

## Why Student Modeling Is So Important

By Michael Linsin

Modeling can be a uniquely powerful strategy.

Which is why the most effective teachers rely on it more than any other method.

Done correctly, your students will emulate anything and everything you model with remarkable accuracy.

The key is to model in such a way that causes them to picture themselves following the precise path you create for them.

They must be able to visualize completing each step along the way *before* it can become a reality, which takes not only a skillful performance from you, but also from one of your students.

You see, one of most critical steps to effective modeling is to select a student to follow your example, to mimic your moves down to the very last detail.

Why is this important?

Because it proves to the rest of your class that it can be done. It proves that one of their own can perform the task, routine, or objective as well as the teacher – and without a stitch of help.

It removes any and every excuse before they even have a chance to try it themselves. It makes the statement, far better than anything you can say, that the expectation isn't to kind-sorta [follow your directions](#), but to mirror them in every respect.

Asking a student to model immediately after you also keeps you sharp and at the top of your game.

When you know that the success of the lesson hinges on how well the chosen student performs, you become hyper-aware of your presentation, striving for clarity, specificity, captivation, and even humor.

As for who to select, the goal is that it shouldn't matter. The goal is to get to the point in your modeling and classroom management skills that you can pull a name out of a hat.

Some teachers will tell you to only select students you know will perform well. Others say that it's more powerful to choose among your most challenging students.

The problem with both approaches is that if any one student realizes that they're unlikely to be chosen, then it will affect their [attentiveness](#).

Knowing that it could be anyone keeps everyone on their toes.

One solution if you're not yet ready to pick randomly is to have more than one student model – either one after the other or, if possible, together.

Group modeling can also be effective.

If you were a fly on the wall of the most effective teachers, those whose students appear so curiously independent, focused, and on task, you would learn that they spend a good portion of their day modeling – and that they're very, very good at it.

No matter what you teach or what grade level, anything and everything you want your students to be able *to do*, should be modeled. Every transition. Every task. Every routine and procedure.

*Show* them what you expect. Lead them from the beginning, through every footfall, to a successful finish.

Then choose a student to check your work, to walk the untrodden path, to let your class know that it's okay to proceed.