

## Annotation & Evaluation

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### Bowers, Melissa AP9 - Learning Environments

Status: **Evaluated**

EVALUATION				
	Emergent	Bridging	Fulfilled	Proficiency Level
<input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient  <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate	<input type="checkbox"/> 9.E.1 Demonstrate knowledge of components of a positive learning environment that foster active engagement in learning, self-motivation and positive social interaction  <input type="checkbox"/> 9.E.2 Understands the importance of setting up an effective learning environment  <input type="checkbox"/> 9.E.3 Understands the importance of structuring the environment for positive student to student interaction	<input type="checkbox"/> 9.B.1 Plans techniques and strategies that promote a positive learning environment that fosters active engagement in learning, self-motivation and positive social interaction  <input type="checkbox"/> 9.B.2 Plans a variety of techniques that will ensure an effective learning environment  <input type="checkbox"/> 9.B.3 Plans to structure the environment so that there is opportunity for positive student to student interaction.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 9.F.1 Model strategies that foster a positive learning environment conducive to students' (P-12) learning  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 9.F.2 Implements a variety of techniques that ensure an effective learning environment  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 9.F.3 Structure the environment specifically to ensure that there is positive student to student interaction.	<input type="checkbox"/> Preliminary <input type="checkbox"/> Emergent <input type="checkbox"/> Bridging <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fulfilled

**Comments from Evaluator:** Your evidence of the Inclusion Success Plan and supporting document from your cooperating teacher about its effectiveness is compelling evidence of your ability to implement a variety of techniques to ensure an effective learning environment. You have done an excellent job of writing up your annotations to describe what you have learned. Well done!

#### ANNOTATION

1. Type and description of evidence(s) (e.g. assignments, activity)

This assignment submitted as evidence for AP#9 – Learning Environment is my final paper for SCE 4310. The main focus of this paper was to take what I had learned from this course, along with all my other classes at USF, and describe what kind of science teacher I intend on becoming and what kind of classroom environment I want to develop. I have combined the knowledge I have acquired as an education student with my own personal ideas and values to create a plan of the most important characteristics of a positive science classroom environment.

UPDATED 11-14-08

This assignment I'm using as evidence for AP #9 is the Classroom Management Plan that was done in EDE 4301: Classroom Management, Safety, Ethics, School Law. The assignment required me to create every aspect of my future classroom. This included my ideas, rules, likes, dislikes, and lesson implementations. I discussed communication with students, parents, and other teachers. This management plan also includes my teaching philosophy inspired by ideas of theorists such as Dreikur, Ginott, and the Canter sisters.

UPDATED 4-1-09

My next evidence is my Inclusion Success Plan project implemented in my Level 3 Internship 2nd grade class. In this evidence, I have explained in detail what my ISP included, how I measured student success and reflections on the effectiveness on the plan from my cooperating teacher, Mr. Hearn, and also myself. I also have uploaded separately the actual paper Mr. Hearn

hand-wrote his reflective paragraph on.

The next assignment I am using for evidence of AP#9 is my Intern Mid-Semester Progress Check completed by my Level 3 Internship Cooperating Teacher Mr. Hearn. In this progress check, Mr. Hearn answers different questions about my skills as an intern.

2. How did the evidence(s) address the Accomplished Practice? (Why are you using the evidence(s) to prove you met the practice and rubric criteria?)

This evidence addresses the Accomplished Practice (Learning Environments) because it shows the thought I put into creating a positive and effective science learning environment for my students. Throughout the evidence, I have planned, and also implemented, various ideas and strategies for developing a learning environment that is beneficial to all students. I have built a concept for a classroom based on the students understanding the importance of following directions, implementing a set of clear, consistent rules, allowing and encouraging my students to think freely, inquisitively, and critically, and knowing that the number one goal in any lesson/activity is about learning something. I mention several times in my evidence about supporting hands-on learning. I believe it is essential to allow students to actively engage with what they are learning, also while learning to interact positively with other students. These ideas not only create an atmosphere of positive thinking and cooperation, but also are skills they will need and use the rest of their lives as adults. I mention in my evidence that I find it is important to work with your students, as they explore and experiment science. If they feel you are there to help and encourage them as apposed to tediously watching their every move to ensure they are following directions, they will feel more comfortable exploring ideas, making predictions, thinking independently, and becoming a self-motivated learner. Using these strategies and ideas to foster every student's academic development helps create a learning environment that helps each and every student grow to their fullest potential.

