

Relationship Feedback Guide

Gather Insights on Your Relationship with
Students



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DESCRIPTION

This activity is designed to help teachers invite meaningful feedback from students about their relationship. Students will reflect on how much they experience each of the key elements from Search Institute's [Developmental Relationships Framework](#).

Implementation Guidance

Many teachers already build strong relationships with students every day, and this tool is meant to support that ongoing work by creating a structured moment for reflection and feedback. Your school might already conduct surveys about student-teacher relationships or sense of belonging, but this tool is *specific to you and your classroom*.

The activity can be used at any point in the year and adapted to your classroom's needs. It can be done using a Google Form, a paper handout, or any format that feels right for your students.

PREP TIME

5 minutes

ACTIVITY TIME

10-15 minutes

MATERIALS

Always,
Sometimes, Never
Feedback Tool
Teacher Reflection

- 1. Select a handful of questions.** We recommend selecting 5-6 questions along with one or two open-ended questions. Students will answer the main questions using “always”, “sometimes”, or “never”. If you want to include more questions, consider spreading them over multiple sessions. We have provided examples for the open-ended questions, but feel free to remove them if you prefer students to generate their own ideas.
- 2. Introducing the activity.** When introducing the activity, some teachers choose to let students know that this is part of their commitment to growing as an educator and making the classroom a place where students feel seen, supported, and respected. An example blurb:
“I’m going to hand out this relationship feedback form, it’s not a test at all, there is no right or wrong answer, think about it as an opportunity for you to let me know how I am doing. The more you share about how you are feeling, the

better I can be your teacher and make sure everyone feels seen & respected in this classroom.”

3. **Review responses.** After reviewing responses, you might decide to share a quick reflection with the class—acknowledging what you noticed and identifying one thing you’re planning to focus on moving forward. This kind of small feedback loop can be a powerful way to model relational trust and mutual respect. See the reflection guide template for additional support.

TIPS

- **Set a supportive tone.** Let students know this is about strengthening your connection with them—not evaluating anyone. An intro like, *“I want to keep growing as your teacher and your input helps,”* builds trust.
- **Keep it simple and quick.** Select just 5–6 prompts from the list provided and give students 5–10 minutes to respond. Paper or digital both work, go with what fits your classroom context.
- **Look for themes, not individual critiques.** Focus on patterns— what do several students mark as sometimes, or never? Use that to guide one small, meaningful shift. Focus on practical and realistic improvement, and try not to take every feedback personally.
- **Adapt it for your needs.** If you are interested in understanding your student’s sense of belonging in your class more broadly, feel free to change “my teacher...” to “my class...”.
- **Accessibility.** For students who might have a harder time understanding the questions, consider doing this activity verbally with them and encourage them to express their feedback through creative means (e.g., drawing).
- **Close the loop.** Take a moment to thank students and share one thing you’re trying based on their input. This builds mutual respect and shows their voices matter.
- **Revisit.** Consider revisiting this tool every once in a while to look for changes and trends over time. Creating a consistent routine around student feedback encourages engagement, especially when they see it makes a difference.

Relationships Feedback

Your Voice Matters

Why are we doing this? This is a short reflection to help me understand how I can support you as your teacher. For each statement below, please tell me whether you feel like this happens **always**, **sometimes**, or **never**.

There are **no right or wrong answers**—your honest feedback helps me understand what’s working for you and what could be better.

Your responses are anonymous and will only be used to help make the classroom a stronger, more supportive space for everyone. At the end, you’ll have a chance to share anything else you’d like me to know.

Thank you for taking the time to reflect and share!

Teacher Action	Always 	Sometimes 	Never 
Expressing Care			
My teacher notices when I’m having a good or bad day.			
My teacher makes me feel like I matter in this class.			
My teacher checks in on how I’m doing, not just my work.			
My teacher shows they care about me as a person.			
Challenging Growth			
My teacher pushes me to do my best.			
My teacher believes I can succeed, even when things are hard.			

My teacher helps me set goals and work toward them.			
My teacher gives feedback that helps me grow.			
Providing Support			
My teacher helps me figure out how to solve problems.			
My teacher is available when I need extra help or guidance.			
My teacher encourages me when I feel stuck or frustrated.			
My teacher provides resources or ideas to help me succeed.			
My teacher explains things in a way that works well for how I learn.			
Expanding Possibilities			
My teacher helps me explore my interests and future goals.			
My teacher connects what we're learning to real life.			
My teacher helps me see what I'm capable of.			
My teacher shares opportunities that match who I am and what I care about.			

Prompts:

1. If I could give my teacher one piece of advice about how to build a strong, healthy relationship with me, it would be:

(e.g., more ice-breaker questions before class starts, asking me how I am doing when I am not having a good day, giving me more space when I am down)

2. What's one thing I can do to better support your learning?

(e.g., be more patient when I really don't understand, give me more time to think before answering, I like when we do group work)

3. What's one thing that is working really well in our classroom?

(e.g., I like that I have some friends in class, I like when we do group work, I like when we play games)

4. What could I do differently to make you feel more comfortable or engaged in class?

(e.g., I like when you notice that I did not have the best day, I like being able to choose where I sit, I think I am more engaged when we play games or go outside.)

