

Building a classroom culture can be a balance between having a friendly rapport and showing professionalism. And that’s not mentioning that you will see several different groups of students each day, and what works with one group does not necessarily work with the next. However, some things that you can do in general can start to build culture with all students. The biggest is to start with the end in mind. Think about the things that you want to see at the end of the class:

* Ability to trust each other and me.
* Participation in all kinds of discussions.
* Taking intellectual and skill risks.
* Laughing together and having fun with success and failure.

Try not to make too many lofty goals; limit them to just three to five goals. A lot hinges on getting to know your students [which we will cover starting next week], but the bulk of the culture starts with you and your room and lab.

The first thing is show your joy for your subject and find joy in your students. It will involve getting to know them both as students and as young adults outside of school. So often CTE classes involve students taking risks, and the better the connection between you and the students the more likely they will take risks.

Second, and as important as the first, is to compliment freely but sincerely. Everybody loves compliments even though they don’t show it on their faces or in their actions. Mostly they like to know that you are paying attention to them.

Third, give students choices when you can. Even if it is a little choice, it gives them a feeling of power. It can be as simple as changing seating for an assignment to choosing how to give feedback on reading.

Finally, ask their opinion, especially if you are new to teaching. Ask them about how an activity went. Should you do it with the next group? Was it worthwhile in helping them learn a skill? The little things can be a big deal with the students. Above all, make your class a happy place and learn to laugh at yourself in the good and the bad.

Coming events in September: [**Teacher Academy**](https://www.okcareertech.org/educators/professional-development/teacher-academy)**.**