CHAPTER C.

Strategies for a
Positive Classroom Climate

Resources for Teachers

Chapter Highlights:
✓ Tips to Build Positive Relationships with Students
✓ Assets Check List for Students
✓ Behavior Guidelines Resources
✓ Student –Led Conferences Resource

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FORMING RESPECTFUL, CARING, GENUINE RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

When you form or extend asset-rich relationships with young people, you take the initiative. You interact with young people you don’t usually interact with, and not just in the usual places. Think of young people not as students but as people, so that wherever you see them – in a line in the grocery store, on the street, in a theatre – you have an opportunity to make them feel that they matter.

1. Use the young person’s name or nickname

2. Know something about the young person.
   • What does the young person like to do?
   • What does the young person avoid doing?
   • What are the young person’s strengths?
   • What does the young person need?
   • What’s going on in the young person’s life?

3. Listen to the young person and respond accordingly.
   • Support
     (e.g., “I know you can do this, and I know you’ll do the best you can too.”)
   • Challenge
     (e.g., “That’s going to take some hard work from you.”)
   • Acknowledgment
     (e.g., “I hear what you’re saying; that’s got to be tough”)
   • Attention
     (e.g., “Okay, tell me again how you did it.”)
   • Analysis
     (e.g., “And how will that accomplish what you want to do?”)

4. Do something for or with the young person outside your routine.
   • Attend an athletic event that the young person is participating in.
   • Sponsor an activity that the young person is participating in.
   • Meet after school to help the young person with a project.
   • Learn something together with the young person.
   • Eat lunch with the young person.
   • E-mail the young person.

5. Maintain contact.
   • Follow up with the young person.
   • Remember the young person on birthdays and holidays.

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IDEAS FOR TEACHERS TO BUILD ASSETS

Asset Building in General
- Post the asset list in your classroom and in the halls of the school. Have students add illustrations and/or examples to these lists to make them come alive.
- Devote a bulletin board in your classroom to asset-building messages and/or put an asset-building message on the computer screen saver at your site.
- Plan asset building learning activities as part of your curriculum (e.g. service learning, cooperative learning, social skills curriculum experiential learning, reading for pleasure, classroom meetings).
- Discuss assets demonstrated in literature read by students, historic role models, artists and musicians, and people in current events.
- Have students identify their heroes and design small group discussion about the values these heroes typify. As a class use these activities to create a list of shared values.
- Give assignments in which students discover and share their histories and stories; use writing or art as a venue, publish them.

Commitment to Learning
- Discuss current art, music, movies, and other media directed at young people and analyze the messages they send. Compare them to asset promoting messages.
- Identify assets of characters in literature, history lessons and current events. Connect how assets assisted in good decision-making and how deficits can lead to tragic decisions.
- Use assets when identifying homework assignments; relate assignments to students’ real-life experience or cultural identify.
- Have students bring in quotes that exemplify assets and ways assets play in people’s lives.
- Read biographies and/or discuss heroic figures that have made a contribution to society (e.g. Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Cesar Chavez) relate this to the assets they have or have provided for others.

Positive Values
- Set boundaries and expectations in class based on the shared values.
- Create a class list of shared values and relate it to assets. Talk about actions to live these values. Recognize students or create recognition opportunities for their peers to note what they did to model these values.
- Have students gather information about their heroes, not necessarily famous ones. Have them discuss what makes them a “hero”; what values do these people have in common? Discuss how values guide what one does.

Adapted from Pass It On! Ready-to-Use Handouts for Asset Builders, Search Institute, 1999.
An Asset Checklist for Youth

Identify where you fall on each item by placing a check mark in the box. Share your answers with your teachers and parents/caregivers to let them know how they can help you increase your assets.

EXTERNAL ASSETS

Support
1. I receive lots of love and support from my family. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
2. My parent(s) and I communicate positively, and I am willing to go to my parent(s) for advice and counsel. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
3. I receive support from three or more nonparent adults. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
4. I experience caring neighbors. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
5. My school provides a caring, encouraging environment. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
6. My parent(s) are actively involved in helping me succeed in school. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True

Empowerment
7. I believe that adults in my community value youth. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
8. I believe that young people are given useful roles in my community. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
9. I serve in my community for one hour or more per week. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
10. I feel safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True

Boundaries and Expectations
11. My family has clear rules and consequences, and monitors my whereabouts. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
12. My school provides clear rules and consequences. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
13. My neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people’s behavior. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
14. Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
15. My best friends model responsible behavior. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
16. Both my parent(s) and my teachers encourage me to do well. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True

Constructive Use of Time
17. I spend three hours or more per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
18. I spend three hours or more per week in sports, clubs, organizations at school, and/or in community organizations. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
19. I spend one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
20. I go out with friends “with nothing special to do,” two or fewer nights per week. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True

