

Teacher-student relationships key to success

As Jenna Mink noted in last Sunday's Daily News, "Nearly every school in the region was deemed unsuccessful after not passing a national assessment."

I was somewhat disappointed, however, that no one she consulted for the article seemed even remotely interested in identifying and addressing the root causes of this so-called "poor performance."

In a very real sense, No Child Left Behind was doomed from the start because the law is based on a false premise; i.e., standardized tests are actually capable of telling us which students, teachers, and schools are doing a good job.

But beyond that increasingly obvious and irrefutable criticism, most of our educational leaders seem perpetually engaged in a quest for some sort of pedagogic "holy grail" – that ideal combination of strategies and techniques that will yield the results we so

desperately crave.

Additional resources, better didactic instruction and more cutting-edge technology are not the answer.

Learning occurs when teachers and students are able to connect with each other through mutual respect based on empathy instead of fear.

In order to create an educational system that is truly responsive to the needs of the individual as well as society, two things need to happen.

First, we need to identify and implement better ways of motivating our students to perform to their full potential. When students have a genuine desire to learn, they do. Ask my son about Halo Reach.

Second, we need to emphasize positive relationships between teachers and students. As Theodore Roosevelt once said, "People don't care how much you know until they know how

much you care."

He would have understood why NCLB is not a spectacular success.

The fact that many experts in the field of education can't seem to grasp these two simple yet immensely powerful truths borders on the surreal.

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