

Positive & Productive Learning Environments

Friday, October 18, 2019
PNW Teachers' Conference
Cannon Beach, OR

Think-and-Respond

Think about the question below. Then take **one minute** to respond by writing down a one-sentence answer. Try to make your response concise and to the point. Afterward, you will share your response.

“How does a faucet, whistling, or water represent your classroom learning environment?”



Overview

Objectives

- Identify principles of positive and productive learning environments.
 - Initially, plan a routine or activity to implement with students that supports a positive and productive learning environment.
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Agenda

Connector: Faucet, Whistle, Water

Overview

Learning 1: Learning Environment Principles

Learning 2: Planning an Activity

Closure & Management

WELS Collaborative Norms

Equity of Voice
Active Listening
Respect All Perspectives
Safety & Confidentiality
Presume Positive Intentions
Monitor Use of Electronics



Foundational Principles

Principles of Christian Education:

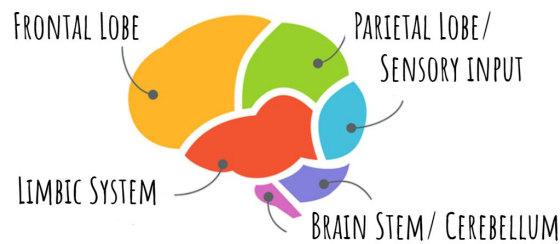
- Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. –Prov. 22:7
- Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. –Eph. 6:4
- A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. –Prov. 15:1
- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things, there is no law. –Gal. 5-22-23

Other Key Principles:

- Teacher “growth mindset” → Student “growth mindset”
- Teacher-Student Connections
- Community/Team “We are a team and a family!”

Brain Research

Key Idea #1 - Before the brain can attend to cognitive learning, students must feel physically safe and emotionally secure. Emotion is a strong force, and when learners experience strong negative emotions, the limbic system kicks in and (1) shuts down cognitive processing and (2) enhances negative memory of the negative event in order to support survival. In other words, “reflex” overrides “reflection” when negative emotions occur.



Key Idea #2 - A positive learning environment increases higher-order thinking. A positive learning environment increases endorphins in the bloodstream which generates a positive feeling and stimulates the brain's frontal lobe to support the memory of both the learning objective and the positive situation.

Key Idea #3 - A negative learning environment leads to the shutting down of higher-order thinking so that the stressful situation is remembered rather than the lesson content. A negative learning environment leads to increased cortisol in the bloodstream which raises the learner's anxiety level, shuts down processing of what it perceives to be low-priority information (the lesson content), and focuses the brain on what it perceives to be high-priority information (the situation causing the stress) so that the stressful situation is remembered rather than the lesson content.

Key Idea #4 - For teacher-student relationships to be effective, teachers must attempt to see the world through a student's eyes - to be empathetic. Students who experience caring relationships with a teacher learn considerably better than students who do not.

Case Study

DIRECTIONS

In groups of three, review the case studies of teachers who were working to foster their classroom learning environments.

1. Select a case study teacher to analyze on the bottom of page 7.
2. Determine effective features of the teacher's activity/procedures
3. Identify improvable areas
4. Agree on a specific improvement the teacher can make

CASE STUDIES

#1 Ms. Green - The students are focused and working on their grammar lesson for the day -- the difference between the subject and object of a sentence. Students turn in their desk work, and Ms. Green says, "That was great diligence you displayed today. Let's all stand up and sing one of our favorite classroom songs before moving on to math."

The students are all smiling and stand up quickly and silently. They sing "I got a feeling that today's going to be a good class," a song based on a popular one whose lyrics Ms. Green modified to make it about things students can do to work hard academically. They sing in unison, loud proud, and it goes on for a couple minutes. When they finish the song, Ms. Green silently counts to three on her fingers, and the students sit down, still grinning, silent, and immediately get started on their math.

#2 Miss Violet - Miss Violet created an incentive that seemed to make her students happier and more focused. She knew they loved to compete against each other, so with good behavior, they could earn minutes at the end of class for playing Heads Up, Seven Up, with math facts as a game. Miss Violet was always it, yet if you got tapped and you answered a math fact question correctly the student team scored. If someone missed or another student who wasn't tapped disrupted, she got a point.

#3 Mr. Gold - Mr. Gold welcomes his students one-by-one at the threshold of the door. With some, he bumps fists; with others, he gives high fives and back slaps. He asks one about his family member who was injured. He gives one a serious stare-down until the student laughs and then smiles. He asks a student who is visibly upset, "What's up?" They talk for a minute and then he continues. As one student approaches, he tips his head and says, "Good morning." The student smiles and enters the class.

