

# Building Effective Relationships

Building trusting relationships with students, parents, and other stakeholders is critical for student growth and creating a safe environment for communication and interaction in blended and online learning. A successful relationship can be viewed as a two-way street that connects both teachers' and stakeholders' input, enables every group to be heard and makes everyone feel valued and supported. To build strong relationships, it is necessary to promote genuine interactions by using a friendly tone, addressing questions directly, and communicating constantly and consistently.

1. Why are relationships essential to your blended and online teaching?
2. What characteristics define successful relationships in blended and online teaching?
3. How can I build and maintain effective relationships in blended and online teaching?



to Consider

Strong partnerships between teachers and students and families contribute to student development, well-being, and academic growth. Establishing and maintaining positive connections supports student social-emotional well-being, impacts student academic growth, and can make family interactions more accessible and effective.

Knowing and understanding students is an essential factor in building warm and trusting teacher-student relationships. Consider using student surveys to learn their interests, hobbies, and communication preferences. Although online learning lacks in-person face-to-face interaction, teachers can intentionally incorporate dedicated social interaction for the purpose of building student social-emotional connections such as having brief one-on-one video conferencing sessions with each student. Students need to feel that teachers are "there" for them and really care about them and not just their academic success. In blended learning environments utilize face-to-face introductions to set class expectations and align online environment interactions to support teacher-student and student-student relationships.

Set rules and boundaries to minimize student misbehavior and organize virtual learning activities. Check in with students at different points of a semester to see if they have any concerns to build and maintain effective and positive relationships. Use words and actions to show that you care about students with diverse backgrounds to create safe and inclusive online environments. Incorporate students' cultural backgrounds into blended and online instruction as a way to show that all students belong and are accepted.

To build positive relationships with families, teachers must understand the diverse cultural background and family context to meet parents' language and relational needs. Consider getting to know families by creating a family survey to gather information about what is needed to help support their children at home. Set up a calendar to organize virtual teacher-family meetings and maintain frequent and consistent communication with families to enhance teacher-family relationships. If possible, provide written and verbal communication in families' native languages. Clear, frequent, and consistent communication will help establish and support positive teacher-family relationships. Cultivating and supporting relationships with families has become highly dependent on technology, and it is important to remain flexible in communication efforts, as some families may not have reliable internet connectivity. Ultimately, to deepen and strengthen teacher-student and teacher-family relationships, utilize good listening and communication skills, demonstrate empathy, and create a safe space for interaction to support trust and relationship growth.

## KEY Elements