

## CREATING A POSITIVE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

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Crearea atmosferei pozitive este visul și responsabilitatea fiecărui profesor. Atmosfera plăcută constituie mediul în care procesul de învățare devine interesant, studenții sunt încurajați și în care toți vor să ia parte. Crearea atmosferei plăcute în auditoriu va permite studenților să se simtă confortabil, în siguranță și implicați în procesul de învățare – lucru pe care toți studenții îl merită.

Creating a positive classroom climate and maintaining good order in classrooms, at the same time, are among the most difficult tasks facing not only young and inexperienced teachers, but also those who have been teaching for years. Classroom management, student discipline, and issues related to organization are among the most commonly reported problems by teachers in their first years. Brown (1994) suggests that classroom organization and management includes all of the things that a teacher must do towards two ends:

1. to foster student involvement and cooperation in all classroom activities and
2. to establish a productive working environment.

The task has become more difficult over the past few decades as young people's attitudes to people in authority have changed dramatically. Some of the changes have led to greater self-confidence in students. Others - such as the acceptance of violence to achieve ends, attitudes to substance abuse and an increasing lack of respect for authority - have made classroom management and life in school generally more difficult, and more demanding, on those who are charged with maintaining a positive learning environment.

The roles you play and the style you develop will merge to give you some tools for creating a classroom climate that is positive, stimulating and energizing. Successful teachers know how to make an environment that is stimulating and inviting.

One of the most important facts is to establish a "RAPPORT" with your students. Rapport is the relationship with your students, a relationship that is built on trust and respect and that leads to students' feeling capable, competent and creative. We are those who have to make the first attempt because we are the key, because students initially look to us for leadership and guidance, that is why, we are the one to begin to get the creative and positive sparks flying. This connection may be set by showing interest in each student as a person, giving feedback on each person's progress, valuing and respecting what students think and say, laughing with them and not at them, working with them as a team, and not against them and developing a genuine sense of vicarious joy when they learn something or otherwise succeed. Part of this rapport you create is based on the delicate balance that you set between praise and criticism. Too much of either one or the other renders it less and less effective. Genuine praise, appropriately delivered, enables students to welcome criticism and to put it to use. Effective praise attributes success to effort, implying that similar success can be expected in the future and fosters intrinsic motivation to continue to pursue goals. It is offered in recognition of noteworthy effort on difficult tasks and is delivered without disrupting the communicative flow of ongoing interaction.

Other important facts to be taken into consideration are room arrangements and displays which must be attractive, but also functional.

Quality instruction requires that teachers use materials other than assigned textbooks and workbooks. If teachers begin collecting and organizing these items before school begins, planning richer and varied lessons becomes routine, makes the teacher more productive, and reduces work-related stress.

Classrooms that invite students to learn actively and think critically have these features in common:

- **Teachers and students share responsibilities for the classroom climate**

A positive atmosphere can make a classroom a more pleasant place to be and, in turn, a more effective, motivating place to learn. We can call it *classroom energy*. It is unleashed in a classroom, perceivable only through a "sixth sense". Energy is an aura of creativity sparked by the interaction of students. Energy drives students toward higher attainment. Students (and teachers) take energy with them when they leave the classroom and bring it back the next day. It is simple to do, and it can have positive results on the achievement of students. When students feel safe, secure and are engaged, learning increases. Learning decreases when students feel threatened or unchallenged.

- **Teachers model thinking for students and support students as they share their thinking strategies.**

Teachers demonstrate how a person thinks critically, not by propounding ideas as if everything that came out of their mouths was a certainty, but by approaching ideas tentatively, conditionally and promoting respect for different points of view in their lessons. Students have open discussions with each other and learn each others' way of thinking. Teachers may question their own, their students and others' conclusions and knowledge and encourage students to do likewise.

- **There is an atmosphere of inquiry and openness.**

The teachers and students use high-level questions ( that is not just *what? where? when?* but *why? What if? and why not?*) as they analyze problems and make questions. Students take certain roles in activities as they practice different kinds of thinking: they make predictions, gather information, organize the information and question conclusions. Teachers show students ways to carry out tasks in the classroom and they give students more corrective advice than criticism and evaluation.

- **Students are given support, but just the right amount of it.**

Teachers pay close attention to what students are learning and how they are thinking, investigating and communicating to see how they go about learning. Teachers vary the amount of guidance they give students and offer them more independence as they show they are ready for it. There is an emotionally secure learning environment in which students feel free to try new tasks, and in which unsuccessful attempts may lead to eventual success.

