

Why Was I Not Invited?

It upsets me to this day. When I was in junior high school, I had straight A's and was in the honor class. One day, the teacher went around the class and gave invitations to several students, but not me. They were asked to join the National Honor Society. To this day, I am still puzzled, confused, and disappointed that I was not invited.

— Rosemary Tripi Wong

The effective teacher is committed to seeing all people as able, valuable, responsible, and possessing untapped potential in all worthwhile areas of human endeavor.

The person who is asked or complimented is INVITED. The person who is not asked or complimented is DISINVITED. This concept was formulated by William W. Purkey in 1978 and is known as invitational education.¹

Invitational education is centered on the following propositions:

- ✓ People possess untapped potential in all areas of human development.
- ✓ People are able, valuable, and responsible and should be treated accordingly.
- ✓ People, places, policies, procedures, and programs all invite people to realize their fullest potential.

To fulfill these propositions, invitational education employs the following assumptions:

- ✓ Opportunities are everywhere, but little happens until invitations are sent, received, and acted on.
- ✓ A positive self-concept is the product of inviting acts.
- ✓ One inviting act can make a positive difference even if everything else is disinventing.
- ✓ We will always be invited if we are giving the party.
- ✓ Human potential is always there, waiting to be discovered and invited forth.
- ✓ To maintain a consistently inviting stance is the essence of an effective teacher.

¹Purkey, William W., and John Novak. (1996). *Inviting School Success: A Self-Concept Approach to Teaching, Learning, and Democratic Practice*. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth. Purkey, William W., and Betty L. Siegel. (2003). *Becoming an Invitational Leader*. Atlanta: Humanities Trade Group.

Are You Invitational or Disinvitational?

Inviting Verbal Comments

- “Good morning.”
- “Congratulations.”
- “I appreciate your help.”
- “Tell me about it.”
- “How can I help you?”
- “Yes.”

Disinviting Verbal Comments

- “Keep out.”
- “It won’t work.”
- “Not bad for a girl.”
- “I don’t care what you do.”
- “You can’t do that.”
- “Because I said so, that’s why.”

Inviting Personal Behaviors

- Smiling
- Listening
- Holding a door
- Thumbs up or high five
- Sending a valentine
- Waiting your turn

Disinviting Personal Behaviors

- Looking at your watch
- Yawning
- Letting a door swing behind you
- Sneering
- Forgetting an important date
- Shoving

Inviting Physical Environment

- Fresh paint
- Living plants
- Clean walls
- Comfortable furniture
- Attractively set table
- Fresh air

Disinviting Physical Environment

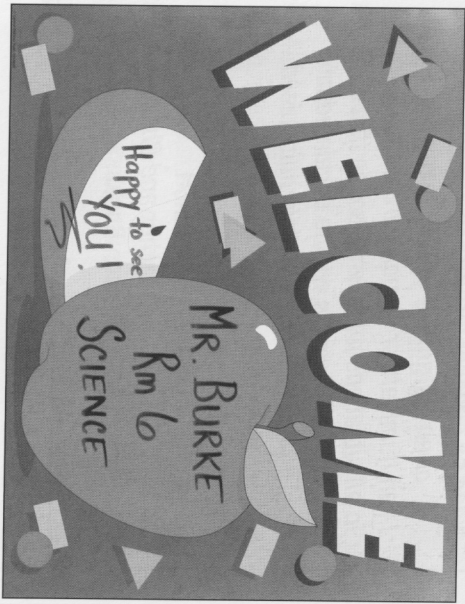
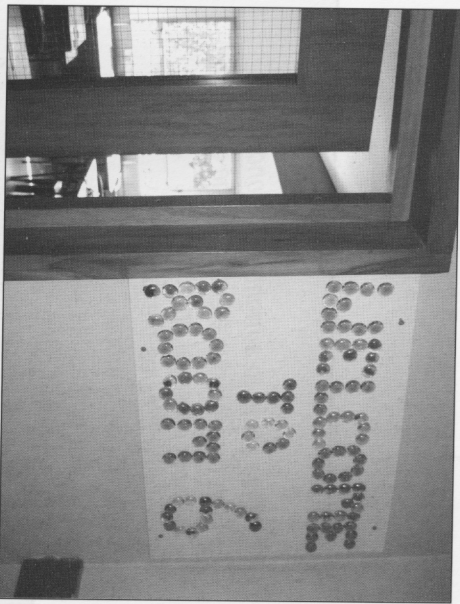
- Dark corridors
- No plants
- Graffiti
- Beat-up or uncomfortable furniture
- Leftover food
- Bad smells

Inviting Thoughts (Self-Talk)

- “Making mistakes is all right.”
- “I’ve misplaced my keys.”
- “I could learn to do that.”
- “Sometimes I have to think what to say.”