INTERNAL ASSETS

21. I am motivated to do well in school. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
22. I am actively engaged in learning. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
23. I do at least one hour of homework every school day. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
24. I care about my school. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
25. I read for pleasure three or more hours per week. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True

Positive Values
26. I place a high value on helping other people. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
27. I place a high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
28. I act on my convictions and stand up for my beliefs. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
29. I tell the truth even when it is not easy. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
30. I accept and take personal responsibility. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
31. I believe it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True

Social Competencies
32. I know how to plan ahead and make choices. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
33. I have empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
34. I have knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
35. I can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
36. I seek to resolve conflict nonviolently. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True

Positive Identity
37. I feel I have control over things that happen to me. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
38. I have a high self-esteem. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
39. I believe my life has a purpose. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True
40. I am optimistic about my personal future. □ True □ Mostly True □ Not True

Permission to photocopy this chart granted for individual and education use only. From Building Assets Together by Jolene L. Roehlkepartain, Copyright © 1997 by Search Institute, 1-800-888-7828. This checklist is an educational tool.
GUIDELINES FOR CREATING A GREAT BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

★ Youth Buy-in: Young people adhere to the rules when they have been given an opportunity to help create them. (see “Setting Agreements” on page F-14).

★ Consistency: Any student who breaks the rules must be held to a consistent set of consequences. Likewise, just as misguided behavior carries a set of consequences; positive behaviors should be rewarded and reinforced (see “Rewards and Consequences” on next page).

★ Documentation: Disruptive, dangerous or repetitive behavior should be documented in an Incident Report and/or an individualized contract with expectations for student behavior clearly outlined.

★ Understanding the Existing Rules: In order to create consistency and reinforce the same expectations of youth everywhere in the school, it is important that all staff uphold the same rules and policies. Keep in mind the district’s core values:

Be Safe. Be Respectful. Be Responsible.

Example of SFUSD School Rules:

- **Stay on school grounds** and in assigned areas during school hours. Stay with the class if on a field trip.

- **Use appropriate language** at all times with peers and adults. Appropriate language is respectful and polite. Name-calling, insults, or slurs will not be tolerated.

- **Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourselves**, and use your bodies safely. (No fighting, play-fighting, or inappropriate touching).

- **Respect public and private property** by keeping walls, bathrooms, playground, classrooms, and planted areas neat and clean. If it doesn't belong to us, we leave it alone.

- **Bring to school only items that help us learn** (we leave toys, weapons, toy weapons, gum, water balloons, and valuables at home).

- **Be responsible for your learning** by participating with your class, doing your best work, listening when someone is talking, completing our homework, improving your community, and helping each other learn.

- **Be safe and have fun!**
REWARDS AND CONSEQUENCES

Any student who breaks the rules must be held to a consistent set of consequences. Likewise, while misguided behavior carries a set of consequences, positive behaviors should be rewarded and reinforced.

Examples of Rewards and Reinforcements:

Positive recognition is the sincere and meaningful attention you give a student for behaving according to the expectations. When used consistently, positive recognition is often more effective at encouraging students to follow the rules than the fear of consequences is.

Examples of positive recognition are:

★ Praise: Effective praise is personal, specific, and genuine. “I am so proud of the way you helped your friend read today, Samantha,” sounds much more meaningful than, “Great job Samantha”.

★ Positive Notes and Phone Calls Home: Students feel proud when their parents are made aware of the good work they are doing. Again, the praise should be personal, specific, and genuine.

★ Special Privileges: These can be awarded to an individual or the whole group and may include: Extra Recess Time; Employment as the Teacher’s Helper; Field Trips; etc.

★ Public Recognition: Recognition can include: a Star Chart display; Student of the Week or Super-Star bulletin boards; certificates given at a school wide showcase, meeting, or assembly, etc.

★ Tangible Rewards: Students can “earn” rewards for consistently following the rules. Examples include: Healthy Snack Parties; School Bucks, raffle tickets, or other point systems that enable students to “purchase” trinkets such as school supplies; etc.

★ Positive Repetition: This technique will help encourage students to follow the many directions you give each day. Positive repetition works best in group situations with at least two students.
Here's how positive repetition works:
1. Give a direction.
2. Immediately look for at least two students who are following direction.
3. Say the student’s name and restate the direction as they are following it.

Here’s an example:
Direction: "Line up quickly and quietly"
Positive Repetition: "Jose is in line. That was very fast! Steve is in his place too!"

