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<center>Classroom Learning Environment</center>

The term "classroom learning environment" seems quite simple at first but is much more complex than it initially seems. This phrase could range from the physical layout of the room to the rules and expectations in the classroom. The teacher helps to foster the classroom learning environment by creating a culture in the classroom. Other parts of the classroom learning environment include the style of teaching that a teacher uses, the attitude of a teacher, personality, efforts made to connect with students, and the social structure of the classroom as a whole. I will be taking a closer look at the physical space of my future classroom and how that plays an integral role in the classroom learning environment and then look at my classroom learning environment through the lens of the Ready for Rigor framework.

The Classroom Space Itself

The physical space of the classroom is one of the most important aspects of teaching. It is often forgotten or overlooked because it is quite easy to think that the teaching itself is the most important part of the classroom.

For my classroom, I plan on having desks in small groups, initially alphabetically, but then switching to students choosing at least one of the people that they are sitting with. I want to start alphabetically to help me learn the names of students but I want to give the students my trust and allow them to choose someone that I will put them with. I will do this by having students fill out a notecard that says who they would like to sit with and who they cannot sit with. This will help students feel more comfortable and guarantee them a seat where they will be near a friend or someone that they get along with. Having students write down students that they cannot sit with also lets me know if any issues exist between any of the students that are in my

class. This will help to cultivate a comfortable environment for students while also encouraging them to branch out and make new friends with the people around them that they may not be as close with. By making it so that students have a say in where they sit as well as me assigning seating, students will be able to strengthen the relationships that they have with their friends while simultaneously building relationships with people who they may not interact with as much. I chose to do this because I have found in my personal experience it allowed me to feel comfortable while also getting to know those around me but also always having a friend nearby. This will also build trust in the classroom because I am showing students that I trust them to have a say in their seating where they will still be productive. If they betray that trust and are disruptive or not doing as well in the class as I know they could be, they will lose the privilege of choosing their seat and I will pick it for them.

My Classroom According to the Ready for Rigor Framework

Awareness

To make my classroom as inclusive as possible, I will research the demographics of my students and the area that I am teaching in before I start my first year. This will help me understand where my students are coming from and help me to ensure that I am incorporating their culture in appropriate ways and not just going on the surface. If I know that students like rap music, I will not simply have them write rap songs. I will instead alter how I am teaching to incorporate something that connects to rap music. This is similar to the teacher that Dr. Criswell mentioned who used the rap/hip-hop cipher to teach students the scientific method.

I will also take into consideration my background and upbringing and think about how that may be impacting my perception and expectations of the students that are in my class. By being aware of the biases that I have I can combat them and acknowledge how they may be

impacting my thinking and thought processes in certain situations. I will remind myself that the students that I am teaching are not like me. They are unique individuals with different, values, beliefs, ability levels, and cultures from myself.

Learning Partnerships

A part of my classroom learning environment that is extremely important to me is the relationship between me and my students. I want to build a strong relationship with my students so that they feel comfortable and excited to learn when they come to class each day. As we discussed in class, it is impossible to teach if the students do not respect you or do not want to be there. To help build this strong bond, I will have students fill out a get-to-know-me worksheet in the first week of school and I will then see how I can use the information on that worksheet in the upcoming class periods. This can be something like picking specific readings based on students' interests or finding ways to tie the lessons I am teaching into pop culture and talk about how literature and pop culture reflect or interact with one another. When I know what student's like or believe I can make meaningful connections with the content and things that they know or like, similar to the ATLAS case study that we watched where the teacher connected what the students were learning in class to part of the bible.

To further strengthen the bond I have with my students, I will have standard expectations for all of them but I will also have expectations for each student. For example, if I know that one student is a particularly strong writer, I will push them more and help them get better at writing rather than just saying that they are where they should be for their grade level. Likewise, if I know that a specific student is struggling with writing I will ensure that they are understanding and grasping the main concepts before I push them to do more because the foundation is the most important part. I must make these expectations clear and communicate them with the

students so they know what I expect of them and know that I believe in them. It is also important that all of these expectations are reasonable for the students to achieve.

When I am teaching, I will also enable students and give them the tools that they need to succeed. I am not there to hold their hand or tell them exactly what to do in every situation. I am there to help them become more independent and take control of their learning. When it comes to taking control of their learning, I will do this by having students do a project at the end of the year where they choose what book they are going to read and then have to complete a project on it. Other than one or two check-ins with me during this process, students will only have the guidance of the rubric and they are accountable for meeting all the deadlines. This will give students greater agency and allow them to learn about what they want to while also creating a schedule to get the work done on time.

