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Meet and Greet

A Point to Ponder



“When I retire, I want to be a Wal-Mart greeter.” We know you’ve heard it before. You may have even said it! But have you ever really analyzed why so many teachers continue to say this? We have.

Stores like Wal-Mart actually hire people to pretend to be happy to see you, a stranger, as you enter the store. In fact, these people possess the jobs that many teachers say they want to have when they retire. The reason so many teachers say they want to retire and be a Wal-Mart greeter is twofold: (1) The Wal-Mart greeter looks happy. (2) The Wal-Mart greeter looks stress-free! Who wouldn’t want a job where he felt happy and stress-free?

Now consider *why* Wal-Mart pays people to greet its customers. Wal-Mart does this because of the simple fact that **happy customers who feel wanted and welcome are more likely to buy what is being sold and will happily return to buy even more.** Period. This is why you are greeted when you walk into a restaurant, when you step onto an airplane, and when you enter any other establishment that puts concerted thought into making its customers feel happy and welcome.

So wouldn’t this same concept work with students? And shouldn’t we be putting concerted thought into making our students (customers) feel happy and welcome every time they enter our classrooms? Don’t we want them to want to “buy” what we are “selling”? Don’t we want them to **want** to come back? The answers to those questions are *yes, yes, yes, and yes!*

Classroom Solution/Strategy



So let's bring this simple strategy into the classroom. In our observations of teachers, we have found that most teachers claim that they greet their students every day. The fact is that some do, and others don't. So let's first establish what greeting does *not* mean. Some teachers stand at their classroom doors and, as the students arrive, say things like, "Let's go. Your work is on the board. Get busy as soon as you get into the room. Hurry. Let's get moving. The bell is about to ring." This, our fellow teachers, is *not* greeting. Rather, it is the equivalent of saying, "Welcome to my torture chamber!" Any student who is rushed into the classroom in this oh-so-unwelcoming manner will hardly feel like you want him in your classroom! Students not feeling wanted? That is a recipe for misbehavior, and class has not even begun! But the foundation has been laid and the little rascals are scheming.

Now, let's look at what greeting *does* mean. The very best teachers, the ones who always seem to have the fewest behavior problems, know the simple strategy that stores such as Wal-Mart know: If the teacher (greeter) looks happy to see his or her students (customers) every day and can actually make the students feel wanted and valued in the classroom, then the students are much more likely to "buy" what the teacher is "selling" and are more apt to want to return to that particular class the next day and the day after!

So here's a simple way to greet your students every day. Don't reinvent the wheel. Just do what the most successful teachers do. Simply stand at your classroom door, every day, every class period, and say things like, "Hello. How are you? Thank you for coming to class. Nice outfit. I love your new haircut. Jason, I'm so happy you're back today. I missed you yesterday!" Okay, so you prayed last night that Jason would *never* come back, but the important thing is that Jason does not know that! He believes that you are happy to see him, and therefore he will be more likely to behave.

The truth is that students are less likely to misbehave in a classroom where they feel wanted and valued. To think that the simple act of "greeting" someone can solve so many problems! It can. The fact is that **if you consistently greet your students every day, then you will soon decrease your discipline problems drastically.** Anyone who does not believe this fact is not greeting students every day. Now, we do want to warn you that if you tend to be a little negative with your students and do not typically greet them every day with a smile on your face, this new approach will confuse your students at first. It will take more than one day of greeting your students to convince them that you are a "changed" person. But stick with it! The results will be worth it.

Is it possible that your “greeting” may be a little phony? Probably. Are you *really* that happy to see every student every day? Possibly not. But remember, we were hired to be actors and actresses! Oh, and just so you know, the Wal-Mart greeter is probably not overly happy to see you either! The flight attendant is possibly tired and hoping for a fairly empty flight. But here you are, yet another passenger! However, *you* should never know that that greeting was possibly a little overexuberant. You deserve to feel welcome and wanted and valued. Make your students feel the same way—every day! Even if you’re faking it just a little, you will soon find that the more you “fake it,” the more you will actually begin to feel happier, and thus your greetings will become more genuine. What a bonus!

Oh, and what more does it cost to tell them good-bye as they leave your room each day? If they arrive and leave on a happy note, better behavior you will promote!

Bottom Line



If you *want* your students to *want* to be in your classroom, then you have to convince them that you actually *want them there*. You never know when a simple hello will make someone’s day more okay!

A Simple “Hi”

Each day when I entered her classroom, she smiled and said hello
 Just what that gesture meant to me, she truly could not know
 She did not know that she and only she made me feel wanted
 That *her* smile got me through a time in life when I felt daunted
 That life at home was way too tough for any kid to take
 That her classroom was my refuge, that my happiness was fake
 That for her I put my best foot forward, even when times were rough
 That my smile was a façade to hide my pain, for I was tough
 But even though she never knew, it meant so much to me
 That there was one place in my life where someone wanted me
 Wanted me to be there, wanted me to learn
 Wanted to help me realize there were good things I could earn
 For beyond the books and content, I learned that year that I
 Was someone who, to someone, was worth a simple “Hi.”

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Believe in Them!

A Point to Ponder



- ◆ Many students do not believe that their teachers actually believe in them.
 - ◆ Many students do not believe that their parents actually believe in them.
 - ◆ Many students do not believe that any adult actually believes in them.
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- ◆ Many students, therefore, do not believe in themselves.
 - ◆ Students who do not believe in themselves tend to have more behavior problems.
 - ◆ Students who *do* believe in themselves actually cause fewer discipline challenges for teachers.

Children do not automatically and innately believe in themselves. They look to their role models, adults in their lives, to determine their sense of “worthiness.” **If a student lacks positive role models at home, his only hope may lie in the hands of his teachers.** When students lack positive role models at home, they tend to be more difficult to deal with regarding behavior. Thus, the teacher’s job may become more challenging. But no one said that teaching was easy. It’s not. Every child, however, deserves to have an adult who believes in him. And even if a child does have positive role models at home and actually does believe in himself, one teacher who does not believe in that child can upset the whole equation! When we consider the fact that school-age children spend so much of their time with their teachers (and often more waking hours with their teachers than with their parents), it is not difficult to understand why teachers have such powerful influence on students’ lives. And also, when we consider the fact that you have to *reach* the child before you can *teach* the child, then it should be your main goal, as

a teacher, to reach every child you teach. So how do you reach a child? **You reach a child by convincing him that you believe in him.**

Classroom Solution/Strategy



Okay, so we've established the fact that you must convince all students that you believe in them in order to reach them and thus teach them. *All* students! **So what does it look like when a teacher believes in his/her students?**

- ◆ Lots of smiling on the part of the teacher.
- ◆ Lots of encouragement and "You can do it" statements.
- ◆ Lots of support on the part of the teacher.
- ◆ Lots of patience on the part of the teacher.
- ◆ Lots of saying "I believe in you" to students.

Do you want a student to believe in himself? Then actually *tell* him that you believe in him, that you will not give up on him, that you understand his struggles, and that you are there for him.

We continue to find that far too many teachers forget to do this—to tell and show their students that they actually believe in them. It's a simple thing to do. So do it!

Bottom Line



Students who believe in themselves behave better. Teachers who believe in their students have fewer discipline problems. If you are thinking, "It can't be that if I do something as simple as believing in my students that I will see improved behavior," then you have obviously never tried it. So try it, and you will soon become a *believer*!