

# FOSTERING RESPECT



*I always laugh when I watch my little sister eat spaghetti. She usually begins by eating all of the meatballs. She sucks the last few noodles into her mouth one at a time. There's always spaghetti sauce left on her shirt. —Maria*

Elisa Wiedeman

All students have a unique set of skills and perspectives that reach beyond academic conformity and standardized learning outcomes. As art teachers, we play a major role in guiding students through creative processes that they can embrace and use throughout their lives. However, without mutual respect in the classroom, our efforts are useless. The following tips and art activity were designed to elevate mutual respect, humility, and humor in the classroom.

### Keep It Authentic

Reading and hearing your name used in a positive way nurtures positive self-esteem and opens minds to new concepts. Likewise, providing written and verbal comments that reflect students' authentic achievements main-

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tains creative confidence. Example: "Jade, it's easy to see you fully understand the concept of using contour line to achieve realism. Nice work!"

### Keep It Student-Centered

Avoid using the word "I" and "me" in verbal and written communication. This places students in a power position where they are better able to trust their own judgment and respect their unique perspectives on a range of concepts.

### Saving Face

If a student "misses the point," offer varied examples rather than pointing out perceived errors. Example: "Hannah, check out these images to give you additional ideas for focal point placement." Likewise, always end art reviews and comments with a positive statement to promote future risk-taking. Example: "Hannah, what

noticeable progress you've made since the beginning of this project."

### Laughter Is the Best Medicine

The mystery of humor is elusive and engaging. Some say it's used to ponder logical impossibilities. Others say it helps to release energy generated by stress. As educators know, humor can also break down barriers in the classroom. Personal portraits are the perfect avenue for providing a time and space for laughter and humility, and an opening up to another's point of view.

#### Activity: Humorous Portraits

##### 1. Interview the Subject

Begin by pairing up students by drawing names from a hat or intentionally pairing students who know little about one another. Through the interview process, each student must pose the question to his or her partner, "What makes you laugh?" After each student interviews and composes a detailed response, a blind contour line portrait drawing session ushers in laughter and release.

##### 2. Procedures

Have students choose from black fine-tipped markers, colored pencils, and/or watercolor on white paper. Possible perspectives include front, profile, or three-quarter views. Students should take turns drawing one another. Eyes must stay on the subject, while the student drawing uses one continuous line to compose the portrait. No erasing. No regrets. Emphasize the value of the creative process rather than the final product.

##### 3. Criteria

The subject must smile during the drawing session. The artist must keep the drawing utensil in contact with the model at all times and include every facial feature, especially the smile (lips, teeth, etc.). Maximize the picture plane—make it "big." Produce five distinctly different blind portraits and have the subject pick the one that suits him or her the most. Either the artist or the subject may apply the color medium of their choice.



*Watching my dog chase his tail. Max was a Christmas surprise. He learned to fetch a ball before he was five weeks old. By the time he was a year old, he began coming with me on family vacations. We've hiked trails in two national parks. Though I know he's an intelligent dog, he's always liked to chase his tail. Sometimes I think he just likes to hear me laugh. —Peter*

#### Results

Be prepared to laugh and discuss the intrinsic qualities of the highly abstract portrait results. 🐾

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