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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from The Illustrated Guide to Teacher Credibility.

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# INTRODUCTION

It started with a question: **Why do some strategies work better for some teachers than others?** Or more specifically, why is it that three teachers can implement the same strategy, lesson plan, or instructional materials, and have a different impact on students' learning? Let's say that three different teachers all agree that they are going to use a certain graphic organizer. And let's say that they all understand the tool to be used and provide very similar lessons for students. Why is it that some classes learn more than others? Our search for an answer led us away from a focus on the quality of the lesson plan, strategy, or instructional materials to a focus on the credibility each teacher had with students. Teachers who were more credible with their students had a much higher impact on their learning.



**QR Code 0.1:** Students talk about credible teachers  
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# TEACHER CREDIBILITY DEFINED



“The dynamic of teacher credibility is always at play.”<sup>1</sup>

**Teacher credibility** is the perception by students about their teacher’s competence, dynamism, trustworthiness, and immediacy.<sup>2</sup> A student’s ability to learn is influenced by whether the source (the teacher) is believed to be knowledgeable (competent), enthusiastic (dynamic), reliable (trustworthy), and accessible (immediate). In other words, learning is governed by the social and emotional perceptions that lie just below the surface. We have seen too many teachers implement what should have been effective instructional strategies, but they did not get the impact they hoped for.



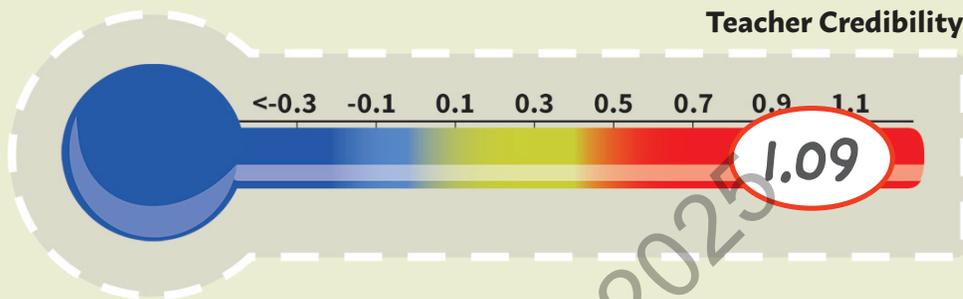
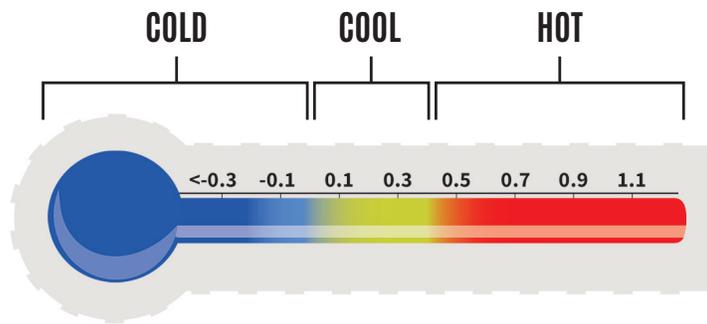
Teacher credibility is sometimes confused with the concept of **authority**. Being authoritarian does not build credibility. And simply asserting yourself as an authority will not ensure that students learn at high levels. We've all met people who clearly are experts, authorities as it were, in an area. But if we did not trust them, if they were not dynamic and willing to share, and if we did not feel a connection with them, we probably did not give them much of our attention and may even have disregarded what they said. The medical field calls this *bedside manner*; in education, it is called **teacher credibility**.

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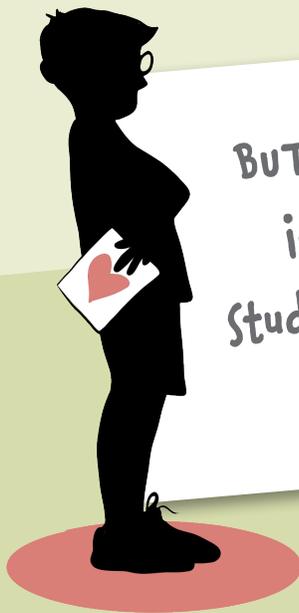
Importantly, teacher credibility differs from teacher–student relationships, which are also important. Teachers and students should have healthy, growth-producing relationships, in part because students learn more when these are present, and they are more likely to take risks knowing that the classroom is safe. It's hard to imagine that a teacher could be credible with students without a strong relationship. But teacher credibility extends to other areas, specifically trust, competence, dynamism or passion, and immediacy or perceived closeness.



An effect size is a measure of the impact of a specific influence on learning. John Hattie (2023) summarized more than 450 influences. The average of all influences is **0.40**, thus **those over 0.40 have the potential to accelerate learning.**

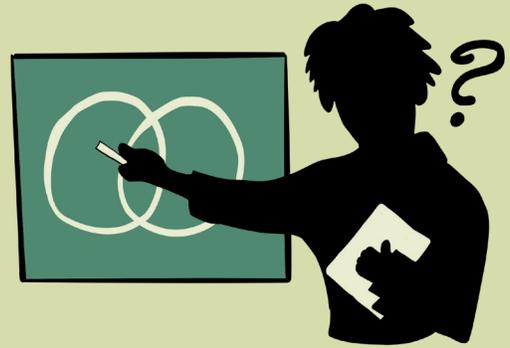


**The effect size of teacher credibility is noteworthy: 1.09.** In fact, teacher credibility is one of the most influential aspects of the teaching and learning process. And it's one that we can choose to improve.



BUT we don't get to decide if we are credible with students. **Our students decide if we are credible.**

When a teacher is *not* perceived as credible, students tune out. They fail to show up; they fail to complete tasks; they fail to engage with peers; they fail. And quite frankly, we can't afford for students to do so. We need students to engage, to trust their teachers, and to choose to participate in their learning. The four aspects of teacher credibility—trust, competence, dynamism, and immediacy—can help do just that.



Consider the following success criteria that will be the focus of this illustrated guide:

- I can develop routines and procedures that ensure that trust is maintained so that students know we have a healthy, growth-producing relationship that allows them to take risks in their learning.
- I can demonstrate my competence using familiar routines and acknowledge new learning, building students skills as they develop confidence in their own learning.
- I can create a dynamic learning environment in which students see value in their learning knowing that I care deeply about them and their learning.
- I can find ways to maintain immediacy with students, ensuring that I am relatable and vulnerable.
- I can support others in developing and maintaining their credibility.



In this book we focus on the four dimensions of teacher credibility and provide actionable ways that you can maintain and improve your students' belief that they can learn from you. We offer several tools and ideas, all illustrated for ease of access, so that you can maximize the impact you have on your students. And some day, those students will return and ask you, "*Do you remember me?*" and you will because you had a profound impact on their development.



**QR Code 0.2:** Teachers talk about credibility  
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