

# HIGH EXPECTATIONS AND STUDENT MOTIVATION

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REFERENCES



## TOPIC FOCUS

My topic is to gain a deeper understanding of high expectations as a teacher, and student motivation in the classroom. More specifically, the focus of this topic is to see how the two actions are interrelated, and affect one another. As teachers, we can manage our expectations, which affect our students' motivation and, ultimately, their academic success. However, our expectations are also conversely affected by student motivation. Suppose we, as teachers, can begin with high expectations and consistently express them to our students throughout the year. In that case, both qualitative and quantitative data show that we can see high levels of academic success.

My topic aligns with the TPEP criterion 1, centering instruction on high expectations for student achievement. The topic aligns with this TPEP criterion because it focuses on implementing and consistently communicating high expectations in the classroom. Further, the topic seeks to demonstrate how this positively affects student achievement and learning through the lens of motivation. For both the collective class as a whole and the individual student, learning and development are the desired outcomes. This achievement is only attainable with properly motivated students.

My topic is defined as teachers strongly believing that their students will achieve a greater than normal amount of development and success in the classroom. While student motivation can be defined as the willingness to complete daily and long-term tasks. Together, high teacher expectations and student motivation are correlated, and each one affects the other. The key to high student achievement and success is for teachers to maintain and communicate that their high expectations are grounded in the belief in the student, thereby increasing the student's self-confidence and self-belief.

## RATIONALE

My connection to this topic was that I was heavily impacted by an early lesson during the Master's in Teaching program at WSU Spokane. This early lesson featured a short TED Talk, "Every Kid Needs a Champion" by Rita Pierson, which has significantly influenced my teaching philosophy. My personal preference as a teacher has always been to mentor students and prepare them for college attendance or a future career. This TED Talk showed me a simple and easy way to be a champion for my students, helping them succeed in their endeavors.

My professional connection to this topic is that I want to further learn and develop my teaching skills on how to motivate students in the classroom. Diving deeper into the connection between high expectations, student self-efficacy, and motivation would help me professionally channel a core belief in my teaching philosophy to focus on developing skills in how to best motivate students. Ultimately, with compulsory schooling and a mandatory subject like social studies, students sometimes miss the relevance and become demotivated in the classroom.

I want to learn about this because, so far in my teaching experience, unmotivated and demotivated students have been challenging to turn around, especially for long-term tasks. However, I want to research whether building a classroom culture from the very beginning that offers an attainable challenge for every student could help mitigate negative behavior and unmotivated work in the classroom.

