



Appreciating High Expectations: A Discussion Guide

Do educators believe that all students, including students with disabilities, can achieve ambitious goals? Are educators able to appropriately set high standards for all students?

This video and discussion guide can be used to facilitate staff discussions about the importance of having high expectations for students with disabilities. This guide includes information to support facilitating the discussion, reaction questions that will support teams in reflecting and sharing their perspectives, and application questions designed to build understanding and support action.

“And later on, he [the teacher] told my mom, ‘I know he can do it. I know he can do it.’ So, I really gave it my all eventually. And I did pass the class and did well.”

—Billy Pickens

Facilitating the Discussion

This section provides an overview of the process¹ and materials needed to facilitate a thoughtful discussion following the video. Although this process is based on the video *Stories from the Classroom: Appreciating High Expectations*, it can be adapted for use with other videos, articles, and discussions. If time is limited, consider using the [quick guide reflection and discussion](#) in place of this more in-depth discussion guide.

Process

- Review [Appreciating High Expectations video](#) and discussion guide.
- Select target participants (e.g., school staff, families, students) for the discussion.
- Schedule at least 30 minutes to view the 4:25-minute video and engage in discussion. For larger groups or groups with diverse stakeholder representation, consider including additional time for introductions and discussion.
- Depending on timing and group structure, prioritize and customize reaction and application questions.

Materials

- Video
- Screen-sharing technology
- Discussion questions
- Additional material (as relevant)

¹ This process has been adapted from the IDEA Partnerships dialogue process. Additional suggestions for facilitation are in the *Dialogue Guide Facilitator Handbook* (https://nasdse.org/docs/dialogue_guide.pdf).



- Share printed or electronic session materials, based on local preference, with participants.
- Prior to the session, check the video sound and set up the room to promote discussion.
- Facilitate the conversation using the structure in Exhibit 1. Consider adapting the structure based on the group dynamics and familiarity with the process.

Exhibit 1. Sample Meeting Structure for a 30-Minute Session

Step	Description of step
Step 1: Set the stage (5 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a time for participants to introduce themselves if they are not already familiar with one another. • Set dialogue purpose by reviewing why this conversation is important within your context. Identify the purpose of this reflection and discussion. (<i>For example, do expectations for students with disabilities differ from expectations for their peers without disabilities?</i>) • Establish ground rules for discussion to ensure that all participants feel welcome and safe sharing their perspectives during the conversation.
Step 2: Show the video (5 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play the Appreciating High Expectations video for participants. • Encourage the participants to jot down any notes or reflections they may have while watching the video.
Step 3: Facilitate discussion (15 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the discussion questions to facilitate conversation. Depending on the number of participants and the time allowed, consider focusing on a couple of reaction and application questions or separating the group into smaller groups. • As the facilitator, you may need to ask participants to elaborate or clarify their comments, or you may need to redirect the conversation and encourage all participants to engage and share.
Step 4: Plan for future activities (5 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a group, brainstorm and plan for future work on this topic. This work may include exploring additional resources on the topic, trying a strategy that was discussed, or spending time reflecting further.

Appreciating High Expectations Discussion Questions

Reaction Questions

Question	Notes and reflection
What resonated with you while watching the video?	
What does having high expectations for students with disabilities mean to you?	
Can you think of a student who has benefited from high expectations? How did that impact them?	
Do you believe that all students with disabilities at our school are being held to high expectations? Why or why not?	
Are there specific students or groups of students who are held to different expectations?	
If you were to ask students in our school whether they believe all students are held to high expectations, what would they say?	
Can you think of an instance where you may not have held a student to high expectations? What could you have done differently?	

Application Questions

Question	Notes and reflection
What are we currently doing to establish high expectations for our students, including our students with disabilities?	
How can our school better ensure all students, including students with disabilities, are held to high expectations?	
How can we ensure that we focus on high expectations within the development and implementation of our individualized education programs?	
How can we continuously learn from students about whether they feel like they are being held to high expectations?	
What supports do staff need to ensure they are holding all students, including students with disabilities, to high expectations?	
In your role, how might you ensure that you are holding students you work with to high expectations?	

Takeaway or Next Steps

As a school community, what are our priorities and next steps in ensuring staff hold high expectations for students with disabilities? How can we more intentionally question how our beliefs and biases affect students with disabilities?

PROGRESS Center

at the American Institutes for Research® ■

1400 Crystal Drive, 10th Floor | Arlington, VA 22202-3289
202-403-5000 | www.air.org

www.promotingprogress.org



This material was produced under the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Award No. H326C190002. David Emenheiser serves as the project officer. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, service, or enterprise mentioned in this resource is intended or should be inferred.

Notice of Trademark: "American Institutes for Research" and "AIR" are registered trademarks. All other brand, product, or company names are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners.