

# research in brief

## **Teacher Immediacy/ Teaching Effectiveness**

Teacher immediacy is nonverbal behavior that reduces physical and/or psychological distances between teacher and students.

In this study, it was found that teacher immediacy is a predictor of teaching effectiveness. In other words, when the teacher reduces the physical and psychological distances between teacher and students through appropriate nonverbal behaviors, learning is increased.

Physical distance can be reduced, of course, by the teacher's moving nearer to the students—a nonverbal behavior. Psychological distances can be reduced by the use of an increased number of channels through which thoughts and feelings are conveyed—facial expressions, voice tone, body movements, eye contact, and gestures.

When these nonverbal behaviors are used to diminish the barriers of distance, students tend to like, evaluate highly, and prefer the source of the behaviors. And they are drawn to that source. Likewise, students aren't drawn to sources that they don't like, evaluate highly, or prefer.

Anderson's study adds scientific support to the things we've been told: that the communicator's nonverbal behaviors, well used, do have a significant effect on positive student learning.

Although this study was conducted in the classroom with school students, it does have obvious implications for the Extension educator working with any age group in any kind of situation. Physical and psychological distances between educator and student can be reduced by nonverbal behaviors, with greater learning being the result.

*"Teacher Immediacy as a Predictor of Teaching Effectiveness."*  
Janis F. Anderson. Ph.D. dissertation, West Virginia University,  
Morgantown, 1978.

*Robert Reisbeck*