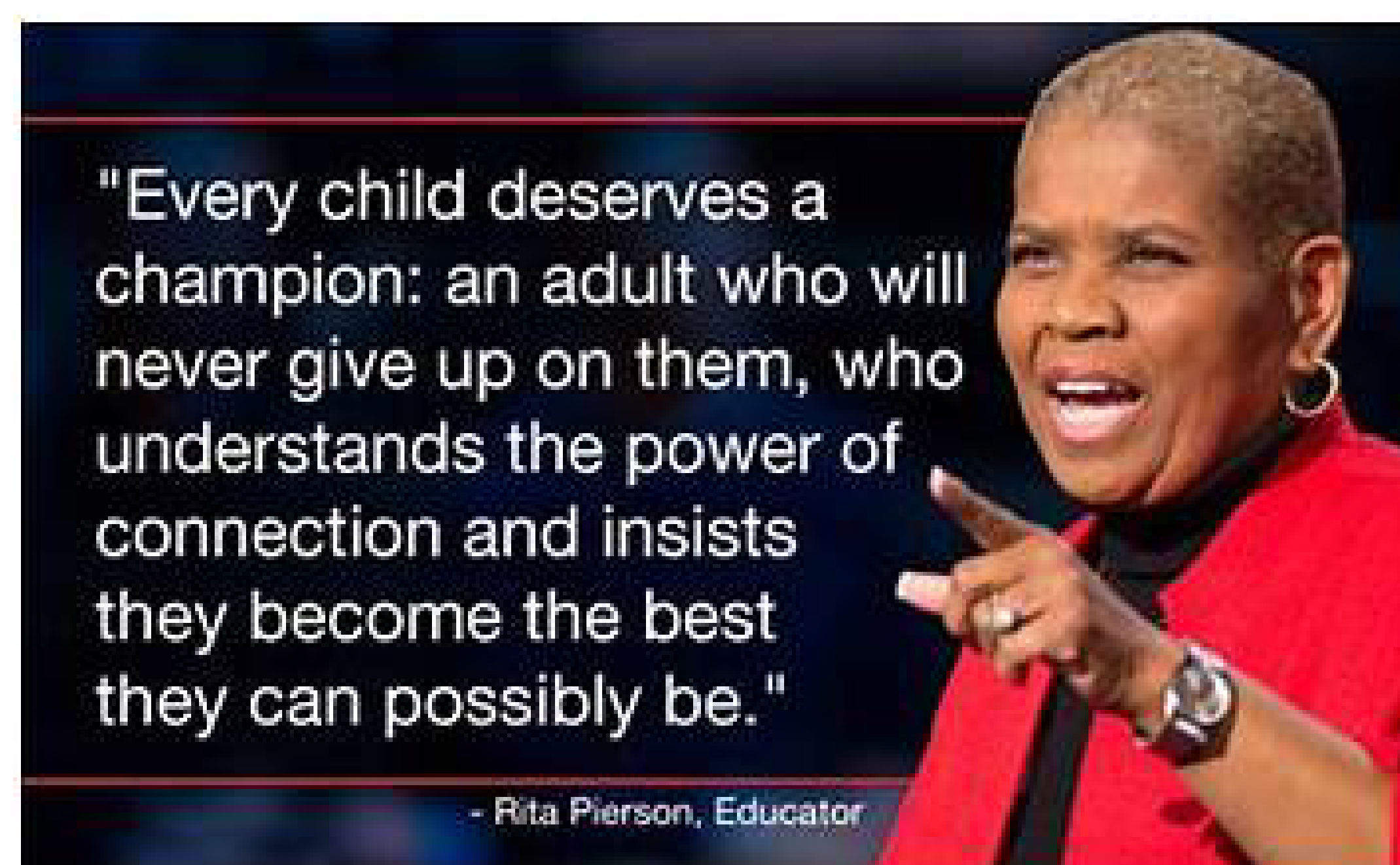
This will support my work as an educator because motivating students to achieve academically is a crucial role that teachers play in the classroom, and every teacher has had students who were notoriously difficult to motivate, often after a period of demotivation, whether in their class or one before. This research will enable me to reach students who are sometimes reluctant to put in the effort required to achieve academic success, thereby creating a more equitable learning environment.