Disinviting Thoughts (Self-Talk)

- “Why am I so stupid?”
- “I’ve lost my keys again.”
- “I never could do that.”
- “I never know what to say; I’m so slow to catch on.”



Even the outside of the classroom door contributes to creating a welcoming, invitational atmosphere.

You Are a Significant Person

An invitation is a message that states that the person being invited is responsible, able, and valuable. Conversely, a disinvasion is intended to tell people that they are irresponsible, incapable, and worthless. The critical ingredient needed for people to realize their fullest potential lies in the kinds of invitations extended to individuals by the significant people in their lives.

All individuals have significant people in their lives. These include teachers, leaders, mentors, colleagues, bosses, parents, relatives, coaches, administrators, spouses, and close friends.

The era of isolated teaching is over. Good teaching thrives in a supportive learning environment created by teachers and school leaders working together to improve learning in strong professional learning communities. Invitational education begins with an induction program where new and veteran teachers are treated with respect, trust, and optimism and their contributions are valued as significant.

The invitational messages that are extended to learn in school are the products of the expectancies that exist in the minds of the significant people who influence the lives of other people.

*I have come to a frightening conclusion.
I am the decisive element in the classroom.
It is my personal approach
that creates the climate.
It is my daily mood
that makes the weather.
As a teacher I possess tremendous power
to make a child's life miserable or joyous.
I can be a tool of torture
or an instrument of inspiration.
I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal.
In all situations it is my response that decides
whether a crisis will be escalated or
de-escalated, and a child humanized
or dehumanized.*

— Haim Ginott
Teacher and Child. (1976).
Avon Books.

We all like to be invited to go shopping, to go to a party, to join a group. And we all have the common courtesy to greet people at the door, to exchange pleasantries when introduced to others, and to offer food or drink to a visitor. These are all obvious, expected, and practiced. These same concepts should be practiced in the classroom.

Effective teachers have the power and the ability to invite students and colleagues each day and in every class to learn together. Attentiveness, expectancy, attitude, enthusiasm, and evaluation are the primary forces behind a teacher's being inviting or disinventing. These are the characteristics that significantly influence a student's self-concept and increase or decrease the probability of student learning.

**"You are important to me as a person."
This is the message that we all need to convey
to our students and our colleagues every day.**

Every teacher, every professor, every educator ought to spend time in a kindergarten or first-grade class each year, just to look at and feel the excitement there. Children get excited about everything in the world. All the world is their stage, and there is nothing they cannot do, even though they cannot read, write, or spell. Yet they are ready to do anything you want them to do.

Then look at their teachers. They know that their charges cannot read, write, spell, or even speak correctly. Some of these students do not even know how to eat, use the bathroom, or hang up their jacket without help. Yet these teachers do not complain that they have a bunch of slow learners. Instead, their classrooms and their demeanor sparkle with an invitational attitude toward learning.

If Only the Finest Birds in the Forest Dared Sing, How Quiet the Forest Would Be

*If only the best readers dared read,
how ignorant our country would be.
If only the best singers dared sing,
how sad our country would be.
If only the best athletes engaged in sports,
how weak our country would be.
If only the best lovers made love,
where would you and I be?
I would be tired!*

— William W. Purkey

The Four Levels of Invitational Education

There are four levels of invitations that are issued to students. These levels can determine your effectiveness as a teacher.

1. Intentionally Disinviting. This is the bottom level at which a few curmudgeonly teachers operate. They deliberately demean, discourage, defeat, and dissuade students. They use expressions like these:

“You never do your homework.”

“Why do you bother to come to school?”

“I failed 12 students last term.”

“I’ve only given one A in the 16 years that I’ve been teaching.”

“You will never amount to anything.”

And they never smile.

2. Unintentionally Disinviting. Some teachers are oblivious to the fact that they are negative people. They feel that they are well-meaning but are seen by others as chauvinistic, condescending, racist, sexist, patronizing, or thoughtless. They make comments like these:

“I teach only students who want to learn.”

