

## Educating Students in Maintaining Civility in the Classroom and Beyond through Constructive Feedback

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### Abstract

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*Educators strive to create civil classroom environments where students can freely express opinions and ideas. This often generates spirited debates, which may involve expressions of anger or frustration. This is particularly true today where students have increased opportunity to encounter individuals from differing racial, ethnic, cultural, and sexually-divergent groups in a classroom setting. It is also true in academia when students are evaluated by the Instructor, when they are required to critique a fellow student's comments, or when their work is the subject of peer evaluation. One way to help promote and maintain a conducive learning environment in the classroom, and empower students with a technique they can apply in their future professions, is to use, and educate them on how to effectively provide, constructive feedback. The purpose of this article is to provide information educators can use to help students develop, and use, constructive feedback in their everyday interactions.*

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**Keywords:** classroom; civility; constructive feedback

### 1. Introduction

Why do educators need to be increasingly concerned about civility in the classroom? Moore (2012) offers that colleges and universities are experiencing a rise in incivilities on their campuses. Wilkins, Caldarella, Crook-Lyon, and Young (2010) state there is also an increase in the nationwide concern over school safety due to widely-publicized acts of incivility. According to Feldmann (2001), as incivility rises in the classroom, the academic teaching and learning environment becomes more restricted. Certainly, the increase of incivility that is spreading on campuses is enough of a reason in itself.

However, along with the noted increase in incivility in society, including college and university campuses, there are other possible reasons as to why educators need to be concerned about classroom civility. Some may say that it is because that it is a part of the job duties. Others may answer that it is because a lack of civility leads to uncontrolled classroom disruption. Still others may say it is because, without classroom civility, the learning environment becomes stifled. This writer proffers that it is for all three reasons.

First, as educators, it is part of the job to control the classroom. This means from the time educators first say hello at the beginning of the semester, through the time the final grades are dispensed there must be maintained orderly procedures and atmospheres in our classrooms. Second, educators must not lose control of the classroom because it may lead to the potential for continuous disruption throughout the semester. Third, and perhaps most importantly, it is owed to the students to create a learning environment that encourages questions, creates the desire for critical thinking, and teaches students how to courteously disagree when presenting an opposing viewpoint or critiquing a fellow student's works or comments. This is particularly true in today's society where there is more of an opportunity to encounter individuals from differing racial, ethnic, cultural, and sexually-divergent groups in a classroom setting.

## 1.1 Classroom Diversity

Moore (2012) holds that “civility is predicated on the belief that all human beings are of equal moral worth and entitled to respect and equal treatment” (p. 145). Students must understand that as they encounter individuals of varying backgrounds, differences of opinion on matters, including those of significance, will arise, but those differences do not lessen the other person’s value.

According to Connelly (1999), education at the college or university level is simply a “microcosm of the larger society” (47). As such, educators can expect that their students come from a vast array of individuals, each with their own complex set of values and characteristics. Pasque, Chesler, Charbeneau, and Carlson (2013) note that in classrooms that are ethnically and racially diverse there are a number of positive educational outcomes and experiences available to students. These positive moments are available at any given time, in any given classroom. However, Pasque et al. warn that these classrooms also hold the potential for conflicts between students of varying and different backgrounds.

Students who may not, or do not, see things in the same light as others, or who do not understand how to engage in non-aggressive conflict resolution and problem-solving, need guidance in learning how to effectively communicate their differences in a manner that continues to encourage a conducive learning environment. Indeed, Pasque et al. (2013) note that there are studies that have shown that college entrance is gained by students from diverse ethnical backgrounds, including students from ethnically segregated neighborhoods and schools. They argue that the diversity can lead to a lack of understanding or agreement among the students; including issues that are discussed in the classrooms. Without the proper guidance in how to appropriately respond to thoughts and ideas foreign to those of their own, students can be left with having feelings of self-doubt and anger which, according to Levine (2010), can cause people to “temper or censor our sincere views to avoid confrontation, and such self-editing reduces our passion and our motivation to act” (p. 14). When that self-editing occurs, the conducive learning environment in a classroom is stifled. Therefore, educators need to take a more pro-active role in controlling the classroom environment in order to promote civility.

## 1.2 Educators as Judges

The lack of an educator to control his or her classroom is akin to a judge failing to control his or her courtroom. Think about the legal system for a moment and the job duties of a judge. A judge must perform a number of tasks including: setting reasonable time limits; allowing participants, in an orderly fashion, their opportunity to be heard; focusing only on the relevant issues; and, perhaps most importantly, using authority with fairness. The same is true of educators. Educators, as such, are the “judges” of the classroom. Without the ability and desire to maintain a civil classroom, no one achieves the maximum positive outcome from the learning experience. Feldmann (2001) defines incivility in the classroom as “any action that interferes with a harmonious and cooperative learning atmosphere in the classroom” (p. 137). He also notes that “we can greatly reduce the number and magnitude of the instances of incivility by examining our attitudes and teaching methods” (p. 137).

Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to educate and prepare ourselves for this, at times, most challenging portion of our work as educators. It behooves us and the students, in the long run, to engage in civility in the classroom as it will provide a nurturing environment that is conducive to learning and free thinking.

## 1.3 Purpose

Cushing, Abbott, Lothian, Hall, and Westwood (2011) found that students who received peer feedback in their classes more effectively learned the course materials. One other thing they found was that when the students were questioned at the end of the study, students wanted more directives on how to provide feedback to their peers that would not be misconstrued as offensive or unkind. This is particularly uplifting in the face of the report by Wilkins et al. (2010) who have offered that there are a number of individuals who believe that the level of civility in today’s society, and in today’s colleges and universities, is in a state of decline.

This decline, combined with the need for student direction on how to provide effective feedback to their peers in an effort to promote improvement learning, provides impetus for educators to continue to pursue improving classroom civility, while giving students tools they can use, both in and out of the classroom, to promote an increase in civility. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to share one way in which educators may maintain, promote, and possible increase civility in the classroom by developing a supportive classroom, as well as by providing a supportive system for giving and receiving feedback that students can use both in and out of the classroom. That way is through the use, and proper application, of constructive feedback.

## **2. Types of Incivility**

Before engaging in a discussion of developing a supportive classroom or a supportive system for giving and receiving feedback, mention must be made regarding what constitutes the disruptive classroom behavior that can affect the level of civility. According to Feldman (2001), incivility in a classroom is any act or action which disrupts the classroom environment from being one that is a harmonious, conducive learning atmosphere. Such disruptive behavior comes in two general forms: verbal disruption and non-verbal disruption.

### **2.1 Verbal Disruption**

Verbal disruption can be present in a number of forms. The following are some forms identified by instructors in discussing classroom civility. Students engaging in verbal disruption include those that dominate classroom discussions, engage in prolonged chattering, and use verbal threats against teachers or students (Wibowo, 2003). Texas Tech University (2002), also notes that, in addition to those already listed, verbal disruption can occur when students make offensive remarks and talk out of turn. Still other disruptive, verbal behavior can take the form of challenging the teacher's authority, making statements about things that are not related to the current topic of discussion, talking about other students behind their backs, and discrediting a person and not simply disagreeing with the idea. In addition to, or sometimes concurrent with, verbal disruption is the occurrence of non-verbal disruption.

### **2.2 Non-verbal Disruption**

Just as with verbal disruption, non-verbal disruption can be present in a variety of forms. The same sources named in the above section on verbal disruption also provide examples of non-verbal disruption. Wibowo (2003) provides for one type of non-verbal disruption that some may never think about until they actually encounter it in their classrooms, poor personal hygiene. Texas Tech University (2002) provides other examples such as sleeping, excessive tardiness, eating food or drinking beverages in class, and shuffling notebooks or backpacks. Other behaviors that can be added to this collection of annoying and disruptive behavior are such things as inattention, reading a newspaper, others visiting students in the classroom, cheating during exams, and preparing homework for another class.

So, with all of these potential disruptive behaviors lying in wait for the unsuspecting teacher, it is incumbent upon us to act as the judges of the classroom, and maintain an atmosphere of civility and order, while providing the impetus for free discussion and learning among the students. To accomplish such tasks there must be a pre-arranged plan to support and encourage classroom civility. One tool to include in that plan for civility is effective constructive feedback for both you and your students to use during classroom evaluations and discussions.

## **3. Civility**

Moore (2012) infers that civility incorporates a number of things, including the calm and rational presentation of viewpoints, including opposing ones. Bennett (2001) believes that civility is the total of all the sacrifices that humans make in exchange for being able to live together in a society. In its essence, civility is a virtue. According to Strike (1995), Plato queried whether virtue is something that can be taught. If the answer is yes, the query becomes one of how to teach it.

### **3.1 Civility with Free Speech**

When we speak of classroom civility what we are inferring, in part, is an adaptation of an ethical code of classroom conduct. This ethical code of classroom conduct will allow us to foster an atmosphere of civility which, according to Murphy (2011), is necessary particularly when the subject matter involves topics that are controversial, such as topics discussed in criminology and criminal justice classes across the nation.

As educators, we have a responsibility to develop a civil classroom without creating a type of "controlled speech" environment. Students will cue on you, as the teacher, to determine how to properly answer a question. Nader (2001) cautions that "Academics should not be party to establishing an ideology of consensus" (p. 13). Indeed, establishing an identity of consensus for students through a discussion guideline can result in more than simple unrest in the classroom. Moreover, as Murphy (2011) notes, the "respect for diversity of ideas and free debate is essential in the classroom" (p. vii).

Thus, it is incumbent upon the educator to temper the desire for order with encouraging students to speak freely in their responses, albeit with civility and due respect for both teachers and fellow students.

Young (1995) offers that when students answer questions honestly they are digging deeply and producing what they believe is an “ultimate good” (p. 38). Moreover, Strike (1995) notes that “Education, after all, is a civic affair” and it “deals not just with people – it deals with ideas” (p. 31). Therefore, educators need to develop a teaching style that encourages not only the people, our students, but also their ideas.

Developing an environment that encourages not only the students but also their ideas is not an easy task. Think about the first day you walk into the classroom each semester. There they sit, awaiting your opening remarks. However, when you look around, it may be advisable to remember that looking at them is also like looking at a bookshelf full of books, with each student one of the books. All you can see are the covers of the books. You won’t know the content of each book until you begin to open it and look inside. So, too, you cannot tell, in general, just by looking at the students which ones are sensitive, which are the aggressive ones, which are the argumentative ones, etc. It is only after engaging the class in a discussion that you may begin to see which book fits which category.

#### **4. Promoting Classroom Civility**

To properly assess students, while encouraging them to express their ideas and beliefs without fear of an uncivilized attack from those with opposing viewpoints, educators must establish two key elements: a supportive classroom environment and a supportive system for feedback. Aid in accomplishing both of these elements can be accomplished through an increase in classroom civility. While educators generally agree that the presence of civility within the classroom setting is of top importance, as noted by Clark and Carnosso (2008) such civility will not occur in the absence of communication skills.

This absence of communication skills can be addressed, in part, by implementation of a constructive feedback system that will allow the students to effectively give and receive feedback from their peers. Without implementation of such a system, the educator could be missing out on an opportunity to improve his or her classroom by creating a more comfortable learning environment for both the educator and the students. In fact, the educator could be, inadvertently, opening the door for the establishment of an increase in incivility, which Feldmann (2001) notes results in a degradation of the classroom learning environment.

