Intasc 9: Praising Students

*“We must strive to break any barriers to success as early as possible in order for youth to reach their full potential”*

This week Ms. Jenkins observed my behavior of praising students, a crucial part of encouraging students to reach their full potential. During our discussion she noted that I have a preference of praising the students who I expected less from, or in other words, the students who don’t do that well in the class. This observation makes sense, as I am person that has a lot of expressions, and while I teach I allow the positive one's to b exaggerated, this means that when I see someone who isn't doing well finally get an answer right or choose to volunteer an answer, I am happy and excited about it.

What I was warned of, however, was to make sure that these students still feel as though their contribution was somewhat a part of the norm. If they receive praise then they have a social incentive to contribute to the class again, but if they receive too much praise they might be embarrassed about deciding to contribute at all. Even worse, they may get wind that my expectations for them were lesser than other students. This isn't false, because I can’t possibly expect the same quality of work and participation from every single student, but I should work towards responding to them with slightly less enthusiasm than before so as to avoid possible embarrassment.

Ms. Jenkins didn’t note any significant differences in my praising of men, women, or any specific race but there was a slight preference for praising women over men. This observation also does not come as a surprise to me. I am empathize more with women because I am a woman and I want to be able to encourage women specifically because I feel that they might be lacking encouragement in academics. However, I should work towards having a more balanced classroom where every student, regardless of gender, feels as though they will get the same amount of praise. I will pay more attention to who I am giving praise to and equalize my reactions a bit more.