



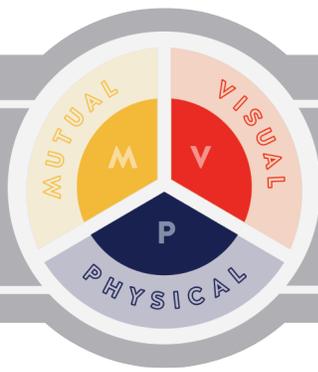
MVP SPACES

A Holistic Learning Environment ———

A guide for using essential **STAPLEs** in the classroom.

Simple **T**echniques to **A**chieve a **P**ositive **L**earning **E**nvironment

Anthony M. Chiles, Ed.S.



The Introduction

THE WHAT

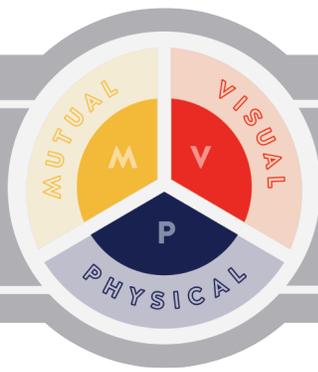
MVP Spaces is a guide to support an educator's practice in Mutual, Visual, and Physical learning spaces. Eight practices support each space called STAPLEs (Simple Techniques to Achieve a Positive Learning Environment) and are grounded in four principles: Relevance, Empathy, Action, and Lifelong Learning. Insight into these spaces provides an educator with a personalized framework to create a holistic learning environment for their students. MVP Spaces provides the blueprint for educators to engage in high-quality teaching and learning techniques, centralized in one location and simplified to implement with consistency and fidelity.

THE WHY

Creating holistic learning environments is essential for students to thrive socially, academically, and emotionally. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of such environments, particularly in disruptive and uncertain circumstances. However, many students and educators who rely on the consistency and structure of traditional face-to-face instruction need help to navigate the ever-changing landscape of blended and online learning. The research for creating positive learning environments includes many strategies to enhance an educator's toolkit. For example, one way to foster a positive learning environment is to establish clear and consistent expectations for behavior and learning, including structured and predictable routines and clear classroom participation guidelines. When students know these expectations, they are more likely to feel secure and confident executing them. Unfortunately, implementing effective strategies fails due to the need to implement them with consistency and fidelity. As a result, some educators have begun to review their core practices and are renewing their commitment and engagement in these techniques.

THE HOW

The Educator will first take the MVP Spaces Survey to analyze the perspective and use of the 24 STAPLEs in the Mutual, Visual, and Physical spaces. The survey questions are based on the REAL Education principles and help guide the implementation of each technique, focusing on consistency and fidelity. Each STAPLE includes (if applicable) a scripted activity and supporting documentation. Explore instructional videos, downloadable STAPLE handouts, and educator resources—plus connect with a growing teacher community—all at realeducators.org.



What is REAL Education?

Relevance in education focuses on a person's needs according to time and context. Relevant teaching engages students emotionally and connects prior knowledge to support the development of neural connections and long-term memory storage.^[7] Students must feel that the information they are learning is useful, valuable, and essential for their future. Relevance is most impactful when learning is connected to everyday life applications and as information moves from theory to practice.^[37] Background knowledge through scaffolding supports relevance by bridging the knowledge gap of new learning material. Relevant, real-world instruction can empower students to take ownership of their learning experiences.

Empathy in education is a teachable attribute innate in all people. We learn from a young age to “feel what others feel.” When explicitly taught and modeled, empathy teaches us to understand another person's point of view while using the information to inform our actions based on the situation.^[78] Compassionate action takes shape when empathy is enacted, whether a hug, a helping hand, or a shoulder to cry on.^[64] The golden rule “treat others as you want to be treated” is evident in nearly all cultures and ethnicities. Empathy teaches us how to interact with each other without judgment. Empathy interactions allow us to build social connections with others, regulate our own emotions, and promote helping behaviors.^[15] A culture of respect, trust, and teamwork is established when empathy is understood, modeled, and reinforced.

