

Creating and Upholding Classroom Culture

Courage to Risk
January 24, 2025
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Introduction: Critical Components of Classroom Culture

Boundaries and expectations can be difficult to set and maintain, especially when also balancing the joy and fun we aim to bring to teaching. However, they are the key to building a successful community where accomplishments, challenges, self-growth, and deep learning can be fostered.

**What's a question you really want answered
by coming to this session?**

My goal for us 😊

My hope is that after we have this discussion, you feel more comfortable and equipped to lead with joy and fun while also feeling better able to implement and uphold expectations and boundaries.

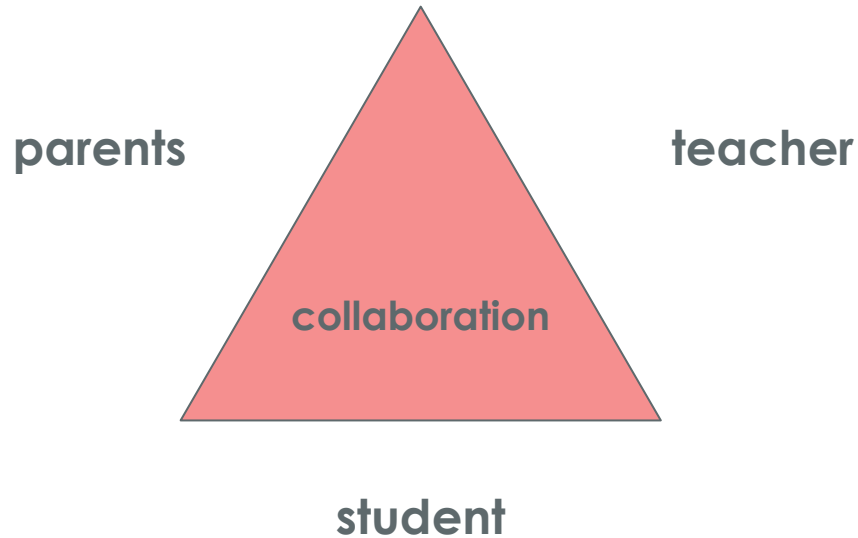
I firmly believe that one cannot happen without the other, and it starts with setting the tone at the beginning of each school year in our sacred classroom spaces and families.

boundaries	joy
expectations	fun
accomplishments	community
deep learning (academic & social)	challenges
balance	self-growth

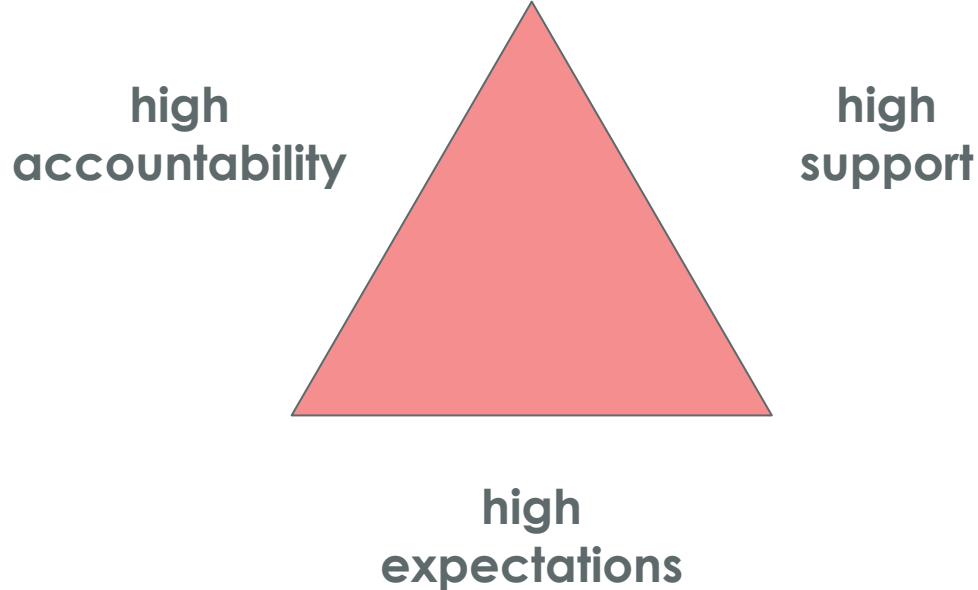
What about those words grabbed your attention and brought you here today?

