



The Power of Expectations | Show Notes

Today we're going to look at a simple diagram that might change teaching for you. Once you "get it," you won't see your students the same way again. We'll also work through three practical ways to help your students improve in class.

PUSH vs. PULL

When it comes to your classroom, there are two main styles of motivation. They are the philosophies of Push and Pull.

The Push approach is when you have a goal for your students and you put pressure on them to achieve that goal. This pressure could include things like nagging, begging, negotiating, bribing and even threatening your students.

This approach leaves loyalties hanging by a thread, it puts nerves on edge, and keeps mutiny just one misstep away. Not fun.

The other option is the Pull philosophy. This is when you have a goal for your students and you encourage and inspire them to achieve that goal. You lead them to the goal, acting as a role model for what you want. You call them up to a higher level of behavior and learning. You help cause a desire for the goal to awaken in them. And you support and guide them along the way.

The result is a group of students that is mostly excited to learn, high in motivation and energy, and that is making consistent progress.

THE PYGMALION EFFECT

Obviously, we all know which one we want. So how do we get there?

Before we get to the practical steps, there's one thing you have to know first, otherwise the rest won't work. And that's the power of your expectations.

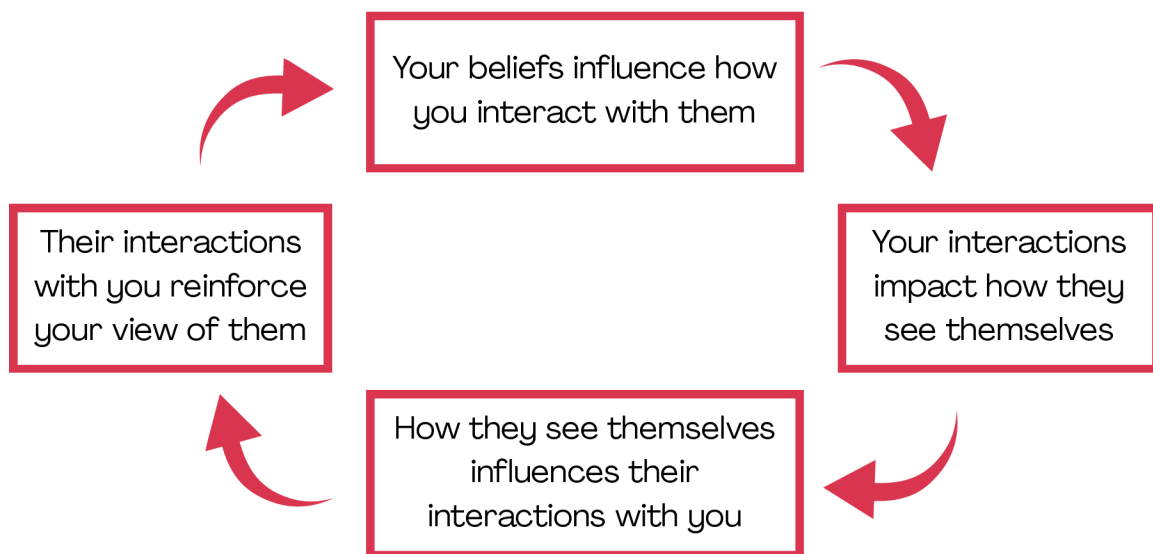
You may have heard the phrase: "You get what you expect."

While this isn't 100% true all the time, it's way closer to reality than we might realize.

A famous study* has shown that the grades of certain students in a class improved solely because of the expectations their teacher had for them, and the teacher's actions that followed as a result.

There's a simple framework that encapsulates this idea, and it's called the Pygmalion Effect (aka "self-fulfilling prophecy").

THE PYGMALION EFFECT (CONT.)



What's fascinating is that the cycle can be either positive or negative based largely on where it starts.

If the child acts out because of his poor perception of himself, that can negatively affect your beliefs, which in turn alters your behavior towards him. This reinforces his negative beliefs about himself, which leads to a negative self-fulfilling prophecy.

This means that you as the teacher must decide beforehand that you will choose to believe the best about your students. If you wait to see what they're like, they will begin the cycle and you will be left responding to their behavior, which puts them in charge.

When you go in with a predetermined, positive belief, *you* start the cycle. If you're consistent, this will force them to respond to what you believe about them, which will begin to change their behavior.

If you secretly believe that your students can't learn, and that you're wasting your time, that belief will become a reality.

However, if you have a fundamental belief in their ability to change (more specifically in God's ability to change them), then you'll keep going when others quit. You'll refuse to give up on even the toughest child, even if they've given up on themselves. You'll be there to pull out the potential within, because you believe it's there. By harnessing the power of your expectations for good, you will see your role as a teacher in a whole new way. And you'll make the game winnable for your students.

