



Standards: Rachael Mustill, AP

Working in schools means that children's welfare is absolutely at the heart of what we do each day, in every lesson, and indeed in all interactions that we have with our students. We all see students that struggle for different reasons, and we are all in the privileged position to be able to help these students, not only with their progress and attainment but in how they develop as young people, members of our community and responsible peers. Having good relationships has never been more important and a calm and friendly approach with students can encourage even the trickiest to respond well to what we are trying to teach them, both in and outside the classroom. By showing children respect and kindness, they are more likely to mirror these qualities and be positive in their interactions and learning. Staff that can enjoy humour with students and build positive relationships are likely to be rewarded with successful outcomes for all. In this edition of the T and L Link, colleagues have highlighted varied examples of ways to try to build relationships with students, and I am sure we can all learn from each other and try different suggestions with students as we continue to improve our skills in this key area.

Offering high standards in our relationship building

The **Ely Experts framework** identifies the skill of **relationship-building** as a key element of the Standards strand. We are so strong in this area at Ely that it's hard to choose where to start to showcase all the things we do. Here are just four **examples of colleague practice**, linked to the WALKTHRUS.

Respect, Care and Kindness *Interactions with students and colleagues demonstrate mutual respect, care and kindness*

Ely College is a trauma-informed school which recognises the experiences that students have influence their behaviours in school. Teachers are expected to build relationships with students and where behaviours do not meet expectations, initial approaches of de-escalation, re-focusing and changing seats of the student should be applied before sanctions are issued.

Teachers must seek to manage student behaviour through calm and considered responses, avoiding activities that would escalate behaviour issues further.

Framing interactions positively: Louis Jinkerson, Science

Positive framing helps **improve participation** and encourages students to develop their answers. I use whole class positive framing such as: "I can see lots of you have started the task". This encourages everyone, rather than naming students, which could be humiliating. I also use positive framing for individual feedback: "I really like your idea of... can we now try and include a few more keywords?". This helps keep **everyone on task**, improving their work. It can be particularly successful with **LPA students**, and those who find focusing for longer periods more challenging.



Using least intrusive intervention: Emily Hill, Geography CL

Using physical proximity can be really powerful with this. I stand close to students who are making poor choices, or I sometimes crouch down, offering **gentle reminders** about expectations. I focus on checking that **lack of understanding** around the learning is not the issue. If this doesn't work, I might ask the student to speak with me away from the group, but I make this request **neutral**, not behaviour focused: 'Felix, can I have a quick word?' This helps **reduce conflict** in the room.



Making kindness visible: Pauline Sansom-Roberts, PE CL

When I pair up students for PE, I sometimes find this can cause some grumbles. Students can be a bit vocal if they **object to a partner**, which is unfortunate all round. I find it can be really helpful to **audibly praise students** on occasions when they make a clear effort to welcome an unfamiliar partner and 'give it a go'. This sets a **teamwork tone** and increases tolerance, as well as setting a group norm of **courtesy and kindness**. Moving forward, I may start to offer House Points for behaviour like this.



Modelling responses to mistakes: Sarah Denney, Maths

I believe in the **power of making mistakes**. Often, I will include a deliberate mistake in my calculations (occasionally this happens organically!). When students spot the error, I **calmly encourage the discourse** that follows, either verbally or on mini whiteboards, curious to see how students explain their reasoning. This creates a **low-risk environment** for unpicking misconceptions, identifying relevant skills and exploring alternative methods. I want students to become **critical consumers of their own learning**.

The holistic outcomes of **building resilience**, raising **self-confidence** and developing **oracy** skills around maths are **invaluable**.



REMEMBER!

You can access further details of the WALKTHRUS through our Meridian Learning provision.

