

High Expectation Teaching – 'It's a game changer!'

My name is Anja Henning. I am originally from Berlin and have been teaching at Green Bay for the past 15 years.



My gut always told me something was really odd with this kind of five reading groups, five maths groups and this is the bottom group, and this is the top group.

I got involved with Christine (Professor Christine Rubie-Davies) in 2011 when she had the first round of high expectation teachers, and we went to university certain days and got to meet each other. And as Christine laid out all her research, all the data, I was like thank you, thank you, thank you. From then on, I felt the chains were gone.

For me the most important thing is basically to have a listening system in place. You need to work with the students very closely, you need to listen, and you must have certain mechanisms in place where you always listen to them and get their feedback. You take the first term to get to know them. We have lots and lots of activities that go beyond school. I've come across another fantastic lady who runs a programme which is called circle time where kids can bring something forward that bothers them and where they need the help of the group. The essence is the wisdom lays within the class, the group, so kids helping kids, kids suggesting things, kids giving advice.

The groups are set in a certain way – mixed ability – but there is always a purpose. I have all my kids spread out who need help and I have obviously a very strong person next to them, academically strong but also socially strong. They glance over and support in a very subtle way, but this person also has a friend or strong academic person around them because otherwise they would miss out. When you get it right, the classroom just hums, it just flows.

This is what Christine has as her first chapter – the class climate. The class climate is so, so important to the learning – it's the number one, and the teacher is just part of the class climate – you're just one of many. Building that student teacher relationship is a big pillar of everything. They need to trust you and then you basically put that trust back and that's where your high expectations come from.

Basically, the high expectation is you expect every student to do their best – every student and that's the big thing. We know that one teacher can't do 30 kids justice – it's near impossible – and that's where you need to have systems in place where they help each other. There's always someone who can do it already and I say to my kids, "find that person."

What changes have I noticed since training as a high expectation teacher: I would say my relationship in general has become a lot closer to the students. I've become a lot calmer as a teacher because I have a better understanding of them. I can deal with behaviour so much easier. That's the biggest thing I experience.

*They are calm, they are learning,
they are happy, and that's the real beauty.
I would say it's a game changer.*