UPDATED 11-14-08

This assignment meets AP #9, Learning Environment in various ways. First, I took my knowledge from my University classes and my experiences from my observations and internships and designed my plan. My classroom management plan is 100% student centered. Every single aspect is for and about them and their success. I took this idea and focused on making my classroom a very learning-supportive environment. This evidence shows my ability to take several different aspects into consideration when planning my classroom. I stress my stance on the importance of clear and consistent classroom rules, respect, and pushing every student to their fullest potential. I gave several examples of techniques I use to promote a positive learning environment, such as modeling both examples and non-examples of correct classroom behavior, and practicing the correct way to do even very simple things like walking down the hall in a straight line. If every student is very aware of the classroom rules and follow them, this will definitely help foster positive interaction between students, and also with me, the teacher. It will be a more inviting atmosphere for students to think critically, explore new ideas, and ask questions. I also talk about my ideas of positive reinforcement for students. I think it is essential to focus on a student's good points, even when sometimes it is hard to find one. This will create a sense of self confidence and will motivate the student(s) to work even harder to learn as much as they can and to impress their teacher. I believe compliments are addicting for children. Once you've given them one compliment, they are going to want to work even harder to be recognized in such a positive light by their teacher once more.

UPDATED 4-1-09

My Inclusion Success Plan meets this AP in many ways. First of all, this assignment was made especially to require us to focus on the enhancing the acceptance of all students in the classroom. As you can see in my evidence, I have done just that and more. What started off as a simple experimental project turned into something that completely improved the dynamic of the classroom. As stated in my evidence, my ISP involved every student getting a chance to be in "the spotlight", and all the other students would write a nice comment about that student. In order for students to grasp the concept of the activity, I first modeled the strategy I wanted them to learn. Also, when the students were writing their comments about a student, I was doing the same thing. I want them to see the importance of a positive classroom environment, and what better way than to model the behavior myself? At first, it was fun and exciting for each student to have their name drawn and have all their classmates say nice things to them. It immediately gave most students a new sense of confidence. Students were recognizing their peers for such specific things like their ability to understand math so well, their great spelling in writing, how quietly they always are during silent reading time, etc. After awhile, when most students already had their turn, I began to really focus on the importance of a positive classroom atmosphere with my students. I started becoming intolerant of behaviors such as tattling, mean comments, name calling, etc. If I heard a student doing something of the sort, there was a negative consequence for the whole class (our in-class behavior management system). I wanted the students to understand that even if one person is being negative, it affects the entire class. Mr. Hearn's reflection on the effectiveness on my ISP really helped me realize that I am not the only one seeing a difference in my students. His reflection states how successful my ISP has been, and that now most of the students in the class "demonstrate throughout the day a genuine care and concern for their peers." Piggy-backing on my ISP, I also have implemented strategies to help the students learn to be nicer to each other. We practice using nicer ways to say things. For example, instead of "stop reading so loud!" in a negative tone, we practice saying things like "Can you please lower your voice when you read? It is a little distracting". I have been showing them the importance of explaining your side of the situation calmly when there is an issue between students. If a student has a significant problem with another student (tattles don't count!), I show them how to explain why they are upset or angry, so the other student can try to understand better. Basically, over time and a lot of hard work from both me and my students, the entire day-to-day atmosphere in the class has improved because the structure of our class has changed.