- **The arrangement of the space makes it easy and natural for students to work together and to talk to each other.**

One of the simplest principles of classroom management centers on the physical environment for learning: the classroom itself. Traditional classrooms are arranged so they resemble ceremonial places, where students sit in rows like an audience or a congregation, and the teacher sits in front, often on an elevated place, like the mayor or the priest. If we want to stress the idea that the students are important, that what they have to say is interesting and should be shared, then we should arrange the classroom space to allow or them to talk to each other, and to work together.

Let us consider the following categories that can help us make students feel welcome, encourage involvement and allow for learning experiences in a multitude of arrangements:

### 1. **Sight, sound and comfort**

Pupils and students are affected by what they see, hear, and feel when they enter the classroom.

- The classroom is neat, clean, and orderly in appearance.
- Blackboards are erased.
- Chairs are appropriately arranged.
- The classroom is as free from external noises as possible (machinery outside, street noise).
- Acoustics within the classroom are at least tolerable.
- Heating or cooling systems are operating.

Make your classroom as physically comfortable as possible.

### 2. **Seating arrangements**

Students are members of a team and should be able to see one another, to talk to one another and not to feel like they just walked into a military formation. If your classroom has movable desk-chairs, consider patterns of semi-circles, U-shapes, or – if your class size is small enough – one circle so that students aren't squarely facing the teacher. If the room has tables with two to four students at each, try to come up with configurations that make interaction among students most feasible. Give some thought to how students will do small group and pair work with as little chaos as possible. It is the teacher who determines who sits next to whom in cases where it is necessary (different proficiency levels).

### 3. **Blackboard use**

The blackboard is one of the teacher's greatest allies. It gives students and pupils added visual input along with auditory. It allows the teacher to illustrate with words and pictures and graphs and charts. Try to be neat and orderly in your blackboard use, erasing as often as appropriate; a messy, confusing blackboard drives pupils and students crazy.

### 4. **Equipment**

The teacher may include in the classroom any equipment he uses. If he\she uses electrical equipment, he\she must make sure that:

- The room has outlets.

- The equipment fits comfortably in the room.
- Everyone can see it (or hear it).
- The machine actually works.
- He\she knows how to operate it.
- He\she leaves enough time before and after class to get the equipment and return it to its proper place.

There is an extra light bulb or battery or whatever else he\she will need if a routine replacement is in order.

Prominent scholars state that effective classroom management consists of teacher behaviors that produce high levels of student involvement in classroom activities, minimal amounts of student behavior that interfere with the teacher's or other students' work, and efficient use of instructional time. Teachers that are effective classroom managers have:

- Planned rules and procedures carefully
- Systematically taught these to students
- Organized instruction to maximize student task engagement and success
- Communicated directions and expectations to students.

Here are several examples that can help us to create a positive physical and emotional atmosphere:

1. Change the way you act, talk, teach, and communicate with your students. From today, communicate positively with every single one of them in a way that tells them that you have total confidence in them and their abilities (even though you might not have). Your body language and tone of voice makes up the majority your overall communication, so include it in your changes.
2. Encourage the students with positive feedback whenever possible. Praise for successes is a far stronger motivation than criticism.
3. Cover the walls of your classroom with positive messages: posters with motivational pictures and words; inspirational quotations from great people; positive paintings, drawings, prose, poems, done by your students.
4. Create stereograms that have hidden positive words. For an example go to [www.school-teacher-student-motivation-resources-courses.com/teaching methods](http://www.school-teacher-student-motivation-resources-courses.com/teaching-methods) and check out subliminal communication.
5. Embed more positive words in everything that you write and talk about.
6. Create a positive word for the day and start a discussion on it. Apply it to positive case studies, role models. For example - 'Winning' - Lance Armstrong won against cancer, won Tour de France Race 7 times, and won the hearts and minds of charities and young people with his colored rubber wrist bands.
7. Create a class dictionary of positive words. Start with an A - Z template and get your students to add positive words to the template. Make it big and put it on the wall.
8. Use bright, warm colours in decorations. Most classrooms begin with standard-issue furnishings, all the same. Well-placed wall decorations can make a classroom more homey and occasionally even impart knowledge to those whose attention has drifted off.

It is also important to involve students in participating in developing class rules for conduct. Teachers invite students to take initiative- for example, by using cooperative learning strategies in which each student is assigned his or her own role to play in helping classmates learn. All students must be engaged in this process. In this way we will develop a system that will ensure us that all students are called on and have an opportunity to participate.

In conclusion, we can say that the climate of the classroom is the responsibility of the teacher. Enthusiasm is contagious. Keeping school positive, active, and interesting is rewarding not only for students, but also for teachers. A positive classroom is a place where learning is interesting, students are encouraged, and where people want to be. Creating a positive learning environment in your classroom will allow your students to feel comfortable, safe and engaged – something that all students deserve.

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