To create both a supportive classroom environment and a supportive system for feedback Kauffman and Burbach (1997) believe a teacher must combine a mixture of morality and trust. In the same light, Dallimore, Hertenstein, and Platt (2004) distributed a questionnaire to students, asking them to help define what helps in creating participation and effective discussion in a classroom. A qualitative analysis was performed, and the responses clustered into six areas, two of which are of import here; a supportive classroom environment and affirming contributions/positive feedback. It is imperative for the teacher, as the judge of the classroom, to instill both ideals into the students, as well as to utilize such ideals him or her self, so as to maintain a civil classroom.

##### **4.1 Supportive Classroom Environment**

Boyd (2006) stated that when one discusses civility as an educator, one must include teaching students how to civilly interact in a variety of social settings. Moore (2012) notes that Mark DeMoss, the founder of The Civility Project, has stressed that debates are no longer being conducted civilly, but are now performed with increasing shouting, screaming and other types of behavior that is disruptive.

Clark and Carnosso (2008) revealed that people refusing to listen to opposing viewpoints, or failing to respectfully discuss issues, do not allow for open discussion of matters that may be of a sensitive nature. This is of concern where students face the constant possibility of having to confront viewpoints presented in an uncivilized fashion that are contrary to the beliefs and ideals they hold based on their own cultural backgrounds. This is also of particular concern where students who are in a minority group believe that they must temper or censor in some way their viewpoint, so as to not create confrontational issues. When this occurs, based on Levine (2010), the students actually experience a diminution in their motivation to speak or act. This diminution is absolutely contrary to the purpose of education. Moreover, as succinctly stated by Bennett (2001), “If the result of our incivility is to stifle diversity of ideas and legitimate discussion and debate on issues of concern to the profession, we are all poorer for it” (p. xi).

As noted by Richardson (1999), classrooms are environments where students are required to adapt to the unfamiliar observations and ideas to which they are exposed. What is necessary for assisting students in their adaptations and growth is the need for a supportive learning environment. That supportive environment can be supported through classroom civility.

In fact, Braxton and Bayer (2004) revealed that pedagogical research has shown that student learning is fostered through a supportive classroom environment, and that civility contributes to inducing and producing such an environment.

Kauffman and Burbach (1997a) discuss that there are three elements necessary to maintain a supportive classroom environment. The teacher must engage in self-analysis, imagine a climate of civility, and build a repertoire of initiatives and responses (Kauffman & Burbach, 1997a). However, Feldmann (2001) cautions that “what constitutes appropriate action will vary according to the individual institution [and] . . . the individual instructor” (p. 138). Indeed, most if not all colleges and universities not only provide a general overall civility statement, but also a procedure for educators in dealing with class disruptions.

Moreover, there is a wealth of information available to you, as an educator, regarding responses to discipline problems. A good place to begin is located at <http://www.tc3.edu/instruct/sbrown/fac/civilbib.htm>. In this site Brown (2012) provides an annotated list of links to materials discussing classroom civility. These may help as a guide in generally developing a civil classroom, as well as appropriate responses in dealing with class disruptions. Also, guidance given by Feldmann (2001) and Kauffman and Burbach (1997) in contemplating a variety of scenarios of classroom incivility can help in developing procedures and responses to defuse such situations as soon as possible.

It must also be remembered that even “minor” acts of incivility must be addressed in order to avoid sending students the wrong message about classroom behavior. As noted by Feldmann (2001), “We erroneously tend to ignore some of the low-level acts of classroom incivility in the hope they will go away. However, failure to address these actions appears to condone them, sending a message to students that it is okay for that type of incivility to be repeated” (p. 138). So, the teacher must be prepared to diffuse all types of uncivil behavior. How you, as an educator, choose to defuse any given situation depends upon your ability to assess the situation and determine the appropriate response or reaction to any given situation. One thing that is certain, however, as expressed by Wilkins et al. (2010), is that educators, by setting rules and expectations for classroom behavior, may encourage civility. One such set of rules, guidelines, or expectations is the mandate that students use constructive feedback when providing comments to a peer’s work, comments, or opinions.

