

Creating a conducive classroom enviroment



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When I think of a conducive classroom, the first thing that comes to mind is the climate and atmosphere of the room. Is the room inviting? Is the environment set up in such a way that everyone has access to everything in the room? Does the teacher come off as a warm, caring person? In a conducive classroom, it is the teachers role to create such an environment that children can and will succeed regardless of their educational background, their cultural background or even the language they speak. A teacher needs to establish an effective climate where she still maintains authority and organization, where there is mutual respect and good rapport between each other. As an educator of ELL students, the classroom needs to be a place that will influence the child's achievement and help boost their self-esteem, and have planned organized activities at their levels which can produce success. The ELL student can present many problems for a teacher in the classroom if the teacher is not prepared to teach this type of population. ELL students often come to school with many disadvantages such as learning a new language, learning new content, cultural differences, socioeconomical issues and the list could go on. In his book, *The Natural Approach: Language Acquisition in the Classroom*, Stephen Krashen often speaks of the different levels for Language- Acquisition-sometimes referred to as "The Natural Approach" and how it is a natural process for students to learn the language. In fact, some say it is so natural that it requires very little education and planning on the teacher's part, for an ELL student to learn a new language. I took this to mean, if you just put them amongst their peers the learning and language-acquisition will happen. But, as an educator for many years, I can honestly say, I have worked very hard to establish the best policies and practices for a successful conducive classroom. But even after <https://assignbuster.com/creating-a-conducive-classroom-enviroment/>

many years of working with the ELL population, I can honestly say I can improve on different strategies that would not only make me a better teacher, but would also benefit my ELL students as well.

Problems or issues in the classroom: Building Trust

If I had to make any improvements working towards a conducive classroom for my ELL students, I would have to say I could work on establishing more trust from my students, and working on my routines in the classroom.

Even though I try to establish a sense of trust with every student, sometimes you will not gain every ones trust in the room but a teacher must continue to try. That is why before the school year even begins, I try to get to know my students during the “ Meet the Teacher Day” offered at our school the week prior to the first day of school. It is during this time I start to build trust. This gives us a chance to get to know one another and during this time, I start to get a feel for my students, their parents, and the family situation. From the minute I shake their hand at meet and greet, I try to make them feel as if we have been together an entire school year already. To help gain trust, I begin by letting them explore “ their” classroom, choose what seat “ they” would like, and I ask them a few questions about their likes and dislikes. I want my students to feel as though I care about them as a teacher and a friend.

Even though I try to establish a student/teacher trust, a problem I have found over the years is that not all students feel they can trust a teacher or other adults because of their cultural upbringings. Even though I tell them they can come to me for anything, many are hesitate because they do not want to get a family member in trouble, and believe me, I can see how this

affects their school work. So, my solution to the problem is to share personal stories that I think the students can relate to and then ask if anyone has had something similar happen to them. Sometimes it works and they trust in me, other times, they simply keep things inside.

Another way I try to establish trust is by showing the student that I care and value their language and culture. I start doing this by pairing up a limited English speaking student with an English proficient student that will help them throughout the day or however long they need each other. Research has shown that when students can continue to learn in their own language the non proficient student will actually learn English faster (Cummins, 1991). That is why, as I am teaching my lessons, I will allow my students to speak to each other in their native tongue which helps the non proficient student understand what is being taught and what is expected of them. There is nothing worse than having new students get “lost” at the beginning of a school year, and then you will have lost them forever. Even though I try to establish trust in this manner, there are still times I may forget about the non proficient student and when I hear talking during a lesson, I sometimes get upset only to realize they are translating for me.

I feel that every teacher needs to get to know their students on a personal basis; they need to build trust and respect for each other. Teachers need to look beyond the students proficiency levels, their cultural backgrounds, their social-economical status, and remember they are people and we need to embrace our differences and teach them as we would any child. By building a relationship of mutual trust, a teacher can help relieve the anxiety many

ELL students feel and therefore provide a conducive classroom that is beneficial to all.

Research on Building Trust

Maslow, (Maslow, 1968) discusses the basic strategies for safety and security for a new student. One of the very first things he says is that every new student should be assigned a personal buddy, preferably one who speaks the same language. This person would help the new student throughout the day to make sure he/she knows the routines and how to navigate around the school. Additional solutions include that of established routines. Research states if a classroom has routines in place, this can help to lower the ELL students' anxiety and it helps them become a part of the classroom (Krashen & Terrell 1983).

Problems or issues in the classroom: Daily Routines

Another issue I may face is trying to set-up the perfect routine. To me, there is nothing more conducive in a classroom that has structure that will promote student success. Structure and routines in a classroom can make all the difference in a successful or a non successful room. In the beginning of the year, I have simple routines that everyone, regardless if they speak English or not, can follow. The routines are so basic and they establish what is expected of each and every student. By having such a routine in place, any new student, ELL or otherwise, can come into the room and know what is expected of them after just 1 or 2 days. A well planned

routine helps ease the expectations of many new comers. It does not require them to know English to begin fitting into the classroom. My routines also include how groups are made and organized. I have small groups for every subject area and the students know where they are assigned. Even though I like to think I have the perfect routine established, and my students know how to move from one routine to another, that is not always the case, because at a Title 1 school, I have found that routines are made to be broken, which is something I have to learn to deal with. At a Title 1 school on any given day, I receive numerous intercom interruptions from the office or other teachers asking for so and so to be sent to the Counselors office, or nurse's office, or reading/writing lab, or my favorite, they are going home, could you make sure they have their homework. Call me " old-school," but, I really like a structured classroom, so whenever I am interrupted it throws everything off. I found that I have to monitor and adjust my schedule on a daily basis, so you can imagine how my students feel when I say, " OK" we need to change this or that, it takes them a lot longer to adjust. So, I guess one problem I have when establishing a conducive classroom is how to deal with change on a daily basis and how to make the transitions easier for my students as not to disrupt the learning going on.

Professional Research on Routines

Establishing routines in the classroom is one of the easiest strategies to help ELL students lessen their stress and enjoy their days in schools. In their book, *50 Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners*, (Herrell & Jordan 2008), go so far as to walking a teacher through the process step by step on how to set up a classroom. Other research also mentions that ELL <https://assignbuster.com/creating-a-conducive-classroom-enviroment/>

students need cooperative groupings to interact orally with their peers (ESL learners: a guide for classroom teachers). The guide goes on to say that structured learning groups have many positive outcomes in academic achievement, increase in communication skills, race relations, and social development. I am a firm believer in cooperative learning groups. There have been many times I have seen students teach other and explain things to each other, in only ways they understand.

Where I am in producing a conducive learning environment

As a veteran teacher of 15 plus years, I believe I already have a classroom that is conducive to the ELL student. To me, it takes many years to establish such a room where the ELL student can produce and become successful. I have implemented many strategies to help ensure the success of each and every one of my students. My classroom is arranged in such a way that students have access to everything they need from bilingual dictionaries, technology, manipulatives, realia, learning centers, and small groupings. I also differentiate instruction, have established routines and structure, I embrace and learn all about my student's cultures, I create an environment that makes a child feel comfortable and one that helps to relieve all anxieties a child may feel when entering a strange new place. I instill a love of learning through motivation, hands-on activities, and positive feedback. I understand as an educator that every student has different needs, and the ELL population may have even more than your typical American student, but I do whatever I have to, to make sure they have everything they need and to make sure they are in a conducive environment that is task-oriented, engaging, and supportive so that they can and will be successful.

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