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Perspective: A Game Changer in the Classroom and in Our Lives

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Perspective: A Game Changer in the Classroom and in Our Lives

www.edutopia.org/blog/perspective-game-changer-in-classroom-lori-desautels

What is perspective? What does it have to do with teaching, leadership, and learning? *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines perspective as: "A particular attitude toward or way of regarding something; a point of view." Blending this definition into our instruction, classroom cultures, and relationships, perspective drives all we are and do in our classrooms. Perspectives are bundles of beliefs, a mindset that we each embrace determining how we see one another, our experiences, and possibilities or lack thereof. As teachers, our perspectives directly impact student emotions and their learning, because [emotions are contagious](#).



How I feel, understand, or interpret any situation always determines the "perceived" outcome of an event, or the collective disposition experienced and acted upon with a group of students or colleagues. When we feel any kind of negative emotion, our perspectives narrow, and we spin in repetitive conflict cycles, reacting and subconsciously creating more negative emotion. Under negatively experienced stress, we feel bound and limited in our choices of responses. Neuroplasticity is the brain's innate ability to structurally and functionally change with every new experience. Our perspectives hold the power to create more of what we desire to experience.

When we change our perspectives, we provide ourselves with a novel view through a lens that can open us to a [growth mindset](#), defined by Carol Dweck as a belief that emotional and cognitive intelligence can change based on our desires and the plasticity of our thought processes.

What can we do to shift perspective in our schools and classrooms? From my experiences, these three practices might assist us in approaching relationships, instruction, and even assessments with a novel working lens and increased learning.

1. Recognize Triggers and Challenges

Write down two or three of the greatest teachers in your classroom or building. (These are the individuals who trigger hot emotion inside of you.) Your triggers could also be a particular routine or procedure that feels stale and oppressive, or simply not invigorating anymore. After you identify the experiences or persons that feel challenging; write down two positive outcomes that, once upon a time, did not feel so challenging about those persons or situations. These don't have to be enormous realizations. They can be daily "noticings" that have disappeared from our vision because our mindset and eyes have landed on the tedious, repetitive negative.

Here's a powerful example. A few months ago, Darren began his typical rendition of a poor choice sequence of

tiresome behaviors. He was bouncing out of his seat without permission, interrupting instruction as he conversed with students around him. When asked to turn around or to please sit down, there was the usual eye rolling, denying, and increased anger. I decided to create a shift for both of us, and thought of Darren's expertise and strengths. I knew he was very familiar with smartphones and, even at 12 years old, probably knew more about them than I did. I used his knowledge and leadership to turn our perspectives around. "Darren," I said, "I need to respond right away to one of my students who just emailed me at the University, but I have to prepare for our group discussion here in three minutes. Could you please send her a message for me?" I pulled out my phone, called up the email, and explained to Darren what I wanted to say.

There are no words to describe how excited he was as he crafted a perfect message to my undergraduate student, forgetting his bad mood and his "felt" opposition toward me and toward the class. I thanked him, and we began again. Darren asked if he could use his new phone to pull up additional research while other students moved to the computers. The rest of the afternoon felt different and pleasurable, as my perspective guided Darren away from his usual precipice and onto the safer ground of feeling capable and successful.

2. Show a Different View

Teach your students about the power of perspective. Explain that we all see, feel and behave in ways that mirror our own attitudes, thoughts, and emotions. As you begin to implement the muscle of perspective, greet students at the door with a directive to move to a certain area in the room so that each student is seeing a different view. A few students could be lying down, while others could be facing a bulletin board, the door, the sink, a window. Explain that although everyone is gathered in the same room, each person has a different view, and that is how we can all approach daily experiences and relationships. After each student has recorded his or her view, talk about these changed views, relating this activity to a frustration or a stuck thought or feeling. There is great change that occurs in groups as together we can brainstorm new ways to see worn-out behaviors and relationships.

3. Offer a Fresh Start

Change up the routine for a week to generate fresh methods of instruction and classroom culture. When students walk in on Monday morning, offer subjects in a different order, wear your clothes backward, or create mottos or nicknames to use for the week based on an attribute of each student. Connect props to content and standards, wear two different shoes, or greet your class as you sit by a freshly decorated entrance to the room, a gesture that indirectly states, "You have a fresh start every time you walk through these doors. What will you choose to see and create today?"

Some people see scars; and it is wounding they remember.

To me, they are proof of the fact that there is healing.

-- Linda Hogan