

SECTION 6

What is present in effective classroom practice?

A simple acronym – going P.L.A.C.E.S

Progress

Learning

Assessment for Learning

Core skills

Employability skills

Stretch and Challenge

Simplicity is the ultimate complexity!

Set the scene

Start with a hook. Take advantage of the primacy effect; when recalling information, students often show a recall advantage for the first item encountered.

The beginning, in particular, is the time when the potential for learning is at its greatest. Anticipation and expectation (driven by prior association with a particular teacher) creates a receptive mind set to new learning. Students should have the opportunity in lesson starters to either develop new learning and/or contextualise prior learning.

In lesson starters:

- **Pitch questions appropriately so that every student is able to respond**
- **Make starters multi-sensory where possible**
- **Starter activities should unearth any gaps in knowledge from previously learned material**
- **Lesson starters should create the right state for learning. Putting a student in the spotlight or under pressure will not constitute a good learning state for your lesson.**

“Creative inspiration often strikes when the mind is in a state of playful relaxation”

Guy Claxton

Students in the wrong frame of mind are less likely to be creative.

Links to prior learning

New information gets laid down on existing schemata in the brain. There are 1,000 trillion connections in the human brain. The possible combinations of connections are about ten to the one-millionth power. As we use the brain, we strengthen certain patterns of connection, making each connection easier to create next time. This is how memory, learning and understanding develop. Group discussion (pairs, threes or fours) is a good way to create a safe environment for exploration of prior learning. Give students a time scale (2-4 minutes) to feedback to you what they learned last lesson, or what they already know about a specific topic. Ask students to record questions that they want answered throughout the lesson (use mini white boards).

These questions can be used to discuss learning at the end of each learning episode. This recording activity also forms part of a personalised intervention strategy.

Classroom Climate

A good classroom must include the possibility for individual control as well as providing a well-proportioned, stimulating and comfortable learning space. Take advantage of local character, solar orientation and appropriate views. Allowing teachers to easily adapt learning environments to their individual pedagogical style(s) will increase the opportunity for student learning. The use of humour is very important. It personalizes the teacher (credibility) and allows the development of rapport.

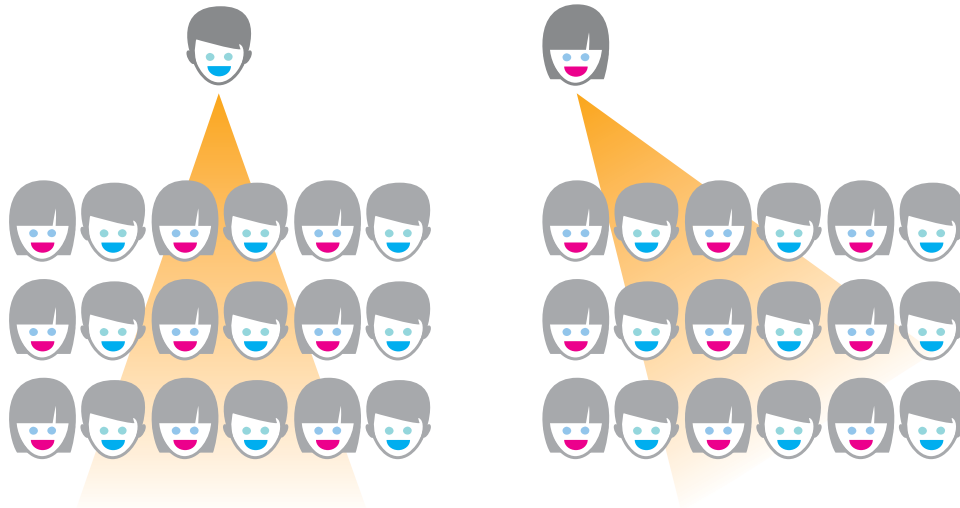
Classroom climate for learning is enhanced when

- 1 A recognition by students that the teacher treats them fairly and is committed to teaching them**
- 2 Effective classroom routines, such as the way students enter and leave, and the way lessons begin and end, are understood**
- 3 Strategies exist for making learning dynamic, interesting and challenging**
- 4 Students should feel secure (physically and emotionally)**
- 5 Classroom displays that support learning are up to date and attractive**
- 6 Table and seating arrangements are varied to suit the different teaching strategies and student groupings. This enhances the learning process**
- 7 Over time speak to each student individually about things that interest them**
- 8 Use language in a way that builds relationships and raises students' self-esteem**

You can make a significant difference to your classroom climate. Start with something which is well within your control and relatively easy to manage. Be determined to maintain the change deliberately and purposefully for the first few weeks as your students adjust.



Where you stand in the classroom will influence which students you address directly in question-and-answer sessions. Teachers tend to focus on students within a fairly narrow arc. Simply by moving to different points in the room you can ensure a wider range of students are included.



Providing the big picture

“There is, it seems, more concern about whether children learn the mechanics of reading and writing than grow to love reading and writing; learn about democratic practice rather than have practice in democracy; hear about knowledge... rather than experience in personally constructing knowledge;... see the world narrowly, simple and ordered, rather than broad, complex and uncertain.” David Milliband

The brain is more likely to absorb details when it can place them in a wider context. That wider context may be a visual, a sound, a feeling, a taste or a smell. The big picture must take into account the multi-sensory nature of information.

In general we learn best when we are actively involved in the learning process.

Every little thing we do in the classroom must feed into the “big picture”. Students should be able to develop their knowledge in a sequential and lateral manner whereby exploration, and reflection, of the nature of the big picture occurs through an ever increasing number of small chunks of information.



31 What is present in effective classroom practice?

Mind maps, brain storms and learning maps bring together all the information to create the big picture. These are very useful revision tools.

What do I want students to be able to do?

How will I do it?

Learning objectives specify the intended endpoint of a period of engagement in specified learning activities. They are written in the future tense and should clearly indicate the nature and/or level of learning required to achieve them successfully. They should be achievable and assessable and use language that learners (and other teachers) can easily understand. They relate to explicit statements of achievement and always contain verbs. Objectives should be **SMART**: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime bound.

Lesson Planning

- 1 Lesson objectives are clearly stated and repeatedly used as focal points during the lesson
- 2 Planning takes into account the varying needs of the students and consists of stimulatory sections for all groups of learners
- 3 The lesson is pitched at the appropriate level and the pace allows all learners to become engaged.
- 4 There is evidence that the accelerated learners are catered for where applicable
- 5 Lessons are in sequence with previous lessons/prior knowledge and have purpose and direction.
- 6 Support staff are utilised to allow access to the learning to all the students
- 7 A range of teaching strategies is employed to deliver the lesson plan
- 8 There is time at the end of the lesson for reflection and progression planning
- 9 The progression of the students is mapped against what is actually learned
- 10 There are embedded AfL strategies that supports the learner at every step

All of the above will only happen if:

Teachers use well judged and imaginative strategies that match the needs of the learners present

Teachers draw on excellent subject knowledge to astutely plan assessment of learners' skills, knowledge and understanding

Teachers understand the learning process itself