Denver Academy's Triangles of Success

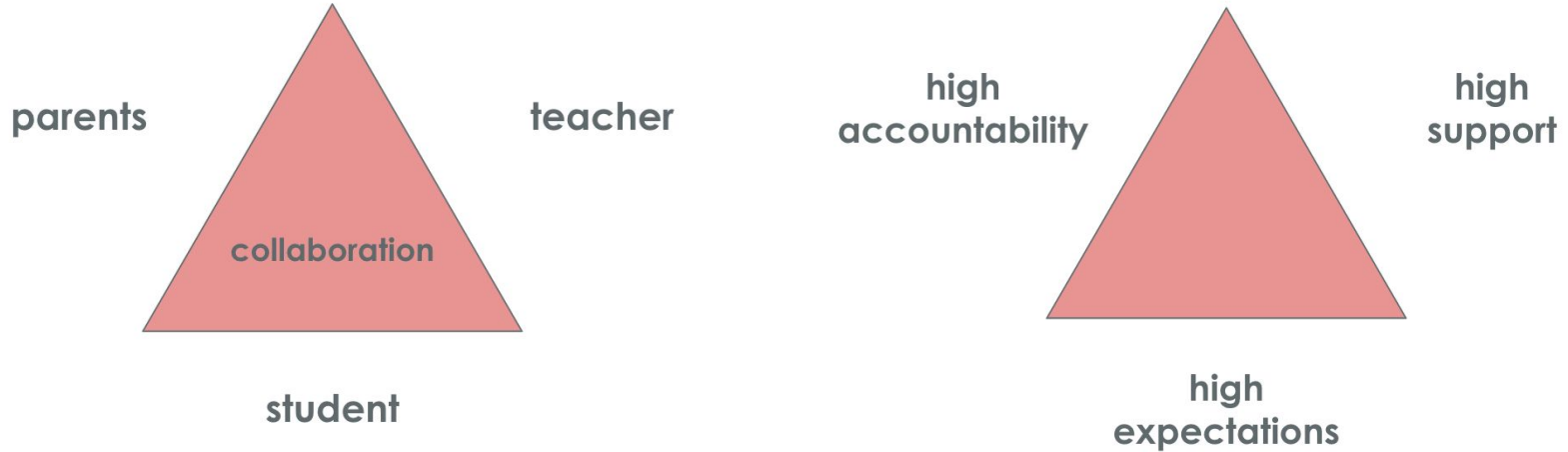
Partnership Model



Denver Academy's Triangles of Success



Denver Academy's Triangles of Success



How do these relate to relationships you build as a teacher?

Leading with relationships

Why is it important to foster relationships both individually and as a whole group to sustain expectations and positive group dynamics?

“Positive student relationships are fundamental to success. When students feel supported, they’re more likely to engage in learning and have better academic outcomes. Plus, when students have positive interactions with teachers, they have fewer behavioral problems.”
(Kaufman - Understood.org)