Now that you have a good handle on the power of your expectations, here are three practical ways to cause your students to rise to your expectations.

01 Give Them an Inspiring Identity

Too many kids take what they think must be true about themselves and live it out. They believe things like:



But God has a different vision for them. It's our job to tell them what that vision is. This means we must ask God for His perspective and how He sees these children. Use your imagination and think ahead to who God wants them to be, not just who they are now or what they did wrong in the moment.

We want the heart attitude that says, *"I believe you're capable of great things, so let's work to reach them together."*

Once you see them correctly, look for each child's unique traits, whether good or bad. Are they energetic, friendly, overly sensitive, impetuous? Use that trait to give you clues about how to inspire them. Find the good or potential good in that main quality, then cast a vision for their identity, for both the immediate and long term.

Examples might include:

Short term: *You're a leader. You're a good friend. You're a hard worker. You're a good protector.*

Long term: *I believe that you're going to be a great father some day. I think you're going to change people's lives with your leadership.*

Be consistent and keep at it.

You can also create an identity for your whole class. This can give them a clearer picture of the behavior you expect.

➤➤➤ Want more on this topic? | Suggested Resources

- Video | Character-Based Correction: <https://youtu.be/bzMlyvCPJd4>
- Video | Praise Your Students the Right Way: Coming soon!

02 Give Them Clear Expectations

Most people don't achieve their goals because they don't really know what they are. They have a vague idea, but the finish line is fuzzy. In the same way, we might know what we want to see in our classroom, but if it isn't clear to our students, then we're leaving them with a fuzzy finish line while expecting them to somehow just "do better." That isn't fair to them.

It's good to be inspiring about their identities. But when it comes to your expectations for the behavior of the class, detailed is best. Your expectations need to be simple but specific.

Much of the time, what we see as disobedience is actually a lack of clarity plus boredom. Your students aren't mind readers. They won't know what you want unless you tell them (a lot, and often). Repeat your expectations until you're sick of it. That's when they'll start getting it. And don't just tell them what you want; tell them how to get there. Give them actions that will lead to the result you seek.

When you set a goal for them and provide clear steps to get there, and you keep at it, nine times out of ten, the student will achieve it.

Have practices and competitions until everyone is on the same page. Remember to stay consistent. Require the same thing, done in the same way so they can always know what to expect.

03 Give Them Genuine Praise

Everyone needs feedback. Let them know right away if they did it right or not. Remember, they won't know for sure unless you tell them. Gently correct any issues, and really celebrate when they get it right.

Remember: **Praise what you want, correct what you don't.**

Make sure that your praise is genuine and generous. Praise them for the right choice they made, not just for the result itself.

Liberally praising and rewarding kids for behavior that meets your expectations helps them feel like they're making progress. This makes it a little more likely that they'll repeat the same good behavior next time. So make it a big deal!

CONCLUSION

Remember, you are ridiculously in charge of your classroom. If things aren't going how you want, examine your approach.

When you take the time to expect great things from your students, and make your expectations crystal clear and achievable, it will give your students the opportunity and desire to rise to the occasion and meet those expectations.

? What is your general expectation of your students?

? How have you experienced the Pygmalion Effect in your own life (positive or negative)?

? If you could wish anything for your students, what would it be?

? What is one practical way you can begin to call your students up to a higher level?

“ The student will rise—or fall—to the level of your *truest* expectations. ”

➤➤➤ Want more? | Additional Resources

Congratulations on taking one more step in your journey of learning and personal growth!

THANK YOU for taking the time to invest in yourself today so that you can be a better children's ministry leader tomorrow.

THANK YOU for investing in the next generation and living in light of eternity.

We want to encourage and equip you for greater ministry impact, so please utilize the following resources!

— “ —

If we stop learning today, we stop teaching tomorrow.

- Howard G. Hendricks

— ” —

More training resources!

- Children's ministry training: www.youtube.com/@TrainingontheGoVideos/videos
- Devotionals: www.inthegap.org/edify/
- Courses: www.inthegap.org/resources/

Volunteer at an after-school Bible Club!

- What is a Bible Club: <https://youtu.be/WwcDxYMNleY>
- His life was changed at Bible Club: <https://youtu.be/Cx2EfuBlecM>
- Join the mission: www.mission414.net/

Fun & educational resources for kids!

- Christian puppet videos for kids: www.youtube.com/@InTheGapKids/videos
- Character lessons, videos, and downloads: www.inthegapkids.org/
- Character curriculum for kids' ministry: www.inspirecurriculum.com/

See what God is doing and get involved!

- Summer missions for youth: www.inthegap.org/operationimpactoverview/
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/inthegap.ok/
- Instagram: www.instagram.com/inthegapokc/
- Newsletter updates straight to your inbox: www.inthegap.org/subscribe/