Action in education is a driving force for active engagement. Daily activity that includes mental and physical experiences is needed to support creative and critical thinking skills in learning.^[47,73] Active learning allows students to be fully engaged in their education through hands-on learning, collaborative group work, and memorable experiences.^[74] Experiences that are mentally and physically demanding to develop deeper learning connections.^[7] We remember what we touch. Taking active brain breaks during instruction allows the brain to retain information and focus attention. While the instructional approach sets the stage for an active classroom, the way a learning space is physically set up is equally important to the overall success of the active system.^[41,70] Being mentally and physically active benefits the body and mind by reducing stress and improving mood and overall mental health.^[12]

Lifelong-Learning is a process where one can learn, unlearn and relearn continuously. [20] History's greatest pioneers, inventors, and leaders have utilized continuous learning to create and improve significant human advancements in transportation, agriculture, and technology. Through trial and error, creating and destroying, defining and redefining, lifelong learning provides us with a wealth of knowledge on developing continually. Lifelong learning builds innovation and creativity in finding solutions for age-old problems still waiting to be solved. [39]

Lifelong-Learning does not occur in a single location, at a particular time, or in one attempt but is flexible, timeless, and omnipresent. Students in the 21st century can now learn from anyone, anywhere, and anytime. [39] Continuous improvement encourages an endless pursuit of understanding the world around us and how to make it better, including ourselves.

Combining Mutual, Visual, and Physical Spaces with the foundational principles of relevance, empathy, action, and lifelong learning creates a holistic learning environment. To truly educate students, we must return to the simple, integrated format that has produced some of the greatest minds in history. This means providing learning experiences that are experiential, meaningful, and connected to all aspects of life. The focus should be on providing a well-rounded education that extends beyond economic or political considerations and encompasses a Real, Experiential, Authentic, and Lifelong approach. This approach is vital for preparing students for the demands of the 21st century.

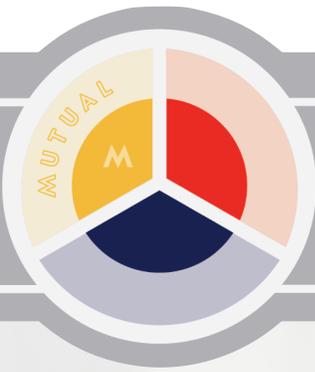
*A note from the Author of **MVP SPACES**:*

Thank you for being so committed to creating and sustaining holistic learning environments. By utilizing these techniques, MVP Spaces will help new and veteran teachers become REAL Educators. Our students depend on us to come alongside them and facilitate their learning in meaningful and engaging ways. We can do it. Let us work together and make it happen!

Sincerely,



Anthony M. Chiles
MVP Spaces, Creator



MUTUAL SPACE

STAPLE & Definitions

Mutual Space | A collaborative space where two or more people can continually respect, recognize, and relate to one another.

M1

Involve Students In Decision-Making

M2

Learn About Student Interests and Backgrounds

M3

Greet Students At The Door

M4

Give 4:1 Positive vs Corrective Feedback

M5

Engage Students In Community Meetings

M6

Tell Students About Yourself

M7

Make Positive Contact With Parents

M8

Start Each Day With A Clean Slate

R.E.A.L. Education



Connection

R

Relevance | having significant and demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand.

E

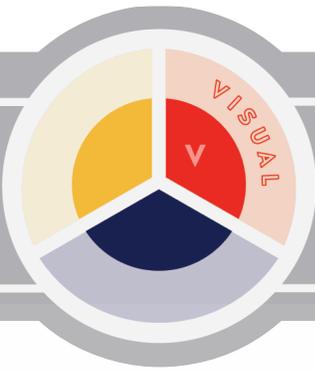
Empathy | the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

A

Action | the manner or method of performing.

L

Lifelong-Learning | knowledge acquired by systematic study in any field or scholarly application.



VISUAL SPACE

STAPLE & Definitions

Visual Space | Aspects of a space balanced with examples, exposures, and experiences to support learning.

V1 Model Expectations

V2 Post A Variety of Student Work

V3 Provide Low Light

V4 Display High Quality Exemplars

V5 Use Media to Enhance Learning

V6 Display Different Cultural Perspectives

V7 Use Natural Light

V8 Display Universal Vocabulary

R.E.A.L. Education Connection

R **Relevance** | having significant and demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand.

