

Summarized from

Owusu-Ansah, A., & Kyei-Blankson, L. (2016). Going Back to the Basics: Demonstrating Care, Connectedness, and a Pedagogy of Relationship in Education. *World Journal of Education*, 6(3), 1-9.

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According to Meyer (2009), caring or developing a rapport with students affects attitudes toward the class, students' academic behavior, and the extent of their learning; Expressing care, communicating respect, behaving sensitively, and remaining kind and engaged with students affects the broader learning community. Enacting care and connectedness are effective characteristics that continually help promote academic achievement, positive attitudes, motivation, and learning. Teachers need to show a genuine interest in their students as they do with their subject matter. They need to be open, available, and responsive to students. They need to show respect and concern for their students, see them as individuals and not just learners, and welcome interaction with them.

Strategies for improving teacher care and connectedness as suggested by authors such as Hawk and Lyons (2008) and Meyer (2009) include the following:

1. Get to know the students as individuals through the administration of a survey as a "first day of class" activity. It is important that students' goals and expectations be assessed. Teachers need to know their students and let their students get to know them.

2. Recognize that students are individuals who have diverse learning styles and backgrounds. As much as possible, a variety of teaching approaches, activities, and assignments need to be applied.

3. Invite student input in class and of the need to be aware and responsive to the classroom climate.

4. Provide timely, specific, and constructive feedback on activities, assessments, and assignments. Students need to know as early as possible how they are progressing in class and what they need to change in order to be successful in class.

5. Provide a safe, supportive, and fair learning environment where students are encouraged to share their ideas and ask questions. Students need to be able to express themselves in the form of questions or need to respond to questions without the fear of being wrong. Cloninger (2008) challenged instructors to put themselves in the mind and experiences of their students as a demonstration of care.

6. Demonstrate clarity when it comes to classroom behavioral and performance expectations. Students need to be clear on the class expectations. Each learning objective and activity must come with a rationale. There is a need to provide students with directions and

examples for assignments using rubrics and samples of past and exemplary work. Also, there is the need to align the activities, assessments, and assignments with the class outcomes, and to demonstrate how class activities will help build the necessary and required career skills later in life. Teachers need to be empathetic, teach while modeling caring, showing concern, and developing positive connections with students. **Teachers should allow their students to know them. They need to be able to reveal aspects about themselves that allow students to see them as real people.**

Cloninger (2008) suggested that, “love creates a socio-cognitive context in which knowledge is imbued with different shades of understanding” (p. 208). Caring relationships and meaningful academic experiences promote a sense of community associated with academic and personal benefits. Caring teachers will continue to hold the key to student success.