Types of Relationships

Teacher-Student

Student-Teacher

Student-Student

Family-Teacher

Teacher-Family

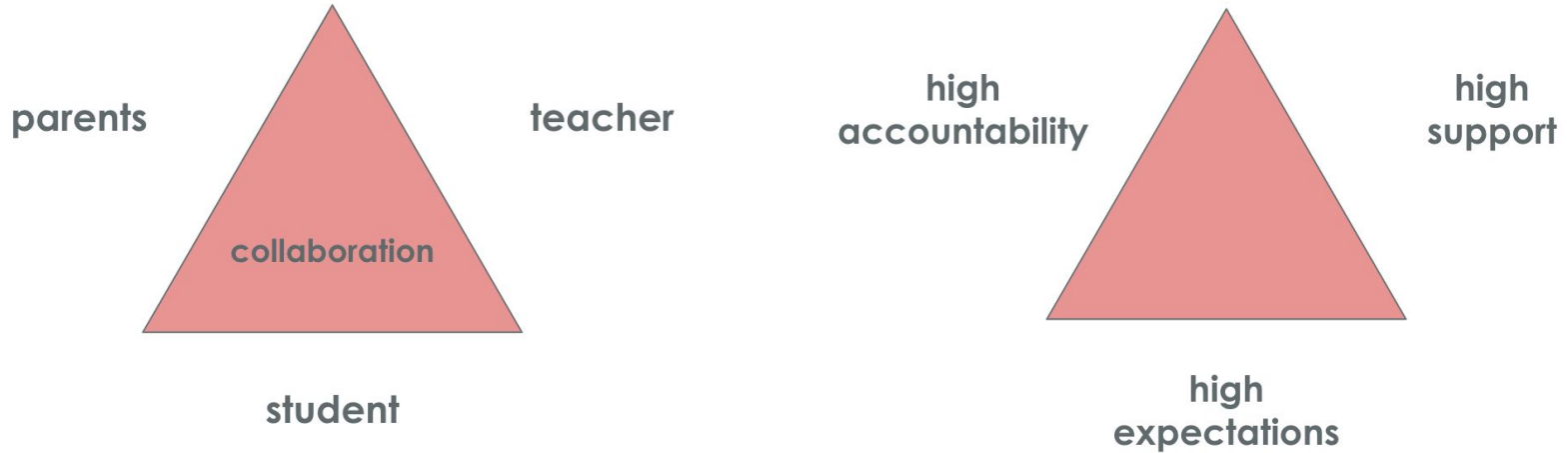
** Ideally, these are symbiotic relationships where both parties are learning, growing, and benefiting from what each other brings to the table. **

Reflection

Which of those types of relationships is challenging for you?

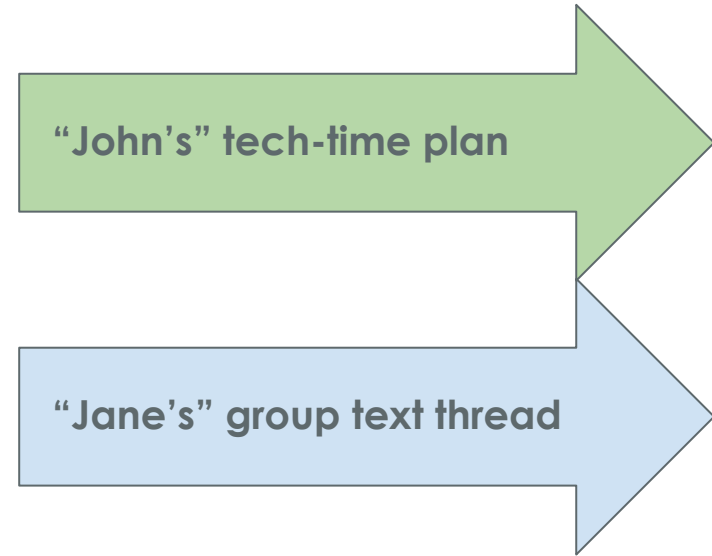
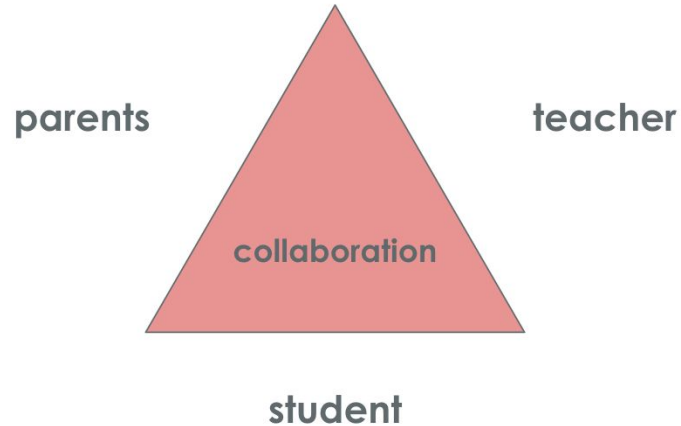
What is one specific thing you can do to enhance that relationship?