Equally as important as my relationships with the students are the students' relationships with one another. To help students build friendships and connections with their classmates I plan on having students complete get-to-know-you sheets and then I will make that into a Bingo sheet. The following class period, I would hand out the Bingo sheet and have students go around the class and find which students correspond with each box and try to get Bingo. After the activity, I will ask the class who each square was and then ask them to raise their hand or put their hand on their head if they have a similar hobby, interest, or fact to that person. This makes it so students see how similar they are to one another and have things to talk to each other about based on their similarities. Furthermore, in the first week of school, it is important to stress the relationship aspect of each class as opposed to the content. This is because if students do not feel as though they know me and the people around them, it makes the process of learning much more difficult. In addition to this, if students enjoy me as a teacher and know that they are

surrounded by friends and a classroom community that supports them, they are much more likely to be actively engaged in the learning process and the classroom as a whole.

Information Processing

Tying into learning partnerships and what I discussed previously with challenging my students, it is my goal as an educator to help provide challenges to stimulate brain growth and intellective capacity in my students. One way that I will do this is when taking notes in class I will provide blank notes and guided notes. I will encourage students to use the blank notes but make it clear there is nothing wrong with using the guided notes. Halfway through the year, I will start to stress to my students more that the blank notes are the *challenge* notes and encourage them to stray from the guided and let them know that if they need or want help they can ask me for it. At this point in the year, I will also do a mini-lesson on note-taking because many students are not formally taught how to take notes in their classes and this can be detrimental to and slow down their learning.

I will use a variety of different modalities to teach students to ensure that there is differentiation in the material that I am teaching in class. I will do this by using videos, PowerPoints, lectures, the jigsaw method, group work, and independent work. By using a variety of different methods to present information to the students in my classroom, I will ensure that students who may process information differently can fully comprehend and process the lessons that are being taught. Furthermore, I plan on giving students options for what they can do as projects in my classroom. Examples of this include creating a video, creating a presentation/PowerPoint, creating a poster, or writing a traditional paper. This allows students to process the information that has been presented to them and present it back to me in a way that makes the most sense for them rather than what is easiest for me to grade.

One thing that I will value highly in my class is the use of feedback after assignments. After I assign a project or exam to my students and it is finished, I will ask them for feedback on what they just did. This will either be through an in class-discussion or through an anonymous form. Allowing the students to give me feedback and present any issues or difficulties that they may have had provided me with the opportunity to see if there was any point of confusion or mess up on my end that I did not see initially. It will also help me to change and alter assignments in the future based on what the students say about the task or assignment that I had just given them.

Community of Learners and Learning Environment

To create a space that is both intellectually and socially safe for my students I will start the school year by letting my students know that the class and content in it are meant to be challenging at times and may be controversial. However, it is important to look at the books and stories from this class and take what you can out of them to form your own opinions that you can back up and support. I will emphasize that my classroom is no space for hate or ignorance and neither of those will be tolerated. I will have posters hanging around the room with quotes from a variety of books and people, ensuring that a variety of different groups and cultures are represented because the standard literary canon in the English classroom is almost entirely cis-gendered white men. Representation in the classroom is essential, so throughout the school year, I plan on teaching books and articles that are written by different ethnic groups and communities that are underrepresented in literature today. Books such as *You Should See Me in a Crown* and *Firekeeper's Daughter* dive into issues that different ethnic groups face and are by non-white authors and this will help students feel seen and help drive home the point that my classroom is a safe space for all.

By ensuring that students are comfortable, I will create a space where students feel as though they can speak their minds and what they think about a variety of issues that we see in the texts we are reading. I will provide them with a platform to discuss these thoughts and opinions by having class discussions when we are done reading books and articles for class and ask students how they felt reading them and why reading texts like the ones that they read is important.

I plan on bringing students together by having them do group work with one another but also changing up their seats every once in a while so that they are not just talking to the same person every single time that I have them do anything in partners or groups. To ensure they are not working with the same people, I will say something along the lines of "Go share with someone that you haven't talked to yet today" and I will question them if they try to act like they have not spoken with another student that I know is their friend.

I will also use classroom rituals and routines to support the culture of learning that I am trying to create. When I come into class I will say "Good morning!" or "Good afternoon!" and teach my students to say it back to me. This will be something that I do every day and if no one responds when I say it, I will say it again to ensure I get some sort of response. I will also have instructions for what the students must do when they get in on the board which will include the materials that they will need and any additional information that they may need as well.

Conclusion

The classroom learning environment is arguably the most important aspect of teaching and there are a plethora of ways to mold your classroom into the space that you want it to be. While thinking about what I want my future classroom to be like I drew on my personal experiences as well as methods that I have learned in my education classes. The majority of my

classroom learning environment revolves around building relationships and creating a welcoming and safe space for the students in my classes. This is a result of my personal philosophy on education and my belief that relationships are essential when it comes to teaching students effectively. The foundation of trust and a support system is essential in creating the classroom learning environment that I want to create. By creating relationships with my students and encouraging them to form friendships with one another, I am effectively trying to turn my classroom from a group of strangers into a small community that can rely on one another; that is why I decided to format my classroom learning environment in this way.