Caring and Nurturing Learning Environments

module 9

Caring and Nurturing Learning Environments

What This Module Is About

Traditionally, teachers think of the conducive classroom environment as one where students are under the complete control of the teacher through rules and regulations which he/she has set.

However, the trend today is different. It is now more inclined toward providing a caring and nurturing learning environment.

This module will tell you the "whats" and "hows" of a caring and nurturing learning environment. It will also give you information on what role you play as a teacher in providing your students the kind of environment that will be most conducive to their learning.

This module has three lessons:

■ Lesson 1 —— *The Caring and Nurturing Learning Environment*

■ Lesson 2 — *The Role of Teachers in Creating a Caring and Nurturing Environment*

■ Lesson 3 — *Making It Happen (What Needs to Be Done)*
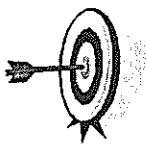
What Are the Objectives of This Module?

After completing this module, you should be able to:

• distinguish between the physical and social-emotional elements of the school;

• identify the factors that constitute the physical environment;

• explain how the physical environment affects educational goals;

• identify the factors that constitute the social-emotional element;

• explain what a conducive social-emotional learning environment entails;

• explain the role teachers play in creating a caring and nurturing environment;

• enumerate ways by which to encourage students to learn;

• enumerate ways by which students are discouraged from learning; and

• identify and explain the tasks that schools should accomplish in order to create a caring and nurturing environment.

Test Your Knowledge

Before we continue, let's see how much you already know about the topics that will be discussed in this module.

Write T in the blank if the statement is true and F if it is false.

_____ 1. The physical element in caring and nurturing environments is more important than the social-emotional element.

_____ 2. The physical appearance of the classroom affects the achievement of educational goals.

_____ 3. In teacher-centered classrooms, responsibility is shared.

_____ 4. In healthy schools, teachers work toward developing the individuality of each student.

_____ 5. Praise is better than encouragement.

_____ 6. Comparing students with one another can discourage them.

_____ 7. Teachers should not set high expectations for their students.

_____ 8. In a truly caring and nurturing environment, teachers only act as mediators in learning.

_____ 9. Students' skills can only be truly tested through paper-and-pencil tests.

_____ 10. Teachers should only provide guidelines and directions but leave their students to make their own choices.

Finished? Look at the *Answer Key* on page 23 to check if your answers are correct. I'm sure you found the test a breeze if you're already familiar with caring and nurturing learning environments.

If you got a score of 6 or above, very good! If you got less than that, i.e., 5 or below, then this module is perfect for you. Turn to the next page to begin Lesson 1. Good luck!
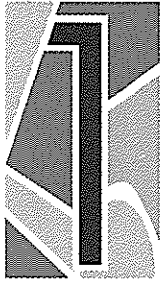
The Caring and Nurturing Learning Environment

The caring and nurturing environment is composed not only of the physical features of the classroom or the school but the attitudes of both the students and teachers as well. In this lesson, you will learn how these two factors affect you and your students.

After studying this lesson, you should be able to:

* describe the essential characteristics of a caring and nurturing physical environment; and

* describe the essential characteristics of learning in a caring and nurturing social-emotional learning environment.

Study

Your students' development is tied to the physical and social-emotional climates that they experience in school. In optimal environments, students can get more work done. But in less desirable conditions, their productivity declines and their alienation prevents their energies from flowing into their work. In fact, research has shown that the learning environment is one of the main determinants of academic learning.

Points for Discussion

Discuss with your group your answer to the question below.

What is the personality of your classroom?

Did you find it easy to give an answer? Or perhaps you thought that a classroom cannot have a personality at all.

Just like the individuals in it, the classroom has a personality. However, some observers note that some classrooms have difficulty expressing this.

Why? Because they are made to be alike or almost alike. Most classrooms have become storehouses of desks and chairs and of students. These things have become a given in any classroom that we often fail to notice the relationships between them. Almost always we take the interaction that takes place for granted because it is an everyday thing.

There are elements in your school and classroom environment which you can change to increase learning and improve behavior and thus, create a personality for your school. These are the physical environment and the social-emotional environment.

Find out more about these two environments in our next discussions.

