

Care Out Loud Strategies

Intentionally greet each student when they arrive: This can be as simple as greeting students with a smile and saying, “Hi Jamar, I am so glad to see you today.” If you can be the bus loop or the front door to welcome students as they arrive at school, do it! If you are the bus driver, you are setting the tone for the day! This serves more than one purpose. The students feel valued when we greet them by name, and we notice that we feel more connected all day long.

Say an individual goodbye as students leave: Taking the time to end class with a positive exchange can make all the difference. The first and last things we hear stick with us the longest. Take advantage of this by using this time to remind students you care about them. Student pick up is a great time to build relationships with students and their families. Get out there and say goodbye.

Get to know students using writing or interviewing: Many teachers have students write a letter introducing themselves to the teacher, or some version of this at the start of the year. With younger students, using interviews, surveys, or drawings can also be effective ways to get to know your students right away. Consider the following writing or interview prompts:

- What is something you would like me to know about you?
- Tell me about the people you live with.
- What helps you learn best?
- What are you good at? What’s hard for you?

Keep the conversation going: When we ask students to write to us, we write back! This is the first opportunity to provide personalized feedback on what makes them awesome. Make as many connections as you can to what they shared about themselves. For example, “It is so cool that you like to swim; I have always loved to be in the water.” You might want to develop a system for keeping track of these tidbits so you can rely on them later when you need to break the ice!



Provide meaningful praise on their work and their progress: Sharing with them how impressed you are of their growth and accomplishments will fill students with pride. This will also make it more likely they'll keep it up.

Celebrate their birthdays- no matter how old they are: We are never too old to appreciate being wished a happy birthday! Before the year starts, make sure each student's birthday is calendared, either publicly or on the teacher calendar, and establish a birthday tradition. In the classroom, maybe the student gets a small prize and the class sings happy birthday. Maybe the birthday student selects part of the lesson for that day. Maybe you all get a small treat. At the school level, share birthdays over the loudspeaker, have a monthly birthday lunch bunch, or send a positive note home to the birthday student's family. If you have a digital reader board, add birthday students to the running announcements. Whatever it is, the key piece is to acknowledge their special day, and let them know we are glad they were born.

Give them choice and ownership in their education: Wherever we can provide students choice, we should. Are there different ways to demonstrate their learning for a particular standard? Could there be a vote on an important decision for the class or school? What if the class works together to establish classroom agreements? How could a school administrator or teacher use classroom circles to gather information about an important decision? This is their education, and we want them to know it belongs to them.

Ask for feedback and use it: When we ask students for feedback, it lets them know we care what they think because we honor and respect them. Get feedback early and often, and share with them how you will use it. That means you need the information before the school year ends!