<https://walkthrus.co.uk/>
Username: walkthrus@meridiantrust.co.uk
Password: M3ridianL3arning@

Helping students manage perfectionism

A recent resource shared in the staff bulletin highlighted the **dangers of perfectionism** in students, exploring habits such as obsessing over small mistakes and having unrealistic personal standards. Both can lead to self-blame and low self-esteem. Of course, we want our pupils to have **high standards**, but we don't want their mental health to suffer in the process. How can we help them **strike a balance**? Here are some ideas from core subject colleagues.

Charlotte Russell, English

Students can sometimes think they need to **write down literally everything** they know to do well – they aren't satisfied with anything less than this. I try to support with this feeling by encouraging them to jot down everything they can think of in rough and then cutting ideas down and refining them into a more streamlined approach. Using a **step-by-step** essay method can also really help make the task seem more manageable because it helps students feel success at each stage. This seems to interrupt the need for holistic perfection. I also work with students who tend towards perfectionism by working on **exam timings**, encouraging them to move on quickly through the paper rather than trying to get everything spot on. Students can benefit from practising this during revision by **time blocking**.

Isobel Wilson, Science

Year 11 students who struggle with perfectionism can have a habit of writing **very long answers** rather than focusing on the important bits. This can waste time in exams, so I use the **mark schemes** regularly to demonstrate exactly what is needed and encourage students to cut down where possible.

I find that my Year 9s over-focus on perfect presentation at times, deprioritising actual work. To mitigate this, I ask them to start question work before even writing the title, which helps a lot. Over time, this can support them to seeing the **bigger picture** with their learning rather than the perfect underlining etc.

Tania Rahman, Maths

In Maths, students can sometimes really **struggle to get started**, probably because of a fear of failure. This may be because they become overly focused on the idea of a totally correct answer at the end of their task. I take time to explain that the working out of each question is a key part of success, meaning that a **logical calculation in careful steps** is just as important as the right answer, and will be rewarded by examiners.

Students can **also avoid questions** which require longer answers, particularly if they struggle with the subject. The empty page seems to really put them off. Again, I encourage a **'step-by-step'** approach, using prompt questions.



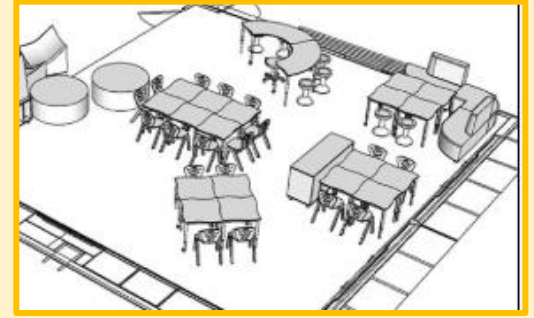
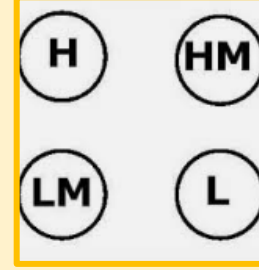
Using different methods of seating and grouping to support achievement

Kagan Seating: Heather Clark-Hope, English CL

I first came across Kagan seating in a previous school, which had embedded the practice across the curriculum, much as we embed oracy here. It offers a model for **mixed-ability grouping**, with students with varied pictures sitting in arrangements which support **flexible collaboration**. You can see a typical **Kagan table set up** and classroom layout here:

I have found this technique can work really well across all year groups. It provides immediate opportunities for HPA students to **coach** peers across the table, or for 'shoulder partners' with similar skills to work together. It really opens up **oracy options** too.

There are some **challenges** too, particularly with shared room spaces. Kagan seating feels very different from traditional front-facing rows and may not suit everyone on all occasions. Students need to be on-boarded too, with **expectations clearly understood**, and with plenty of time to get used to facing each other. Where it works though, this seating technique can be **very powerful**.



Friendship groups and making changes: Harmony Hennessy, PE

With one of my groups, I find there are significant **oracy advantages** to allowing students to sit with their friends. This **transforms** how much they are willing to use their voices and interact. However, my Year 11s are all good friends with each other and tend to socialise readily, so I take a **different approach**, changing the seating plan regularly to ensure a good standard of engagement.