My next evidence meets this AP in different ways. This is a mid-semester progress check done in full by my cooperating teacher about my skills in his classroom. One of his responses to the question "what are your intern's strengths and weaknesses in academic instruction?" was "she is extremely enthusiastic and animated, which causes the students to become enthusiastic about what they are learning." I believe this is necessary for a positive learning environment. If I'm not excited about what I'm teaching, how can I expect my students to be? How could I even expect them to learn anything? This is why I try to teach as if learning new knowledge is the greatest thing in the world (isn't it?). What Mr. Hearn said is true; if you teach with enthusiasm, the students will become just as excited and upbeat. It's contagious! Another comment Mr. Hearn made about me is "She is keenly aware of what all students are doing all of the time. Even from 1 on 1 or small group she can redirect unfocused students in various locations of the classroom without missing a beat in the small group or with the single student she is working with." I also believe this kind of awareness of each student at all times is crucial to the structure of our classroom. If I am working one-on-one with a student, some other students may think it's okay to act up or become off task because the teacher isn't looking. I have developed my class to where even if I'm occupied with a small number of students, I still have my eye on them. I really think they believe I have eyes in the back of my head, because I've gotten to the point

where I can just sense negative behavior. By using this technique of constant awareness, my students have learned that no matter what, no matter where I am, they are responsible for doing the right thing. If they don't, they know I will see it anyways. This is given my students a chance to be self-reflective about their daily actions. They are always aware of what they should be doing at any given time in the day. If a student becomes off-task, they have come to understand that they didn't deserve their sticker that day (another classroom management strategy in our class). There are no sticker "surprises". They know how they performed, Ms. Bowers knows how they performed, and now you must deal with the consequences, good or bad. This sense of self-awareness has helped our classroom become a better environment to learn in. Not only do the students care for themselves, they try to help out their peers as well. If a student becomes off-task, another student at his table will try to help them refocus.

### 3. Answer the question below that best fits your evidence

a - If your evidence involved your direct work with (P-12) students, answer this question: How did the evidence/s impact students' (P-12) learning? (How would/did the evidence(s) help students learn?)

b - If your evidence did not involve your direct work with (P-12) student, answer this question: How could the evidence/s impact students' (P-12) learning? How could the evidence(s) help (P-12) students learn?)

I am currently participating in my Level II Internship in a fifth grade class whose teacher is extremely science-driven. Nearly every day I am in the classroom, there is an extensive science lesson and/or hands-on activity planned. This has allowed me to take the ideas I created in my evidence and apply them in the classroom. First off, my cooperating teacher basically gives me full control of the room when I am there. Before ever beginning a lesson with the students, I presented the rules to them that they must abide by. I stressed the importance of the rules in order to keep a successful learning environment, and if anybody should not follow any of the rules they would no longer be allowed to participate. I am a very fair, caring, and sometimes lenient teacher. I will give a little for my students because I trust them. However, implementing the classroom rules, especially during science activity time, is one time where I feel it is important to be consistent and explicit. My rules are my rules, they are made for a reason, and they must be followed. Everything after that will allow for exploring, predicting, hypothesizing, and fun! My students understand this. If they do their part by following all directions and respecting myself and the other students, I will respect them by allowing them to walk around the room, learn and engage with other students, and even give their own ideas for fun classroom experiments they are interested in learning about. For example, two of my rules are to respect mine and other's property (such as materials used for the experiment) and to always respect others' thoughts and ideas. I want them to know that during this time, their classroom is a lab and they are the scientists and anything they are curious to learn about they are free to do it. In my internship classroom, the students were learning about weather, and were having trouble deciphering between what a barometer and an anemometer was, what they did, and why? So, I found a website that showed how to make your own and use them, so that's what we did. We actually learned how to measure the air pressure with a barometer and the wind speed with the anemometer each day. This allowed the students to become hands-on with what they were learning from their textbook, and see firsthand how the instruments work, and also got to make predictions about what the weather was going to be like each day. They then got to test their predictions to see who got the closest correct hypothesis. This first experiment/activity I implemented with my students helped them become more 'curious' about the things they were learning in their books. If something didn't make sense to them or they wanted to find out more, they would speak up, ask questions, and we would find a fun way to be 'little scientists' and discover answers together. I feel that my evidence shows my ideas for a successful classroom environment and since I have been actually implementing them in a classroom with my students, I see that these ideas and strategies really do help develop a positive and successful learning environment for all students.