E **Empathy** | the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

A **Action** | the manner or method of performing.

L **Lifelong-Learning** | knowledge acquired by systematic study in any field or scholarly application.



PHYSICAL SPACE

STAPLE & Definitions

Physical Space | Property or body of a safe, clean, and nurturing space to support a positive learning environment.

P1

Play Low, Soft Music

P5

Make Learning Mobile

P2

Provide Flexible Seating Options

P6

Use a Student Reflection Area

P3

Use Hands-on Activities

P7

Take Active Brain Breaks

P4

Keep All Areas Clean & Organized

P8

Give Students Classroom Jobs

R.E.A.L. Education



Connection

R

Relevance | having significant and demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand.

E

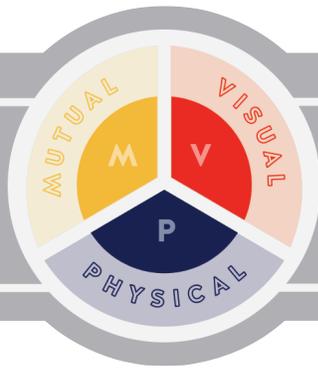
Empathy | the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

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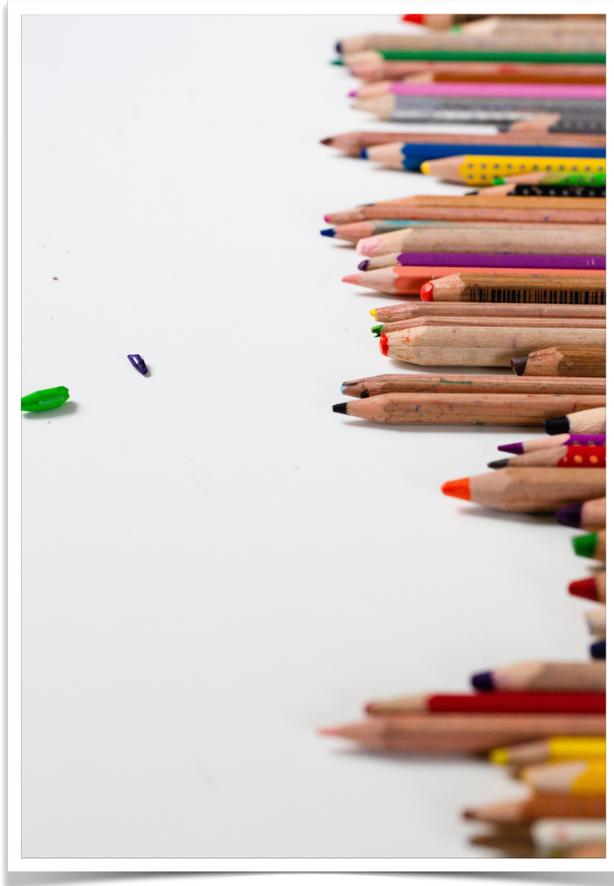
Action | the manner or method of performing.

L

Lifelong-Learning | knowledge acquired by systematic study in any field or scholarly application.



Opening S.T.A.P.L.E. Love Your Students



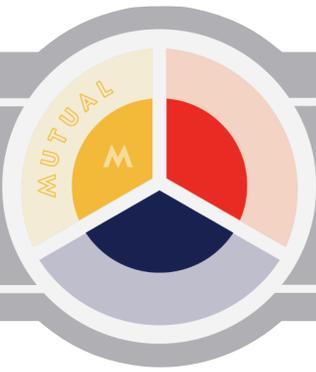
We came into the education profession because of our love for children and the desire to teach them. The students we teach come from all different walks of life. Students come to school broken, sharp, or in between.

Being able to love students no matter how they come to us is key to building positive relationships. Showing love through empathy, patience, and kindness can transform a child's life.

Children do not care how much we know until they know how much we care.

R.E.A.L. Education Connection

- **Relevance** - Teachers can personalize the learning experience by including content that aligns with students' interests and cultures, making learning more meaningful and engaging.
- **Empathy** - Teachers can create a supportive learning environment by being emotionally present and available to students, listening to their concerns, and acknowledging their feelings.
- **Action** - Teachers can actively facilitate student learning by providing timely feedback and using various teaching strategies to engage learning styles.
- **Lifelong Learning** - Teachers can encourage students to explore and pursue their interests inside and outside the classroom.



