



PRONOUNCING STUDENT NAMES


HOW DO YOU HANDLE STUDENT NAMES YOU CAN'T PRONOUNCE?



1 "But I can't say that name."

Be humble. Ask for help. We ask our students all the time to do things they think they can't do. Model what you want them to do when they get to something they think they can't do. Ask for help, practice, repeat.



2 "I give them a nickname."



"It is endearing/easier/faster." (<--to you) Names carry our family values, cultures and dreams. Immigrant and students of color most often have names mispronounced. It can make students feel invisible. It can feel like a micro aggression or a racial superiority message. Imagine if you went to a business meeting and the entire time they called you by the wrong name. By the end of the meeting, how would you feel? Then you go to the next meeting, and they give you a different name you have to hear over and over. Our students have at least 4-7 teachers. To hear their names mispronounced that many times a day is difficult. Imagine if that many teachers also thought they had the right to RENAME you?

3 "They tell me it is ok or to call them ___."

There can be several reasons for this. First, they see YOU are uncomfortable and they are trying to make YOU feel more at ease. Since you are the adult, they are trying to respect you. In addition, this is often because they have given up after hearing no one even trying to say their name correctly. How to solve? Privately as an individual or as a whole class project, have them record themselves saying their name slowly a few times. Practice then try, try and try again.



4 "I just give them 'the American' version of their name."

See number 1 -3 combined. Our families took time to pick names important to THEM.

They say if you put someone in a huge crowd with a lot of noise and call their name, the person will hear it over any other clatter. Our names are the first words off our mother's lips to us. They ARE our identity.

NAMES MATTER

Let's learn to say our students' name correctly.
Let's respect all cultures, languages and families.