Denver Academy's Triangles of Success

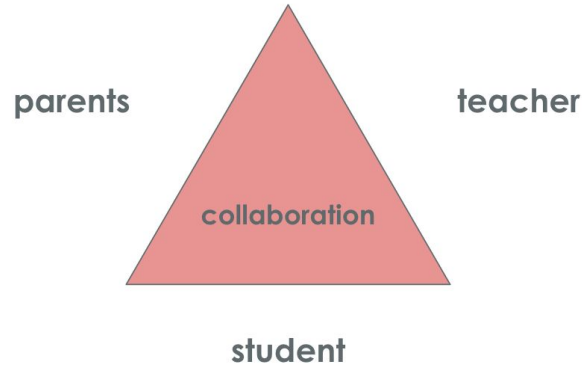


Let's go back to these two models in terms of in the classroom and outside the classroom with students and their families.

Examples:

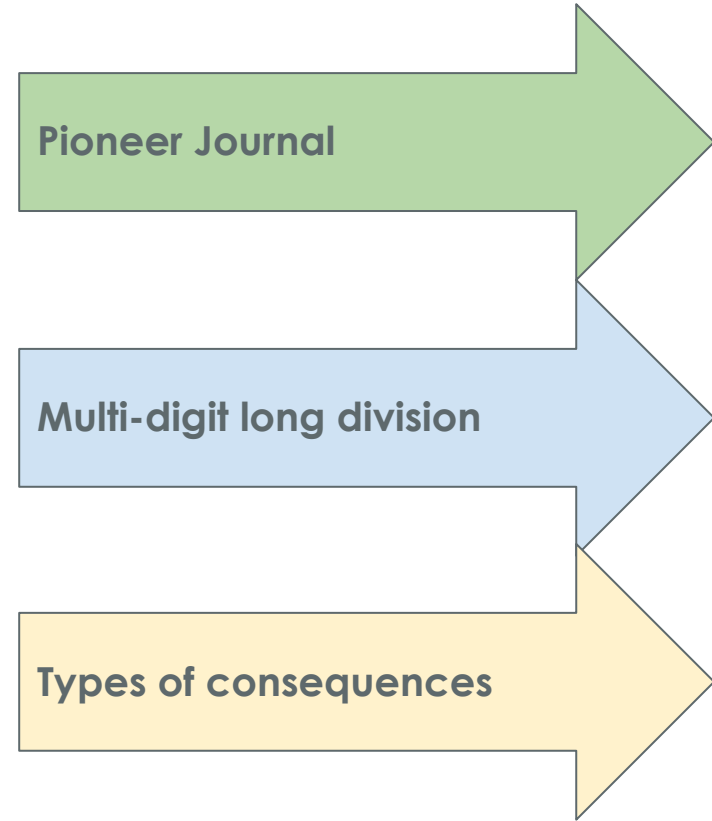
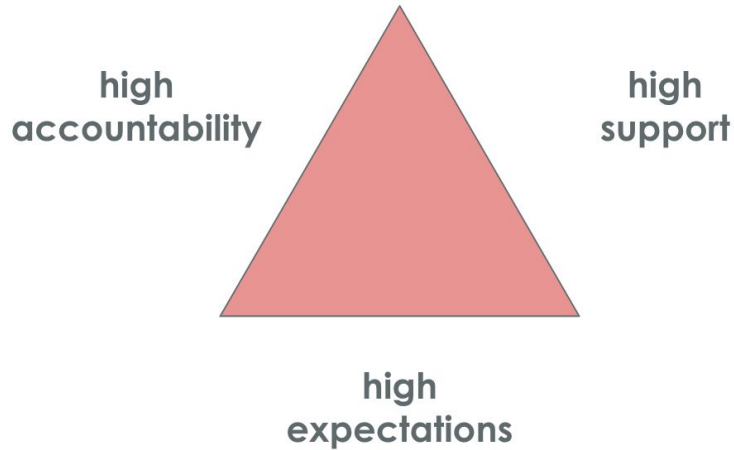


