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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *The Teacher Credibility and Collective Efficacy Playbook* by Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, and Dominque Smith. In this except, the authors define and explain how to use teacher credibility.

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TEACHER CREDIBILITY DEFINED

Researchers have examined the dynamic affective moves of the teacher and identified the actions and dispositions they exhibit. In the research world, this construct is known as teacher credibility. Teacher credibility has a strong effect size at 1.09, well above the average impact of .40 ("250+ Influences," n.d.). To put it in perspective, teacher credibility has twice as much influence on achievement as does student motivation, and twice the impact of socioeconomic status. That's powerful and worth further exploration.

At the basic level, teacher credibility is students' perception that they will learn from this adult. The adult is seen as believable, convincing, and capable of persuading students that they can be successful. Students know which teachers can make a difference, and this can fluctuate. As we have previously noted, "The dynamic of teacher credibility is *always* at play" (Fisher, Frey, & Hattie, 2016, p. 10). We point out in our introduction that there are four components of teacher credibility outlined in the research: trust, competence, dynamism, and immediacy. Thankfully, there are specific actions that teachers can take to increase their credibility in each of these areas.



Trust

Students need to know that their teachers really care about them as individuals and have their best academic and social interests at heart. Students also want to know that their teachers are true to their word and are reliable. A few points about trust:

- 1. If you make a promise, work to keep it (or explain why you could not).
- 2. Tell students the truth about their performance. (They know when their work is below standard and wonder why you are telling them otherwise.)
- 3. Don't spend all of your time trying to catch students in the wrong (and yet be honest about the impact that their behavior has on you as an individual).
- 4. Examine any negative feelings you have about specific students. (They sense it, and it compromises the trust within the classroom.)

Competence

In addition to trust, students want to know that their teachers know their stuff and know how to teach that stuff. They expect an appropriate level of expertise and accuracy from their teachers. Further, students measure competence by the ability of the teacher to deliver instruction that is coherent and organized. They expect that lessons are well paced and include accurate information.

- 1. Make sure you know the content well, and be honest when a question arises that you are not sure about. (This requires planning in advance.)
- 2. Organize lesson delivery in a cohesive and coherent way.
- 3. Consider your nonverbal behaviors that communicate competence, such as the position of your hands when you talk with students or the facial expressions you make. (Students notice defensive positions, and they recognize nonverbal indications that they are not valued when they speak.)

Dynamism

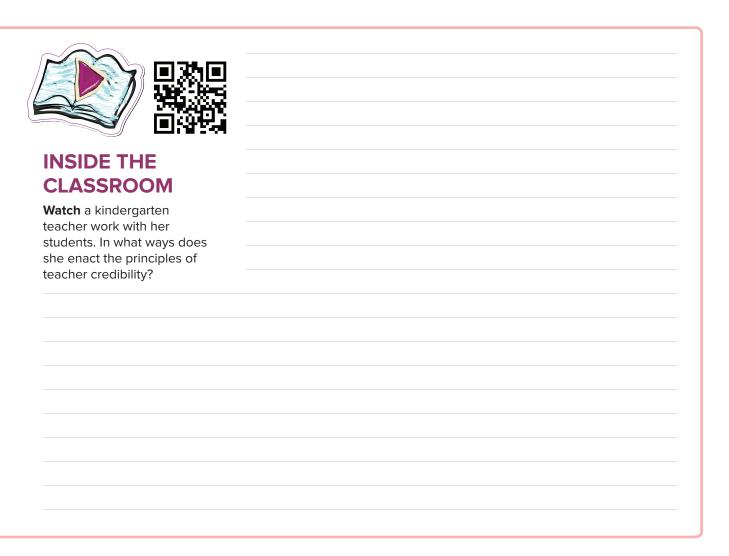
This dimension of teacher credibility focuses on the passion teachers bring to the classroom and their content. It is really about the ability to communicate your enthusiasm for your subject and your students. And it's about developing spirited lessons that capture students' interest. To improve dynamism, consider the following:

 Rekindle your passion for the content you teach by focusing on the aspects that got you excited as a student. Remember why you wanted to be a teacher and the content you wanted to introduce to your students. Students notice when their teachers are bored by the content and when



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- their teachers aren't really interested in the topic. We think that a teacher's motto should be, Make content interesting!
- 2. Consider the relevance of your lessons. Does the content lend itself to application outside the classroom? Do students have opportunities to learn about themselves and their problem solving? Does the content help them become civic minded and engaged in the community? Does it connect to universal human experiences or ask students to grapple with ethical concerns? When there isn't relevance, students check out and may be compliant learners rather than committed learners.
- 3. Seek feedback from trusted colleagues about your lesson delivery. Ask peers to focus on the energy you bring to the lessons and the impact of those lessons, rather than on the individual instructional strategies you use. Students respond to the passion and energy in a lesson, even if they don't initially think they will be interested.



Immediacy

This final construct of teacher credibility focuses on *accessibility* and *relatability* as perceived by students. Teachers who move around the room and are easy to interact with increase students' perception of immediacy.

Teachers need to be accessible, and yet there needs to be a sense of urgency—this signals to students that their learning is important.

- 1. Get to know something personal about each student, as students know when you don't know their names or anything about them.
- 2. Teach with urgency but not to the point that it causes undue stress for them. That said, students want to know that their learning matters and that you are not wasting their time.
- 3. Start the class on time, and use every minute wisely. This means that there are tasks students can complete while you engage in routine tasks, such as taking attendance, and that you have a series of sponge activities ready when lessons run short. Students notice when time is wasted. And when there is "free time," they believe that their learning is not an urgent consideration of their teachers.

When a teacher is *not* perceived as credible, students tune out. And quite frankly, we can't afford for students to do so. We need them to engage, to trust their teachers, and to choose to participate in their learning. These four aspects of teacher credibility—trust, competence, dynamism, and immediacy—can help them do just that. But, as we noted in the introduction, we cannot stop at the individual level. The power of the collective cannot be forgotten.



When a teacher is *not* perceived as credible, students tune out. iStock.com/fizkes

PAUSE & PONDER

Capture the essence of each of the characteristics of teacher credibility in 10 words or fewer, and record them in the graphic organizer below. Which of the four aspects of teacher credibility are highest for you? Which is an area of growth?

Say it in 10 words or less!

- Refer to pages 16–19 in this chapter that talk about each characteristic of teacher credibility.
- Capture the essence of each characteristic in ten words or less.