“If you don’t want to learn, that’s your problem.”

“What do you want me to do? I did my job, didn’t I?”

“What are they all angry at me for?”

“These people just don’t have the capacity to do any better.”

“I want to teach only college-bound students.”

“I was hired to teach history, not do these other things.”

“I believe that only students who want to come to school should be allowed to come to school.”

And they keep their arms folded when interacting with students.

Everyone Is a VIP

Oklahoma City principal Sharon Creager keeps a “VIP book” in her office with this inscription on the inside cover:

**Congratulations to these
Very Important Pupils,
who have distinguished
themselves in various ways.
These are the stars
of our future.**

Teachers send students to the office to have their names entered in the VIP book. The book is on permanent display in the hall and has never been vandalized. Each morning, the new VIP names are read on the morning announcements.

3. Unintentionally Inviting. This is the level of the “natural-born teacher.” Such teachers are generally well liked and effective but are unaware of why they are effective; they do not have a consistent philosophy of education. When something does not work in the classroom, they are unable to analyze what went wrong. They are usually affable, and this characteristic often hides the fact that their students may not be learning to their fullest potential. These teachers are sincere, try very hard, and we generally like to have them as friends. They offer remarks like these:

“Aren’t you sweet!”

“Charge! Let’s go, team!”

“That’s neat.”

“Just try harder.”

“I enjoy teaching.”

And they bubble with excitement.

4. Intentionally Inviting. Intentionally inviting teachers have a professional attitude, work diligently and consistently, and strive to be more effective teachers. They have a sound philosophy of education and can analyze the process of student learning. Most important, they are purposively and explicitly invitational. They know what it means to be invitational, and they work at it. They say things like this:

“Good morning. Have a great day.”

“If you try this, you’ll be sensational.”

“Please tell me about it.”

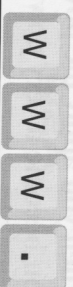
“I know that someday you will be the best at . . .”

“Would you like to help me?”

“Yes, I believe it is in your best interest.”

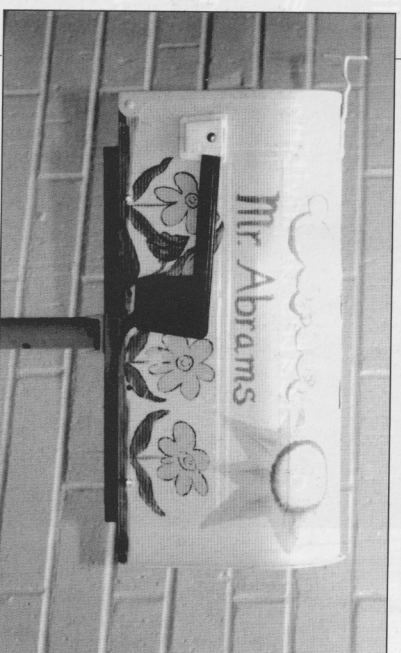
“You can do better than this; let me show you how.”

They also use the proper emotion at the appropriate time.



The International Alliance for Invitational Education

cordially invites all who are interested in developing the untapped potential of all humans. For more information on invitational education, go to www.invitationaleducation.net.



Eric Abrams, a former principal at Douglas Elementary School in Tucson, Arizona, intentionally invited his students to communicate with him.

Address Each Student by Name

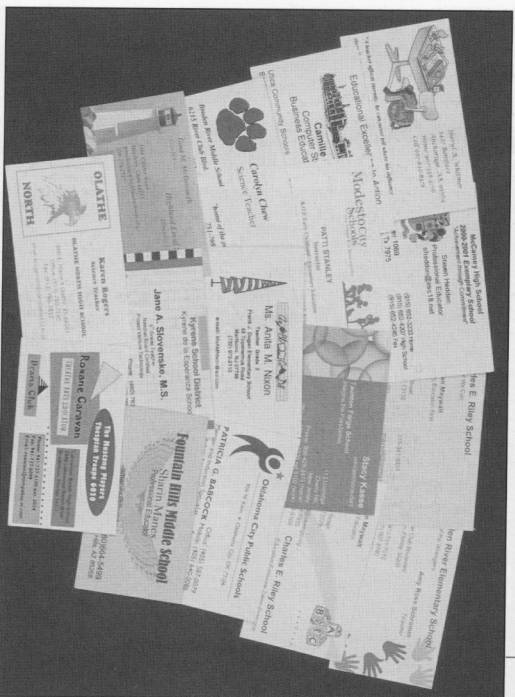
Effective salespeople employ a very simple but valuable technique. They find out your name, introduce themselves to you, and then use your proper name every 7 to 10 sentences when they talk with you.