Reflection time:

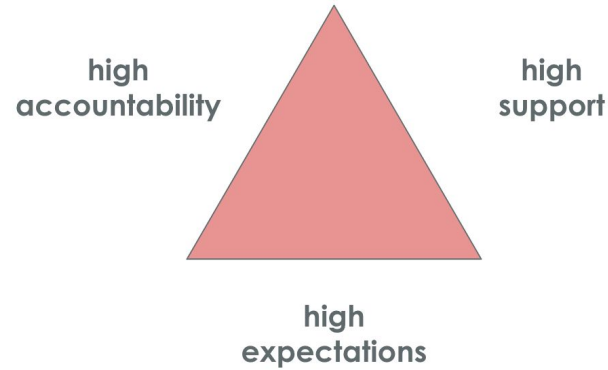


- In what areas do you already do some of the parent-teacher-student collaboration?
- Where or how can you grow in your classroom management related to this?
- Do you “set the tone of the year” early on with the role that each player on the team has, or could one of the sides of the triangle be bolstered more?

Examples:



Reflection time:



- Do you feel you sustain high accountability, high support, and high expectations?
- Are there ways this can be strengthened to help uphold to classroom and building-wide norms you create with your students?
- Who can you lean on to get more support in doing so in your educational setting?

Classroom Set Up and Environment

Reflection time:

- My bubble, your bubble, peers' bubbles
- How is your classroom set up to help your students be successful with physical boundaries?
- What are the expectations around “stuff” in your classroom?
 - Fidgets, supplies, what's kept at desks, etc.

Shared Community Norms / Contracts



Establishing building or division-wide norms that all students are expected to follow in addition to those in your specific classrooms.

Helps to set the tone of the community culture you're aiming for.

Let's talk classroom contracts:

- What are the pros and cons of of contracts?

Contracts continued...

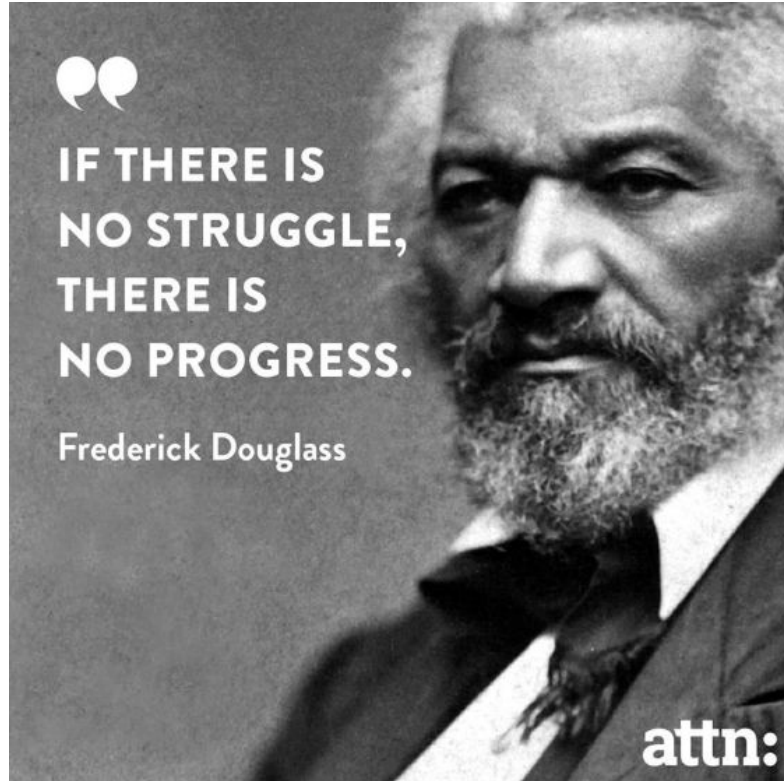
- Something you can come up with as a classroom group in a discussion or supply them with to sign and agree to uphold. Discuss with students why this is important and what their roles can be.
- Offers great opportunities for both teachers and peers to hold students accountable and set clear expectations/boundaries about classroom behavior and norms.

