



Surrendering the One Up Activities and Strategies for Educators

Surrendering the One Up Relationship is a set of specific strategies that help educators build authentic, unconditional relationships that help all students feel understood, valued, and safe. When done effectively, Surrendering the One Up Relationship is the X-factor for motivating all student to action and seeing their potential.

Most strategies and activities we use to Surrender the One Up fall into three categories.

1. Strategies that help us create **student connection**.
2. Strategies that facilitate **student empowerment**.
3. Strategies that are **student centered**.

We have organized this list into these three categories and recommend you find strategies and activities from all three categories to implement into your practice.

Student Connection

I know your name: One of the most simple yet effective strategies. Greet each student as they enter or leave your class by name. Shake their hand or give them a high-five. Use their names as you see them in the hall. Find opportunities to talk with them and every time--use their name.

Two Truths and a Lie: Share two true stories about yourself and one false one. You can use pictures or just explain them. Have the class try and guess which one is false. Go into more details about each story after they guess and find out the answer.

Music Playlist: Create a class playlist of songs that your students submit. This can just be fun upbeat music that they choose or if you want to increase relevance you can even ask them for music that has

deeper meaning or has influenced them in some way.

We Decide the Warm Up: Start the day with a warm up activity. The activity doesn't have to have a purpose other than to have fun with each other. This can be a simple game you play every day for 5 - 10 minutes. This can be a mindfulness activity or a song you listen to. Choose something different on a regular basis and then allow your students to decide how you will start the day.

Story of my Life: Invite students to think of the title of a book about their life. What would that title be? Why? Always be prepared to share your own first. You could even invite students to create the cover of that book artistically.

You Complete Me: Have several heart shapes cut out from paper. Each heart has a unique design on it. Cut each heart in half and randomly distribute the halves to the students. Students then have to go throughout the room looking at all the other students heart until they find the other half of the one they have with matching design. Once they find the other half of their heart they ask each other some preassigned get to know you questions.

Dress It Up: Dress up for the class. You can either dress up very professionally or classy. You can also dress up from a time period, persona, or theme.

Getting to Know You: Spotlight a student at the beginning of class for a few minutes. You can share success, interests, passions, dreams, etc.

Advise Me: If there is a situation in your life that would be appropriate or fun for your students to give you advice on... give them the opportunity. Tell them you need help deciding something. Maybe its what breed of pet to get or what to name a child. Maybe its where to take one of your children for their birthday or what present to give your significant other.

I'm Not Perfect: Find opportunities to share mistakes you make. Openly share the feelings and emotions you have as hard things happen or as you stumble and fall. It is important for students to see they are not alone in the feelings and experiences they have.

I Owe You: Anytime you make even a simple mistake with a student like mispronouncing a name or calling a student by the wrong name (because sometimes we get old and forget), respond by saying... Oh I'm so sorry. I owe you a candy bar. Then bring them a candy bar.

My Business Card: Give each of your students a business card you design that says... I'm here for you. Put your name. Email. Office hours. It's a reminder they carry with them that you are there!

Have I Got Something for You: Give students a personal token or gift. It can be a positive quote or object that serves as a reminder of some idea that you have been teaching them.

Show and Tell: Share personal stories and information about yourself through objects or pictures so that students can know you and feel you are approachable. Give students an opportunity as well.

Service Project / Giving Back: Have the class come together for a service project of some kind. The project should be focused on supporting and building up the community. As the instructor or teacher, take this opportunity to work closely alongside the students.

Check In Forms: Create Google Check in Forms with student check in questions that you have them fill out from time to time.**Personalized Wallet:** Help students create an origami wallet: <https://www.activityvillage.co.uk/origami-wallet>. Then have them draw a self a picture or representation of themselves or write some positive characteristics of themselves on the wallet. Use this as a way to learn more about the students.

Listening for Meaning: Select a song that is appropriate for your classroom or office (preferably a song that the students haven't heard before). Listen to the song together with the intent of listening to the lyrics and describing what they mean to you. Then let the student pick a song that they like and listen to it together. Describe what the lyrics mean to you and then what the student thinks they mean to them.

Always Aware: Pay attention to your students. Specifically take note of new things they wear or bring to class. Ask about them or compliment them. The fact that you are aware and notice those differences will demonstrate you care as well as give you something to talk about in the future.

I Will If You Will: Set a class goal regarding something your class would like to work toward... (assignment completion, attendance, service to others, etc). If the class reaches the goal, be willing to do something embarrassing or out of the ordinary as the reward. Perhaps you'd dress up like a character, be hit with water balloons, taped to the wall, eat a smoothie of strange ingredients, etc.

Student Empowerment

You Give the Grade: Allow students the opportunity on an assignment to grade themselves. You may want to tell them what criteria you would use for grading, but ultimately they get to decide.

You're the Leader: Allow students the opportunity to lead in different situations during the class. Examples include starting class, running an activity, teaching something, doing projects, etc.

You've Got the Blues: Tell the class that you realize that life can be challenging at home, school, or with peers. Because of that, you will give them a specific number of BLUE cards they can cash in at any time for dropping an assignment or a quiz, getting extended time on a test or larger assignment, etc.

Classroom Design Theme: Put your students into groups and let them come up with a theme and blueprint for decoration and design for your classroom or office. Use some of their elements so that the students feel like they have ideas represented in the overall design of the classroom decor or even your door to your room or office.

Passion Presenter: When you have learned about your students, bring in an outside presenter that is either a professional or expert on one of the interests and hobbies of your students. The guest can do a presentation that can be informative or fun for the students and hopefully build

upon their passion, interest or hobby. You can even gather ideas from students on who to bring into the class.

