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AN INVITATION TO LEARN IN A RESTORATIVE CULTURE



IT IS THE TEACHER WHO
SETS THE WEATHER
IN THE CLASSROOM.

There is an adage that suggests it is the teacher who sets the weather in the classroom. This is borne out in the extensive research about the psychosocial climate for learning, particularly in students' perceptions of the emotional and instructional support they receive in the classroom (Hamre et al., 2013). You have undoubtedly experienced this same phenomenon in your own educational career, whether student or teacher. There are some classrooms that feel instantly inviting, while others do not. We're not talking about how the room is decorated, although the physical environment can contribute to the overall culture of learning. It's something less tangible—is it a perception? Or is there more to it?

The notion of invitational teaching was forwarded by Purkey and Novak in 1996, and it continues to resonate today. They described invitational teaching through four lenses:

- **Trust.** Trust is defined as the ongoing relationships between the teacher and students. In trusting classrooms, teachers and students assume positive intentions and seek to build, maintain, and repair those relationships.
- **Respect.** This condition is fostered through actions that communicate an understanding of everyone's autonomy, identity, and value to the learning

community. Shared responsibility is crucial, and members of the classroom, including the teacher, see themselves as stewards for maintaining the social and emotional well-being of others.

- **Optimism.** The potential of each classroom member is untapped, and every member of the classroom is responsible for finding ways to help others reach their potential. Teachers are important in creating optimistic learning environments, and so are students. In an inviting classroom, students support the learning of their peers and understand that they are key in others' learning. Purkey and Novak believe that a life without hope impairs a person's ability to move forward. If schools are not places to find hope, then what use are they?
- **Intentionality.** An invitation to learning means that the practices, policies, processes, and programs of classrooms and schools are carefully designed to convey trust, respect, and optimism to all.

Having said that, these may not be evidenced in reality. It's more than just saying "All children can learn." The researchers took two of those conditions—intention and invitation—and discussed four possible types of teachers (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Four Types of Teachers

<p>Intentionally uninviting teachers . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are judgmental and belittling Display little care or regard Are uninterested in the lives and feelings of students Isolate themselves from school life Seek power over students 	<p>Intentionally inviting teachers . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are consistent and steady with students Notice learning and struggle Respond regularly with feedback Seek to build, maintain, and repair relationships
<p>Unintentionally uninviting teachers . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distance themselves from students Have low expectations Don't feel effective, and blame students for shortcomings Fail to notice student learning or struggle Offer little feedback to learners 	<p>Unintentionally inviting teachers . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are eager but unreflective Are energetic but rigid when facing problems Are unaware of what works in their practice, and why Have fewer means for responding when student learning is resistant to their usual methods

Source: Adapted from Purkey & Novak (1996).