The Physical Element

Now that you know that every classroom has a distinct personality, we will discuss next the things that make up this personality. One of them is the physical environment. The physical environment consists of those aspects of the classroom that exist independently of the people (students and teachers) who inhabit it. For example, the shape and size of the room, the seating arrangement and the location and availability of equipment and materials are all part of the physical environment.

Activity 1.1

List down other aspects of the physical environment of your classroom.

_____

_____

_____

_____

You probably came up with a long list. Aspects of the physical environment can actually be classified into two—concrete and abstract.

Study

Concrete and Abstract Aspects of the Physical Environment

Concrete aspects refer to those that you see, hear, feel and touch in their original state such as:

- chairs
- tables
- walls
- trees
- plants
- benches

On the other hand, the abstract aspects refer to those that you see, hear, feel, touch and then make an interpretation of. They represent an interplay of the concrete aspects. Examples of these are:

- lighting (bright or dim)
- combination of colors
- space
- shapes

Unfortunately, you do not often notice these aspects of the school's or classroom's physical environment because of the traditional views that you have about teaching and learning. Since traditional teaching and learning focuses on information input and learner reception, you overlook the value of the physical environment.

Oftentimes, you may perceive the environment, especially the classroom as virtually "invisible." The classroom environment, no matter how stimulating, often becomes nothing but a given to you, to the teachers and to the students. It becomes so familiar that their potential effects are usually taken for granted.

Points for Discussion

Discuss this with a group:

How does the physical environment of your classroom affect your educational goals?

In your discussion, did you realize that the physical environment is important in accomplishing your educational goals? Find out more in our next discussions.

Study

How Does the Physical Environment Affect Educational Goals?

There are two major ways by which the design and arrangement of your classroom's physical environment can affect the achievement of your school's educational goals.

First, the physical and spatial aspects of the classroom communicate a symbolic message of what you expect to happen in that particular place.

Reflect

In the classroom, where is your table located in relation to your students?

Most of the time, the teacher's table is isolated from the students. This signifies your status in relation to your students. This setup communicates that you are not on the same level with the students and that you are in a position of authority.

While this setup communicates the need to give respect to you as the school authority, it likewise "repels" students. Students might see you as unapproachable and they may even feel scared of you.

Study

Another reason why the physical setting can affect your classroom's educational goals is because it plays a pragmatic or practical role in the learning situation. The effective arrangement and management of space can facilitate or hinder the learning process.

For example, in almost all classrooms, there is a glaring lack of space for solitary or individual activity. This is because the current setup normally "forces" students to relate to others at all times. Even when the student is asked to do individual work, he/she is still pressured with the presence of the group that surrounds him/her.

You should remember that the physical environment in the school or classroom requires appropriate changes within the student or learner. In other words, the students are taught and influenced by their environment.

Another factor that affects the learning environment is the policy and people factor or what constitutes the social-emotional environment.

Continue reading to find out more.

The Social-Emotional Element

I have previously discussed with you the physical environment and the role it plays in achieving your school's educational goals. Now, I will discuss with you the other element, the social-emotional environment.

The social-emotional element includes the emotional tone of the school and the comfort level of the students with the teacher, their learning tasks and with other students as a social group.

Activity 1.2

Think about your classes and write down your observations in terms of the items listed below. Give specific descriptions.

Leadership	
Who handles organization, paperwork, other tasks?	
Discipline	
Who helps you?	
Rewards and recognition	
Responsibilities given to students	

To find out whether your classes exhibit a positive social-emotional environment, continue reading.

Study

Now, compare your answers with those in the table below.

Social-emotional environments can be classified into two—teacher-centered and person-centered.

Teacher-Centered Classrooms	Person-Centered Classrooms
You are the sole leader of the class.	Leadership is shared.
You take all responsibility for all paperwork and organization.	You and your students facilitate operations in the classroom.
Discipline and authority comes mostly from you.	Discipline comes mostly from one's (the student's) self.
A few students help you.	All students can become an integral part of classroom management.
Students are allowed limited responsibilities.	You and the students share in school responsibilities.

If you noticed, teacher-centered classrooms view you as the source of authority and all knowledge whereas person-centered schools give more importance to the needs and potentials of students. Studies show that person-centered classrooms are better and more conducive to teaching and learning. Now, find out more about person-centered schools in our next discussion.