STAPLE #1

Greet Students At The Door



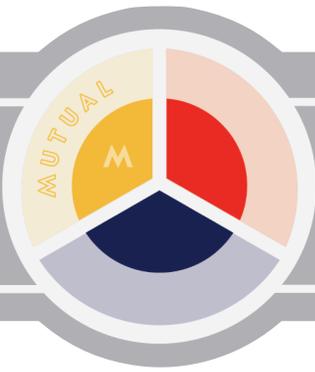
Greeting students at the door sets the tone for a positive, productive day. This small, intentional act builds connection and trust, fosters a sense of belonging, and quickly checks students' emotional states. It also helps establish a structured classroom environment that supports participation and engagement.

1. Smile – We are naturally drawn to people who smile. Additionally, smiling elevates our mood and reduces stress.
2. Make Eye Contact – Looking students in the eyes shows respect and attentiveness. It also allows teachers to assess students' readiness to learn.
3. Nice Notice – Acknowledging a student's positive qualities reinforces confidence and engagement while setting a warm, encouraging tone for the class.

[Research Resource \[2,44\]](#)

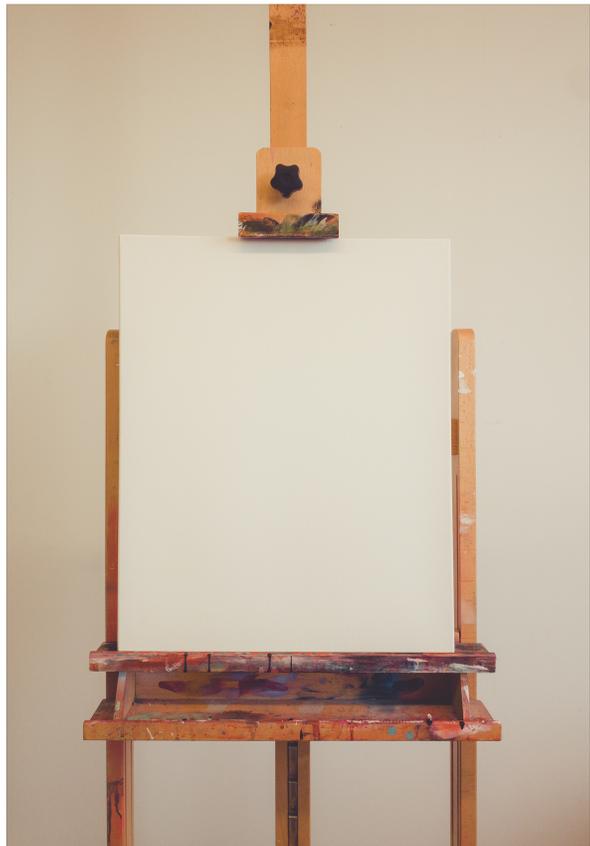
R.E.A.L. Education Connection

- **Relevance** - Greeting students shows them they are seen, valued, and respected, making the classroom a place they want to be.
- **Empathy** – Engaging students personally allows teachers to understand their emotions and experiences, creating a supportive environment.
- **Action** – Teachers can quickly identify students needing extra support and intervene early if they notice distress or disengagement.
- **Lifelong Learning** – When students experience positive, welcoming interactions, they learn the importance of professional and personal courtesy, which benefits them beyond the



STAPLE #2

Start Each Day With A Clean Slate



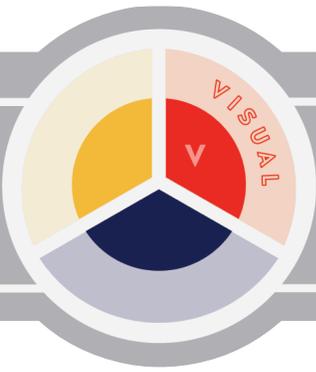
Letting go of the emotions and frustrations from a challenging day is essential for fostering positive relationships and maintaining a supportive classroom environment. Starting each day with a clean slate allows teachers and students to focus on growth and new opportunities rather than dwelling on past mistakes. This approach reinforces trust, accountability, and a culture of empathy.

