

Relationships, Relationships, Relationships

By Ashlyn Diamond

All right, so I have now been teaching for three years. And when I first started teaching, I had a very different mindset than I do now. I was so focused on hitting the standards and making sure I was teaching what I needed to teach and making sure that they were coming from point A to point B and ready for first grade. And I really didn't take the time to develop super strong relationships. I did have good relationships with my students, but I didn't invest in the time that might've been needed to develop them further and deeper relationships with my kids. I also was not very good at diving deep into the curriculum to promote thinking, and I wasn't good at teaching about social emotional skills that kindergarten really needs. So it was just very surface level baseline teaching, just the standards so that they memorized it and passed the assessments and got ready for first grade.

That was my first year. My second year I had a student that entirely changed my entire perspective of teaching and how to approach education. And so this is like my paradigm shift. And yes, those standards are important, but really what's most important is building that relationship. First and foremost, this kid came into my classroom and he was from a foreign country and this kid had some severe behavior and mental problems and he got, he was angry, and so I would ask him to do something and he would tell me no he didn't want to. And I would be trying my small teacher tool bag, "oh, come on, let's try this. I'll help you". And he would get very, very angry 'cause he didn't want to do his work or he just didn't feel like anybody cared about him. And so he would throw the papers and pencils across the floor.

It did escalate, and he would throw things off my shelves. He would kind of kick tables down. It escalated to the point where he was hitting and biting and kicking me, and I had to evacuate my class from the room. So it got very aggressive very quickly, and I did not know how to handle this. But I also wasn't teaching those foundational social emotional skills of teaching how to deal with these big emotions and anger. And I think that that is so important to teach kids. And I know that it's hard, but setting aside time to build a relationship with each kid that isn't always about academics and setting aside time to do these social emotional lessons with your class, because then when you do that, you can ultimately have a good strong classroom culture to then start focusing on those standards. And so once I started shifting that into my second year, it was a game changer.

I mean, those behaviors stopped almost instantly. Once, soon as I got that relationship. And then in my third year, I continued that and I focused on that social emotional from

the get go. So then within the couple months of school, I could dive into the curriculum and we could create good thinking habits and, and working together and having time where the kids can talk to each other and setting those expectations so that they know with expected of them and what's expected for them to learn. And it's just such a powerful thing when you start at the beginning and, and set those relationships. I mean, that's honestly what teaching boils down to, in my opinion, is Relationships. Relationships, Relationships.