



Classroom Climate in a Rural School Context: Reflection, Modification, and Improvement in the Science Classroom.

Aaron Kessler

Clear Creek Middle School, Buffalo, Wyoming



Background

Classroom climate is defined as “the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical environments in which our students learn (Ambrose, 2010).

The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers in a small, isolated teaching situation can benefit and improve their overall classroom climate by using each other as both an element for change and/or motivation in their everyday professional life.

Research Questions

Determining ones’ ideal classroom climate and then comparing that vision to what was actually occurring in the classroom was at the heart of this study.

Primary Question: “What is the current status of your classroom climate?”

Secondary Question: “Is the classroom’s climate in your teaching space set to the highest standard for student learning?”

Reference

Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M.W., DiPietro, M. & Lovett, M.C. (2010) How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching. San Francisco, CA

Methodology

The study began by asking teachers what their ideal classroom climate would look like. Second, teachers then reflected on their own classroom and then compared their actual classroom climate to their ideal classroom climate. Teachers then participated in observing and being observed by fellow teachers. In addition to just watching, the observing teacher completed an observation form that documented what they saw as well as heard in that classroom. Teachers then met shortly afterward and shared a dialogue of what occurred. Judgement free conversation attempted to not only help the observed classroom reach the most productive classroom climate, but also the observing teacher gained valuable first hand experience to assist in improving their own classroom climate.

Thanks to the teachers of Clear Creek Middle School who participated in this action research study.

Teacher Quotes: How would you describe your ideal classroom climate?

- * Kids feel valued by their peers and teacher and see value in what they're being asked to do.
- * Collaboration, growth mindset (mistakes are allowed and encouraged because from mistakes comes growth), established guidelines of respect/expectations
- *An environment where every kid was willing to do their best, and if they failed, they were willing to both laugh at and learn from their mistakes.

Conclusion

Prior to this study, teaching in isolation and curriculum delivery based on trial and error were two of the norms that teachers in my building experienced. The goal of improving each classroom’s climate was a one-person endeavor.

While participation in this study, teachers broke free from this hindering situation and with the collaboration from peers a collective increase in both the individual classroom as well as the whole school classroom climate occurred. Teachers helping teachers to make their school a better more productive place, who would of thought?



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