1. Forgiveness - Forgive students for past behaviors to focus on their potential.
2. Forget – Don't let yesterday's behavior define today's interactions.
3. Move On – Use the MOVE-ON Method to approach each day with a positive, forward-focused mindset.

[Research Resource \[17.67.85\]](#)

R.E.A.L. Education Connection

- **Relevance** – A clean slate allows students to focus on the present, making their learning experience more meaningful and engaging.
- **Empathy** – Giving students a fresh start fosters understanding and helps them feel supported, even after mistakes.
- **Action** – Knowing they have an opportunity to improve motivates students to work towards their goals and overcome challenges.
- **Lifelong Learning** – Modeling forgiveness and resilience teaches students the value of growth and continuous self-improvement.



STAPLE #3

Model Expectations



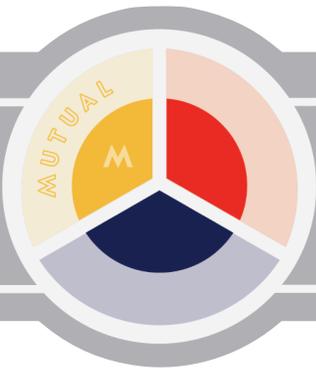
Modeling expectations helps students understand and practice the behaviors and routines needed for success. When students see and hear clear examples, it reduces confusion and builds accountability. Effective modeling requires teachers to communicate, stay consistent, and ensure expectations are achievable and connected to student needs.

1. Clear Expectations – Students must know exactly what is expected before being held accountable.
2. Consistent Expectations – Consistency builds trust—expectations one day should be expected every day.
3. Obtainable Expectations – Expectations should be realistic and developmentally appropriate for all students.

[Research Resource \[34.45\]](#)

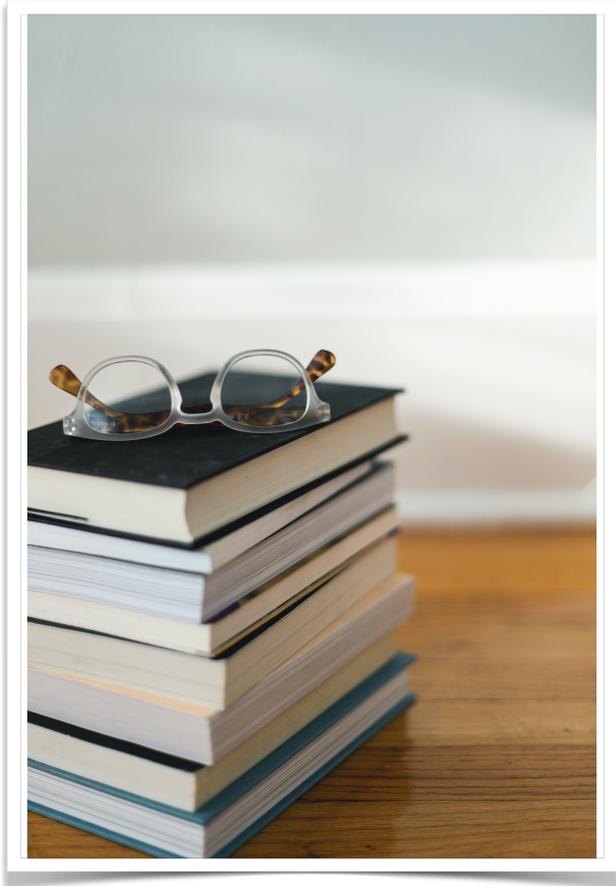
R.E.A.L. Education Connection

- **Relevance** – Demonstrating real-world applications helps students see the importance and usefulness of their learning.
- **Empathy** – Modeling respect and inclusivity helps students develop empathy and learn to interact with diverse people.
- **Action** – Encouraging responsibility and positive contributions can inspire students to become active and engaged citizens.
- **Lifelong Learning** – Teaching students to ask questions, analyze information, and reflect fosters intellectual curiosity and a love of learning.