5. Is there something you wish I understood better about you?

6. What's one way I could make this class a better place for everyone?

(e.g., I think some people are shy like me, so not calling us out to answer questions would be good. I like that you let us choose where to sit.)

7. Are there any ideas or suggestions you have to improve how I connect with you or other students?

(e.g., more ice-breaker questions before class starts, maybe we can do more games. Giving us more space when someone is feeling down.)

8. When do you feel truly like yourself in class? What gets in the way of you feeling comfortable in class?

(e.g., I really like it when we celebrate holidays and talk about our family, that makes me feel good about our class. I don't like it when people make fun of me and no one helps me.)

9. Are there any ideas or suggestions you have to improve how I connect with you or other students?

(e.g., more ice-breaker questions before class starts, maybe we can do more games. Giving us more space when someone is feeling down.)

Teacher Reflection Guide

Making Sense of Student Feedback

Use the reflection questions below to help you make sense of student feedback. If other educators in your school are also using this tool, and you feel comfortable sharing ideas with them, consider using this guide to facilitate collaboration and discussion.

What patterns or common themes do you notice?	
What strengths are students highlighting about your relationship or classroom environment?	
Are there surprises or insights that challenge your assumptions?	
What contextual factors might have influenced how students responded? (e.g., absenteeism, existing cliques and other peer dynamics)	
What is one specific, manageable change you can try based on this feedback?	
How will you communicate back to students what you heard and what you plan to do?	

Next Steps: Learn more about your results

 Express Care	If most of your students report ‘always’ on this element, it means you are doing a great job <i>showing your students that they matter to you</i>, which is excellent because genuine care is the <i>foundation</i> of strong and trusting relationships. If a good amount of your students report ‘never’ or ‘sometimes’ on this element and you want to be more intentional about expressing care, try: • protecting five minutes every class to get to know what brings your students joy. Seemingly small ice-breakers, when done <i>consistently</i> and <i>genuinely</i>, can go a long way. • connecting your instruction to your students’ hobbies or interests (e.g., use actual basketball statistics from your students’ favorite team to teach fractions and ratios). • revisiting the small things that they shared with you (e.g., “you talked about your friend in Mx. XY’s class the other day, how are they doing?”) Also, check out Search Institute’s Resources Hub for a list of activities on expressing care.
 Provide Support	If most of your students report ‘always’ on this element, it means you are doing a great job <i>helping your students complete tasks and achieve their goals</i>, which is excellent because everyone needs and deserves to be supported in becoming their full selves. If a good amount of your students report ‘never’ or ‘sometimes’ on this element and you want to be more intentional about providing support, try: • validating your students’ feelings (e.g., “it’s totally okay to feel frustrated, it is part of how we learn”) – emotional support is as important as instructional support. • working <i>together</i> with your students to problem solve: be “in it” alongside them instead of giving advice from a top-down approach. • <i>advocating</i> for your students by ensuring that they have access to the resources they need to thrive. Also, check out Search Institute’s Resources Hub for a list of activities on providing support.



Share Power

If most of your students report ‘always’ on this element, it means you are doing a great job ***treating your students with respect and giving them a say***, which is excellent because strong and trusting relationships are two-way.

If a good amount of your students report ‘never’ or ‘sometimes’ on this element and you want to be more intentional about sharing power, try:

- asking your students to take the lead on small things to start with (e.g., create a class playlist).
- giving them choices or obtaining their input when possible (e.g., providing a couple options for demonstrating their learning).
- encouraging your students to ask *you* questions about your hobbies, goals, etc. (of course, within the boundaries you set)

Also, check out Search Institute’s Resources Hub for a list of [activities on sharing power](#).



Expand Possibilities

If most of your students report ‘always’ on this element, it means you are doing a great job ***connecting your students with people and places that broaden their world***, which is great because you are opening doors to possibilities that can lead to amazing things for your students.

If a good amount of your students report ‘never’ or ‘sometimes’ on this element and you want to be more intentional about expanding possibilities, try:

- asking your students to come up with guest speakers and field trip ideas that are meaningful to them.
- ensuring your instruction materials reflect your students’ cultures as well as the futures that they aspire to (e.g., are there diverse ‘famous people’ depicted in the textbooks)
- naming what you notice in them- their interests, strengths (academic and social emotional), and the passions they show in
- and beyond the classroom. Share how these qualities could open up future opportunities they might not see yet for themselves.

Also, check out Search Institute’s Resources Hub for a list of [activities on expanding possibilities](#).



About Search Institute

We collaborate with schools, youth-serving organizations, programs, and communities to conduct applied research, co-design solutions, and build the relational infrastructure every young person needs to thrive. Through professional learning experiences, surveys, measurement tools, and support for continuous improvement, we help partners turn knowledge into action and create the conditions where young people can truly learn, grow, contribute, and thrive.

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