

Developing Relationships with Students

The State of Michigan recently promoted a high school reform that emphasized the three “R”s. These three “R”s are **Rigor**, **Relevance** and **Relationships**. Even though I have been involved in public education for 39 years, I am not fond of copying what is going on in that system. These three “R”s are relevant to Christian education as well.

Rigor means that the curriculum should be challenging. Christian curriculum should be challenging to all students in that we should not merely be teaching Bible stories, but the applications for us in those stories. We should always be challenging our students to grow and mature in Christ.

Relevance is an obvious “R” in Christian education. The Bible and God are relevant to everything that pertains to our daily life. We need to teach this to our students. There is nothing of more importance or relevance to us than this.

The third “R” is the one that this class concentrations on—Relationships. Forming relationships with our students is of vital importance. The most important quality in a teacher is another “R”--respect. Studies have shown many things impact whether people will listen to a teacher or not. Things like appropriate and nice clothing are important, but the number one thing on whether people will listen is respect for the teacher. I am sure you know this from experience.

Respect cannot be demanded—it must be earned. We earn this respect, not by having degrees behind our name, but by the relationships that we form with our students. Our students must see a real, honest, caring person. We listen to people that we know care about us.

In demonstrating caring for our students, we must first of all really care about them. Prayer is one of the ways that we can love our students. If we pray for our students on a weekly basis, we will end up caring about them. If we really care about or love our students, we will want them to come Christ for salvation and grow in Him. Everything we do in class should bring about this goal. The time we have with our students is precious and valuable. Children especially may not come from a Christian home and there may not be any encouragement to read the Bible or pray. There will probably be a world view that is promoted that is not a Biblical world view.

We must be careful as teachers that we do not say or do anything inappropriate with our students. Satan is hard at work in the church, especially with leaders and teachers. If he can cause us to stumble it reflects badly on the church and on Jesus Christ in the eyes of the unsaved. Jesus warns about causing a child to stumble.

Matthew 18:5-7

6 “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. 7 Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come!

In establishing relationships there are some rules that should be followed. These rules can be appropriate for both adults, teens and children.

<i>Rule</i>	<i>Applies to Adults</i>	<i>Applies to Teens</i>	<i>Applies to Children</i>
We should never place ourselves in a position where we are alone with a student.	X	X	X
There should be another teacher or adult in the classroom with you		X	X
We should never touch students except to shake hands.	X	X	
Young children may be hugged if the child initiates the hug.			X
Begin class asking students about what is happening in their lives—school, etc.		X	X
Smile at students	X	X	X
When disciplining students, make sure that you do not use sarcasm or display anger toward them.		X	X
Ask the students questions about their interests and daily lives. Try to include activities that reflect their interests.		X	X
Tell your students you care about them.	X	X	X
Act as if the students are important to you. No hypocrisy.	X	X	X
Always behave appropriately toward students.	X	X	X
Spend time out of class with your students. If teens or children have another adult with you.	X	X	X