

Classroom Environment

Environmental factors in a classroom can make a significant difference to both teachers and students in a number of ways. The classroom should be a stimulating and supportive environment in which age- and subject-appropriate tasks can be completed. There are a number of key factors which can affect the educational success of the pupils in the classroom.

Décor

- Classroom décor appropriate to the subject being taught in the room is one of the best ways to create a positive environment in the room. Students will be less likely to damage the room if they feel they are participating in its upkeep and that the teacher cares about creating a stimulating atmosphere. Changing the displays often to include the students' work, for holidays or for seasons can help create variety and encourage everyone to participate in creating a warm and welcoming environment.

Seating Arrangements

- The layout of the tables, chairs and the teacher's desk are key to the environment of a room. A teacher's desk in the center, with rows of tables and chairs, will create a much more formal atmosphere than desks arranged in a semi-circle around it. The seating arrangement can also have a direct impact on a student's education. For example, group seating can work well to encourage pupils to participate in group activities, however, it can lead to some students having their back to the blackboard if the teacher does not plan their workspace carefully.

Equipment and Facilities

- Many classrooms require a variety of equipment and facilities depending on the subject being taught in the room. The environment in a science lab, for instance, should be significantly different from that of an art room.

Stimulating Resources

- The classroom should be full of stimulating, age-appropriate resources such as books, maps, puzzles, games, charts, and posters offering educational and functional as well as attractive items to stimulate learning.

Rules, Regulations and Expectations

- A list of classroom rules and regulations should be posted in a prominent place in each classroom. It should also be reviewed by the teacher with the whole class to be sure they know what is expected of them. This is especially important in classrooms in which specialized activities take place, such as the science lab or woodworking shop. The environment can not only affect the level of learning going on in the classroom, but the health and safety of the pupils as well.

Level of Discipline

- The environment will be created to a large extent by how closely the teacher keeps the students under control. A productive environment will be one with few distractions or disruptions.

Social Environment

- A classroom in which each pupil feels his contributions will be valued and respected, creates a more positive learning environment compared to one in which a child feels criticized all the time. Instances of verbal or physical bullying, either obvious or subtle, by fellow pupils, can also create a stressful environment for a child and prevent learning.

Physical Environment

- Physical aspects of the classroom, including the location, amount of lighting, temperature, and even the view out the window can all contribute to the atmosphere of the classroom and its overall environment.

Creating a Positive Learning Environment

Many forces combine to create a classroom's learning environment. This environment could be positive or negative, efficient or inefficient. Much of this depends on the plans you have in place to deal with situations that affect this environment. The following list looks at each of these forces in order to help teachers better understand how to ensure that they are creating a positive learning environment for all students.

1. Teacher Behaviors

Teachers set the tone for the classroom setting. If as a teacher you try hard to be even-tempered, fair with your students, and equitable in rule enforcement than you will have set a high standard for your classroom. Of the many factors that affect a classroom environment, your behavior is the one factor that you can completely control.

2. Teacher Characteristics

The core characteristics of your personality also affect the classroom environment. Are you humorous? Are you able to take a joke? Are you sarcastic? Are you an optimist or a pessimist? All of these and other personal characteristics will shine through in your classroom and affect the learning environment. Therefore, it is important that you take stock of your traits and make adjustments if necessary.

3. Student Behavior

Disruptive students can really affect the classroom environment. It is important that you have a firm discipline policy that you enforce on a daily basis. Stopping problems before they start by moving students or diffusing situations before they begin are key. However, it is hard when you have that one student who always seems to push your buttons. Use all the resources at your disposal including mentors, [guidance counselors](#), phone calls home, and if necessary the administration to help you keep the situation under control.

4. Student Characteristics

This factor takes into account overriding characteristics of the group of students you are teaching. For example, you will find that students from urban areas like [New York City](#) will have different characteristics than those from rural areas of the country. Therefore, the classroom environment will also be different.

5. Curriculum

What you teach will have an effect on the classroom learning environment. [Mathematics](#) classrooms are much different than social studies classrooms. Typically, teachers will not be holding classroom debates or using role playing games to help teach math. Therefore, this will have an effect on teacher and student expectations of the classroom learning environment.

6. Classroom Setup

Classrooms with desks in rows are quite different than those where students sit around tables. The environment will be different too. Talking is typically less in a classroom set up in the traditional manner.

However, interaction and teamwork are much easier in a learning environment where students sit together.

7. Time

Time refers to not only time spent in class but also the time of day in which a class is held. First, the time spent in class will have an impact on the learning environment. If your school uses a [block schedule](#), there will be more time on certain days spent in the classroom. This will have an impact on student behavior and learning.

The time of day in which you teach a specific class is beyond your control. However, it can have a huge impact on student attention and retention. For example, a class right before the end of the day is often less productive than one at the beginning of the morning.

8. School Policies

Your school's policies and administration will have an impact within your classroom. For example, the school's approach to interrupting instruction can impact learning during the school day. Schools do not want to interrupt class time. However, some administrations put in policies or guidelines that strictly regulate those interruptions while others are more lax about calling into a class.

9. Community Characteristics

The community-at-large impacts your classroom. If you live in an economically depressed area, you might find that the students have different concerns than those in a well-off community. This will impact classroom discussions and behavior.