## **5. Feedback**

The researcher notes at the onset of this section of the discussion that the materials that follow were developed through various instruction and ideas given to me by my instructors while the researcher was pursuing my Ph.D. degree. The researcher considers the instruction received in the art of providing and receiving feedback invaluable. Moreover the researcher has used constructive feedback, and the “Constructive Feedback Cheeseburger” application technique discussed later in this article, on a number of occasions both in and out of the classroom, all with favorable results.

Cushing et al. (2011) note that a positive learning experience can be developed through the use of peer evaluation and feedback among students. However, it is important to instruct students on the proper way to provide feedback, and explain to them the various nuances that each type of feedback can provide. To that end, there are three common types of feedback that one can be given when addressing a comment by a peer, colleague, student, or other persons in general. These are known as positive feedback, negative feedback, and critical feedback.

### **5.1 Positive Feedback**

It is important to note that positive feedback is a very powerful source of motivation for individuals. It maintains its importance as reinforcement to individuals by generating a want and desire to repeat their performance. If you don’t believe that, just let a four-year old child give you a picture they just drew for you, tell them how beautiful it looks, and place the drawing on the side of your refrigerator. Chances are pretty good that you’ll have at least two more pictures to add to the collection before the day is through.

Schumacher (2012) refers to positive feedback as a tool used by managers for motivating employees on the job. The key to positive feedback, however, is how it is communicated to the individual. That is, one must be careful not to provide a false sense of accomplishment by giving positive feedback in an unauthentic manner. To clarify, if a student gives a lackluster performance in a paper, presentation, etc., it is non-beneficial to provide feedback that makes the student believe such performance is of a higher standard than that otherwise required by the teacher. Part of the teacher’s duties is to require the student to deliver a maximum performance when completing assigned tasks. Thus, an unauthentic response acts as a “false positive” for the student, and can actually hamper that student’s academic growth.

## 5.2 Negative Feedback

Giving negative feedback serves no beneficial purpose, and is actually the type of feedback that must be avoided in order to maintain civility in the classroom. This is so because, as provided by Cushing et al. (2011), this feedback has a potentially devastating negative impact on not only the recipient's capabilities, but also possibly on their sense of worth. When an individual engages in negative feedback what he or she is generally doing is attacking the person making the statement, and not the content of the statement itself. Personally attacking the person instead of the statement being made provides a result that is best described by Fischer (2011) as "both distasteful and counterproductive" (p. 229).

Moreover, such feedback has a great potential to create resentment and anger, instead of encouraging an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and open discussion. Indeed, while this type of feedback may provide short term compliance, it is stifling to the concept of free speech in classroom discussions. Thus, it can lead to a type of controlled speech and lack of free discussion and learning which educators must avoid in order to allow the students to develop critical thinking.

## 5.3 Critical Feedback

Critical feedback provides a vital building block for providing information upon which an individual can make a change in his or her performance, by guiding that individual toward the goal of improvement. In essence, what we are telling the person is how we believe he or she can improve. The caveat with this type of feedback is that, if given incorrectly, it can be misconstrued, and, thus perceived, as negative feedback. Cushing et al. (2011) instruct that providing critical feedback is not "a straightforward process because of its potential impact on the sense of self and capability of the recipient" (p. e110). So, what is a good way to provide the necessary critical feedback to an individual? One answer is through application of a system that be supportive of that feedback: constructive feedback.

