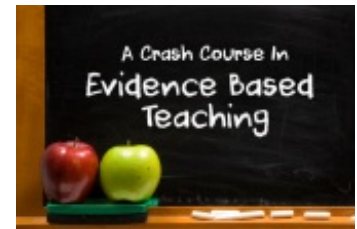


What Everyone Needs to Know About High-Performance, Teacher Student Relationships

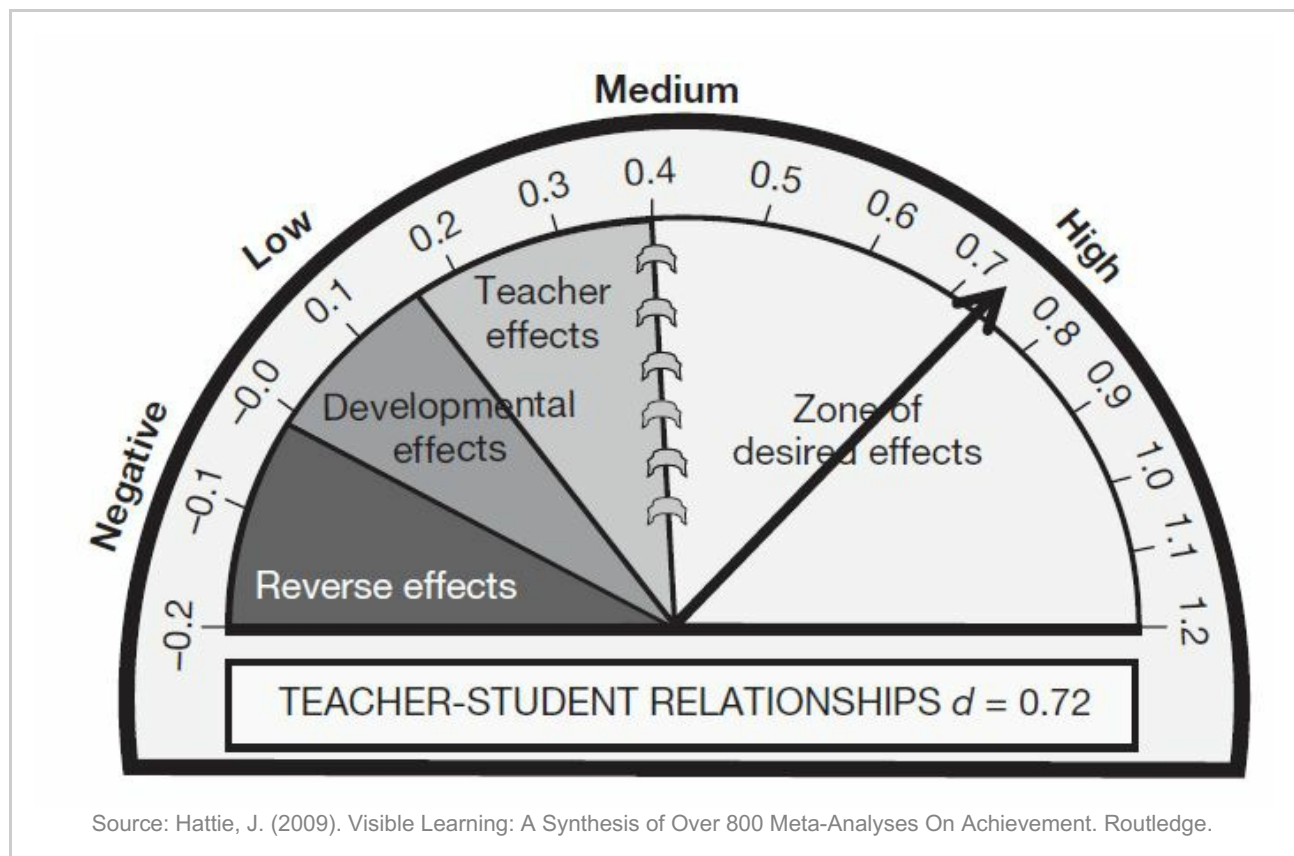
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Strong teacher student relationships are crucial.

To a large extent, the nature of your relationship with your students dictates the impact that you have on them. If you want to have a positive and lasting difference on your kids, you need to forge productive teacher student relationships.



Advocates of evidence based education know that students who have constructive relationships with their teachers are more likely to do well at school, and teachers who actively build such relationships have a strong effect on the lives of their students.



Strong teacher student relationships shape the way children think and act in school.

When you have a good relationship with your students, they are more likely feel positive about class and about school in general. They are also more willing to have a go at hard work, to risk making mistakes, and to ask for help when they need it.

Therefore, it is not surprising that research¹ shows constructive teacher student relationships have a large and positive impact on students' academic results.

