

The Elements of Effective Instruction (EEI) Resource and Research Guides are designed to allow educators to learn more about the research, strategies, and theory behind each of the five strands. These Resource Guides can be used following the [EEI Self-Assessment](#) to help individual educators or teams learn more about areas of interest.

## Element 1: Learning Environment

The learning environment supports each student to take risks, ask questions, and make and learn from mistakes. The physical space, routines and procedures, and development of positive relationships create a physically, socially, and emotionally safe environment.



### Important Ideas

1. “The physical space of the classroom does not exist independently from the instruction and learning that live there. The wall space, seating, ‘learning zones,’ and materials in the classroom not only support instruction, but also support strong habits of scholarship, independence, and responsibility. Like other aspects of teacher presence—body language, voice, and managing your emotions—the classroom environment is a backdrop to how a student experiences school.” —Berger, R., Strasser, D., and Woodfin, L. (2015). *Management in the Active Classroom* (2nd ed.) (p. 23). New York, NY: EL Education.
2. “Students who are surrounded by disbelieving peers and discouraging adults, or who suffer from institutional labels that predict underperformance (such as “remedial,” “SpEd,” or anything other than “gifted and talented,” or “advanced placement”), may find it difficult to generate the motivation to attempt challenging tasks. Therefore we must manage those social expectations, too, through strong and responsive classroom management techniques and reflections on our own beliefs about what’s possible for our students and ourselves. We might even need to reconsider and reform the way we test, sort and rank students by ‘ability.’ After all, no learning environment will be successful if students don’t believe they will succeed.” —Toshalis, E. (2015). *Make Me!: Understanding and Engaging Student Resistance in School* (p. 106). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
3. “You know, great classrooms are places where kids are not just listening to the teacher, but they are also learning from each other, learning with each other, and problem solving together. For that to happen, teachers actually have to teach kids how to work together, and teach them that working together does not mean copying someone else’s work, but it really means each person is taking responsibility for their contribution. If you are able to create an environment where kids are working together, it is easier for teachers to address the individual needs of children.” —Rea, D.W. (2015). *Interview with Pedro Noguera: How to Help Students and Schools in Poverty*. *National Youth-AtRisk Journal* 1(1), 11-21.



## Brief Articles

1. Hammond, Zaretta. (2018, October). **Culturally Responsive Teaching Puts Rigor at the Center.** Learning Forward. Retrieved from <https://learningforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/culturally-responsive-teaching-puts-rigor-at-the-center.pdf>. A Q & A with Dr. Zaretta Hammond about the importance of centering rigor.
2. Frommert, Crystal. (2023, January 11). **A Classroom Culture Built on Trust.** Edutopia. Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/article/a-classroom-culture-trust/>. In this article, the author discusses how creating conditions where students feel safe to be vulnerable with their classmates improves learning outcomes.
3. Stewart, E., Rebollar, E., Howle, H., & Patterson, M. (2016, October 13). **Lift Every Voice: Classroom Essays from Our 2016 Fishman Prize Winners.** Brooklyn, NY: TNTP. Retrieved from <https://tntp.org/publications/view/teacher-training-and-classroom-practice/lift-every-voice>. This series of essays by classroom teachers explores the ways in which the relationships they build with students, families, and communities impact what and how they teach.



## Book Recommendations

1. Berger, R., Strasser, D., & Woodfin, L. (2015). **Management in the Active Classroom.** (2nd ed), New York, NY: EL Education. This book presents resources in two parts— Foundational Structures and Practices that support active learning in the classroom and Protocols and Strategies that build collaborative environments where students take responsibility for their learning. The tools and resources are widely applicable across grade level and content areas.
2. Muhammad, Gholdy. (2020). **Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework.** New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc. The author presents a four-layered instructional framework that is grounded in history and explores excellence in literacy education.
3. Novak, K. (2022). **UDL Now! A Teacher's Guide to Understanding Universal Design for Learning.** Wakefield, MA: Cast Inc. This is the third edition of this book and the author provides practice strategies for helping all learners, including key tips for how to support UDL within the MTSS framework.



## Reports and Research

1. Quin, D. (2017). **Longitudinal and Contextual Associations Between Teacher–Student Relationships and Student Engagement.** *Review of Educational Research*, 87, 345-387. This is a longitudinal study that examines the relation between teacher-student relationships and student engagement.
2. Tao, Y., Meng, Y., Gao, Z., & Yang, X. (2022). **Perceived teacher support, student engagement, and academic achievement: a meta-analysis.** *Educational Psychology*, 42, 401 - 420. Using 71 empirical studies, the authors examine the relation between perceived teacher support and student performance.

3. TNTP. (2018). The Opportunity Myth. TNTP. Retrieved from <https://opportunitymyth.tntp.org/>. Through case studies, the authors of this report explore the conditions necessary for every student to succeed and make concrete recommendations on practices, systems, and structures to support student learning and growth.



## Videos and Podcasts

1. Uncommon Schools. Precise Praise 2.0 Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYu6uTTwHwk>
2. Edutopia. 5-Minute Film Festival: Classroom Makeovers to Engage Learners. Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/film-festival-learning-spaces-classroom-makeovers>
3. EL Education. Setting Up Your Classroom Environment. Retrieved from <https://eleducation.org/resources/setting-up-your-classroom-environment>
4. EL Education. Connecting Class Norms to Schoolwide Norms. Retrieved from <https://eleducation.org/resources/connecting-class-norms-to-schoolwide-norms>
5. Gonzalez, Jennifer. 2024, December 8. When Your Classroom Management Goes Off the Rails. The Cult of Pedagogy Podcast. Retrieved from <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/classroom-management-problems-2/>. Claire English talks about three reasons why classroom management can fall apart midway through a school year, and what educators can do to turn things back around.