an important part of my high school community” (Yassie-Mintz). If almost half of students do not feel like they are part of the community in schools by Sergiovanni’s definition we are not respecting their needs and we are not trying to understand their ideals and respect who they are.
Building a Rapport with Students

Building a community is important, but how do we accomplish this? One of the first steps is trying to build a rapport with students. The article “The Nature of Rapport and Its Nonverbal Correlates” by Linda Tickle-Degnen and Robert Rosenthal says the three ways to build rapport with students are:

- Mutual attentiveness
- Positivity
- Coordination

The article goes on to say, “with increased familiarity between participants, interactions tend to be more loosely structured....There should be an increase in communication efficiency and coordination and fewer misunderstandings of communication meaning.”

(Definitions of mutual attentiveness, positivity, and coordination can be located at http://www.jstor.org/stable/14493157?seq=2)
Trust

Along with building a community and a rapport, trust must be established as well. After all, “trust is at the heart of strong relationships that help children learn.” In the article, “A Multilevel Examination of the Distribution and Effects of Teacher Trust in Students and Parents in Urban Elementary Schools” trust is listed as important because:

- Trusting that others can be believed is an important element in human learning
- Teachers are in daily contact with students, and they are the first line of communication between the school and the family (student)
- Distrust would make it difficult for people to cooperate in accomplishing common goals
- Trust builds honesty, and honesty speaks to the integrity and behavior of the teacher.

While the article finds positives in trust as far as resulting in better grades, it also found certain situations where the lack of trust was common. Three different groups of students were cited as having a lower GPA because of trust issues. They are:

- Minority status
- Disadvantaged socioeconomic status
- Students in need of special education

(this information can be located at [http://www.jstor.org/stable/1002166](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1002166))
Holistic Learning

As teachers, what kind of assignments do we assign, how do we grade them, and what do we say to students while in class? These are all important questions for teachers to consider. What is also important is that teachers should take into account what students enjoy and hear their opinions on how the classroom is run. After all, “how students feel about school and their coursework is in large measure determined by the quality of the relationship they have with their teachers.” Below is a list of things a teacher might do in class that would have students rebelling against classroom activities:

- Unclear grading
- Take away students’ individuality
- Subject matter over personal knowledge
- Too much of a certain kind of class work (notes, worksheets)

As a result, “teachers who allowed and encouraged student involvement were rewarded with students who generally respected them and were engaged in their classes. Nevertheless, the students did not believe that most of their teachers encouraged or allowed student involvement in class decisions, and this lack of involvement contributed to their lack of engagement in those classes.”

![A Multidimensional Perspective
INTEGRATION IN HOLISTIC EDUCATION](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=EJ437075&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EJ437075)

![Integration in Holistic Education](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2248/is_152_38/ai_n6005505/)
Works Cited


Icebreakers and Energizers.


Icebreakers, Warmups, Energizers, & Deinhibitizers.