Why? When you address someone by name, you are treating that person with dignity and respect.

Your name is very important. It identifies and dignifies you. Other people in the world may have the same name as yours, but as far as you are concerned, you are the only person in the world with your name. It is a name that you can easily hear called above the din of a crowd. And when you hear your name, you pay attention. Salespeople know this when they use your name. You pay attention because you are important!

Effective teachers use names, especially when they want a student to do something or behave in a certain way.

- ✓ When you address a student, use the student's name.
- ✓ Use a student's name in a friendly, respectful manner. Never address a student in an angry or condescending tone. This is a put-down of a person's identity and dignity.
- ✓ Pronounce the student's name correctly. A person's name is precious and personal. It is that person's property. It is imperative that students hear the correct pronunciation of names. Failure to do so will tell the students that they do not have to respect each other's name and as a result can tease, mock, and make fun of each other's name.
- ✓ When you use a person's name, you are saying to that person, "You are important. You are important enough for me to identify you by name."
- ✓ When you use a person's name, you are saying I care enough to know who you are.



Important people have business cards—
and who is more important than a teacher?



Say “Please,” Please

Cultured, polite people can be identified by their manners. The heart of courtesy is respect for persons. The neglect of courtesy leads to the collapse of community, and this can be seen in ineffective schools and classrooms where people demean one another.

People who neglect to say “please,” even when speaking to children, are teaching impressionable youngsters that it is all right to bark orders and to run roughshod over the dignity of others. The youngsters may not react or respond, but they resent the lack of courtesy implicit in such treatment.

When you fail to say “please” and couch your request as an order, you are slowly chipping away at that person’s freedom and dignity, and many of our children come to school, having been yelled at all day and night, with none of their freedom and dignity intact.

When you say, “Would you please get me a bottle of glue?” it is in fact shorthand for saying, “If you please—if it gives you pleasure—get me a bottle of glue.” You are asking the person not only to help but also to feel kindly toward you and are acknowledging that kindness. When you say “please,” you are in effect saying, “I respect you and your kindness and your worth as a human being.”

- ✓ Kindness begins with the word *please*.
- ✓ Cultured, polite, and well-mannered people automatically use the word *please*. They have learned appropriate behavior.
- ✓ Repetitive use of the word *please* is important if a child is to learn to use the word *please* in his or her life.
- ✓ *Please* is usually used when you ask someone to do something for you. Thus the most effective way to use *please* is to precede the word with the person’s name, as in “Trevor, *please* . . .”
- ✓ Consider adding the word *please* to instructions on your worksheets, assignments, and other papers that you distribute in class.

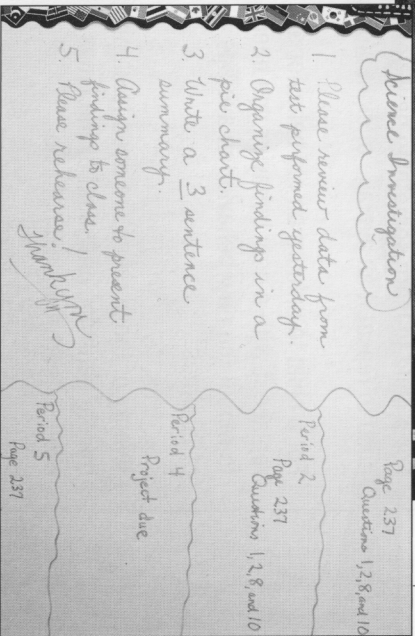
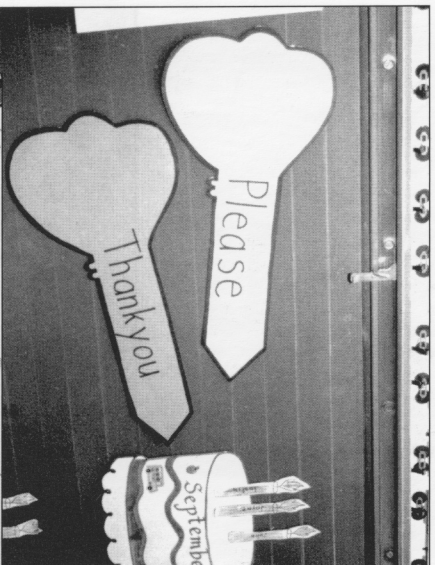
Repetition Is the Key

For a child to learn something new, you need to repeat it an average of eight times.

