

Positive Greetings at the Door

A greeting policy that turns a teacher into a threshold to be performed past.

Reach for it when a school is adopting PGD and nobody has asked what it costs to walk through that door.

Many neurodivergent people have difficulties with the eye contact (<https://stimpunks.org/eye-contact/>), touching (<https://stimpunks.org/access/perceptual-worlds/>), speaking (<https://stimpunks.org/glossary/situational-mutism/>), and other acts of performative neuronormativity (<https://stimpunks.org/glossary/neuronormativity/>) that are expected when entering a classroom that implements Positive Greetings at the Door (PGD).

Exposure anxiety (<https://stimpunks.org/glossary/exposure-anxiety/>), threshold anxiety, and situational mutism (<https://stimpunks.org/glossary/situational-mutism/>) are widespread in our community. Their intensity is overwhelming. PGD policies turn teachers into anxiety-inducing “threshold guardians” that we have to get past by performing. This is an exhausting and dysregulating start to the day.

Classroom door greetings are steeped in PBS/PBIS (<https://stimpunks.org/glossary/behaviorism/>), a form of behaviorism (<https://stimpunks.org/glossary/behaviorism/>) overwhelmingly opposed by the neurodiversity movement.

Two studies often cited in favor of PGD are full of behaviorist framing and language.

- Positive Greetings at the Door: Evaluation of a Low-Cost, High-Yield Proactive Classroom Management Strategy – Clayton R. Cook, Aria Fiat, Madeline Larson, Christopher Daikos, Tal Slemrod, Elizabeth A. Holland, Andrew J. Thayer, Tyler Renshaw, 2018 (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1098300717753831>)
- Effects of Teacher Greetings on Student On-task Behavior – PMC (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1885415/>)

Behaviorist (<https://stimpunks.org/glossary/behaviorism/>) education is ableist (<https://stimpunks.org/glossary/ableism/>) education. You don’t need to do door greetings. There are better ways to invite people into shared space that don’t induce anxiety at thresholds, those liminal lines between inclusion (<https://stimpunks.org/glossary/inclusion/>) and exclusion.

We advise against posting any sort of threshold guardian or threshold ritual. If you must implement PGD, PGD policies can be improved and better avoid ableism by supporting multiple modalities (<https://stimpunks.org/glossary/modality/>) and embracing flexibility (<https://stimpunks.org/glossary/flexibility/>) as good UDL (<https://stimpunks.org/glossary/universal-design-for-learning/>). Allow greetings of all sorts:

- Spoken
- Fist bump
- Handshake
- Thumbs up
- Hug
- Virtual hug
- Head nod
- Sign of the horns

Nonverbal interpersonal interactions, such as a friendly handshake or a thumbs-up, can help make greetings feel authentic and build trust—as long as students feel comfortable with physical contact.

— Welcoming Students With a Smile | Edutopia (<https://www.edutopia.org/article/welcoming-students-smile/>)

Also allow no response at all. Compliance is not the goal, a good start to the day is the goal. Forcing students to perform against their mood is a bad start to the day. Forcing students to be false to themselves and their reality is counterproductive.

Trust (<https://stimpunks.org/glossary/trust/>) and authenticity (<https://stimpunks.org/glossary/very-grand-emotions/>) are important to many autistic people. We're wired for it (<https://stimpunks.org/glossary/canary/>). Forcing us to perform neuronormativity and toxic positivity (<https://stimpunks.org/glossary/toxic-positivity/>) destroys trust and authenticity. Such coercion is gaslighting (<https://medium.com/@sheaemmafett/10-things-i-wish-i-d-known-about-gaslighting-22234cb5e407>), as it is an attempt to “overwrite another person’s reality (<https://medium.com/@sheaemmafett/10-things-i-wish-i-d-known-about-gaslighting-22234cb5e407>)”. Such coercion contributes to school-induced anxiety (<https://stimpunks.org/glossary/school-induced-anxiety/>).

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- Emma Whittaker
- Aaron Roldan
- [Trisha Thompson](https://www.instagram.com/intentionalteachingsolutions/) (<https://www.instagram.com/intentionalteachingsolutions/>)
- [Angela Kingdon, The Autistic Culture Podcast](https://www.AutisticCulturePodcast.com) (<https://www.AutisticCulturePodcast.com>)
- [Neurodivergent Infinity Network of Educators](https://tinyurl.com/NINEsite) (<https://tinyurl.com/NINEsite>)
- Emily Marcus

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Where this sheet comes from. It is written and revised as Markdown in the open: [Positive Greetings at the Door.md](#). That file is the source this page and its PDF are both generated from, so the three cannot say different things.

This sheet is also published as a page on stimpunks.org.

There is a [one-sheet broadside](#) of this argument — the version you pin up.