## 6. Supportive System for Feedback: Constructive Feedback

According to Crane (2005), when a person gives feedback it must be done in an honest fashion. Also of importance is for educators to teach students to provide feedback in a non-aggressive, civil manner. Kauffman and Burbach (1997a) state that educators should educate students against non-aggressive responses to problems, as they believe aggressive and non-aggressive behavior can be learned. Cushing et al. (2011) explained that students in their study expressed an interest in specifically learning how to provide constructive feedback to someone so that the person did not feel it was being delivered in an unkind fashion. So, in developing a method of providing a non-aggressive response to areas of critiquing another and in general classroom discussion, I proffer a system for providing what we commonly refer to as "constructive feedback".

Cushing et al (2011) provide that the effectiveness of feedback is influenced by the way in which it is given. In its essence, what teachers should do is encourage students, and themselves, to adopt a system of constructive feedback. Such a system provides the impetus for creating and maintaining a civil classroom, while encouraging students to develop both personally and professionally.

### 6.1 Elements of the System

The elements of this system are essentially four-fold. First, the person giving the feedback should introduce the feedback by making a positive statement. This should then be immediately followed, as the second step, by providing concrete examples that support the initial positive feedback statement. Schumacher (2012) refers to this as painting a picture that lets the person getting the feedback understand what you heard them say or saw them do. Third, critical feedback should then be tactfully applied to provide guidance for future growth. Finally, the fourth step is for the person giving the feedback to finish with another positive feedback comment that provides an overall summation that encourages the person receiving the feedback to continue engaging in such positive performances. So, as a breakdown, the following steps for providing constructive feedback are:

1. Positive feedback statement;
2. Concrete examples supporting step one;
3. Critical feedback; and
4. A concluding positive feedback statement.

I teach this system at the beginning of each semester to all of my classes by utilizing what I call a "Constructive Feedback Cheeseburger".

## 6.2 The Constructive Feedback Cheeseburger

What I do is to create a visual learning tool in the form of a cheeseburger (arguably a main food staple of colleges students (and some of us that have moved beyond the college student phase of our lives)) to illustrate to students how to provide constructive feedback when critiquing another person. I use positive feedback (Steps 1 and 4) as the top and bottom pieces of the bun. The concrete examples (Step 2) are represented as toppings inside the bun on top of the cheese and meat combo. Students are instructed that these examples/toppings are unlimited in number, with the determining factor being the amount that is necessary depending upon the individual circumstances. The critical feedback (Step 3) is represented by the cheese and meat combination under the toppings inside the bun.

I use this system when providing constructive feedback to my students. As noted earlier, I also teach this system at the beginning of each semester to all of my classes as a tool I require the students to use when critiquing another student's classroom presentation, including the presentation of an opposing opinion or viewpoint. I find it has proven to be an effective tool in maintaining civility in the classroom even during such spirited debates regarding topics such as racial and gender inequality issues, the death penalty, concealed carry, and firearm ownership.

This tool can also be used by students outside of the classroom and even after graduation as they enter their chosen professions. In fact, one of my former students used this technique in teaching the student governing body how to debate matters within their own meetings, and another former student informed me of the effectiveness of this technique when it was used during the course of their law enforcement duties.

When I provide the students with the system steps, and associate the steps to the cheeseburger visual, I then provide them with a couple of scenarios to illustrate both how to apply the steps of the cheeseburger, and how the cheeseburger method can avoid critical feedback from being misinterpreted by the recipient of the feedback. This is particularly important to ensure, as noted by Cushing et al. (2011), that the effect of the feedback is one of enabling the recipient to perform better, not one that sends a judgmental message. Allow the following scenarios to provide examples of this constructive feedback cheeseburger method in action.

In scenario one your boss asks you to make a presentation to a potential buyer on a new product that you intend to market. You spend a week putting together a presentation that includes Power Point slides, photographs of the product, and a color brochure outlining the essence of the presentation, as well as including prices and contact information. On the day of the presentation, you believe you "knocked it out of the ballpark". After the presentation is over and prospective buyer leaves, your boss turns to you and says "The print on some of the slides was hard to read and a couple of the photos seemed out of focus. You may want to make a note of that for next time." When asked to react to such a scenario, students typically indicate that the message being delivered, the critical feedback, can easily be misinterpreted as negative feedback.

