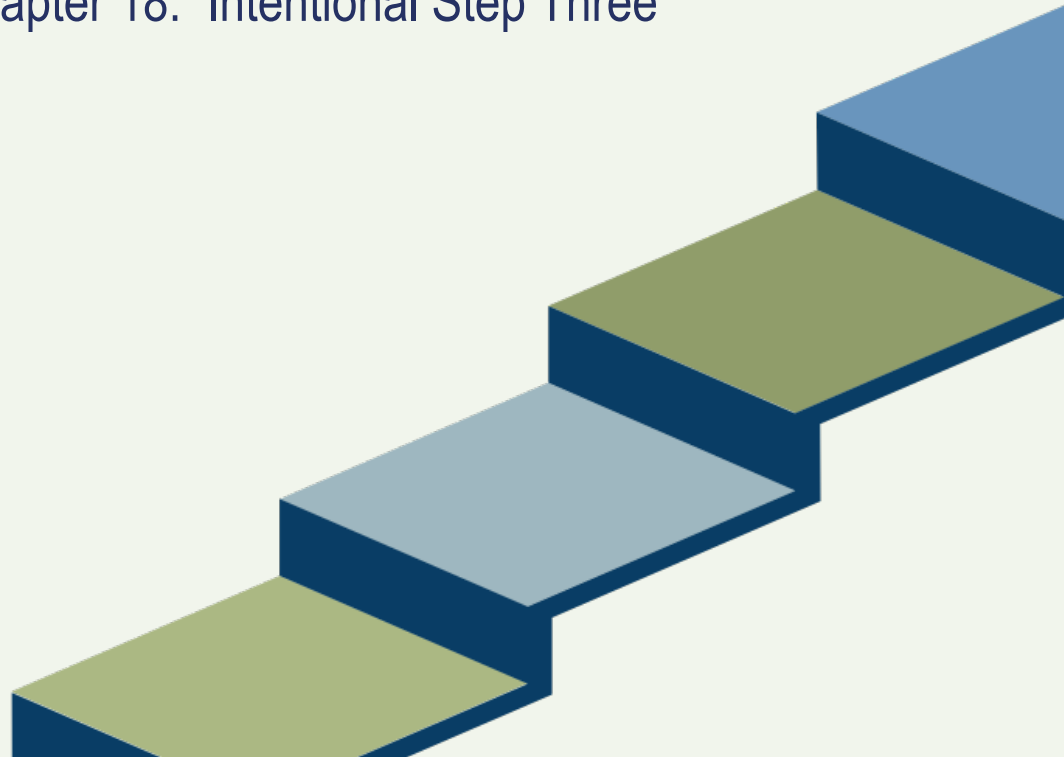


# Intentional Instructional Moves

Strategic Steps to  
Accelerate Student  
Learning

## Companion Guide

Chapter 18: Intentional Step Three



## Chapter 18

### Intentional Step Three: Foster Student-to-Student Relationships

Once the teacher has established relationships with the students and created a class culture of positivity and inclusivity, the next step is to encourage student-to-student relationships. These peer relationships can be fostered using collaborative structures that require students to regularly communicate, cooperate, and share responsibility with one another. Teachers can nurture a variety of student-to-student interactions, such as asking students to work with a friend, work with an acquaintance, or work with someone they don't know. The projects don't all have to be content-based either; students can paint a class mural, volunteer to clean up a portion of the classroom or school grounds, or help a peer who needs support (Venturis, n.d.). Teachers can also facilitate class meetings, circle time, or other intentional community building activities that promote peer interaction and help students bond with their classmates. We can help build more competent students and citizens by developing life skills that will aid them not only in their professional lives, but as they navigate any personal, social, or emotional situation.

#### Strategy 1: Empathy Training

Students engage in activities that help put them in another classmate's shoes so they can better understand different experiences and perspectives. Teachers can use role playing games where students act out different scenes that require them to demonstrate empathy. For instance, students can role play how to cheer up a peer who is upset or how to celebrate with a friend who is excited about an accomplishment.

