Strategies for Creating a Positive Classroom Environment

Review the following strategies and rate your current practice using the rating scale below:

1	2	3	4
I rarely do this	I sometimes do this	I usually do this	I consistently do this

Build Positive Relationships

Your rating

Build rapport with your students by:

- greeting each of your students by name as they enter the classroom
- making time to interact with each student individually
- listening to their comments, concerns, and worries while modelling empathy
- showing your interest in their stories and experiences

Get to know each of your students' strengths, and help them leverage their strengths to experience successes. This is crucial because resilience develops out of individuals' existing strengths[1].

Engage parents, caregivers, and the community via regular communication as well as through volunteering and mentorship opportunities. This will not only help you learn more about your students, but it will also build trust with these partners in education.

Arrange the Physical Environment

Your rating

Strategically organize the classroom by:

- assigning seats to students at the beginning of the year, if applicable
- arranging furniture to ensure all students are able to see you and the board
- establishing routines for distributing and collecting materials in an orderly manner

Having an organized classroom provides structure and predictability for all students, which can help to reduce stress levels.

Set Realistic Expectations	*Your rating*
Have high but realistic academic expectations for all students. Engage all students in their work by carefully planning learning tasks that draw on differentiated instruction and universal design for learning. Support all students to feel successful.	
Establish clear and consistent behavioural expectations with your students. Involving students in setting behavioural expectations can improve compliance. Be sure to address bullying and peer victimization in your discussions. Consider revising expectations halfway through the year; expectations should change over time, as students become better able to manage their own behaviours.	

Provide Feedback and Reinforcement	*Your rating*
Acknowledge and praise positive behaviours. Depending on the student and the situation, this can be done in front of the whole class, individually, or through communication with parents/caregivers. Remember to recognize and reinforce students' efforts and not only results.	
Reframe mistakes as learning opportunities. Coping with challenging situations can build a sense of competence. Mistakes are 'teachable moments' and can help students learn how to cope with future mistakes and failures, and feel more comfortable taking risks. It is important to support students in learning from their mistakes and failures by modelling and normalizing those experiences. When a student takes a risk, praise them for their effort. When a student makes a mistake, respond in such a way that they feel validated for trying, rather than ashamed of getting it wrong.	
Provide effective coaching and supervision. For example, periodically review the rules and expectations, supervise students by regularly scanning the classroom, move around the classroom and occupy the whole space, and quickly deal with problems in a calm and positive way.	
Use humour. Humour helps students feel comfortable and at ease in the classroom. Make sure you keep your humour positive and avoid sarcasm.	

Continued…

Provide Feedback and Reinforcement continued	*Your rating*
Help students access the supports they need. A positive classroom environment is one where students feel comfortable expressing their feelings. Encourage students to let you know if they or their peers are feeling overwhelmed or stressed. Help them learn to ask for what they need.	

Reflection Questions:

1) What were your highest and lowest scores?

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2) What obstacles do you face to implementing these strategies?

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3) Set yourself a goal: Which items will you work to improve? How will you do so?

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[1] Hurlington, K. (2010). *Bolstering Resilience in Students: Teachers as Protective Factors. What Works? Research into Practice.* Research Monograph #25. Retrieved from: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/WW_bolstering_students.pdf