UPDATED 11-14-08

In my level I and II internships, I have implemented many of my ideas and strategies from my classroom management plan in my classroom. I am lucky enough to have, and have had, cooperating teachers who give me free reign over the classroom. Unfortunately, I have not been able to be present the first day of school this semester to implement my rules and expectations of every student in my 5th grade classroom, but with clear and consistent direction in the classroom, my students know exactly what I expect of them, even if my instruction and/or rules are slightly different from their teacher. When a student misbehaves in my classroom, instead of pointing out the negative behavior in front of the entire classroom, I merely remind all the students what they should be doing at that present time, or I compliment someone who is modeling this positive behavior. This is a theory designed by Haim Ginott, who believed in focusing on the positive aspects (for example, saying "I love how Tommy has his science book opened to page 70" or "Susie, our science books should be opened to page 70," instead of "Susie! Why isn't your math book open yet?"), thus giving students a sense of self motivation. Self motivation is very essential to a positive learning environment, regardless of the grade. A word I use very often in my classroom is "why?" I constantly ask my students why do they think this is the way it is and things like that. I want them to develop into critical thinkers. I want them to question everything! During our science lessons, if there is a question a student comes up with that the book does not cover, we write it on the board and we use our kid-friendly search engine (infobits.com) on the computer to look up the answers. I never test them on these additional findings or anything, I just love that they want to learn merely for the sake of learning. I have fostered cooperative learning and positive social interactions between students by having created a positive and successful classroom arrangement. I discuss in my evidence the importance of arranging the desks and other materials in the class to where every student is comfortable and can easily access every material in the room. I make sure the white board and projector screen is completely visible to every student. High traffic areas are cleared of tables (we have tables instead of desks) and clutter (such as students' backpacks, coats, and notebooks). Sharpening pencils is only allowed at the beginning of the school day, so it doesn't become a distraction to other students later in the day. Taking ideas from my classroom management plan, I also foster cooperative learning by providing my students with hands-on activities and the allowance of group work (in twos or threes) for certain assignments in math, science, and reading. Once a week, if the students are well behaved, I reward them by letting them write 'add -on' stories at their table (they are grouped at tables of 4 and 5 students to a table). One student at each table will start, and write a paragraph about a story of their choice, then pass it on to the next student, where he will add on another paragraph to the story. Each student will add a little more, and then the last student will add an ending to their paragraph. This is great for student to student interaction because they are working together, cooperating, and building off each others' thoughts and ideas. Lastly, I discuss several other ideas that I feel add a positive and successful learning environment for every student such as communicating effectively and often with the parents of your students, meeting with other teachers to exchange ideas about what is working in the classroom, utilizing the ESE specialist, ESOL specialist, guidance counselor, and reading & math coaches for students in need in these areas.

UPDATED 4-1-09

a) My ISP was implemented in my Level 3 Internship/2nd grade class. I believe my students have been heavily impacted by this project. The act of focusing on only the good in each other has really promoted a new level of acceptance and

cooperation in all my students. Each and every student now considers all other classmates their true friends. I have seen students who never used to talk "buddying up" during reading time or walking to lunch. The number of selfless gestures being done in the classroom forces me to raise an eyebrow sometimes because I never thought this ISP project would have such a great impact on my students. If someone needs a sheet of paper, another student will be right there without being asked with a piece of paper and a cheerful "here you go!" which is always followed now by a "thank you." My students are smart kids, they know what's right and wrong, but sometimes I think it just takes a little extra to really get them to see WHY 'right' is right and the results being a helpful, positive classmate can bring. I am going to quote a part of my reflection from my ISP because I think it falls into this category: "At any point during the day, the students can look up at our big tri-fold poster filled with nice things they have said about each other. I often see students just standing in front of it and smiling. When I came up with the idea for my ISP, I thought it would be a fun thing for the students, but I never thought it would have the impact it truly did. After a student hears about 16 compliments in a row from their peers, it makes them stand up a little straighter and hold their head a bit higher. I have had shy students come out of their shell and be more social, and I have had students who usually have a very hard time staying on task studying their spelling words every single night, because one of their classmates complimented him on his improved spelling test scores." By modeling the right way to do things, helping the students understand the importance of a positive classroom environment, and by giving these children strategies to learn to speak positively towards one another (and a lot of practice!!) my classroom has become a learning environment filled with encouragement, fun, and warmth.

