

2b: Establishing a Culture for Learning

What is your current “Culture for Learning”?????

Which of the following statements best describe you?

1. “I think most of you will be able to do this?”
2. “Why don’t you try this easier problem?”
3. “Let’s work on this together. It’s hard, but you all will be able to do it well.”
4. The students are not satisfied until they have complete understanding.

Video

Communicating High Expectations

www.ascd.org

The Whole Child

“Culture for Learning”

A “culture for learning” refers to the atmosphere in the classroom that reflects the importance of the work undertaken by both students and teacher. It describes the norms that govern interactions among individuals about the activities and assignments, the look of the classroom, and the general tone of the class. A classroom with a strong culture for learning is characterized by high cognitive energy, by a sense that what is happening there is important, and that it is essential to get it right. There are high expectations for all students, and the classroom is a place where the teacher and students value learning and hard work.

Elements of Establishing a Culture for Learning

- **Importance of content and of learning**

In a classroom with a strong culture for learning, teachers convey the essential importance of what the students are learning.

- **Expectations for learning and achievement**

In classrooms with robust cultures for learning, all students receive the message that while the work is challenging, they are capable of achieving it if they are prepared to work hard.

- **Student pride in work**

When students are convinced of their capabilities, they are willing to devote energy to the task at hand, and they take pride in their accomplishments. They may undertake revisions on their own, or show a visitor a recent paper or project they have produced.

2b: Establishing a Culture for Learning

- Belief in the value of the work
- Expectations are high and supported through both verbal and nonverbal behaviors
- Quality is expected and recognized
- Effort and persistence are expected and recognized
- Confidence in ability is evidenced by the teacher's and student's language and behaviors
- Expectation for all students to participate

Understanding the Levels of Performance

Level 4

The classroom culture is a cognitively vibrant place, characterized by a shared belief in the importance of learning. The teacher conveys high expectations for learning by all students and insists on hard work; students assume responsibility for high quality by initiating improvements, making revisions, adding detail, and/or helping peers.

Level 3

The classroom culture is a cognitively busy place where learning is valued by all, with high expectations for learning the norm for most students. The teacher conveys that with hard work students can be successful; students understand their role as learners and consistently expend effort to learn. Classroom interactions support learning and hard work.

Level 2

The classroom culture is characterized by little commitment to learning by the teacher or students. The teacher appears to be only ‘going through the motions,” and students indicate that they are interested incompletion of a task rather than quality. The teacher conveys that student success is the result of natural ability rather than hard work; high expectations for learning are reserved for those students thought to have a natural aptitude for the subject.

Level 1

The classroom culture is characterized by a lack of teacher or student commitment to learning and /or little or no investment of student energy is the task at hand. Hard work is not expected or valued. Medium to low expectations for student achievement are the norm, with high expectations for learning reserved for only one or two students.

Distinguish between levels

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Assign a level

- The teacher's energy for the work is neutral, neither a high level of commitment nor "blowing it off." Many students indicate that they are looking for an easy path to completing the work. The teacher says, "I think most of you will be able to do this."

Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4

- The teacher conveys that the work is too challenging for at least some of the students. Almost all of the activities are busy work. Students turn in sloppy or incomplete work. Students don't engage in work , and the teacher ignores it.

Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4

- The teacher communicates a genuine passion for the subject. Student questions and comments indicate a desire to understand the content. Students work even when the teacher isn't working with them or directing their efforts. A student asks a classmate to explain a concept or procedure since he didn't quite follow the teacher explanation.

Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4

- The teacher demonstrates a high regard for student abilities. The teacher expects student effort and recognizes it. The teacher says, “Let’s work on this together. It’s hard, but you all will be able to do it well.” The teacher says, “This idea is really important!”

Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4

Identify evidence that is relevant to 2b

The teacher says to a student, “Why don’t you try this easier problem?”

Yes

Identify evidence that is relevant to 2b

A student asks the teacher whether she can redo a piece of work since she now sees how it could be strengthened.

Yes

Identify evidence that is relevant to 2b

Students question one another on answers.

Yes

Identify evidence that is relevant to 2b

Students independently check themselves into class on the attendance board.

No

Managing Classroom Procedures

Identify evidence that is relevant to 2b

The teacher says, “This idea is really important!
It’s central to our understanding of history.”

Yes

Identify evidence that is relevant to 2b

The teacher says, “Watch me while I show you how to underline context clues,” and students are asked only to listen.

No

Communicating with Students

Table Top Activity

- Watch the video...
- How does Ms. Saul communicate her beliefs about learning to her students?

Group Activity

Group by department.

- What is your classroom culture?
- What effect do you and your paraprofessionals have on it?
- How can you increase the culture for learning?
- What practice or routine could you start to build your classroom culture?