

**John D. O'Bryant High School of
Mathematics and Science
Boston Public Schools
Roxbury, Massachusetts**



“More Than Just a Number”: The Power of Relationships

Student

In some really big schools you are just known by student id numbers and some schools you just don't have the relationship with the teacher because you are just another number to them you know. And at O'Bryant you are not. They know your first name; they know your last name; they know who your teacher was the year before. They know who they are going to try and take next year.

Daniel Smalley, Mathematics Teacher

They need us to be here and do our job. Sometimes I get the sense that in my other work I'd come in the students had a lot of different support networks to sort of help them out and I kind of got the sense that if I didn't really kind of show up a day, they still would be alright. Here I know the students. They need us to be here. They need us to do our job. If I stay until 3:30 there are students there with me until 3:30. If I stay until 4:00 there are students with me until 4:00. If I give them five hours after school, they are there five hours after school. They need me to be there and that makes me a better teacher.

Sharon Hessney, Mathematics Teacher

I'm here every morning at 6:00. I rarely leave before 5:00. I have students that I kick out at 5:00. I have a stat review on Monday and Tuesday. I have MCAS on Wednesday. Thursday is open to everybody. That's what it takes to get these kids over the bar.

Student

They really believe in us, that we really have the potential to become just as good if not better than the Boston Latin School kids.

Steve Sullivan, Headmaster

I've had some difficulty in my life. So I know what can be done and I know the levels that they can achieve and certainly I want each of them to go a lot further than I did but even just to get where I'm sitting—

Joseph Herrington

It's not sink or swim. It's not this is it. If you don't do this then it's game over. We are here to help the students. We understand the students I think very well and so we work with the students in

order to help them achieve. We talk with them, we understand them on a personal level. We know what they want to do and we try to kind of apply ourselves to get them to where they want to be.

Hai Choi, Guidance Counselor

Our role in their education is to make sure that they are prepared to be able to go to the most competitive colleges after high school graduation.

Sharon Hessney

For AP statistics I told my headmaster when I started teaching that I wouldn't teach it if I knew at the beginning the kids were going to fail and I said the only way that they are not going to fail is if I teach them 20 hours in June to get them started. And he said, "we can't do that, we don't have the money, we don't have the room, we can't do that." I said, "we're going to do it anyway." So I raised \$3000 and we did it.

Student

I know for me when I reached the point where I'm able to form a relationship with a teacher I work that much harder because we were just talking about it out there. You don't want to disappoint a teacher. Knowing that you disappoint a teacher, it can sometimes be worse than that teacher becoming upset with you. So it fosters your growth and it forces you to work that much harder because you know that they're putting effort into your education and if you don't put the same amount of effort into it then they're going to be disappointed and you don't want that.

Sharon Hessney

The students are so forgiving. They are absolutely unbelievable and they are generous beyond what you can possibly imagine.

Student

The AP Physics Teacher, Mr. Smalley, who I think is probably one of my biggest supporters here at the school. He has been there for countless things. Recently we had a sound project. We had to make our own instruments in the class and you had to hit certain frequencies to make certain tones and pitches and he supplied us with like big guitar strings. We made a hammered dulcimer and he helped us design it and he supplied us with the wood. There were hours after school that he spent to help us design it and help us make it.

Daniel Smalley, Science Teacher

Being a good solid person and being a good solid role model for them; I don't know how many of them look up to me but just being a solid person is almost a requirement for you to do your job well here.

Sharon Hessney

Someone once said to me in the Boston Public Schools if a kid knows that you are on their side, they will do anything for you.

Daniel Smalley

Our students are getting into college, getting in all these schools. So when they come in the students in my class will like stand up and applaud the students that got into college, or got the new scholarship or got their dream school and the kids do this on their own. They are like, they are so happy, they are almost in tears. They are happy for their classmates.

Steve Sullivan

As far as we're concerned here, it's an O'Bryant Family and anyone involved in this school, custodian, lunch mother, librarian – everyone is a piece/part of that family.

Student

You might find schools as good as O'Bryant but you won't find one better.