The Person-Centered Learning Environment

There are seven aspects of the social-emotional environment that characterize a person-centered classroom environment. Check them out and see if your school has a healthy social-emotional environment.

1. *Caring Atmosphere*

   Caring classrooms are characterized by:

   - mutual respect between the teachers and students;

   - cooperative relationships; and

   - a sense of student satisfaction.

2. *Appreciation of Individuality*

   Teachers in healthy schools work continually to see who their students really are and what makes each of them unique. At the same time, they let the students have the opportunity to know them as people and not merely as their leaders.

3. *Task Orientation*

   In task-oriented classrooms, students perceive that there are definite learning goals to pursue and believe that they will be held accountable for reaching these goals. Most of the school time is spent working toward those goals.

   Teachers in healthy classrooms continually invite their students to take part in teaching. They believe that each student is an effective teacher of certain things.

4. *Organization*

   A classroom with a positive social climate is also a predictable place because of well-organized routines and structure. The expectations should be clear and each student should be given a role to perform in the organization.

5. *Student Autonomy*

   Teachers should provide directions and guidelines for quality but at the same time leave their students to make their own choice.

   Therefore, the students should be given an opportunity to become autonomous by allowing them to make decisions.

6. *Advocacy for Self-Discipline*

   When students manifest aggressive behaviors such as picking fights with classmates, their feelings should be heard through an arbiter. Then through group effort, the potentially

destructive behavior can be modified into a productive one. This way, the students are able to work out an alternative to violence.

7. *High Expectations but Lots of Ladders to Achieve Them*

In healthy schools, the school administrator helps both the teachers and students dream big. However, you should understand that not all dreams are alike and that each person needs concrete ways to achieve them. In other words, as a teacher, you should provide the game plan that will ensure the maximum success for your students' dreams. You may, however, remain on the sideline, encouraging and offering advice as your students "play their own game."

Points for Discussion
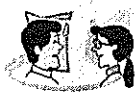
Discuss with a group your answer to the question below.

In which of the seven areas is your school strong at? weak at? Why?

Analyzing the case of your own school will help you find a way to become more effective in and consequently nearer to your goal of creating a caring and nurturing learning environment.

Remember

Do not forget the important points of this lesson.

- There are two elements of the school environment which you, as a teacher or the school administrator, can manipulate:
    - the physical environment; and
    - the social-emotional environment.
- The physical environment consists of aspects of the school or classroom that exist independently of the people who are in it.
- The physical environment has an effect on the achievement of school's educational goals because:
    - it can communicate the type of interaction that will take place; and
    - it affects the effectivity of teaching and learning.
- The social-emotional environment refers to the emotional tone of the school as well as the comfort level of teachers and students.
- The social-emotional environment can either be teacher-centered or person-centered.
- A person-centered environment is characterized by:
    - a caring atmosphere;
    - appreciation of individuality; and
    - task orientation;
    - organization;
    - student autonomy;

- advocacy for self-discipline; and
- high expectations but lots of ladders.

Apply What You Have Learned

Answer the following questions.

1–2. Two elements of the school and classroom environment which you can control to create a caring and nurturing environment

_____

_____

_____

3–4. Two ways by which the physical environment affects achievement of educational goals

_____

_____

_____

5–6. Two classifications of the social-emotional environment (according to where power and tasks and activities are centered)

_____

_____

_____

7–9. Three characteristics of person-centered learning environments

_____

_____

_____

You can check your answers using the *Answer Key* on page 23. So, how did you do in the test? If you were able to answer most of the questions correctly, you can proceed to the next lesson. If not, review the items which you missed.
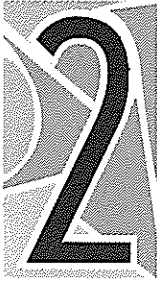
The Role of Teachers in Creating a Caring and Nurturing Environment

"Essentially, the good teacher tells us what is out there to learn, shows enthusiasm for acquiring knowledge for the purpose of understanding and then turns us loose to learn at our own pace, all the while looking carefully over our shoulders."