STAPLE #4

Learn About Student Interests and Backgrounds



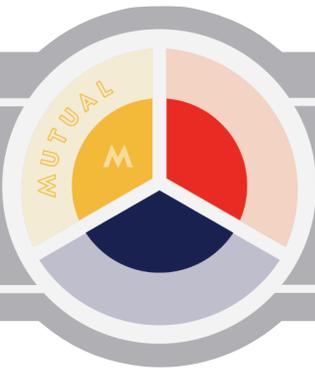
Learning about your students is a powerful way to discover what drives and inspires them. Taking time to understand their interests and backgrounds helps build stronger relationships and fosters a more inclusive, engaging classroom environment.

1. Use a Student Interest Survey - Ask students about their hobbies, favorite subjects, and goals.
2. Try the 3-2-1 Share Method - Engage students in sharing personal experiences to build community while learning about their backgrounds.
3. Incorporate Student Interests into Lessons - Tie content to what students care about to boost engagement.

[Research Resource \[18,44\]](#)

R.E.A.L. Education Connection

- **Relevance** – By understanding students’ backgrounds and interests, teachers make learning more meaningful and relevant to real-world experiences.
- **Empathy** – Learning about students’ lives allows teachers to understand their perspectives better, fostering an inclusive and supportive classroom.
- **Action** – Knowing students’ backgrounds helps teachers identify potential challenges and opportunities for providing additional support.
- **Lifelong Learning** – When students see themselves reflected in the learning experience, they begin to view learning as a continuous part of who they are, not just something they do at school.



STAPLE #5

Give 4:1 Positive vs Corrective Feedback



The feedback we give shapes student behavior and motivation. Students repeat behaviors that receive the most attention. A 4:1 ratio of positive to corrective feedback ensures students receive more reinforcement for what they're doing right versus constant redirection. Positive feedback encourages growth and confidence, while corrective feedback should focus on the desired behavior.

1. Awareness – Become aware of the number of positive versus corrective statements you make.
2. The phrasing of Commands – Rephrase negative statements to focus on the desired behavior rather than what to stop.
3. Increase Positive Comments – Start small and build up to the 4:1 ratio by intentionally recognizing positive daily behaviors.

[Research Resource \[33,54,89\]](#)

R.E.A.L. Education



Connection

- **Relevance** – Positive feedback reinforces the behaviors and skills students need to succeed academically and socially.
- **Empathy** – Acknowledging students' efforts shows that teachers see their progress and care about their development.
- **Action** – Giving clear, specific feedback helps students understand what they're doing well and where to improve.
- **Lifelong Learning** – Encouraging a growth mindset helps students develop resilience, self-motivation, and a desire to improve.



STAPLE #6

Take Active Brain Breaks



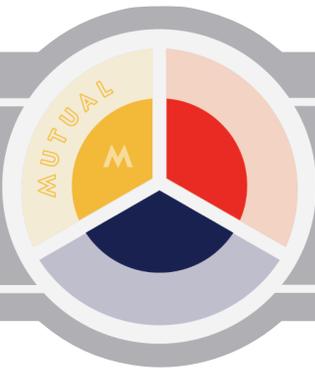
Long periods of sitting can lead to restlessness, reduced focus, and mental fatigue. Active brain breaks provide a reset for the mind and body, boosting energy, improving mood, and helping students regain attention during extended instructional blocks. Movement also stimulates neural activity, increases oxygen flow to the brain, and supports better learning outcomes. Regular, intentional breaks improve overall classroom engagement and behavior.

1. Play a Movement Game (Online or In-Person).
2. Take a walk outside.
3. Do stationary exercises.

Research Resource [[14,24,53,80](#)]

R.E.A.L. Education Connection

- **Relevance:** When students are given a choice of brain break activities, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated to learn.
- **Empathy:** Students who engage in group activities better understand and appreciate their peers.
- **Action:** When students are given regular breaks to be active, they are more likely to be focused and productive in the classroom.
- **Lifelong Learning:** When students are encouraged to take breaks and prioritize their well-being, they develop habits supporting their ongoing learning and personal growth.



STAPLE #7

Involve Students in Decision-Making



When students are involved in decision-making, they feel empowered, respected, and invested in the classroom environment. This collaboration fosters trust, builds ownership of learning, and helps students think their input is valued.

1. **Setting Expectations Together** – Start the year with a reset by brainstorming classroom expectations together.
2. **Communicate Clearly** – Clarify which decisions students can influence and which are non-negotiable.
3. **Encourage Participation** – Make student input a regular part of your classroom routines.