For a child to unlearn an old behavior and replace it with a new behavior, you need to repeat the new behavior an average of 28 times.

Twenty of those times are used to eliminate the old behavior, and eight of the times are used to learn the new behavior.

— After Madeline Hunter



Please and thank you are used in these teachers' classrooms.

I Really Appreciate What You Did, "Thank You"

You really cannot use *please* without using *thank you*. The two just go together. Not using the two together would be like having a knife without a fork, a belt without a buckle, a letter without an envelope. When you say "thank you," you are acknowledging that someone did something kindly for **YOU** and not because you ordered **THEM** to do it.

"Thank you" says to others that you appreciate their effort and kindness. If you have expectations that students will work hard and will learn to be kind, saying "thank you" is your way of acknowledging that they have been kind and diligent and that you appreciate what they have done for you.

- ✓ End a statement of gratitude and appreciation for someone respecting your wishes with *thank you*.
- ✓ *Thank you* is the perfect transition; it paves the way to the next request, lesson, or task in class. It makes whatever you want done next much easier.
- ✓ The most effective way to use *thank you* is to use it with the person's name: "I truly appreciate what you did. *Thank you*, George" or "George, I truly appreciate what you did. *Thank you*."
- ✓ Consider adding the words *thank you* to instructions on your worksheets, assignments, and other papers that you distribute in class.

Please, No "No Problem." Thank You!

The worst response to "thank you" is "no problem." This implies that the task was a problem. A more appropriate response to "thank you" is "my pleasure," indicating that the task was done with pleasure and not because it was a problem.

A Smile, the Frosting on the Cake

If you truly want to achieve maximum effectiveness when you use a person's name and say "please" and "thank you," you SMILE. It requires no effort and is even easier than frowning—smiling uses far fewer muscles than frowning and hence is less tiring to do. But like using please and thank you, smiling is a behavioral trait that is learned.

A smile is like that sprig of parsley on the dinner plate, the extra pat on the back when a job has been done well, or the extra hug that says "I really love you." It's the frosting on the cake, the little lagniappe (pronounced "lan-yap," meaning "something extra") that sets you apart. It communicates three things:

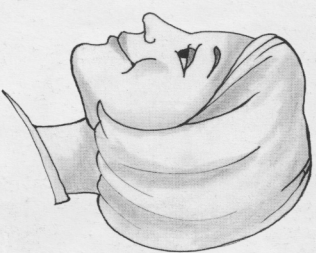
1. You are a person who knows the ultimate of hospitality and graciousness.
2. You have that little extra bit of polish or panache that marks you as a cultured person.
3. You feel good about yourself and want others to feel good about themselves, too.

A smile is the universal language of understanding, peace, and harmony. If, indeed, we want the next generation to have a world of peace and understanding, we need to teach its sign, a smile.

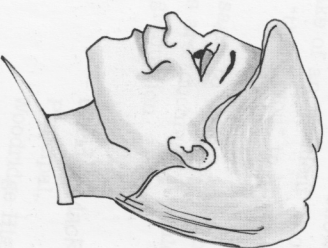
A smile is the most effective way to create a positive climate, to disarm an angry person, and to convey the message "Do not be afraid of me; I am here to help you."

- ✓ There is no need for a great big smile; a controlled, slight, disarming smile is all you need.
- ✓ Accompany the smile with the name of the person.
- ✓ As you smile and speak, use momentary pauses. This is called timing. Every performer knows that the key to delivering a speech, telling a joke, or giving a performance is timing. This is the pregnant pause before speaking an important or emotional line or the punch line.

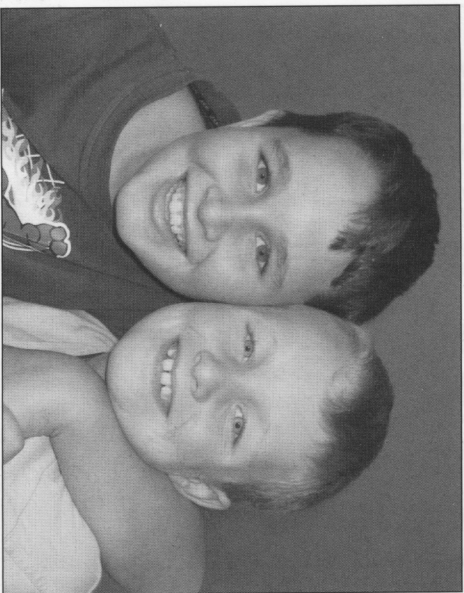
Please...