— Lorien Belton

The statement above summarizes the whole point of this lesson. As a teacher, you play a major role in creating a conducive learning environment. In fact, the whole idea of creating a nurturing environment is impossible without your "consent." You hold a certain amount of power which can make this possible.

After studying this lesson, you should be able to:

- use the encouragement model;

- differentiate encouragement from praise;

- identify ways by which you may be discouraging your students; and

- identify ways to encourage students and create a caring and nurturing learning environment in your school.

Activity 2.1

Study the situations given below and focus on the roles played by the teachers in creating learning environments for their students.

In Math, Dan hardly tries at all. He's not disinterested in the subject and, in fact, is very good at it but he still ends up getting a mediocre grade. The teacher spends most of the time lecturing with his back to the class then returns to his desk to answer the questions. The students stay on their seats and do a large portion of their work in class.

Dan's next class, chemistry, is different. He participates actively and has one of the highest grades. The teacher lectures a great deal of the time, but during the lectures, he banters happily with the students and allows for discussions and jokes. While students work on an assignment toward the end of the class, the teacher wanders around the room inquiring from each student how he/she is doing. Dan is the type who is often unwilling to ask questions in front of the whole class or even to seek individual help on a certain concept. When the teacher comes to him and shows that he cares though, Dan willingly asks him for help.

Why do you think Dan learns more from the second teacher?

Both teachers exhibit intelligence and the first teacher might even have more experience or know his material better than the second one. However, the important consideration, is, which class lets Dan learn more? Dan cares more for his chemistry class because it is there where he is more motivated.

You, as the teacher, clearly influence what happens in your classroom. Teacher-pupil interaction is critical in developing a wholesome emotional climate. What you say and how you say it are also related in important ways to the quality of the classroom climate. If you continually give directions in a tone suggesting hostility, the pupils will respond in the same fashion. Moreover, they will treat each other the same way.

If you approve or reward the behavior of children who tattle on others, there will soon be a room full of tattletales. If you create anxiety by pacing the instruction too rapidly, the pupils will reflect a tenseness that may later on surface as aggressive behavior. All of these suggest that the classroom climate is directly affected by what you do or say and how you do or say it.

According to studies, encouragement is the key to reforming classrooms. Encouragement training changes the way teachers run their classrooms and relate to students, resulting in students who are more involved, responsible and academically successful. To find out more about encouragement, continue reading the discussions.

Study

The Encouragement Model

The encouragement model reflects the belief that in order to transform schools successfully, you must demonstrate the human relations skills needed to manage democratic, cooperative classrooms. That is, classrooms and schools in which people help one another and enjoy one another's company; where no one is to blame and everyone contributes to finding solutions.

This model stresses six practices:

1. making relationships a priority;
2. carrying on a respectful dialog;
3. practicing encouragement and affirmation daily;
4. making decisions through shared involvement;
5. resolving conflict; and
6. having fun on a regular basis.

Psychologist Alfred Adler supports this view. He believes that an educator's most important task—perhaps his/her holy duty—is to see to it that no child is discouraged in school and to influence any child who enters school discouraged. He believes that learning is only possible when children look hopefully and joyfully toward the future.

Reflect

Reflect on your work as a teacher. Are you performing your "holy duty" in practicing encouragement on a daily basis?

Points for Discussion
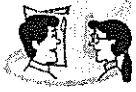
Discuss this with a group.

What do we mean when we say the word "encourage?" when we say "praise?" Is there a difference between the two?

So, what did most of you say? We will find out who's right and who's not in the next discussions. Read on.

Study

Encouragement Versus Praise

To learn the language of encouragement, one must first distinguish it from praise. So, yes, there is a difference between the two.

Praise flatters, rewards, compares or includes superlatives ("You're the best!"). To praise is to commend one's worth. Praise can easily lead to discouragement by reinforcing the idea that unless a piece of work done is praised, it has no value. The focus is shifted on winning the reward rather than doing the task for the satisfaction that comes with learning.

In contrast, encouraging statements are less judgmental and controlling. They help students appreciate their own work and behavior while separating work from worth.

Here are some examples:

Encouragement	Praise
Keep up the good work!	You're my number one student!
Very good! Always do your best.	Nobody can beat you in this class.

