Meet your students at the door,

setting expectations before they enter the classroom.

THRESHOLD
TEACHLIKEACHAMPION.COM
To practice your threshold, we've shared an excerpt from the Teach Like Champion Field Guide 2.0 in the following pages. As it references two video clips, you may find those here:

bit.ly/ThresholdJuly
OVERVIEW

*Threshold* refers to meeting students at the door, and setting or reinforcing positive expectations before they even enter the room. This is one of the most important moments for building positive culture. It gives you the opportunity to greet each student by name. It’s a moment when you can establish a personal connection with students through a brief individual check-in. It’s a moment when each student shakes your hand, looks you in the eye, and accepts and returns a civil and cordial greeting. For these reasons, it’s beneficial when *Threshold* happens every day.

**Reflection**

Do you currently stand outside the classroom, and greet each student by name as he or she crosses the threshold of your door? If you do, what do you consider the key ingredients of this activity? If you don’t, what reservations might you have about it?

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**ANALYZE THE CHAMPIONS**

- **Clip FG47. Shadell Purefoy, Kindergarten**
- **Clip FG48. Stephen Chiger, Grade 9**

View the clips, ideally more than once, and answer the following questions. Compare your observations with ours at the end of this technique.

  What does Shadell do and say in the course of each greeting?
How much do the greetings vary in tone or other respects?

What has Shadell noticed in her greeting with the last student? How does she respond?

What’s more sophisticated or high school–appropriate about Stephen’s Threshold and what he expected students to do upon entering?

FUNDAMENTALS

Basics

See both sides. Stand where you can see the hall and the room, so that you can briefly direct or compliment behavior outside and in. “Thanks, Adele, for going directly to your seat.” “Chairs in to let others get by.”

Control the flow. Stand where you control movement in and out as much as possible; it’s your right and responsibility to control how quickly and when students enter.

Shake hands and initiate eye contact. This builds a tone of civility and should cause each student to pause and make eye contact. The handshake puts you in charge of access to the room. If a student’s Threshold is a little lacking, gently hold on to the hand until the student does it better.

Use positive chatter. Build positive rapport and connections to students with brief personalized comments: “Looking sharp, Devon!” You won’t have time to say something like this to every student, so pick a few each day; over time, connect with everyone as an individual.

Reset expectations. Use Threshold as an opportunity to remind and reset students who are in danger of slipping. A gentle reminder of your expectations will go a long way for students struggling to improve.

Consistent on Both Sides

It’s best to maintain a consistent positive tone. It can be tempting to greet some students with a smile and positive words and others with subtle verbal or nonverbal corrections, or not greet them at all. Techniques 58 and 60, Positive Framing and Warm/Strict, can help you address all students with a positive tone that simultaneously communicates high expectations.
Some students may not always respond as you wish without some further instruction, training, and positive encouragement from you. For example, a student may

- Avoid eye contact
- Respond with a silly greeting
- Fail to respond to the greeting
- Offer a greeting that is barely audible
- Offer a limp hand

The basic solution begins with making sure each student knows your Threshold expectations. When a student’s Threshold is out of line, in good spirit you can ask him or her to go back in line and Do It Again (technique 50), entering on good terms while also meeting your expectations. The techniques of chapter 12, Building Character and Trust, can also help you address the problem.

Revisit Teach Like a Champion 2.0
Find detailed examples of Threshold corrections as performed by Dacia Toll and Jamey Verrilli.

Your Current Threshold Practice
Have you already incorporated the basics we’ve described into a Threshold routine? For each, briefly note that you do them or that you might improve them. Or identify a possible benefit of ones you don’t use now.

See both sides:

Control the flow:

Shake hands/initiate eye contact:

Use positive chatter:

Reset expectations:

Threshold Greetings
Here are some aims your greetings can serve, with examples. Below each one, add other wording you use or could use.
Remind students where they are or where they are going: “Ready for college today?”

Remind students what you expect of them: “I’m ready to see your best!”