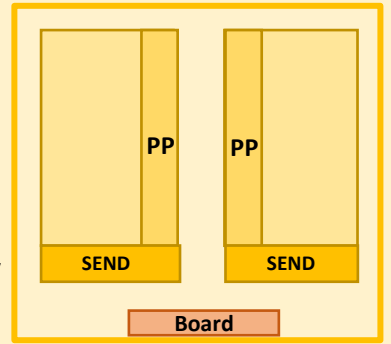
Line of vision and stakeholder collaboration: Sam Manning, Science

I start by placing key students into seats which are in **my natural line of vision** and which are **easily physically accessible** for me too. This means I automatically check progress and learning with these students throughout each lesson and can **adapt my practice accordingly**. I encourage students to offer their ideas on seating too: we try **things out together** and evaluate what works best for the whole group – it's an **open dialogue**.

Intentional seating for key students: David Burke, Geography

I have front-facing rows with a central aisle in my room and lay out my seating plans to **capitalise on the proximity** opportunities of this set up. I use the Provision Map to identify student with SEND needs and usually place them in **horizontally the front row**, closest to me and the board. I then place students with PP coding **vertically**, on both sides of my central aisle.

This arrangement means that the students in most need in the room are also the **most easily accessible for support**. Of course, there are natural variations for pastoral issues etc, but generally this strategy works really well.



Tutor Tactics: Supporting students with PLEDGES

New section!!

Welcome to a regular new feature of our Link!

We realised we needed a place to **showcase all the excellent tutorial work** which is going on round college, somewhere to **capture great ideas** and **inspire practice**.

Please let us know about anything you are doing with your form group which you would like to share with colleagues.

Nicole Deegan, Franklin House tutor

I regularly offer students the chance to **lead short MFL vocab learning** games to achieve their Silver Leadership or Participation PLEDGE. Once a class has practised a quiz activity with me, I **invite volunteers** to host the next round, with students acting as the 'teacher'. This is **very popular** with KS3 students, including those who tend to be less keen in lessons – they enjoy the chance to **take ownership of the learning**.

Alex Smith, Etheldreda House Asst ST

In a recent House Council meeting, we decided to start an **Etheldreda PLEDGES Support Group** with the initial aim of making sure there is no Etheldreda student who does not have their Bronze PLEDGE award.

We are currently focusing on our year 7 cohort and have been meeting on Friday mornings to **share ideas and support** those who are close to achieving their Bronze. Older students have also been in attendance to offer that support, and this has been contributing to their **Silver and Gold leadership sections**.

So far, it's been a **very positive experience** for our students as they get to not only share ideas but also to speak about their experiences of the PLEDGES awards overall.

Kaitlin Thornton, Scott House tutor

I discuss PLEDGES every week with my form and **don't wait for them to come to me** with ideas: we work out specific targets. I encourage students to **think broadly** about activities they do outside school which could be included in their awards. For example, with one student, I created a **simple bespoke tracking booklet** so she could record help she was offering at home with a baby sibling, to attain her Service PLEDGE.

New ideas for PLEDGES

SILVER SUGGESTIONS

This academic year the student council have produced a **'Silver Suggestions'** document. This aims to provide tangible and **achievable additional Silver PLEDGES** activities for students. The document can be found here: [PLEDGES](#)

Sarah Goodey, VP



NEXT TIME...

Join in too!

Showcase **your professional practice** and contribute to the vibrant T and L culture around college!

The next edition will focus on Knowledge. We need YOUR EXPERT ANSWERS to these questions:

How do you support students to learn **key vocabulary**?

Which CPD **recommendations** have you tried out recently?

How do you address **key misconceptions** in your subject?

How do you identify when to **withdraw scaffolds**?

Keen to contribute? Good!

Contact **Sam Rasmussen** or **Charity Novick** with ideas, articles, tips, reviews etc.

HAVE YOUR SAY