

Interacting with Our Students – a culturally responsive classroom

How can I create a climate of success?

Learning occurs when students perceive that they are valued as a member of the learning community, that teachers believe in them, and that they are expected to succeed. To be effective teachers and encourage student engagement, we need to build caring relationships that are informed by knowledge of the students' cultural background, previous experiences and personal strengths. For students to invest in learning and participation, they must experience positive affirming interactions with their teachers and classmates on a consistent basis. This precept is basic to culturally responsive teaching, but it is far from new; in fact, it mirrors the age-old adage that:

"Students don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care."

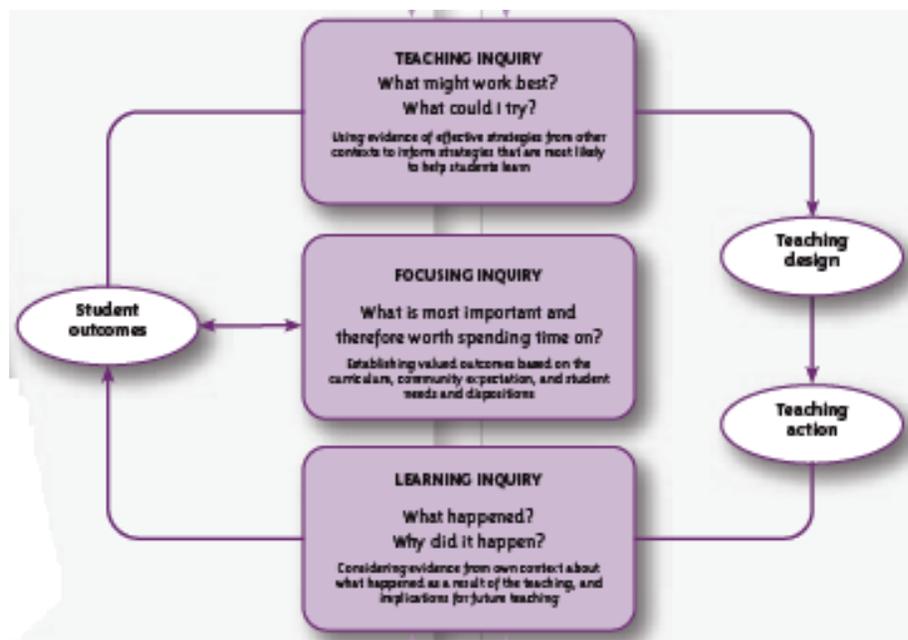
Care and respect are conveyed in a number of ways. In particular, all aspects of the classroom environment come into play in establishing care and respect. The Classroom Self-Tour invites us to look at our classrooms with new eyes, and see whether our classroom settings demonstrate the beliefs, learning opportunities, and support that we hope to share with our students.

Suggested ways to use the Classroom Self-Tour

Although you (the teacher) may want to take the full classroom tour, you may want to get your students to complete just parts of it.

→ You could get different groups in the class to complete different sections, or complete different sections at different times of the year, or different classes to do a different section.

The analysed responses from the classroom tours will provide the data for focusing your inquiry. The next step in your inquiry will probably concentrate on one or two aspects of the classroom setting (eg entrance and wall), followed by collecting feedback that tells how effective you are and informs your next steps.



Classroom Self-Tour: Seeing your classroom with new eyes



Classroom Setting	What do you see?
Entrance	
What is the first message students' get when they enter the room?	
Are students greeted verbally and with eye contact when they enter? Are they greeted by name?	
Is it possible to scan the room quickly to get a feel for students' state of mind?	
Are there Daily Prompts or other "do now" activities that help students focus immediately?	
Seating	
What does the seating arrangement communicate about who will be talking?	
Can seating arrangements be changed to facilitate each lesson's main activity?	
Can the students make eye contact easily during discussions?	
During working sessions, can students easily collaborate?	
During tests, can students work alone?	
Walls	
Are key words, questions and concepts posted?	
Are objectives and themes clearly posted?	
When students' eyes wander, what are they seeing or learning?	
Is diversity affirmed through quotes and posters from a wide range of speakers (and in the languages of your students)?	
Is there a visual display of the ways in which students will be assessed on the content?	
Are skills such as writing processes and reading strategies outlined and visible to students?	
Is student work displayed to honour successful students and provide all students with models?	

Materials	
Are materials displayed in a visually pleasing manner to increase interest?	
Do readings represent a variety of perspectives and a diverse set of authors?	
Do classroom materials include graphic organizers and other scaffolding tools?	
Are interesting reading materials available if students want to pick up something to read?	
Do classroom materials include primary sources from which students draw their own conclusions?	
Activities	
Do teaching techniques include the use of diverse approaches like role-plays, art, or music?	
Are there regular conferences with students to monitor their progress and engagement?	
Can students make a choice among topics or products they may pursue?	
Are students engaged and participating in classroom activities?	
Are activities changed often to keep students' interest high?	
Assessment	
Are students really learning? How is their progress measured?	
Is student learning assessed before, during, and after units are taught?	
Are lessons informed by the data that emerges from student assessments?	
Are diverse methods of assessment used to get a clear view of student understanding?	

Seeing your classroom through your students eyes



Classroom Setting	What do you see?
Entrance	
What is the first message you get when you enter this classroom?	
Are you greeted verbally and with eye contact when you enter? Are they greeted by name?	
Do you feel your teacher knows you and where you are with this subject?	
Are there Daily Prompts or other "do now" activities that help you focus immediately?	
Seating	
Does the seating arrangement allow you to communicate effectively?	
Can seating arrangements be changed to help you complete each lesson's main activities?	
Are you able to make eye contact easily with the teacher during class discussions?	
During working sessions, can you easily collaborate with other students?	
During tests, can you complete your answers without others seeing it?	
Walls	
Are key words, questions and concepts posted on the classroom walls?	
Are learning objectives and themes clearly posted on classroom walls?	
When your 'eyes wander' during class what are you seeing or learning?	
Are aspects of your culture visible on the walls of the classroom?	
Is there a visual display of the ways in which you will be assessed on the content?	
Are skills such as writing processes and reading strategies outlined and visible?	
Is student work displayed?	

Materials	
Do you find the materials displayed visually pleasing manner / interesting?	
Do readings/displays represent a variety of perspectives and a diverse set of authors?	
Do classroom materials include graphic organizers and other scaffolding tools?	
Are interesting reading materials available if you want to pick up something to read?	
Do classroom materials include primary sources from which you can draw their own conclusions?	
Activities	
Do teaching techniques include the use of diverse approaches like role-plays, art, or music?	
Does the teacher regularly monitor your progress and give you practical feedback to improve your understanding?	
Can you make a choice among topics you want to pursue?	
Are you engaged and participating in classroom activities?	
Are activities changed often to keep your interest high?	
Assessment	
Do assessment methods used enable you to clearly show your ability?	
Does the give feed-forward advice after assessments that improves your understanding?	



With your “new eyes” what changes will you make to improve the interaction with your students?

What would you like to “see” - ie changes you are going to make
Entrance
Seating
Walls
Materials
Activities
Assessment