

## How To Build Instant Rapport With Individual Students

March 2, 2019 by Michael Linsin

Here at SCM, we talk a lot about the importance of building rapport.

And how it's best to focus on your entire class rather than individual students.

Because, trying to build rapport one student at a time is . . .

- time consuming
- awkward for students
- less efficient and effective

Simply being pleasant, on the other hand, day after day, effortlessly draws students *to* you.

And when students like you and want to be around you and get to know you better, [rapport comes naturally](#).

Conversation flows. Banter is easy and organic. Your influence stays with you wherever you go.

However, there are times when you have to meet with individual students, which can momentarily change the relationship.

You see, those students who are so comfortable around you in a group setting tend to become self-conscious when you speak to them individually, especially if it involves their performance.

Thus, being able to put them at ease becomes paramount.

Now, it's common for teachers to try to coax students out of their shell by becoming overtly friendly, by engaging them directly and making small talk. But as we've covered in previous articles, this risks pushing them away and causing even more awkwardness.

Luckily, there is a strategy that can make them immediately comfortable around you. It's called **isopraxism**.

Isopraxism is a form of mirroring that happens naturally between friends and spouses. It's an unconscious behavior that sees the pair or small group copying each other's mannerisms, way of speaking, and even appearance.

You've no doubt experienced this yourself.

It's something we all do without thought around those we care about. It shows our affection, empathy, and trust and bonds us in deeper, more satisfying relationships.

It brings us closer and improves rapport between us. Imitation, as they say, is the sincerest form of flattery.

Hacking into this phenomenon is the key to building fast rapport with individual students. No, it doesn't involve dressing like them or using their favorite slang terms. It's not about mimicking their tone of voice or [trying to be their friend](#).

If it's inauthentic, if it isn't *you*, then it will backfire every time. You'll look ridiculous and your students will become even more painfully uncomfortable. The key isn't to mirror anything visible or audible.

**It's to mirror their energy.**

Teachers tend to operate at a high frequency. The heavy responsibility of the job can naturally pull you into a more heightened state.

It makes you hyper-aware and on guard, which in turn can cause you to talk and move faster and behave with greater intensity.

The problem with this is that rapport happens on a more relaxed plane. This is one of the many reasons why all of our strategies at SCM support and encourage [a calm temperament](#).

Furthermore, students tend to operate at a lower frequency, sometimes several notches below their teacher. And if you're always *up here* and they're always *down there*, then there will be a disconnect in the relationship.

To make matters worse, if your energy is too intense, if you're stressed-out and anxious, it will start to affect them. Your students will become excitable and misbehavior will increase tenfold.

So, while it pays to cultivate a relaxed, easygoing disposition as your default setting, it becomes even more important when interacting one on one with students.

The good news is that this particular form of isopraxism isn't difficult.

Before calling over the student you want to speak to, take a moment to notice their energy and then simply lock into it. Mirror their easy pace and soft expression. Match their relaxed muscle tone and breathing pattern.

Don't worry about being perfect. It's a subtle change, but one you'll find easy to mimic.

If they seem apprehensive, however, then allow your own calm spirit to bring them into a softer, more open place. Just [smile and breathe](#). Surprisingly, you'll notice a change as soon as they enter your energy field.

I know the strategy seems a bit out there, new-agey and woo-woo, but in the world of behavioral science it's a proven and established method of inducing rapport.

**And it really works.**

So whether you're just saying hello to a student or meeting with them more formally, use the power of isopraxism to hack into the same wavelength.

Where your advice, instruction, and words of wisdom are sure to hit their mark.

**PS** – My new book *The Smart Classroom Management Way* is still in the interior layout and design phase (sigh), but on track for release on May 7th.