



New Tech Network

Good teaching, warm and demanding classrooms, and critically conscious students: Measuring student perceptions of asset-based equity pedagogy in the classroom

Highlights from Emily E. Virtue, PhD. and Brandi Hinnant-Crawford, PhD.

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Objective

The purpose of this study was to build our understanding of the characteristics of teachers who are considered warm demanders, how students respond to warm demanders, and to what extent project-based learning supports a warm demander stance¹.

Data Collection

16 classroom observations, five student focus groups, four teacher focus groups, and 68 responses to a student survey.

Quantitative data was collected using a student survey that included 1) perceptions of Asset-Based Equity Pedagogy and its three subscales (good teaching, criticality, and warm and demanding environment), 2) student perceptions of academic press, culturally responsive teaching, and dissonance between school and home culture, and 3) student self-report on “outcomes” including grades in core academic subjects, academic self-concept, and academic self-efficacy.

Qualitative data was collected from teacher focus groups, student focus groups, and observations to develop a profile of teachers who were identified as warm demanders.

Quantitative Findings¹

Students experienced:

- warm and demanding environments

- positive perceptions of their school
- low dissonance between home and school culture

Warm and demanding environment was positively and significantly correlated with:

- good teaching
- criticality
- student measure of culturally relevant teaching
- academic press
- academic self-concept
- academic self-efficacy
- perceived grades in English and Science²

Qualitative Findings

Warmth and demand can be enacted in various ways with positive results for students. This suggests:

- Warm and demanding pedagogical practices can be learned and enacted in various ways
- There is not just one profile of a warm demander

Teacher reflective practice was consistent among Warm Demanders:

- A common reflection that all warm demanders shared is the notion that teaching and learning are not about them (the teachers) but rather the focus should remain on the students

1. These means must be interpreted with a great deal of caution due to the low response rate in each setting
2. A warm and demanding environment positively correlated with elevated grades in Math and Social Studies but not to a significant extent



Teachers not only had high expectations, but evidence of differentiated learning was clear.

Students articulated how teachers gave them individual work to meet their needs and how this experience was rewarding because they developed a better relationship with the teacher and enjoyed the work they were assigned. It's clear that warmth and demand - from the student perspective - also played into a student's sense of belonging and self-efficacy.

Warm Demander practices are effective when:

- Students trust in their teachers when they perceive teachers as caring
- Teachers facilitate differentiated learning experiences to meet student needs
- Teachers build a sense of belonging and self-efficacy for the student, and hold high expectations

PBL and Warm Demanders:

- PBL may well have been the conduit teachers and students used to build trust and understanding – that is, the very nature of PBL lends itself to one-on-one interaction, collaborative work, and a chance for students to use their assets to demonstrate learning. Warm Demanders might know this to be a strength of PBL and use it to their advantage as they design project expectations and assign teams.
- When a teacher believes students are capable of learning, teachers demand it of their students.
- NTN MS and HS teachers noted that growth in warm demanders pedagogical practices can occur in project-based learning instruction.



"Every student can learn, and there's just different ways that I might need to work to reach each scholar...every kiddo can learn, just the way we get there is a bit different and we [teacher and student] share the responsibility. I need to figure out how to help a kiddo learn, and it's also their responsibility to give into that process and figure out the best way for themselves to learn as well." - NTN Teacher

**"What I teach isn't as important as who I teach."
- NTN Teacher**



Warm Demander Profiles

The teacher profiles provided here are meant to show the various ways Warm Demanders present themselves and interact with students. These profiles demonstrate myriad ways to be a warm demander rather one definition or approach.

1

The Balanced Warm Demander: This teacher is balanced in warmth and demand—they describe themselves as “firm but fun.” Demand comes in various forms in the classroom: both academic and behavioral. Because students are able to learn from their mistakes without fear of retribution or shame, they remain on task and encourage one another to keep trying. The teacher knows students by name, moves about the classroom with ease and maintains a strong relationship with each student.

2

Team Teachers: Teaching pairs work effectively when they are balanced and engaged throughout the class meeting period. Team teachers who effectively employ warm demander pedagogy set student expectations together and hold students to those academic and behavioral guides in equal measure. Warmth is noted not only in their relationships with students, but also the relationships the teachers have (built on respect) for one another—this allows for laughter and fun as well as serious work to occur.

3

High Demand, Unobtrusive Warmth: This teacher believes there is a “right” way to behave in class but is willing to listen to students and understand differences. The teacher provides multiple ways for students to learn that include giving them many attempts to complete an assignment or engage in and around the classroom. This helps students build and sustain cultural assets and project/problem-based learning.

4

High Warmth, Low Academic Demand: High warmth teachers are considered familiar and fun, and may be trusted to know personal details of the student’s life, but classroom expectations are not always high, rigorous, or set high enough to meet challenges. High warmth profiles are often seen in first- or second-year teachers who are navigating their own learning about their profession as they enter the classroom. Students will often feel comfortable in the class, but perhaps too much so—for instance, students may not feel a pressing urge to work on projects or stay focused on class material when the teacher is not in close proximity.

5

Human-First Approach: A human-first teacher is one who recognizes the humanity of students, their physical and emotional needs, and how such needs supersede academic expectations. This teacher recognizes and celebrates differences in students and their culture as is evident from various artifacts around the classroom. When students struggle academically, this teacher “supports them emotionally first” because they know “extenuating circumstances” affect academics. This teacher has clear academic and behavioral expectations but knows how to differentiate for their students.