Video Project: Make a video with your students. It can relate to your content. Have them help you write out what the video will be and then carry out the project with them. This isn't an assignment you are giving them, but rather something you are working on together. For example, you may say: I want to make a video for the school about the negative affects of Labeling others. I'm going to show it to the administration so they know what we are learning about.

Quote Board: Create a quote board on a wall or bulletin board where you put up quotes and saying your students provide or really like. Start with some of your own and build it from there.

Failure Wall: Create a space where you put up an artifact, picture, word that represents times you make a mistake and then process with your students what you learned from it. If students ever feel comfortable you may be able to even facilitate students wanting to put things on the failure wall. There is power letting students see it is okay to have mistakes and learn from them.

Our Class Against the World: Let's prove them wrong. Discuss what others think are limits to what the class can achieve and set a goal to prove them wrong. Allow your students to decide what that goal should look like or sound like.

You Teach, We Learn: Give assignments or projects where the student can be the expert or teacher. Give them the opportunity to instruct you and the other students in the class.

You Make the Call: Give students several options on a project or assignment and allow them to choose which one they would like to do.

How You Share is Your Choice: Allow students the opportunity to choose how they will respond to certain prompts or questions. Some students feel more comfortably using art, others speech, some music, others through story. Give options for how students share their processing of principles and ideas.

Reward Courage: Find opportunities to reward students who show courage. When students are celebrated for speaking up, sharing ideas, or taking action, it will create a class culture where allowing your voice to be heard is valued.

Choice Boards: A choice board is either a physical object or digital creation where students actively choose projects or assignments they want to do in whatever order they choose. This can be used both with a whole class or with individual students.

Calming Centers/Rooms: This can be done in a virtual or physical environment. This is a space where a student can go and have control over what they do in order to calm down from emotional responses to something, anxiety, or for coping. We've included several examples of virtual calming centers below:

Jennifer Kortge's Calming Center: <https://bit.ly/3k7UKJv>

Ashley Wright's Calming Center: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1X6ZyXoOFnKX2HZ9FY5RPkUformEWocSPV-8Z0x__2lk/present?slide=id.p

Student Centered

Hallmark Moment: Give a positive personal note to students at some time during the semester. Make sure you use this strategy with all of your students at some point.

Art or Creativity Wall: Devote part of your wall space that is easily seen to student creativity pieces. Students can submit any type of art (drawing, poem, verse, picture, etc.) for the wall. You can either take them voluntarily or give art prompts for them. Keep their art up as part of the decor. If you want you can invite other classes to come and stroll through the art (virtually or in person). This is a great way to help students feel like your room or office is their space as well as yours.

Classroom Built For You: Construct and organize your classroom space into a place where students feel comfortable, where they want to be and learn. You could use a theme that represents one of your interests or hobbies or perhaps something you know your students are interested in. It will create an environment that is welcoming and friendly.

Weekend Wrap Up: At the start of every week, give your students time to share anything they'd like. Over time as students share, you learn more about each other and become more invested in each other's lives.

Tech Expert: Have some of your students help you with technology pieces. Act like you need some help with technology or setup and allow your students to jump in and be the expert or master (even if you understand how it works).

Make Your Connections: Roll out a piece of butcher paper big enough for every student to have a space to write down their name and answer with a picture whatever prompts you provide (favorite hobby, music, food, etc). Students then look for something similar and draw a line between your own answers with someone else's. The paper will be filled with lines and students can see a web of lines between students.

Cheer Off: Invite your students to develop class chants, cheers or raps. Explain you want to have a cheer that represents your class. Put your students in groups and give some examples. Have the groups perform and then vote on which one to represent your class. If your students are enthusiastic about it, ask your administrator if you can do the cheer the next time your class comes into an assembly or at some other place and time.

Music Life Sketch: Ask students to tell the story of their life or who they are using 3 songs that they chose to tell their story. Great way to see the world through their eyes and also give them voice in their story. May have to give guidelines for appropriateness of songs.

Video Journals: Ask students to record video responses to prompts and compile their responses to watch together.

Weekly Raffles: Hand out tickets for your students to put their names on. Pass out the tickets for being awesome, for being who they are, for saying something positive, etc. Don't attach the

tickets to behavior or academics (there are always plenty of rewards attached to those variables). Then raffle off simple items on a weekly or monthly basis (drinks, food, trinkets, stickers, etc)

Draw Your Life: Help your class film and create Draw My Life videos. You can see many examples online.

You're the Boss, I Work for You: Frequently refer to the students as the boss. Tell the students that this school was built for them. That makes them the boss.

Celebrate Success: Take opportunities to draw special attention to successes that students have like special events, reached goals or achievements (whether it be in school or out of school). Bring treats, a cake, have a party, listen to music, or any other way to make the moment special.

Share the Passion: Share one of your hobbies, interests or passions and provide opportunities for your students to do the same (referred to as Passion Presentations).

Random act of service: Perform a random act of service or appreciation for a student with an encouraging note to pay it forward.

Come Together: Create a class competition against another class, instead of competing against each other. This allows students to work together with a common goal.

'A' students: Frequently refer to all your students as A students and treat them accordingly.

A Call Home: Call the parents or guardians of your students to simply tell them how grateful you are to have them in class or to celebrate growth or success. This call will be a welcome communication when frequently parents only hear from educators when something goes wrong.

A Letter Home: Send a letter via mail to your student or their families at home. Just share positive messages and gratitude. With the majority of communication coming through electronic forms-- this will stand out and feel special.

Nominated: Nominate your student or students to your director, principal, supervisor, or someone similar for special recognition from them for something they have accomplished. Write something up about them and invite that person to come to class to celebrate with all of you.