Activity 2.2

Write the common statements you say to recognize the good deeds of your students. Classify which of these statements can be considered words of encouragement and which ones are praises. Use the table below.

Statement	Encouragement or Praise

Share your list with a group.

Reflect on what you have written and commit to encourage your students rather than praise them.

Half the job of encouraging students lie in avoiding discouragement. Anything that you do which supports a student's lack of faith in himself/herself is discouraging. To find out more, continue reading our discussions.

Ways by Which You Can Discourage Your Students

In particular, you might discourage your students by doing the following:

* setting high expectations or unreasonable standards;

* focusing on mistakes to motivate;

* making pessimistic interpretations;

* comparing people; and

* dominating by being too helpful.

Ways in Which You Can Encourage Your Students

* Creating a climate of mutual concern and respect by showing concern for all students and by being sincerely interested in their ideas, experiences and products.

* Demonstrating to your students that you consider them to be well-intentioned and capable of useful thinking. You can do this by giving reasons and explanations for both academic and social-behavioral issues. Ask for student opinion and input.

* Giving your students the chance to see for themselves the importance of the things that they are asked to do.

* Allowing your students to decide for themselves.

* Letting them realize that they do activities for their own intrinsic reasons rather than a response to external coercion (that is, reasons imposed from without).

* Encouraging collaboration and mutual helping.

* Ensuring that everyone is treated fairly.

Activity 2.3

Reflect on your experience as a teacher to answer the following questions.

1. Cite three instances when you inadvertantly may have discouraged your students.

2. Cite three instances when you successfully encouraged your students.

3. Describe ways by which you plan to encourage your students in the future.

Remember

Do not forget the important points of this lesson.

- You can influence what happens in your classroom. What you say and how you say it affects the quality of your classroom climate.
- The encouragement model stresses the following six practices:

    - making relationships a priority;
    - respectful dialog;
    - daily encouragement and affirmation;
    - shared involvement in decision making;
    - resolving conflict; and
    - having fun.

- One of your greatest tasks is to encourage students.
- You should learn how to distinguish between words of encouragement and words of praise. Encouragement focuses on the deed, while giving praises focuses on the person.
- Students are discouraged by pessimism and too much competition among others.
- Sharing responsibilities and gaining autonomy are two ways to encourage students.

Apply What You Have Learned

A. Identify what is being referred to in each of the following sentences. Write your answers in the blanks.

1. This "model" reflects the belief that human relations skills are essential to establish a caring and nurturing learning environment _____.

2. This psychologist believed that the main role of teachers is to make sure that no child is discouraged _____.

3. The act of commending a person's worth rather than his work

_____.

B. Enumerate what are being asked for.

1. Give at least three practices involved in the encouragement model.

_____

_____

_____

2. Cite at least three ways by which a teacher can consciously or unconsciously discourage his/her students.

_____

_____

_____

You can check your answers using the *Answer Key* on page 24. So, how did you do in the test? If you got most of the answers right, very good! If not, review the parts of the lesson which you didn't quite understand.

If you wish, you can take a well-deserved break before proceeding to Lesson 3.
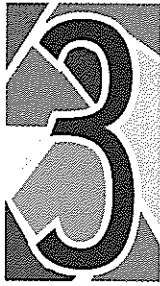
Making It Happen
(What Needs to Be Done)

It is not enough that you know what a caring and nurturing environment is; what is more important is that you know how to establish and maintain it. If we expect our schools to be caring and nurturing ones, the entire systems will have to commit themselves to this task. Parents, other members of the community, teachers and students will have to work hand in hand to make this possible. Being a teacher, you are already in a very good position to initiate this. You have the power.

After studying this lesson, you should be able to explain how administrators, teachers, parents and students can help each other create a caring and nurturing learning environment.

Study

To ensure success, schools have to address the following tasks:

1. **Form new identities and roles.**

   In a traditional school, the students' typical role is to learn what the teacher chooses them to learn and then demonstrate what they have learned based on the teacher's assessment method. Teachers in a traditional school view their domain as the classroom and their major responsibility is to teach the required curriculum to their students.

   In schools undergoing transformation, these roles are changing. A caring and nurturing learning organization results from the transformation of the identities of participants in the process: among them students, administrators, staff developers and you, the teacher.

