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Promoting Academic and Social Success by Creating a Positive Learning Environment

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PROMOTING A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS AND EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

In my study I aimed to investigate how to create a classroom environment that is caring and encourages academic higher learning. Additionally, I explored how such a classroom impacts the social and academic success of students. The study is a result of the ongoing development of a learning environment during my student teaching experience. In regards to classroom environment, I focused on teacher-student relationships and classroom management strategies. Through the initial and ongoing creation of a classroom, close observation, and extensive reflection, I discovered the effects relationships and management style have on students and their learning environment. I conclude that forming a relationship with each student based on trust, genuine interest, and support allows students to feel more comfortable taking academic and personal risks in the classroom. My research exposed me to a variety of management styles and allowed me to reflect on which is the most effective for me and my students, as well as gain ideas for my future as an effective educator.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- In what ways can the development of a classroom environment maximize student learning and success?
- What specific discipline and classroom management strategies are most effective in maximizing my students' learning?
- What steps can I take to establish positive, trusting, and working relationships with my students?
- How can I maintain open teacher student relationships which promote student success in the classroom?

PRIMARY FINDINGS

- Students are more able and willing to make mistakes after a personal relationship is formed with their teacher
- A safe environment promotes teamwork mentality
- Discipline with dignity promotes student independence and accountability through the clear definition of expectations

CONCLUSIONS

- Taking the time to get to know your students as individuals—both as people and as learners, will help guide your lesson plans to be more effective and worthwhile for the understanding of the students in your classroom.
- Taking steps to create a safe and supportive environment, and to form personal relationships with individuals makes it possible to discipline with dignity.
- Forming a relationship with each student based on trust, genuine interest, and support allows students to feel more comfortable taking academic and personal risks in the classroom.

METHODOLOGY

Who: 20 Second Grade Students; 11 girls, 9 boys. 19 White students, 1 Hispanic student. Working class families.

When: Over the five month period of my student teaching experience (August- December 2010)

Where: A second grade classroom in a school located in a small, rural town. Town Population: 1800. School has about 300-350 students.

CLASSROOM LAYOUT and DÉCOR: initial development of the classroom, display of student work, team and family mentality

EMOTIONAL/RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT: safety—promoting taking academic risks, star of the week, reading conferences, family and parent interaction, questionnaire, recess duty

STRATEGIES: YAK time, helpful organization tools, class meetings, reflections on lessons, reflections from cooperating teacher, cube system



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“A teacher's purpose is not to create students in his own image, but to develop students who can create their own image.”