



*Thank you*

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INTEREST IN  
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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *The Teacher Credibility and Collective Efficacy Playbook* by Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, and Dominique Smith. In this excerpt, the authors define and explain how to use teacher credibility.

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## Trust

Students need to know that their teachers really care about them as individuals and have their best academic and social interests at heart. Students also want to know that their teachers are true to their word and are reliable.

A few points about trust:

1. If you make a promise, work to keep it (or explain why you could not).
2. Tell students the truth about their performance. (They know when their work is below standard and wonder why you are telling them otherwise.)
3. Don't spend all of your time trying to catch students in the wrong (and yet be honest about the impact that their behavior has on you as an individual).
4. Examine any negative feelings you have about specific students. (They sense it, and it compromises the trust within the classroom.)

## Competence

In addition to trust, students want to know that their teachers know their stuff and know how to teach that stuff. They expect an appropriate level of expertise and accuracy from their teachers. Further, students measure competence by the ability of the teacher to deliver instruction that is coherent and organized. They expect that lessons are well paced and include accurate information.

1. Make sure you know the content well, and be honest when a question arises that you are not sure about. (This requires planning in advance.)
2. Organize lesson delivery in a cohesive and coherent way.
3. Consider your nonverbal behaviors that communicate competence, such as the position of your hands when you talk with students or the facial expressions you make. (Students notice defensive positions, and they recognize nonverbal indications that they are not valued when they speak.)

## Dynamism

This dimension of teacher credibility focuses on the passion teachers bring to the classroom and their content. It is really about the ability to communicate your enthusiasm for your subject and your students. And it's about developing spirited lessons that capture students' interest. To improve dynamism, consider the following:

1. Rekindle your passion for the content you teach by focusing on the aspects that got you excited as a student. Remember why you wanted to be a teacher and the content you wanted to introduce to your students. Students notice when their teachers are bored by the content and when



TEACHER  
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SOCIOECONOMIC  
STATUS.



## Immediacy

This final construct of teacher credibility focuses on *accessibility* and *relatability* as perceived by students. Teachers who move around the room and are easy to interact with increase students' perception of immediacy.

Teachers need to be accessible, and yet there needs to be a sense of urgency—this signals to students that their learning is important.

1. Get to know something personal about each student, as students know when you don't know their names or anything about them.
2. Teach with urgency but not to the point that it causes undue stress for them. That said, students want to know that their learning matters and that you are not wasting their time.
3. Start the class on time, and use every minute wisely. This means that there are tasks students can complete while you engage in routine tasks, such as taking attendance, and that you have a series of sponge activities ready when lessons run short. Students notice when time is wasted. And when there is “free time,” they believe that their learning is not an urgent consideration of their teachers.

When a teacher is *not* perceived as credible, students tune out. And quite frankly, we can't afford for students to do so. We need them to engage, to trust their teachers, and to choose to participate in their learning. These four aspects of teacher credibility—trust, competence, dynamism, and immediacy—can help them do just that. But, as we noted in the introduction, we cannot stop at the individual level. The power of the collective cannot be forgotten.



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## PAUSE & PONDER

Capture the essence of each of the characteristics of teacher credibility in 10 words or fewer, and record them in the graphic organizer below. Which of the four aspects of teacher credibility are highest for you? Which is an area of growth?

**Say it in 10 words or less!**

- Refer to pages 16–19 in this chapter that talk about each characteristic of teacher credibility.
- Capture the essence of each characteristic in ten words or less.