Build relationships and rapport with students: “Great shot in yesterday’s game!”

Tell students what is coming next: “Are you ready for today’s quiz?”

Encourage them: “Oh, you got this quiz!”

Correct behavior: “I know you can give a stronger handshake than that!”

Recognize good behavior: “Excellent patience from you yesterday.”

Reinforce academic material: “The Battle of Gettysburg, Marcus. Fought in what year?”

Reinforce academic achievement: “Here he is, the man of thoughtful essays!”

**Reflection: What, No Door?**

If school policy or logistical reasons prevent meeting students at the door, what other daily ritual might you create to signify the formal start of class? For example, could you walk the rows briefly greeting students during a daily *Do Now* (technique 20)? Or what other ritual might you do so that students acknowledge they’ve entered your teaching domain?
THE NEXT LEVEL

With Jamey Verrilli’s example in mind (see TLAC 2.0), view your Threshold as part of a broader routine by which you engage your students and launch the lesson. Do you notice any problem of coordination between Threshold and your launch of the actual lesson?

Also, what greeting could you use to reflect your school’s team spirit or your classroom’s overall climate? Is there a phrase that, if you say it, students will be proud to say back to you?

Exit Ticket (technique 26) is one good routine for closing class sessions with a brief farewell contact. Whatever your current de facto routine that marks the students’ departure from class, could you improve it with the use of methods similar to those of Threshold?

ROLL IT OUT

In your next lesson plan, incorporate a note about Threshold that can strengthen its usefulness as part of your overall opening routine.

Look over your work in “Threshold Greetings.” Write and mentally rehearse the following:

Two greetings that relate back to your previous session with the class:

Two greetings that connect to some activity or expectation for today:
Are any students likely to slip into the room before you’ve posted yourself at the door? How will you include them in the greeting and make that less likely to happen next time?

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**WORKING WITH A GROUP OR PARTNER**

Observe and notice the behaviors of students entering other classrooms where teachers have or don’t have Threshold down.

If you have time for more than the following discussion topics, your group may want to practice with the “Threshold Role Play” from my.teachlikeachampion.com.

To a partner or group, describe a Threshold routine you’ve used. What purposes does it serve? What do you do? How do students respond?

Tell what’s easy or more challenging for you in seeing both sides, controlling the flow, shaking hands, resetting expectations, or using positive chatter. Gather useful comments.

Share your ideas from “Threshold Greetings” and brainstorm others.

**ACTION PLANNING**

Use this action planner to continue your work with Threshold. (Find a printable version of this form at my.teachlikeachampion.com.) You know you’re on the right track when you . . .

- Greet and make friendly contact with each student.
- Use *Do it Again* to reset expectations (when necessary).
- Acknowledge student efforts.
Design one or more action steps for improvement. Decide on an interval by which you’ll revisit this page to assess your progress.

**Action Step 1**

By when, with whom, and how you will measure your effort

By ________, I will . . .

**How Did I Do?**

Successes: ____________________________________________

Challenges: ____________________________________________

Next steps: ____________________________________________
Action Step 2
By when, with whom, and how you will measure your effort
By ________, I will . . .

Date

How Did I Do?
Successes: __________________________

Challenges: __________________________

Next steps: __________________________
OUR OBSERVATIONS ON THE CHAMPION

Clip FG48. Stephen Chiger

What stands out about Stephen’s Threshold and what comes after is the level of ownership students assume for it. Stephen does very little to manage students once they cross the threshold of his door. He barely interrupts to monitor the noise level in the classroom (the expectation is silence). He doesn’t distribute any materials. Instead, a “binder helper” distributes binders to classmates as they enter, and students prepare their materials for the lesson once they get it. Even when the binder helper asks Stephen for guidance on what she should do when she can’t locate a binder, Stephen encourages her to resolve the issue herself. Once he enters, students are already starting on the Do Now without any prompting from Stephen. His acknowledgment that the students know what to do “as always” communicates his trust in them to meet all expectations.