## KEY FINDINGS THROUGH RESEARCH

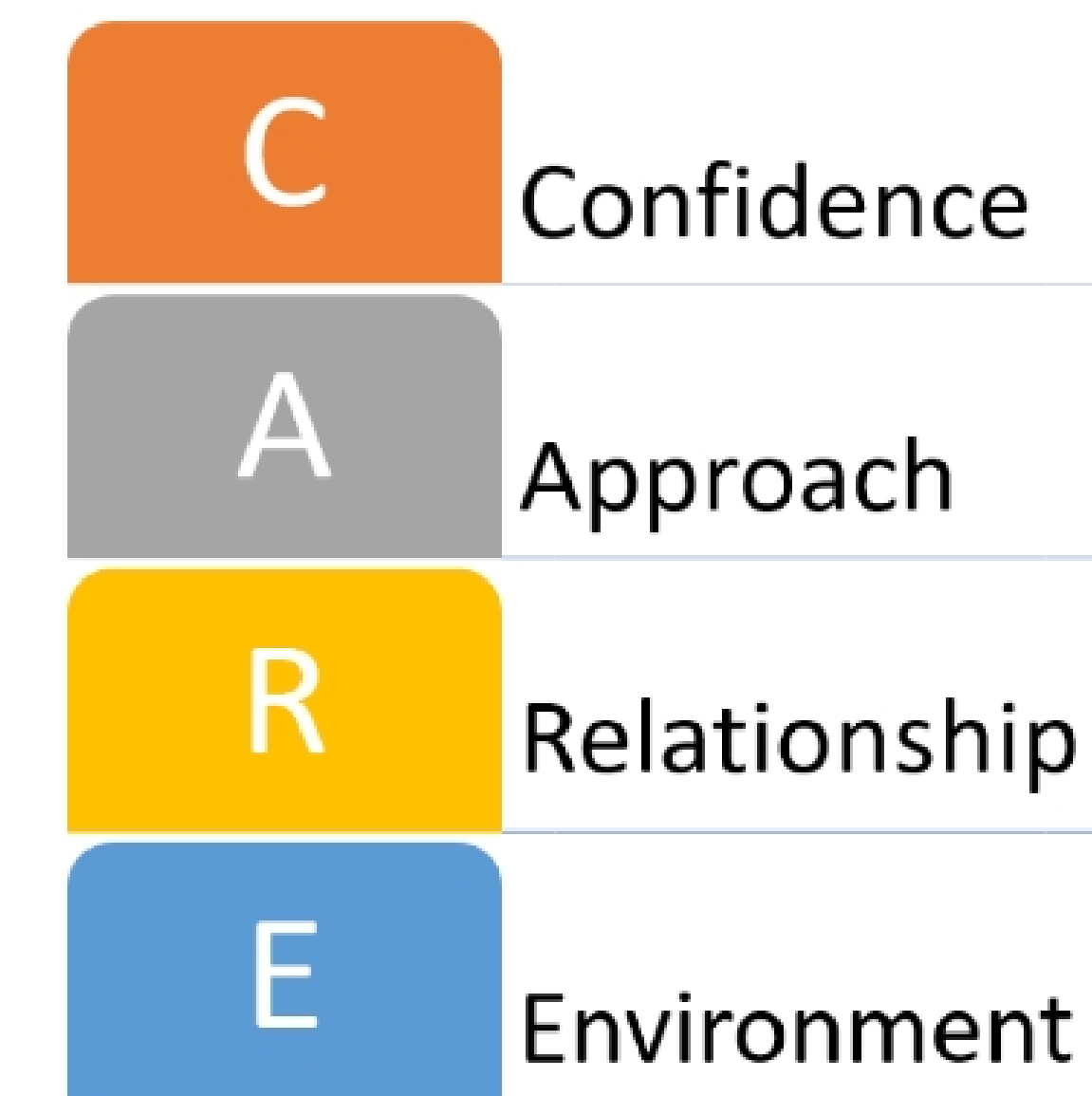
- Having high expectations means strongly believing in each student's potential for academic and behavioral success.
- Teachers directly and indirectly communicate expectations to their students, and we must be mindful not to continue to perpetuate historic academic inequities.
- Best practices for teachers include consistently applying clear rules, and providing challenging tasks that promote self-efficacy, eventually leading to higher levels of intrinsic motivation.
- Students can be demotivated when tasks do not fit within their zone of proximal development, when student choice is overly restricted, and when adequate time is not given.
- A 2020 study linked teacher expectations to college completion rates. Furthermore, teacher expectations have a greater impact on students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Effective strategies for displaying high expectations include having confidence in students, encouraging active learning, building positive relationships, being aware of implicit biases, and actively addressing and combating bias.
- Maintain uniform, consistently high expectations to avoid reinforcing systemic disparities.
- When students see your belief, they, in turn, believe in themselves, producing higher-quality work and seeing higher levels of academic achievement.

## INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- How can high expectations lead to more motivated students?
- What are high expectations?
- How are high expectations implemented in the classroom?
- How can teachers effectively communicate their high expectations to the class?
- What is student motivation?
- How are students motivated and demotivated?
- How do high teacher expectations and student motivation affect each other?