Thank you...



Smile!



Love what you teach, and love whom you teach.

Technique for Smiling, Speaking, and Pausing

- Step 1. SMILE.** Smile as you approach the student, even if your first impulse is to behave harshly toward the student.
- Step 2. FEEDBACK.** Observe the reaction to your smile. Are you receiving a smile in return or at least a signal that the student is relaxing and receptive to your approach?
- Step 3. PAUSE.** (Timing, timing.)
- Step 4. NAME.** Say “Nathan” with a slight smile.
- Step 5. PAUSE.**
- Step 6. PLEASE.** Add please, followed by your request. Do this in a calm, firm voice, accompanied by a slight, nonthreatening smile.
- Step 7. PAUSE.**
- Step 8. THANK YOU.** End with “Thank you, Nathan” and a slight smile.

Example

*Nathan, please stop talking to Joey and get to work on your assignment.
Thank you, Nathan. (Slight smile.)*

Practice this in a mirror, over and over again.

It All Adds Up to Love

Only two things are necessary for a happy and successful life: being lovable and being capable. The effective teacher never stops looking for ways of being more and more capable.



When you look at the truly effective teachers, you will also find caring, warm, lovable people. Years later, when students remember their most significant teachers, the ones they will remember the most are the ones who really cared about them. Effective teachers know that they cannot get a student to learn unless that student knows that the teacher cares.

The effective person offers both a product and a service.

Ineffective teachers think that all they have to do is offer a product, as in “I was hired to teach history” or “I was hired to teach third grade.”

Effective teachers offer more than a product; they offer a service too. **Effective teachers can help students learn as well as enhance the quality of their lives.** They offer this service consistently because they are practicing this same belief on themselves as they increase their own effectiveness in life.

The sincerest form of service requires no money, no training, no special clothes, and no college degrees. **The sincerest form of service comes from listening, caring, and loving.**

Beliefs of Effective Persons

I am not in the restaurant business; I do not sell insurance;
I am in the hospitality business. I help people solve problems.

I do not serve food; I do not teach history;
I nourish customers. I teach students.

I do not sell clothes; I do not teach third grade;
I dress successful people. I enhance the quality of lives.

*You may not love everyone,
but you can give them
unlimited positive regard.*

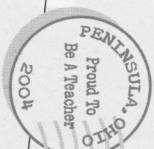
— Source Unknown

Respect at Graduation

At our baccalaureate service, just prior to graduation, we show a videotape to say “thank you” to anyone.

Messages to parents, siblings, and teachers are touching. It could also be part of graduation.

— **David A. MacRaid**
Principal,
Woodridge High School
Peninsula, Ohio



“Love is life . . .
And if you miss love,
you miss life.”

— Leo Buscaglia

Every day
millions of students arrive
at American classrooms
in search of more than
reading and math skills.
They are looking for
a light in the darkness
of their lives,
a Good Samaritan who
will stop and bandage
a burned
heart or ego.

— Jim Trelease

People in our culture are starved for attention:

- ✓ The average child receives 12 minutes of attention each day from his or her parents.
- ✓ By age 18, most Americans have spent more time in front of the television than they have with friends or parents.
- ✓ The average adolescent spends more than three hours alone every day.
- ✓ Loneliness is the number one problem of the elderly, many of whom are afraid to venture out of their homes or apartments.

The Carnegie Foundation surveyed 22,000 teachers.

- ✓ 90 percent said that a lack of parental support was a problem at their schools.
- ✓ 89 percent said that there were abused or neglected children at their schools.
- ✓ 69 percent stated that poor health was a problem for their students.
- ✓ 68 percent reported that some children were undernourished.
- ✓ 100 percent described their students as “emotionally needy and starved for attention and affection.”

You don’t need to tell all the members of a class that you love them, but you certainly can show it. If you choose to be a significant and effective person in a student’s life, you must demonstrate your care and love both implicitly through your body language and explicitly through what you say.

When significant people use significant words and actions, they increase the likelihood of eliciting positive behaviors from other people.

Thank you.

