

Characteristics of Healthy Classroom Environments

The teacher...

1. Appreciates each child as an individual

- a. The teacher in a healthy classroom works continually to “tame” students in this way: to see who they really are, what makes them unique in the world. There is no such thing as a child who is unattractive. There is no such thing as a child who is “OK” without teacher intervention. The teacher “tames” all comers. Teachers in healthy classrooms also take the risk of allowing their students to know them as people. They take the risk of being “tamed” themselves.

2. Remembers to teach the whole child

- a. What children bring to school from home cannot be left outside the school door; similarly, for a lesson to be truly powerful, it must go home with the child

3. Continues to develop expertise

4. Links students and ideas

5. Strives for joyful learning

- a. Children are somehow programmed to respond to joy. They are full of the energy and enthusiasm and rhythms of young life. Moving, touching things, laughing, and telling stories are prime entry points for important skills and understandings.

6. Sets high expectations – and provides ladders

- a. Each student needs to have big dreams and concrete ways to climb them. Thus, the teacher teaches up. That means knowing quite clearly a child’s next learning benchmarks and the scaffolding needed to get there.

7. Helps students make their own sense of ideas

- a. Unless we go through the complexities of struggle and invention, our knowledge is empty.

8. Shares the teaching with students

- a. There is continual talk about the importance of whatever is undertaken, a consistent sense of urgency about what is to be learned. It isn’t a sense of hurriedness, but rather a sense that time and topic are valuable and to be treated as such. This involves the same kind of planning as for a promising trip. Teacher and students are full of anticipation as they calculate destinations, map routes, and adjust to new contingencies.

9. Promotes student independence

10. Exercises positive classroom management