It is teachers who have created positive teacher student relationships that are more likely to have the above average effects on student achievement.

John Hattie

In fact, the quality and nature of the relationships you have with your students has a larger effect on their results than socio-economic status, professional development or Reading Recovery programs¹. It is not that these things don't matter, but rather that your *relationships with students matter more*.

This is why I call them **high-performance, teacher student relationships**.

If you want to make a real and lasting difference, the evidence shows that investing time and effort into building high-performance with students is one of the most powerful things you can do.

But what do such relationships entail? Our knowledge of evidence based teaching provides the answer.

In this article, you will discover:

- How to build strong teacher student relationships
- How to adopt a high-performance relational style

Productive Teacher Student Relationships: Element 1

Angela Maiers has been exploring teacher student relationships with her own classes for over 20 years. In her article 12 Things Kids Want From Their Teachers, she describes how she found that building such relationships requires you to **show genuine care** for your students – both as learners and as people.

It is a view supported by research².

You need to be accepting, to be warm and to be nurturing. You need to be aware of and empathetic to their thoughts and feelings. You need to let them know they are important to you. And, to do all of this, you need to take the time mentally present with them throughout the day.

Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Adapted from Theodore Roosevelt

When teachers and students have a warm and caring relationship, the students show greater levels of school adjustment (even years later)³ and achieve higher marks¹.

This doesn't mean that you should be too permissive. Students like order and security, but they also need to know you have nothing but their best intentions at heart.

3 KEYS TO CARING RELATIONSHIPS

1. **Warmth** – accept your students for who they are and care for them as a good parent cares for their child. Show them that they are important to you.
2. **Empathy** – understand how your students think and feel about what is going on around them.
3. **Time** – take the time to physically and mentally present when talking with your students.

Productive Teacher Student Relationships: Element 2

Caring about your kids is critical. However, forging *productive teacher student relationships* takes more.

You need to ***believe your students are capable of succeeding***¹ and you must ***press them***⁴ to do so.

Your *beliefs* about students are important because they subconsciously influence how you treat each child. If you want to have the largest impact on student results that you possibly can, it is important that you genuinely believe that:

- Children need guidance and structure
- All children can and should behave well
- All children can and should improve how well they do at school
- Improvement comes from hard work
- Some students will need more support than others to meet your standards

When you *press* your students, you act on your beliefs by demanding that students *behave well, work hard* and *understand the material* that you are teaching them.

Press your students to understand difficult material and to engage thoughtfully with their work. Push them to achieve more than they ever thought possible, but support them along the way.

| If I treat you as what you are capable of becoming, I help you become that.

| *Goethe*

You accept a child for *who* they are, but you do not accept (or gloss over) that it is okay for them to misbehave or to do substandard work. Accepting such work sends the wrong message – a message that you don't really believe they can do any better.