a) This evidence is my mid-semester check of my time spent in the classroom, so the comments written by Mr. Hearn are all my skills and strategies implemented in the classroom. I believe the actions observed by Mr. Hearn impact my students in a positive way. I always try to have the attitude that learning is exciting, and it really does rub off on my students. I have students come to me first thing in the morning and say "I can't wait for writing today!" That is when you know that you are doing something right. Another comment Mr. Hearn wrote in my evidence is "She is very empathic, animated, and energetic. She instructs and presents on a level where ALL learn." I try to teach in a way where everyone can understand what's going on, and what I'm talking about. I do this by giving them examples that relate to things in their life, I also give non examples to help them understand vocabulary terms. Reaching every student when you teach can be quite a task, but over time I have learned strategies that help all the students' comprehension, and this helps make our learning environment that much more successful.

4. Reflect on what you learned about this Accomplished Practice? (Write a reflection about what it means to you now that you've selected evidence(s) and have written this annotation about it)

When I was writing this evidence, I already knew that it was important to build a positive learning environment for my classroom. However, until I actually implemented these thoughts and ideas with my fifth graders, I had no idea how crucial it really is. As a professional educator, it is my job first and foremost to develop my students to their fullest potential. Without a proper learning environment, this will never happen. Every student deserves to be in an environment where they feel safe and eager to learn new things. Students need to understand the importance of respect and maturity, they need to learn the skills required to be a self-motivated learner and critical thinker, and they need to feel confident in doing these things. It is my job to build this foundation for them. I feel I have some good ideas for doing so, some of which I have already modeled in my intern classroom. I know I still have more to learn, and I am excited to, but I do feel confident in what I have learned about AP9 - Learning Environments to develop an atmosphere that only promotes success.

UPDATED 11-14-08

After completing my evidence, I have learned many things regarding classroom management plans. After writing my annotation, I really comprehended how much every aspect of my plan affects each and every student in a real classroom. An effective management plan is the backbone to a positive learning environment for your students. I learned the importance of implementing clear and consistent rules and expectations in the classroom. I learned that enforcing rules takes time and practice (from both you and your students. I learned my role, as the teacher, in all of this is to make every student know that I am their biggest fan. They need to feel respected and supported by me in order to succeed. They need to know I am there to help them with anything they need, and I am going to push them to their fullest potential because I BELIEVE in each and every one of them. My students do know this. Mostly, I have learned that a positive learning environment does, in fact, affect every students' learning in a positive way. My students learn so much more information when every student is following directions and on task. The students learn from me, but they also learn a lot from each other academically and socially because of the positive student-to-student interactions in the room.

UPDATED 4-1-09

Thinking of the change my ISP has brought to my class always gets me a little choked up. In every class I always thought there is always at least one student who you feel you will never reach. No matter what you do, they will result back to their old habits. In this case, I have truly learned that is not true. Even my student with the most negative, rude, disrespectful behavior has made such an improvement. This student is not perfect, as none are, but as she goes to say something negative to another student, I literally can see her stopping herself..pausing...and finding a more polite way to make her comment. Positivity in my classroom has become contagious. If someone is nice to you, you will in turn be nice to them and 5 others,. My ISP is clearly evidence of being a self-esteem booster, something fun for the students, motivation to perform better in all subjects, and I hope this is something my students will take with them and use at home and in the future. I am truly proud of my students, and of myself. Teaching is hard, teaching is demanding. But I have learned with a little bit (okay, a lot) of elbow grease and the determination to teach your children techniques to becoming better human beings really will help you develop the wonderful learning environment every hard-working teacher deserves.

I guess I don't really realize what influence I am having on my class until my Cooperating teacher writes my progress reports such as this evidence. I really have learned a lot about learning environments: how I want mine to be and how to get it there. I still have so much to learn about every aspect of teaching, but little by little I have little breakthroughs within my own mind, when I feel I have made an impact on at least one child's life. I have always been very into promoting cooperation and learning to work together, and these ideas are directly tied to the success of your classroom environment. I have learned that these strategies I have modeled myself, and also taught my students, really can make a difference in the atmosphere of your learning environment.

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