In scenario two, Student A gives a class presentation, utilizing the blackboard and overhead transparencies, on the importance of maintaining a positive attitude in times of strife and stress. Student B has been assigned the task of providing constructive feedback to Student A. Assuming Student A met the requirements of the assigned task, Student B can provide feedback as follows: I think you did an excellent job of putting forth the presentation (Step 1). You organized the materials in a very nice fashion, it was easy to follow the ideas you were presenting, and I really like how you used the blackboard and overheads to emphasize what you considered the key points in your presentation (Step 2). I would suggest that maybe the print on the overheads could have been a bit larger as some of the overheads were hard to see, and maybe you could speak a little louder next time (Step 3). Overall, however, I really believe this was an excellent presentation (Step 4).

If feedback is provided in this manner, Student A is then encouraged to continue performing quality work, while being provided with some points to remember for improvement in his or her next presentation. Students are able to identify that the critical feedback message was delivered in a manner that would lead to lessened, if any, animosity based on the method of delivery.

## 6.3 Giving and Receiving Constructive Feedback

This constructive feedback procedure is not only for student to student critiquing. This type of constructive feedback can be applied when the discussion involves student to student, but also in interactions between student to teacher, teacher to student, and, yes, even teacher to teacher.

Regardless of whether a person is giving or receiving constructive feedback, it is important to remember that the person must not let his or her ego or passion overcome his or her reason. As noted earlier, personally attacking the person instead of the statement being made provides a result that is best described by Fischer (2011) as “both distasteful and counterproductive” (p. 229). Students and educators giving feedback need to focus on the content of the comment made, or presentation provided, and not on the person making the presentation or comment.

Students and educators must also learn that when giving the feedback they must be respectful, and encourage and help the other person. That is the whole purpose for giving constructive feedback: to help the person receiving the feedback by providing necessary information, in a structured format, for that person to improve their performance.

Of course, the person receiving the feedback also has a role in the learning process. When receiving such feedback the recipient should do three things: listen, put away the ego, and be open to suggestion. Again, one should not let his or her ego or passion overcome reason.

## 7. Conclusion

Educators need to be cognizant of the necessity to maintain civility in the classroom, and promote that civility by empowering students with a tool to allow them to enhance their own level of civility-based behavior. This is particularly true given the nature of the issues that educators deal with on any given day, and the fact that most if not all of us teach to a diversified field of students. This civility-based behavior can assist in creating a culture of respect that can permeate the classroom and beyond.

It is one of our many duties as teachers to provide a civil classroom so the students have a learning environment that encourages questions, creates the desire for critical thinking, and teaches them how to courteously disagree when presenting an opposing viewpoint or critiquing a fellow student’s works or comments. This includes promoting classroom civility through creation of a supportive classroom environment and constructive feedback.

W. Somerset Maugham, in Chapter 50 of *Of Human Bondage* stated that “People ask you for criticism, but they only want praise.” The system of constructive feedback not only provides praise, but the added bonus of ways to improve future performance. When we, or our students, provide anything but constructive feedback, we venture into the land of negative feedback, which is neither productive nor beneficial, nor conducive to establishing a civil environment for learning. If we do not teach our students how to apply constructive feedback, we do them a disservice in their educational and personal development. We leave them lacking in a tool that they can use to better themselves, in both their professional and personal lives.

As a reminder, Moore (2012) offers that colleges and universities are experiencing a rise in incivilities on their campuses. There are far too many individuals that are willing to criticize another person, without offering any assistance to help that other person become better. When one focuses on simply criticizing, he or she loses the opportunity to explore the potential for learning. Indeed, as noted by Jean de La Bruyere in *Les Caracteres*, “The pleasure of criticizing robs us of the pleasure of being moved by some very fine things.”

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