

An Open Letter to Teachers From Saskatchewan Youth

Dear Teacher,

I want you to know that I do have dreams and that I want to see what I am learning in class to be connected to those dreams.

- Students consume the world around them. Their dreams and desires come from these interactions with their environments. When students have a targeted idea, they may not always know the best implementation plan. A student who seems to be underperforming or displaying concerning behaviors may, in fact, have desires within the very class they are struggling. A student who wants to be a writer or an artist may have these desires, but not understand how their teachers and their classes can provide them with opportunities to develop these skills. When teachers are able to help connect students to behaviors that will increase their chances at future success in their chosen fields, this not only strengthens the relationships with adults in their lives but strengthens the students' self-esteem. With this direction, students can believe in themselves and their dreams - seeing them as realistic.

I want you to know and support me through my struggles and adversity.

- Many, if not most, students want to be understood by the adults in their lives. However, they often find it hard to trust the adults in their lives and can become scared of sharing too much. Oftentimes, students have struggles communicating their narratives to teachers and try displaying them in other ways. It is important that teachers always seek to understand behaviour as a means of communication. When teachers become curious about their students' interests and experiences, this opens the door for relational sharing between teacher and student that can strengthen bonds and improve the students' experiences in schools.

I want you to know that I am scared about my next steps. I am unsure of how I will fit into my community and the workforce when I leave school, and so I may act out and/or try to self-sabotage.

- When students leave school, many of the teachers who have supported them are no longer immediately accessible, and no longer have the capacity to support the students in the same ways. This transition can be daunting and/or alarming as youth envision themselves moving away from the structure and routine of the last twelve years and into the unknown. For many, this experience is overwhelming. However, when schools work in tandem with community agencies throughout a child's school experience, students can learn about their community and discover areas of interest. Bridging the school-community gap can offer students experiences and opportunities, both academic and non-academic, that will then shape their future decision-making. As a result, this may reduce a lot of the anxiety students may be feeling as they face that transition

I want you to believe in me and to believe I can rise to the challenge.

- Helping students realistically navigate their worlds can make them feel as though their teachers are committed to fostering their creativity, motivation, dedication, and success. Helping students manage their academic and life goals within their zone of proximal development helps to ensure students see the realities of life as not just fantasy but attainable goals.

I want to know when you share my interests. It helps me feel like I belong.

- Students and teachers often share interests; if a teacher in the class notices a student with a particular interest that they don't share, they can connect that student with other teachers in their school who do, regardless of class assignments.

I want you to seek my value and input.

- When students feel as though their voices are heard and valued, and they have an impact on how the teacher operates in the classroom, it gives them more trust in the institution. This, in turn, holds space for students to be and become themselves.