Example of a set of Consequences:
Where possible, consequences are tied to restitution or making amends.
1. Verbal warning
2. Time away from group/educational counseling by an adult
3. Note home/student fills out an Incident Report; time away from activity
4. Conference with teacher, and parent/caregiver will be notified
5. Conference with teacher and parent/caregiver; plan of action created
6. Conference with teacher, principal, and parent/caregiver

Steps Towards Solving Behavior Problems:
Observe the young person and record what you see. Look for patterns of behavior. When are behavior problems happening? What seems to trigger them?

Get to know the young person (and his or her parents). Ask the young person about his/her behavior. Ask parents as well.

Think about this question: Other than the child, what might be the problem? Scrutinize your classroom for potential triggers.

Talk with other teachers about possible causes and solutions. Think about this question: What can we do so that the young person/people will more likely CHOOSE to…?"

Work with the young people, parents, and other school teachers to create a plan for implementing solutions.

Follow up by regularly revisiting the issue and revising solutions.
Alternatives to Referring a Student for Suspension

Suspension removes a student from his/her classroom and school campus. Prior to suspending a student, it is encouraged to attempt the following intervention strategies:

If you have a problem, concern, or are experiencing a difficult conflict with a student, here are some suggestions:

- Talk to another teacher, counselor, dean, or Principal for background of the student’s issues or suggestions on how to best deal with the student. Is there a behavior plan already in place? Has the student been referred to a SAP?

- Utilize a school staff or school counselor to mediate the situation.

- Talk to student’s parent/guardian/caregiver.

- Use community services agencies to assist with mediating issues.

- Utilize a conflict management program at your school site if available.

- Call Pupil Services at 695-5543.

Adapted from SFUSD Student, Parent & Guardian Handbook, 2005-06, page 63.
10 Easy Tips for Managing a Group of Students

1. Most Important Rule: **Catch ‘em being good!!!**
   - “Johnny, you are sitting in your chair, good job!”
   - “Marcus is showing me that he read the directions. Good job Marcus!”

2. Be prepared and organized everyday.

3. Use a calm voice, if you shout, students will shout over you.

4. Consistently use a “getting attention” signal. (e.g. raise hand, bell)

5. Give clear, step-by-step directions both verbally and visually. Do not hand things out until you have finished giving directions.

6. If a student is being disruptive:
   1. Give them “the look”
   2. Walk near them
   3. Quietly investigate, clarify, or redirect behavior

7. Have consistent rewards and consequences and focus on the positive.

8. Word directions in the form of a choice. Students can choose their behavior and accept the consequences:
   - “Ashley, do you want to work on the assignment or sit quietly with your head down?”

9. If the group dynamics are ineffective, consider these options:
   1. Separate students from each other or the group
   2. Move on to something else
   3. Take a timeout

10. Make everything as fun as possible!

STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES

KEY USER/S
Teachers

ASSET CATEGORY
Positive Values, Positive Identity

ASSETS ADDRESSED
#30, Responsibility
#37, Personal Power

KEEP THIS IN MIND
What better way to talk about student challenges and progress with parents than to ask the students! Teachers often spend a great deal of time preparing for parent-teacher conferences. Invite students to help you organize. Students know themselves better than anyone else does. Asking students to participate in assessing their own issues, strengths, and goals shifts the responsibility from teachers and parents to the students themselves.

HOW TO USE THIS HANDOUT
During the week before parent-teacher conferences, give students the following handout. If possible, give them time to fill it out in the classroom. Collect the handouts and have them available for the conferences. Ask students to lead the conference discussion by reading what they’ve written in each discussion area. Note: Relatively young students can be asked to do this as well. Expect students to need some coaching from you about how to lead the discussion.
STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES

STUDENT CONFERENCE NOTES

What are you good at? Do you have any strengths in particular that you’ve noticed in the past semester? (Name at least one strength.)

What challenges do you have? Have you noticed any particular challenges in the past semester?

What are three goals you’d like to work toward during the next semester?

1. 

2. 

3. 

How can we (parents and teachers) help you with those goals?

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Best Practices of Turnaround Teachers


Introduction

In story after story, turnaround teachers (teachers who are able to “turn students around” toward positive outcomes) are described as providing, in their own personal styles and ways, three supports and opportunities (also called protective factors) critical to healthy development and school success: caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for participation/contribution (Benard, 1991, 1996). Closing the achievement gap depends on teachers providing these protective factors, no matter what subject, grade, or students they teach.

Caring Relationships

Turnaround teachers not only establish caring relationships between themselves and students, they consciously promote these between students, between themselves and family/community members, and between students and family/community members.

Respect, the giving of acknowledgement, seeing students for who they are, as equals “in value and importance,” figures high in turnaround relationships and schools, according to renowned urban educator Deborah Meier (1995, p. 120).

Being interested in, actively listening to, and getting to know the gifts of students convey the message, “You are important in this world; you matter.”

Some strategies for increasing these caring relationships are listed below and can be used as a self-assessment checklist.

Caring and Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place a check mark by the items already being implemented. Place a plus sign by items you would like to improve or strengthen.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creates and sustains a caring climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims to meet developmental needs for belonging and respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is available/responsive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offers extra individualized help/creates one-to-one time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively listens/gives voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows common courtesy/shows respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses appropriate self-disclosure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pays personalized attention/shows interest/checks in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gets to know hopes and dreams of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gets to know life context of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gets to know interests of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamental positive regard/strengths approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is nonjudgmental/looks beneath “problem” behavior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High Expectations

At the core of caring relationships are high expectations that reflect the teacher’s deep belief in the student’s innate resilience and capacity to learn. Werner (1996) states, “One of the wonderful things we see now in adulthood is that these children really remember one or two teachers who made the difference... who looked beyond outward experience, their behavior, their unkempt-oftentimes-appearance and saw the promise”.

Teachers who have expectations see the possibility, recognize existing strengths, mirror them back, and help students see where they are strong. They assist youth, especially those who have been labeled or oppressed, in understanding their personal power to reframe their life narratives from damaged victim or school failure to resilient survivor and successful learner.

As Warren Bennis (1994) related in his classic examination of leadership, “In a study of school teachers, it turned out that when they held high expectations for their students, that alone was sufficient to cause an increase of 25 points in the students’ I.Q. scores.” Of course, high expectations must be accompanied by the supports necessary to achieve them. High standards without concomitant supports would not only be ludicrous but cruel and frustrating, robbing students of their intrinsic motivation for learning.

Some strategies for increasing high expectations are listed below and can be used as a self-assessment checklist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Expectations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place a check mark by the items already being implemented. Place a plus sign by items you would like to improve or strengthen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustains a high-expectation climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No-excuses/Never give-up” philosophy/Conveys message to students that they are resilient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims to meet developmental needs for mastery and challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believes in innate capacity of all to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on whole child (social, emotional, cognitive, physical, spiritual)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sees culture as an asset</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connects learning to students’ interests, strengths, experiences, dreams, goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributes the best possible motive to behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulates clear expectations/boundaries/structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplines strictly and fairly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holds students accountable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses rituals and traditions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Meaningful Participation**

Turnaround teachers give students lots of opportunities to make choices, including creating the governing rules of the classroom. They involve students in curriculum planning, hold regular class meetings, give them choices in their learning experiences, and use participatory evaluation strategies such as portfolios and other forms of authentic assessment. They engage students in active problem solving by asking questions that encourage self-reflection, critical thinking, consciousness, and dialogue.

Rutter and colleagues (1979) did seminal research on effective urban schools in poor communities - that is, schools in which the rates of delinquency and dropping out actually declined the longer students were in them. Rutter found them to be schools in which students “were given a lot of responsibility. They participated very actively in all sorts of things that went on in the school; they were treated as responsible people and they reacted accordingly” (Pines,

These schools provide lots of opportunities for experiential learning in which students do hands-on work and engage with materials, people, projects, and experiences.

When students have teachers who encourage them to work with and help others, and to give their gifts back to the community, youth develop the attitudes and competencies characteristic of healthy development and successful learning, such as social competence, problem solving, and a sense of self and future.

Some strategies for increasing student participation and contribution are listed below and can be used as a self-assessment checklist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation/Contribution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place a check mark by the items already being implemented. Place a plus sign by items you would like to improve or strengthen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides opportunities for students to use/contribute their:</td>
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<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths and interests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goals and dreams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gives meaningful responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes and engages marginalized groups:</td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls/women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with special needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infuses service/active learning/experience-based learning/community service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers peer-helping/cross-age helping/peer support groups/cooperative learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides ongoing opportunities for personal reflection/diologue/discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses restorative justice circles in place of punitive discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engages students—especially those on the margin—in a school climate improvement task force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invites the participation and contribution of family and community members in meaningful classroom activities—not just cookie-baking!</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infuses communication skills into all learning experiences:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cross-cultural</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Creates opportunities for creative expression:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing/poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling/drama</td>
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Summary
These three protective factors are so powerful because they are how students—and everyone else—meet the basic human needs. It is what teachers model that makes the final difference. Social learning theorists say that most of learning comes from the models around the learner. If teachers are caring and respectful, if they never give up on their students, if they help them discover and use their strengths, if they give them ongoing responsibilities as active decision makers—the students will learn empathy, respect, the wise use of power, self-control, responsibility, persistence, and hope. Moreover, when teachers model this invitational behavior, they create a classroom climate in which caring, respect, and responsibility are the behavioral norms.
