

WHAT WORKED FOR ME

EXPERIENCES FROM A SECOND YEAR TEACHER

By: Noah Kim

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Rapport is a word you will find yourself using consistently throughout the year and is something I place a heavy emphasis on in the learning space. Establishing and maintaining relationships with students is part of the [VIT Codes of Conduct](#). As we have all been through the education system, we have encountered a plethora of different teachers that we have admired, respected and in some cases disliked, which raises the question: What kind of qualities and values are you going to model in order to develop strong, meaningful connections with your students?

At Featherbrook College, we have undergone extensive behavioural management training with [Jenny Mackay](#). Something that resonated with me from this professional development, was a key idea of 'Gossamer Threads' which she described as an invisible network of strings attached to you and your students. By developing a professional and respectful relationship with the students, we can tune into each individual students social, emotional, and psychological needs through these 'threads' on a daily basis.

A personal strength of mine is my ability to connect with my students and ensure they know they are in an environment with someone who will support, care and stretch them academically and socially. In my first year I focused on three things to ensure that I contributed to the students' social and emotional development.

[Get to know the students, deeply](#)

Students like being heard, and want to be heard, especially when it comes to talking about themselves. Rather than surface-level knowledge, really delve into what makes the student tick. What are they passionate about? What do they dislike? What extra-curricular activities do they participate in? It is important to maintain this dialogue throughout the year, regularly checking in with students and referencing prior conversations you have had.

Open yourselves to the students

The teacher-student relationship is a reciprocal process whereby students also need to be able to relate to things in our lives. It can be as simple as encouraging students to ask questions about your interests, hobbies, or cultural background. For example, I like to share stories of my time teaching in Bangalore, India, as many of the students at Featherbrook College have family relations in India. Not only does this teach a student how to interact with people other than peers, it also makes you, the teacher, someone who is relatable, contributing to the strengthening of the 'Gossamer Threads' with each of the students.

Cultivate a team-based culture

From the beginning of the year, I created an image in the students' mind of our homegroup as one big team. This supported our school value of collaboration and instilled an understanding of what it means to care for, cooperate and support one another. This is further promoted through the whole school implementation of the Department's [Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships program](#). The Respectful Relationships resource kit includes a sequential and age-appropriate plan of lessons that build on key ideas, from simple things such as 'Turn Taking' to 'Gender Norms in Early Adolescence'. This gives students opportunities to self-reflect and approach various social and emotional scenarios they may encounter throughout their lives.

Now is a great time to stop and reflect about the connections you are making with students. Have a chat with your mentor about what could be a focus for you this term in strengthening the relationships with students.