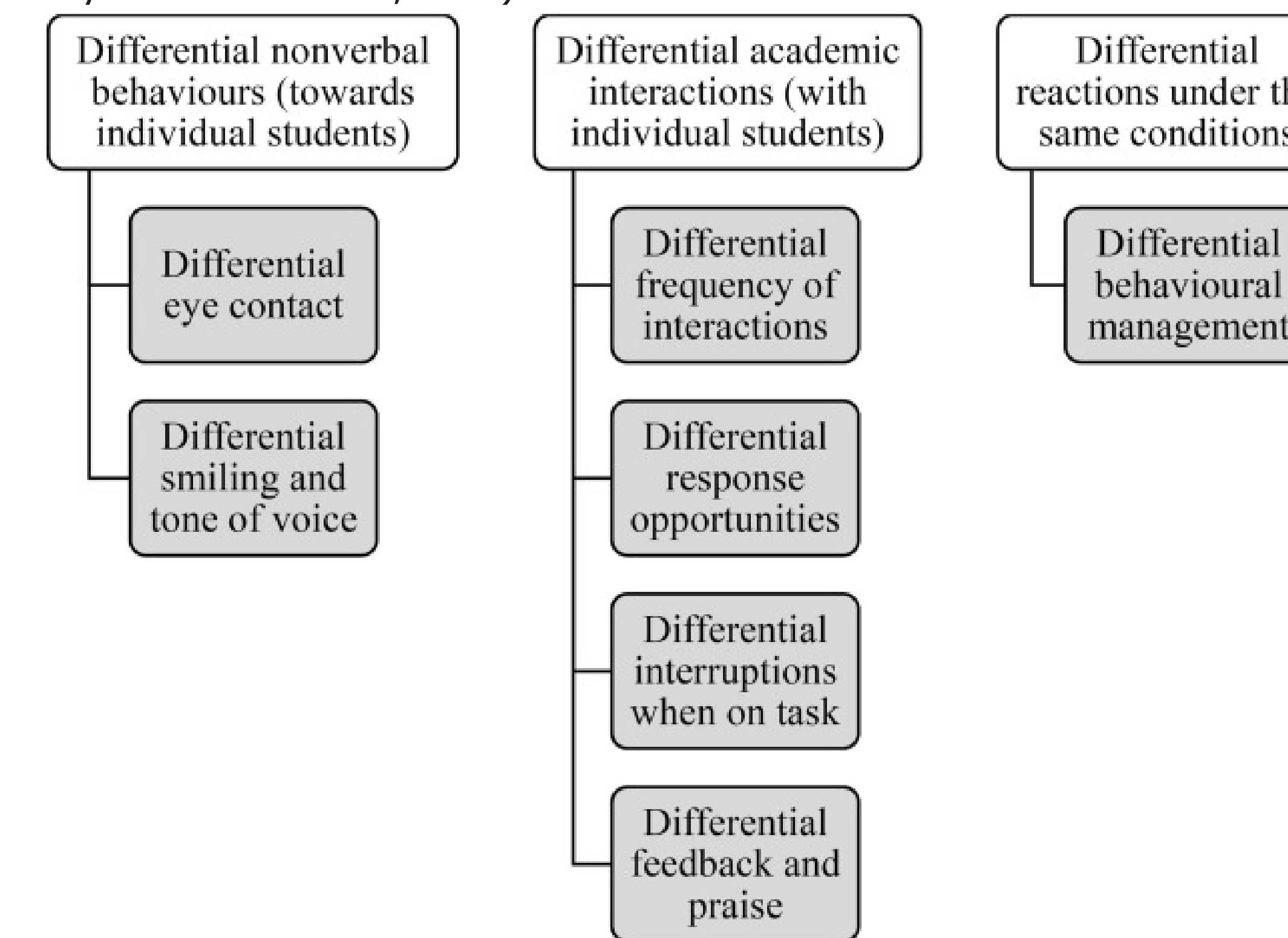


Edited Photo From: [Remembering Educator Rita F Pierson](#)



Students experience the expectations of teachers through expressions of confidence in their abilities, the classroom structure, the dynamics of the student-teacher relationship, and the foundation upon which the classroom culture is built. Photo from (Johnston, Wildy & Shand, 2024).

Themes of differentiated expectations towards students. Photo From (Inan-Kaya & Rubie-Davies, 2022).



## THEORY

The theories that support this topic are all related to student motivation, and how that can be improved by having higher teacher expectations. Expectancy Value Theory describes motivation as a result of convenience and future task usefulness. The expectancy part of this theory is related to the percentage chance of success and is focused on a student's self-efficacy and ability. The value part of this theory involves a simple cost-benefit analysis, where the student weighs the utility of the task, and the feeling of completing a task against the cost of effort required to perform the task sufficiently. While these work in combination with one another, it has also been shown through previous studies that the expectancy of success leads to higher levels of student motivation (Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023). Ultimately, students need self-confidence both in their present and their future to believe that they are capable of completing the task before them.

Another relevant theory in student motivation and its connection to self-efficacy improved through high teacher expectations is the Attribution Theory. In this theory, Weiner argued that a student's perception of their self-efficacy is relatively fixed and can have a cyclical effect, either positive or negative, depending on whether the task is completed or not. Similar data about the ability to remain stable was found in Covington's model of self-worth. Older children, especially those in early adolescence, have an overall lower feeling of self-belief than younger children (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). This theory, along with its evidence, suggests that students require an external factor to recognize their potential, especially students who already have a fixed mindset that rates themselves low on the academic ability scale.

Theories related to this topic typically focus on discussing the student's self-efficacy and its relationship to their motivation. Teachers can't fully control the self-efficacy a student has for themselves. However, teachers do have the ability to influence a student's beliefs about their potential within reason, both positively and negatively.