Teachers can also implement Friendly Fridays, where every Friday students write an encouraging, anonymous note to a different classmate. Students can point out something that

their recipient did or accomplished, or something they like about the student. The teacher then collects the letters and distributes them to the recipients.

Empathy training helps students get to know their classmates and understand them better. It also builds stronger peer relationships and establishes a sense of psychological safety in the classroom. Students learn how to engage in positive affirmations about themselves and others, which can increase confidence and self-management and reduce conflicts (Stanfield, n.d.; (Crowe, 2022). Students will also gain valuable insight into how to navigate challenging emotions and social situations, which will benefit them beyond the classroom. As Hattie has demonstrated, self-regulation strategies (.52) and positive peer influence (.53) can have a strong effect on student outcomes.

### Strategy 2: Group Shoutouts and Salutes

Students give each other positive compliments and/or encouraging gestures during class. Shoutouts typically take the form of verbal praise, while salutes are encouraging gestures, like thumbs-up, high-fives, or finger snaps. These are quick, low-prep activities that can be added to any part of class. The teacher can invite students to share shoutouts and salutes during transitions (ex. at the beginning or ending of a task), or as these moments arise during lessons and activities. These compliments can acknowledge something a student did or said, or students can recognize a classmate who is attempting a challenging task. At first, the teacher can model these behaviors, but over time students should be encouraged to initiate the praise and make shoutouts a regular part of classroom interactions.

Shoutouts help keep the energy positive and high in the classroom. Students are invited to celebrate their peers and recognize each other's efforts and strengths. These kinds of positive

interactions can have a major impact on student performance. According to research, “NBA teams whose players touch the most early in the season—high fives, fist bumps, etc.—had the best records later for the season” (Minero, 2019, para. 14). Again, positive peer influence (.53) can help motivate students and fosters resilience, empathy, and leadership skills.

### Strategy 3: Paper Tweets

The teacher creates a bulletin board modeled after Twitter (Minero, 2019). Each student builds a profile and gets three followers: a friend, an acquaintance and someone they don’t know well. Students write posts about their lives, share their responses on the bulletin board, and their followers reply to their posts. The teacher can offer initial prompts to guide students as they share about themselves. The followers who reply can also be guided to write short, encouraging statements to their peers. These replies can be posted on the board, or shared directly with that student.

Paper Tweets encourage students to interact with a wider range of students in the class, as opposed to just their friends and acquaintances. It also prompts students to actively listen to each other and invest in what their peers have to say. Teachers can model proper etiquette for engaging with and responding to peer’s posts, which also offers opportunities for discussing face-to-face interactions versus online or digital ones. As students develop more agency in the activity, they can practice communication and leadership skills, along with social influence.

### Strategy 4: Conflict Resolution

The teacher and students work together to resolve conflicts in a positive and productive way. Teachers can model how to use “I” statements when discussing a conflict. For instance,

students can say: “I felt hurt when...” or “I don’t feel comfortable talking in my group because...” Teachers can also model how to restate other people’s perspectives: “It sounds like you are saying...” or “If I’m understanding you correctly...” They can direct students to focus on academic dialogue and concepts rather than personal opinions. If things get heated, teachers can give students a few minutes to write down their thoughts about the situation. The teacher will then collect these responses and prepare a discussion for the next class. If necessary, teachers can meet with students individually or work with small groups to resolve conflicts (Center for Teaching, n.d.b).

Another useful tool for classroom interactions is the THINK acronym. THINK reminds students to ask five questions of their behavior:

- Is it True?
- Is it Helpful?
- Is it Inspiring?
- Is it Necessary?
- Is it Kind?

Share this approach with students and discuss examples. For instance, the teacher might have students role play a behavior, such as talking while another student is sharing an idea. Is this behavior helpful or necessary? Is it kind? Teachers can also post an Anchor Chart or visual reminder of the THINK process in the classroom and refer to it regularly.

This strategy teaches students to pause before speaking or acting and reflect on their behavior. It also helps them build empathy, as they must reflect on how their behavior affects others. Pausing to reflect is a learning opportunity and it can help reduce conflicts (Crowe, 2022). This form of self-regulation (.52) can develop greater classroom cohesion (.44) as well.