Meet your students at the door,

setting expectations before they enter the classroom.

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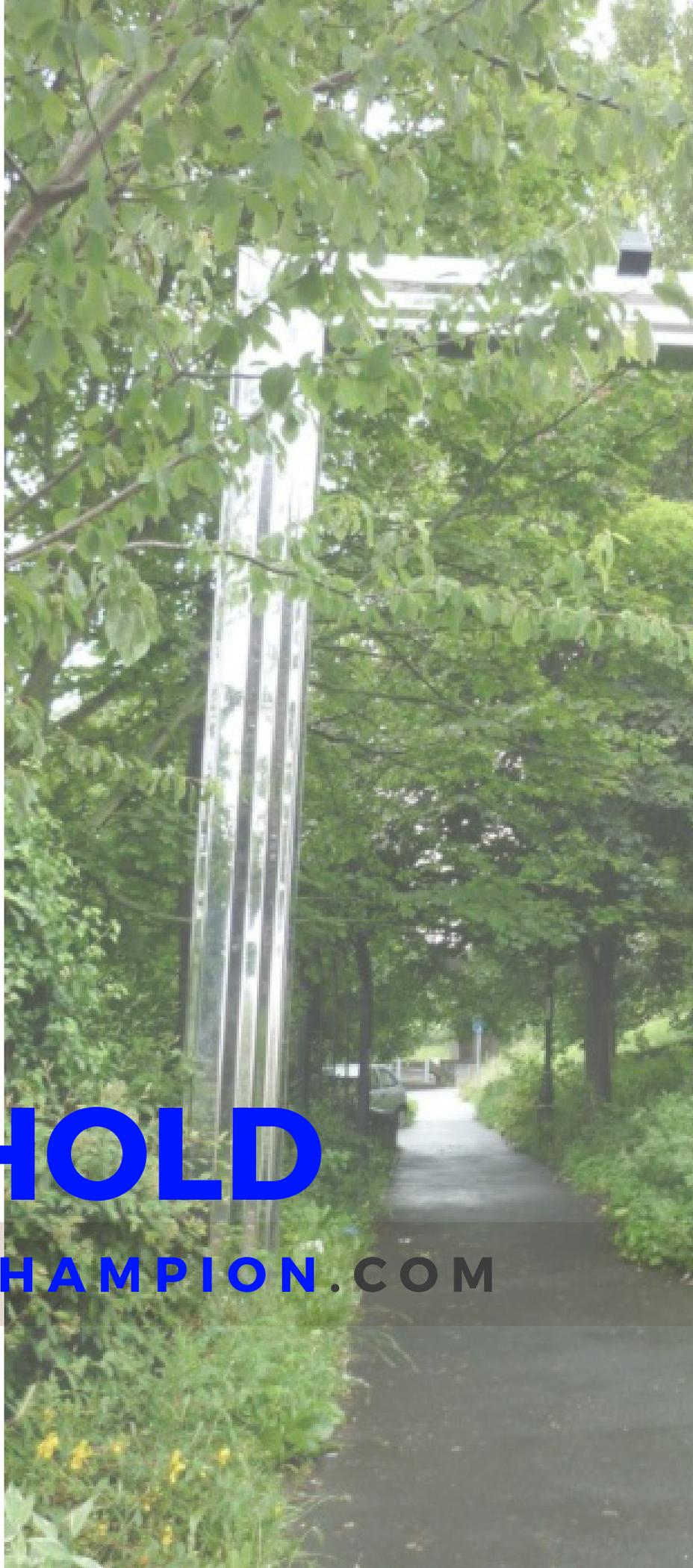
To practice your threshold, we've shared an excerpt from the Teach Like Champion Field Guide 2.0 in the following pages. As it references two video clips, you may find those here:

bit.ly/ThresholdJuly

THRESHOLD

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?

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?

_____

_____

THRESHOLD

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:

_____

_____

THRESHOLD

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?

_____

_____

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.

THRESHOLD

HOW AM I DOING?

_____

_____

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 . . .
    Date

_____

_____

How Did I Do?

Successes: _____

_____

_____

_____

Challenges: _____

_____

_____

Next steps: _____

_____

_____

THRESHOLD

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.

THRESHOLD