

We recently came across a great article published in [Education Week](#) by Robert Kuhl on six types of relationships that can make schools great.

Internal Relationships

- Student and Student
- Adult and Student
- Adult and Adult

External Relationships

- School and Community
- School and Home
- Work in School and Work in the Adult World



In part 1 of this three part series, we are going to focus on the first of these 6, nurturing positive relationships among students. Peers can have an incredible impact on student behavior, whether that is positive or negative depends on the quality of the relationships. When students have positive relationships with each other they will feel more comfortable participating actively in class, group work will be more productive and bullying behaviors will decrease.

As educators there are several steps you can take to encourage positive and supportive relationships between students.

1. Encourage student collaboration – Collaboration among students encourages communication and cooperation, allowing them to teach one another. In some instances, students may understand the material better when it is explained by their peers.

One of the goals of using this strategy is to highlight the fact that all students have something to contribute. Finding the most beneficial role for them benefits the group and the individual student..

It might make sense for students with similar abilities to be grouped together. In other instances, groups comprised of students with differing skill levels could benefit both the students and the project. Sometimes the stronger students will be able to teach and benefit the others.

2. Start a student to student mentorship program – Although adults can greatly influence students to make good decisions and make better grades, fellow students who are a little bit older than another student can serve as strong examples or mentors for that younger student. Turning older students into mentors is a great way to capitalize on this concept. Here are some examples of how students can mentor other students:

- Use older students as positive role-models – Students mirror the behavior they're surrounded by. Use the older students in your school as examples for how your students should treat one another, act in the hallways and behave on the playground. This approach provides good role-modeling and will likely improve the older students' behavior as well.

- Create a buddy system – Large groups are good for setting general culture and expectations, but pairing students together is one of the more effective ways to mentor younger students. Develop a plan in which the older students assist younger students individually in completing classwork, practicing the basics and preparing for tests. Schools have found that buddy system strategies aid in the reduction of school bullying due to the positive relationships that develop among students.
- 3. Teach students prosocial skills** – When students learn social skills such as *How to Get Along with Others*, *Greeting Others*, *Disagreeing Appropriately* and *How to Make an Apology* they are more likely to use these skills in stressful situations. Using these types of social skills makes it more likely for students to establish and maintain friendships. Add social skills to your lessons with our free [social skill lesson plans](#).

Creating an environment where kids feel safe and supported is key to creating a positive climate. Make sure that adults in the building are modeling the same supportive relationships with their colleagues that you would like to see from students. Next up, we will look at how to nurture Student and Adult Relationships as well Adult and Adult Relationships.