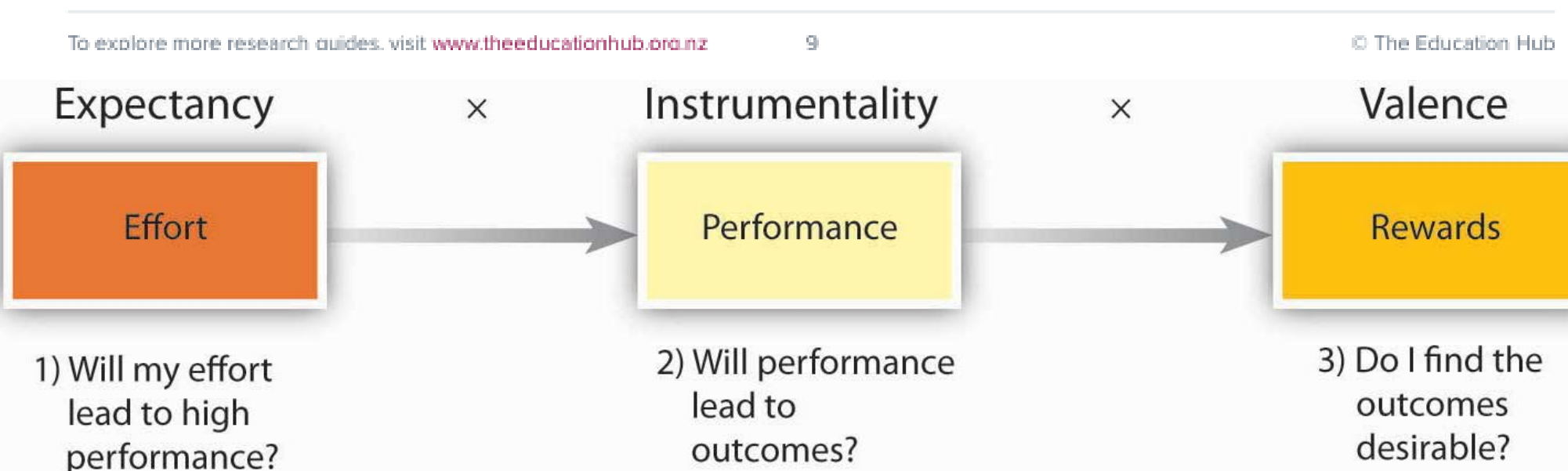
## ACTION

This research will have a significant impact on my future teaching and instruction. This topic aligns closely with one of my core values, which I wanted to help strengthen, a perceived weaker current ability in student motivation. Through my research, I identified various ways to employ direct and indirect communication to meet my expectations for students and classes as a whole. Making sure to be aware of certain biases I may hold in the classroom and how that may affect my expectations for my students will help me to try and combat these by providing opportunities to students who do not fit my implicit unconscious bias. I was also able to learn that having high expectations in the classroom should help provide a more equitable learning environment, combating lasting systemic equity issues in our education system.

Next year, in my school, classroom, and community, I will strive to share with other staff and professional learning communities what I discovered in my research, particularly best practices for multicultural communities. The problems they may encounter stem from current staff who have experienced low student motivation, and how that has affected their teaching, as well as other staff who may not directly counter their initial implicit unconscious biases. However, I will respond to these by trying to remind staff to keep an open mind, that is, to adopt a growth mindset, where perceptions of something should not be fixed one way or the other, with or without bodies of research to explain our ways of thinking. These practices will help my classroom become a popular, safe, and positive place for my students to learn, where they will achieve more academic success than perhaps even deemed possible.

### High expectations self-assessment checklist

How often do you use the following high expectation practices in your teaching?	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Ask open questions			
Praise effort rather than correct answers			
Use regular formative assessment			
Rephrase questions when answers are incorrect			
Use mixed-ability groupings			
Change groupings regularly			
Encourage students to work with a range of their peers			
Provide a range of activities			
Allow students to choose their own activities from a range of options			
Make explicit learning intentions and success criteria			
Allow students to contribute to success criteria			
Give students responsibility for their learning			
Get to know each student personally			



		Stability Dimension	
		Unstable Cause (temporary)	Stable Cause (permanent)
Internal-External Dimension	Internal Cause	Effort Mood Fatigue	Ability Intelligence
	External Cause	Luck Chance Opportunity	Task difficulty

Figures of the Expectancy Value and Attribution Theories. Photos from (Arduini Van-Hoose, 2020).