#4 Mrs. Rose - In Mrs. Rose's class, a student is expected to answer her questions thoroughly and with a complete sentence. Today her class is playing an abbreviated game of Jeopardy about certain historical figures and keywords to remember for History Class. When Josh answers with a complete sentence and correct answer, she tells the students, "We are going to give Josh a Roller Coaster Cheer - ready? They do the cheer with big smiles and giggles, not in unison, but they generally finish around the same time. They are laughing and giggling, and some students sitting next to Josh also give him a high five or a pat on the back. Mrs. Rose begins the next part of the lesson while some students are giggling, or talking quietly. She stops and says, "If we can't handle celebrating or a review game in this class, we won't be able to do it anymore. We will just work using the review questions from the book."

CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Case Study Selected (Circle one): #1 #2 #3 #4

Effective features:

1. _____
2. _____

Improvable areas:

3. _____

Specific connections to what you would like to do in your classroom:

5 -Types of Supportive Activities

- **Games** - features many at-bats, checks for understanding, teach good sportsmanship. A teacher favorite is teacher-versus-students.
- **Us & Them** - creates a feeling of a community by using a specific combination of strategies. Teachers find the right combination that works for them.
- **Drama, Song, Movement, and Dance** - engages the students through interactive movement and voice that breaks up the regular pattern of school. Teachers have also noted how it raises spirits and reinforces belonging.
- **Humor** - shares joy and laughter to strengthen and spread an environment in which happy and fulfilled students and teacher can thrive!
- **Suspense and Surprise** - solidifies learning and makes learning more memorable and fun.

Initial Planning

INITIAL PLAN

An activity designed to support a positive and productive learning environment.

#1 Supportive Activity: _____

Objective/Purpose: _____

#2 What will be done? (Application to classroom setting)

#3 Cooperative Learning Structures (Procedures/How will it end?)

Next Step

With a standing partner:

1. Share your idea(s) for your selected activity,
2. Get feedback on how to extend it or intensify it even further, and
3. Decide how it will end in your classroom setting (what will the procedures be and how do you want it to end).

Flexible Groupings

Flexible Groupings: Defined

- Groups are formed based upon shared need, strength, interest of members
- Content or strategy is provided to group based on shared needs
- Group membership changes (is flexible) as needs change
- Depending on needs, process, and objectives, students engage through many formats.

Flexible Groupings: Added Value¹

Enhance the depth and/or breadth of student learning

Increase student awareness of appropriate classroom behaviors

Promotes on-task behavior and attention

Improves social interactions and skills

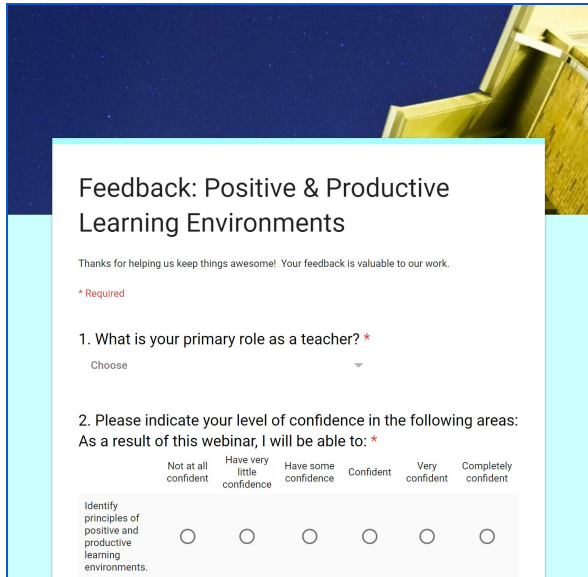
Addressing student differences in background, abilities, and experiences

Provides teachers with opportunities to observe students in varied settings



¹ Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991; Gentry, 1999; Baugous & Bendery, 2000; Valentino 2002; Bennett, 2019

Feedback Form



Feedback: Positive & Productive Learning Environments

Thanks for helping us keep things awesome! Your feedback is valuable to our work.

* Required

1. What is your primary role as a teacher? *

Choose

2. Please indicate your level of confidence in the following areas:
As a result of this webinar, I will be able to: *

	Not at all confident	Have very little confidence	Have some confidence	Confident	Very confident	Completely confident
Identify principles of positive and productive learning environments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you for your attendance & feedback!

Please use the link address to access the short 4-questions feedback form

<http://bit.ly/PNW2019TC>

Major References

Thank you!

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