



SETTING THE TONE

Using Intention to Plan Your Classroom Climate

Imagine some of your favorite classrooms. As you imagine, reflect on favorite classrooms from your own childhood, your professional life, and if applicable, as a family and community member. What do these classrooms feel like? What is the tone of the space? Is the room full of wonder, questions, and problem-solving? Does the space echo the sounds of laughter and play and place a smile on your face and heart? Do you feel calm, loved, and safe?

Every classroom has its own tone and a general feeling of mood. It is often referred to as the classroom climate, and like other areas of the classroom environment, the classroom climate can be created through thoughtful planning. A positive classroom climate is intentional.

FEEL THE ROOM

Have you ever heard the saying, “The tension was so thick, you could cut it with a knife?” It refers to a negative environmental climate full of discord.

Just as you can walk into a space and feel a tense emotional tone, you can enter spaces and feel a sense of lightness, fun, and joy.

Take time to pause, feel, and reflect on the tone in your space. Can you feel the wonder and the smiles?

Classroom climate starts at the top of the class, with the teachers and adults. The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standard's Guiding Principles tell us that "Early Relationships Matter," and The National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood (DAP) states, "From the earliest ages, children look to their teachers as models of the way they should treat each other." Every adult interaction a child has and witnesses guides children in understanding how to act and treat the people around them. Classroom climate is created for students by listening and watching the behavior of teachers and adults in the classroom.

As you plan your early learning environment, make a conscious choice to plan how you want your classroom to feel for yourself, students, families, school community members, and school staff of all types. The climate is felt by all people who interact with the classroom. Positive spaces are welcoming and safe for everyone. They demonstrate respectful communication and shared joy, celebration, and successes in all adult interactions.

From the earliest ages, children look to their teachers as models of the way they should treat each other.

Bredenkamp, S., Masterson, M. L., Willer, B. A., & Wright, B. L. (2022). In Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8 (p. 115). essay, National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards: With Introduction. (2017). Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.



Guiding Questions for Planning the Classroom Climate

- When dreaming about the mood, tone, and feel of your classroom, how would you describe it?
- What routines and procedures do you have in place that support your desired classroom climate?
- How do you model managing negative emotions and stress?
- How do you greet administrators, families, guardians, students, school faculty, and community members when they enter your classroom? Does each person receive the same level of welcome?
- How do you share joy and play?