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MINI-MANUAL

Community Building: Learner-Friendly Culture



INSTRUCTIONAL
COACHING
GROUP

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For more detailed information regarding the information contained in this mini-manual, refer to:

High Impact Instruction: A Framework for Great Teaching

Chapter 10

By Jim Knight

Also view the High Impact Instruction introduction video:



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Learner-Friendly Culture

“The only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture. If you do not manage culture, it manages you, and you may not even be aware of the extent to which this is happening.”

EDGAR SCHEIN

KEY CONCEPTS FOR COACHES

FIVE WAYS TEACHERS CAN CREATE LEARNER-FRIENDLY CULTURES

- 1 Co-construct norms with students.
- 2 Reinforce students when they act consistently with the cultural norms.
- 3 Spread learner-friendly emotions.
- 4 Design a learner-friendly learning environment.
- 5 Walk the talk.

Turning Ideas Into Action

STUDENTS

- 1 Involve students in designing the classroom. Ask them to bring in toys, quotations, works of art, music, or other artifacts that might shape a learner-friendly culture.
- 2 Talk about the learning environment with students and encourage them to be active creators of their classroom. Ask them what helps them learn and what interferes with their learning.

TEACHERS

- 1 Ask yourself what kind of classroom your students would learn best in and do your best to create it.
- 2 Develop an orderly environment.
- 3 Expand your awareness of the environment by being on the lookout for good ideas.

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

- 1 Use the learning environment tool as a method of assessing the learner-friendliness of a classroom environment.
- 2 Use your smart phone or digital camera to create a library of examples of effective ways in which designers create positive environments.
- 3 Suggest to teachers that they redesign their classrooms at the same time that they introduce new behavioral strategies.

PRINCIPALS

- 1 Bring the staff together to discuss the entire school’s learning environment.
- 2 Use the learning environment tool as a method of assessing the learner-friendliness of a classroom environment.
- 3 Use a professional development day to raise “learning environment awareness.”
- 4 Use the learning environment tool for conducting walk-through observations.
- 5 “Walk the talk” by using the learning environment tool to design your own office and the school office.
- 6 Make sure that the school is designed for students and not the convenience of adults.

What It Looks Like



Use the learning environment tool to assess the overall environment of the school and assess the following: (a) overall order, (b) ease of access to all parts of the room and all students, (c) cleanliness, (d) aroma, (e) color and quality of paint, and (f) signs of life, including plants, art, light, quotations, and other features.

LEARNER-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT SURVEY

ORDER	1	2	3	4	5
Good lighting (natural, soft)					
Comfortable and inviting (temperature, furniture)					
Everything has its own place					
Expectations/norms/targets posted					

PLANNING: GUIDED QUESTIONS

CLEANLINESS

1 2 3 4 5

Clutter-free					
Smells nice					
Clean floor/carpets					
Clean desks/furniture					

SIGNS OF LIFE

1 2 3 4 5

Colorful walls/posters/photos					
Student work displays					
Print-rich environment					
Personality of students/teacher reflected					
Plants/flowers/class pets					
Class library					

LAYOUT/ACCESSIBILITY

1 2 3 4 5

Easy to move around					
Students can easily access books, materials, supplies					
Easy-to-do teamwork					
Age-appropriate furniture/materials					