Think, pair, share:

What are some areas of management where you feel you're successful?

What are some areas where you feel you want to improve?

Are there any share outs?



**IF THERE IS
NO STRUGGLE,
THERE IS
NO PROGRESS.**

Frederick Douglass

attn:

Challenge & Discomfort

“These words represented something deeper. In this room, “struggle” emerged as something expected, fruitful, worthy of celebration—a kind of community ethos that seemed to fuel the interaction and learning therein.”

Lindsey Lynch, RC Consulting Teacher and Educational Consultant from the Responsive Classroom website article

Property of Olivia Jennings, 2025

“At their core, great teachers hope to instill skills and strategies that will empower students to thrive in their schooling (and life). We impart soliloquies about the importance of “grit” and the power of “growth mindsets,” in the hopes that these keys for lifelong learning will manifest in our students. In this classroom, I didn’t hear these words or see them posted on walls. What I saw was gritty learners embracing challenge. What I heard was growth-oriented interactions among 8- and 9-year-olds who were thoughtfully attuned to each other and their work.”

Lindsey Lynch, RC Consulting Teacher and Educational Consultant from the Responsive Classroom website

“Often more than words, our actions have the power to create conditions where grit and growth mindsets take root. Our actions have the power to facilitate learning environments which guide students’ developmentally appropriate practice and the incremental mastery of complex competencies that lifelong learners espouse, such as assertiveness, responsibility, and perseverance.”

Lindsey Lynch, RC Consulting Teacher and Educational Consultant from the Responsive Classroom website article

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Reflection

How do you model challenge and discomfort for your students, whether it be with academic or social difficulties or misunderstandings?

How does this relate to creating and maintaining a solid classroom culture and community?

Are there any quotes or words you live by to help set your tone in each school year? Do you share these with your students to help inspire them?

"Fitting in"

is becoming who you think you need to be in order to be accepted.

Belonging

is being your authentic self and knowing that no matter what happens, you belong to you.

Brene Brown

Social-emotional learning & Personhood

- Allowing students to bring their authentic selves to the classroom each day
- Modeling and learning through successful and failed peer-peer and teacher-student interactions
- Perspective-taking and working their way through conflict, discomfort, or misunderstanding each other

Exit-tickets

What are 3 takeaways from today that you could use on Monday in your own classroom or educational setting?

Are you having fun with your students, and are there things you can implement from this discussion to improve the boundaries, joy, and fun in your classroom, not only for your students but for yourself, too!?

Parking lot questions:

Let's address some of these if we have the time.

References

- Kaufman, T. (n.d.). *Building positive relationships with students: What brain science says*. Understood.
<https://www.understood.org/en/articles/brain-science-says-4-reasons-to-build-positive-relationships-with-students>
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<https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/challenge-is-a-part-of-learning/>