

We're always considering ways to surrender the one-up relationship in a group or classroom environment. Here is a collection of some great ideas suggested to us by teachers and educators.

1. Show and tell

Share personal stories and information about yourself, so your students get to know you as a person.

When you share information about yourself, you become more approachable as students see you inviting them into your world. This can make it easier for them to let you into their world.

2. True or false?

Share two true stories about yourself and one false one. Have the class try to guess which one is the lie. Allow the class to get to know you a little better.

This is a simple and fun way to show your students that you are human and approachable. It can be educational and entertaining to make a game of your own story and background.

3. Share your passion

Share one of your hobbies, interests or passions and invite students to do the same.

Students become enthusiastic about class when they have the opportunity to share what they love. It helps them to associate that positive passion with the feelings of being in class. It can also be a great way for class members and the instructor to get to know one another better. When you know what is really important to a student, then you are on your way to establishing a good relationship.

4. I know your name

Greet each student by name as they enter or leave your class. Shake each student's hand or give them a "high-five."

When each student is called and recognized by name, it makes them feel important. We find it's a great way to

send the message that your students are important to you and that you care about them as individuals.

5. Have I got something for you!

Give your students a personal token or gift. It can be an inspirational quote, or an object that reminds them of a concept they've been learning.

This can be a very simple and symbolic way to remind each student that you value and care about them. It can also be a great way to reinforce a concept that you have taught them or would like to emphasize.

6. Random acts of kindness

Perform a random act of service or appreciation for a student. Include a note encouraging them to pay it forward.

This can be an excellent way to change a student's negative attitude towards the class and can help create a more caring and nurturing environment. One of the greatest ways to increase self-esteem is to serve or express appreciation to another person. This is true whether they are the recipient or the giver of the service.

7. This is a hallmark moment

At some time during the semester, give each student a positive personal note. It could be mailed home or hand-delivered to them.

This is one of the best ways outside of class to send a sincere message that you care for a student and believe in them. Remember, a student doesn't really care how much you know until they know how much you care.

8. Ask them

Allow students to express their interests and ideas. Ask them questions.

Ask what they like best about school. Ask them about their favorite teachers in the past and why they liked them. Asking questions gives you an opportunity to see ways that you can improve as their teacher. When people are given the chance to express their opinions, they feel their ideas and thoughts are valued.

9. You're a leader

Give students the opportunity to lead in different situations during the class.

When you give someone a responsibility, they will usually rise to the occasion. At-risk youth are used to being put down. Asking them to lead can be an effective way to build up an individual. It puts them in a positive light in front of other students. It also gives you an opportunity to show confidence and trust in them.

10. You're all A and B students

Make a comment like, "All I see in this class are A and B students." Then treat them accordingly unless they prove otherwise.

This is a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy. Often, when we let students know our expectations and treat them accordingly, they will rise to the occasion. Some students have been negatively labeled so frequently that they feel like they are already failing even before the semester begins. It can be refreshing to a student to be labeled in a positive way.

11. You are the teacher and I am the student

Create opportunities for the student to become the expert. Give them an assignment where they become to be the instructor, teaching you and the other students in the class.

This is a great way to help students leave their comfort zone, improve social skills, and build leadership skills and self-confidence. Teaching a difficult concept can be one of the best ways to learn and retain that information.

12. You give the grade

Allow students an opportunity to grade themselves. You may want to tell them what criteria you would use for grading them, but ultimately let them decide.

Let them grade their own assignment or project. This sends a message to students that you trust them and value their judgment. We have found that when we do this, often students will be fairer in their judgment than if you were grading them yourself.

13. You make the call

Give students options and allow them to choose. For example, give them several choices on a project or assignment.

Students are used to being told what to do. When you give them the freedom to choose their assignment, this empowers them and motivates them to put forth a greater effort.

14. You're the boss; I work for you

Tell your students that this school was built for them. That makes them the boss.

It's ironic that you are always grading them, when the students are the real bosses here. Outline the criteria for your students to earn an A grade in your class, and then ask them how you can earn an A grade as their teacher. Ask them to grade your work at different times during the semester.

15. Come together

Set up a class competition against another class. Instead of competing against each other, this allows your students to work together with a common goal. Offer a reward for the winning class.

This can be a great way to get students to work together, support each other, and create class unity. There seems to be more energy, focus, and purpose when students are sharing a goal. Even a very simple reward in this case can serve as a

great motivator.

16. Getting to know you

Take a few minutes to begin class by spotlighting a member of the class.

You may want to gather information by having students fill out a questionnaire. Have a class member read about the spotlighted student, and ask the class to try and guess who it is. This is another great way for students to feel comfortable in the classroom environment and feel like they are a part of the group.

17. My class is your class

Create a student-friendly environment. Make your classroom reflect the feeling that you are interested in your students and care about them.

Research suggests that if you create a warm and caring classroom environment, attendance and student performance will increase. Some suggestions include:

- Create a photo board with pictures taken of the class throughout the term.
- Have games and puzzles for students to experiment with while waiting for class to start.
- Add some color or artwork to your room.
- Create a suggestion box for ways to make the classroom better.

18. Our class against the world

“Let’s prove them wrong.” Discuss what others think are limits to what your students can achieve. Set a class goal to overcome those limits.

For example: “The principal says that we’ve never had this class get all Bs or higher,” or, “We’ve never had a class get 100% attendance.” Encourage students to work together as a class to prove the naysayers wrong. Then have a celebration when they do!

19. Give something back

Host a class service project. As their teacher, take this opportunity to work closely alongside your students. The project should be focused on supporting and building up the community. For example, you could gather clothes for the homeless, participate in a food drive

or blood drive, plant trees, pick up litter, etc.

When students learn to turn outward in service, they often show positive benefits including less depression, increased gratitude, greater self-esteem, and improved motivation. In working together on a service activity, you are, in a sense, teaching your students about surrendering the one-up relationship with others.

20. Celebrate success!

Take opportunities to draw special attention to students’ successes. Recognize students for individual success or a group effort. Bring treats, a cake, have a party, let them listen to music, or have some other celebratory reward. Congratulate them!

Celebration can be a key to keeping students and groups motivated and focused on a common goal. We have seen youth put forth an incredible effort for even a simple reward (such as a piece of candy). It can also add to the fun and enjoyment that students feel about class, which enhances learning and improves attendance.

21. Dress it up

Dress up for class on a special occasion or to highlight a particular lesson. Wear a tuxedo, a costume, a suit, a dress, or some formal or different attire that shows that this class is important and worth the extra effort on your part. This can also be a great way to add variety to lessons and help to keep your students’ attention.

22. You’ve got the blues

Tell the class you realize that life can be challenging. Because of that, you will give them a number (perhaps 1–3) of “Blue Cards” that they can cash in at any time. They can use a blue card to drop an assignment or a quiz, take extra time on a test, get an extension on the deadline for a large assignment, etc.

Blue cards are a great way to show that you have empathy for the challenges your students face at school, at home, and with their peers. It shows them that you understand and care about their personal lives. It allows you to put their interests first.