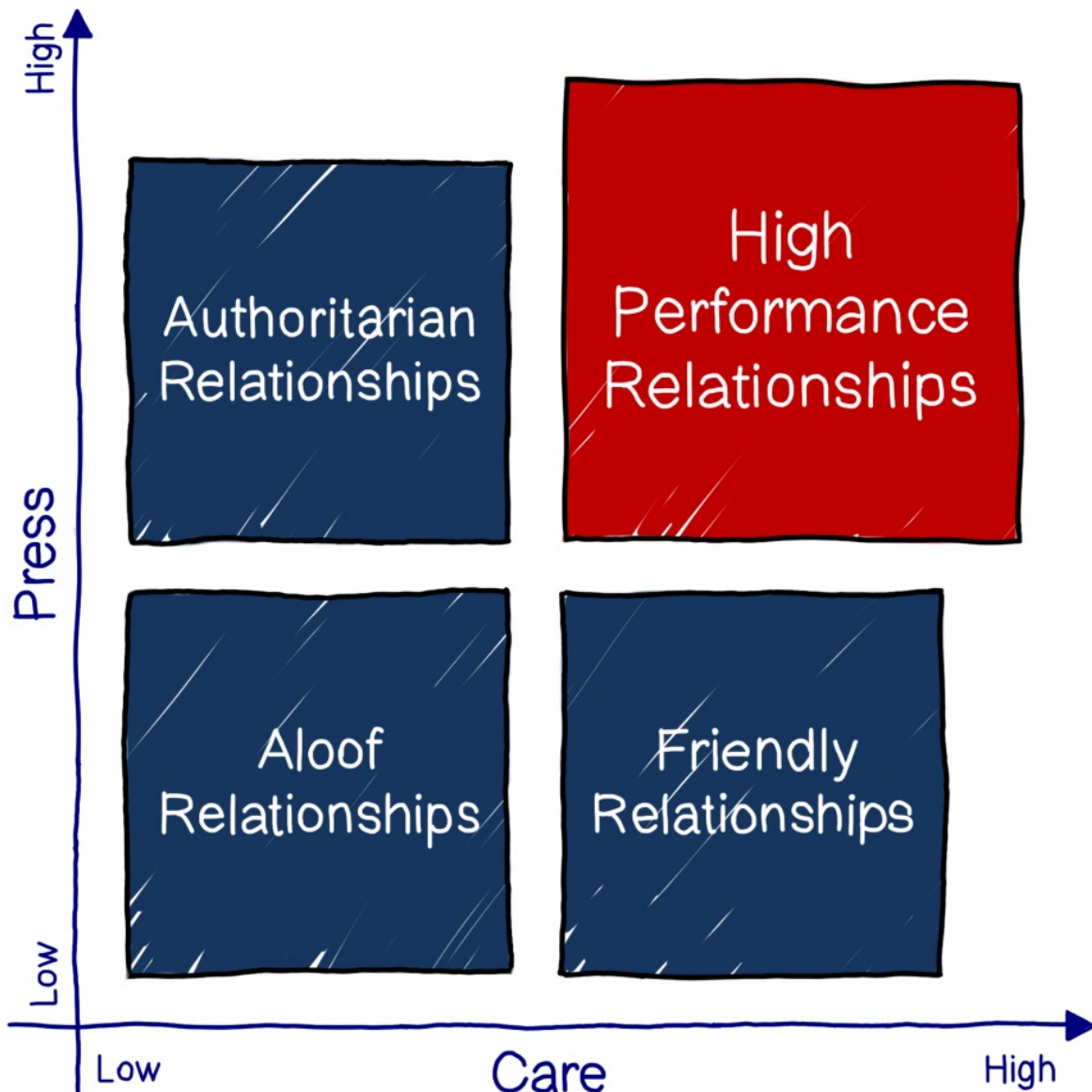
Sometimes *pressing* students involves showing some tough love. Part of this involves being honest about where they are now. Care enough about your students to be up front with them, and then support them to excel in every way you can.

Relational Styles

The two essential elements of high-performance, teacher student relationships are *care* and *pressure*.

While some people see these as polar opposites, this is not the case.

Effective teachers **care** about their kids, while also **pressing** them to do well.



As teachers can show high or low amounts of *care*, as well as high or low amounts of *press*, teachers can relate to students in four distinctly different ways.

On any given day, a teacher may display behaviours from each of the four styles – and sometimes the situation warrants such flexibility. Despite this, when you look at their typical ways of interacting with students over time, different teachers exhibit different **relational styles**.

1. **Authoritarian** teachers show high amounts of *press* and low amounts of *care*. While they may want students to learn, they view their relationships with students as an *us-vs-them* phenomenon, where it is important for them to come out on top. Authoritarian teachers are rigid, and value rules for rule's sake. They often overact to small

- infringements, and they are sometimes sarcastic and cynical.
2. **Friendly** teachers show a high degree of care but a low amount of press. While they may care deeply about students' self-esteem, they misguidedly accept minimal effort and mediocre work. Friendly teachers let their belief in student-directed learning prevent them from giving students the instruction and guidance they need. This often leads to chaotic classrooms and students working independently on tasks they have not been shown how to do.
 3. **Aloof** teachers show low amounts of *press* and low amounts of *care*. While they may go through the motions of teaching, they do so mindlessly. They are often apathetic and indifferent, as their minds are elsewhere – think Bad Teacher. Aloof teachers don't seek conflict with kids, yet their indifference and lack of structure lead students to act out. Then, over-reactions, escalating conflict and passive-aggressive behaviour often follow.
 4. Teachers who forge **high-performance** relationships care for their students while simultaneously pressing them to excel. They have a passionate desire to help students learn and improve, which leads them to demand high standards of behaviour and effort. Yet, they also value their kids as people and take an interest in their lives. These teachers provide their students with strong guidance (both academically and behaviourally), while also nurturing personal responsibility and self-regulation.

Research⁵ shows that when teachers adopt a high-performance style of relating to students, the students have better attitudes about school, and they achieve better results.

Holding high standards without providing a warm environment is merely harsh. A warm environment without high standards lacks backbone. But if you can create a combination of high standards with a warm and supportive environment it will benefit all students, not just the high achievers.

Lee Jussim

If you want your students to excel, you should forge high-performance relationships with each of them.

High-performance, teacher student relationships are a crucial aspect of evidence based teaching. However, teacher student relationships are still just one piece of the puzzle.

Return to the [homepage](#) for your **Crash Course In Evidence Based Teaching**.

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