[Research Resource \[45,76\]](#)

R.E.A.L. Education Connection

- **Relevance** - When students are involved in decisions that impact their daily experiences, they see the relevance of their input. This motivates them to engage more deeply.
- **Empathy** - Including students in decision-making demonstrates that you value their perspectives. Listening to their ideas builds trust and mutual respect.
- **Action** - Acting on student input shows that their voices matter. When they see their ideas implemented, they develop a sense of ownership.
- **Lifelong Learning** - Decision-making builds critical thinking and collaboration skills that extend beyond the classroom.



STAPLE #8

Keep All Areas Clean & Organized



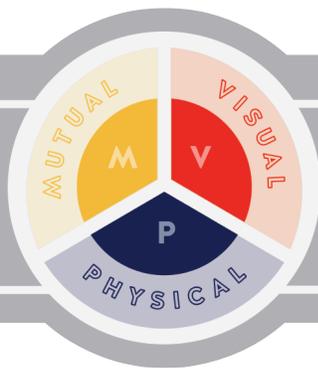
A clean and organized classroom sets the tone for safety, structure, and a focused learning environment. When students see cleanliness modeled and participate in maintaining order, they learn responsibility and life skills that extend beyond school. Simple routines and thoughtful setup create a space where students can focus on learning without distraction.

1. Set up a routine for daily cleaning and organizing.
2. Maximize Classroom Structure to Promote Safety
3. Examine the Classroom Daily for Areas Needing Attention.

[Research Resource \[21,79\]](#)

R.E.A.L. Education Connection

- o **Relevance:** A clean and organized classroom enhances relevance by providing a comfortable, distraction-free environment.
- o **Empathy:** Keeping the classroom clean and organized promotes empathy by creating a shared space everyone can respect and appreciate.
- o **Action:** A clean and organized classroom encourages students to take action and model responsibility and respect.
- o **Lifeong Learning:** A clean and organized classroom fosters a love of learning and a sense of ownership and responsibility that can translate to other areas of life.



Closing S.T.A.P.L.E. Take Care of Yourself



Teaching is a calling. With teaching duties, responsibilities, and daily caring for many students, we sometimes forget to take care of ourselves. Taking care of yourself is a foundation for excellent teaching and learning. We must remember to focus on health and wellness through:

Sleep - Get at least 6-8 hours nightly.

Nutrition - Drink plenty of water and eat healthy foods, including fruit and vegetables.

Exercise - At least 30 minutes/daily.

Mindfulness/Meditation - Spend a few minutes each day in quiet time to reflect on the day and being grateful.

R.E.A.L. Education Connection

- **Relevance:** Self-care keeps you mentally present and emotionally available to connect learning to students' lives.
- **Empathy:** Taking care of yourself helps you stay patient and calm, and better support those around you.
- **Action:** Taking care of yourself gives you the energy and focus to show up and do your best daily.
- **Lifelong Learning:** When students see you making healthy choices, they learn that taking care of yourself is part of growing and learning.

ANTHONY **M** CHILES

Inspiring REAL Connections, in the Digital Age

Anthony M. Chiles is an engaging communicator and an expert in helping people build REAL connections with others and create positive learning environments in schools. With over 20 years of experience as an educator and administrator in Georgia, Anthony is deeply committed to servant leadership and applies a head, heart, and hands approach to teaching others.



Anthony holds a Bachelor of Music Education from Berry College, where he developed a strong foundation in music and the arts. He then pursued further academic achievements, obtaining a Master's and Specialist in Educational Leadership from Georgia College and State University. Additionally, Anthony has earned a Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) Endorsement from Augusta University, equipping him with a multidisciplinary perspective that enhances his ability to address complex challenges in today's educational landscape.

Anthony cherishes his role as a husband to Sherrie and a father to their six beautiful children. Growing up as a military dependent, he has had the privilege of experiencing diverse cultures and backgrounds, instilling in him a deep appreciation for inclusivity and a genuine desire to support individuals from all walks of life. He is dedicated to creating transformative experiences and empowering others to thrive personally and professionally.

Stay Connected:     @anthonymchiles