Points for Discussion

Discuss this with a group.

What do you think are the new roles of students, teachers, school staff and administrators?

The idea of changing roles may frighten many. But we must realize that it is certainly for the better. Let's see what these new roles are.

Required Roles for a nurturing and caring learning environment

Students

Over time, students define their role as envisioners of their own desired states, establishing goals, making plans and clarifying outcomes for themselves. They understand that they are in charge of developing their own strategies for achieving those goals. They generate ways of assessing their own growth toward those ends and they see themselves as knowledge producers and meaning makers for themselves and others.

Teachers

Teachers like you reconceptualize their role as mediators of students' learning. Working in collaborative teams, teachers envision those desired states for themselves, their students and the classroom climate they share. Teachers generate strategies for achieving those desired goals.

In time, you view yourself as knowledge managers, knowledge producers and meaning makers. You generate data as feedback to guide and assess your own, your students' and the classroom climate's progress toward the desired states.

School Staff

The school staff envision their role as mediators for teachers, staff members and the community.

Administrators

Their role is analogous to that of an environmental protection agency. They constantly monitor the intellectual ecology of the district and community, ensuring that the thinking, diversity, cooperation and intellectual growth of all participants are neither threatened nor endangered or worse, made extinct.

Activity 3.1

Now that you know what your new role is, identify the activities that you do in class, and write down the traditional way by which you do these activities. Likewise, write down your "new and improved" way of doing these activities to create a more caring and nurturing learning environment.

Your list should have reflected a change based on the new roles that we discussed earlier. Your activities should no longer center on mere transfer of knowledge but in creating it and understanding it.

Here's an example of the traditional and new ways of doing activities.

Traditional	Improved
Lecturing	Provide a variety of activities, such as asking them to make portfolios, conduct interviews, etc.
Paper-and-pencil tests	Experiments, individual discovery, etc.

Study

Let us now continue studying the tasks that schools have to do.

2. **Expand the range, variety and multiplicity of assessment techniques.**

   Another task for you is to expand your range of assessment techniques.

   For too long, we have relied on a limited range of acceptable assessment measures, primarily paper-and-pencil tests. While standardized tests provide interesting information to some segments of the educational community, such test scores are inadequate to provide the complete data necessary to assess the full range of valued educational outcomes.

   Enlightened, skillful teaching teams are the best collectors of data about students' growth toward the process-oriented goals of the restructured school. This type of assessment will require an expansion on the existing techniques:

   * directly observing students' performance in problem-solving situations;

   * collecting portfolios of selected works of the students over time;

     − observing performance in extended projects; and

     − inviting students to keep logs or journals;

   * interviewing students about their own self-concept and perception of themselves as learners;

   * making video tapes of student interaction;

   * collecting writing samples over time;

   * keeping checklists that record indicators of dispositions and habits of mind exhibited during group projects and discussions;

   * recording critical incidents; and

   * employing technology to assist in collecting and recording information about students over time.

Points for Discussion

Choose five from among the assessment techniques outlined above which you think you can readily apply in your class. Explain how each of them can better assess your students' performance in a way that traditional paper-and-pencil tests cannot.

Share your thoughts with a group.

One of the most compelling benefits of new assessment techniques is being able to uncover the strengths of your students. This is basically what the concept of Multiple Intelligences asserts, that students may have different intelligences that cannot be assessed by paper-and-pencil tests alone.

Study

Below are other tasks toward the creation of desired learning environments.

3. **Reeducate parents and other sectors of the community.**

    Since moving toward a caring and nurturing learning environment will require change, other sectors will have to be informed about it.

    Educators, together with textbook publishers, professional organizations, industry leaders, parents and the media will all play a big part in this endeavor.

4. **Assess current school and classroom conditions.**

    According to Fritz Perls, "Abnormal behavior is normal behavior under abnormal conditions." It can be assumed that teachers will most likely teach thinking, creativity, cooperation and caring if they are in an intellectually stimulating, creative, cooperative and caring environment themselves. We must also assess the quality of the environment in which teachers, students and administrators operate.

Browse the Web

Look up these websites. These are websites of schools (in the United States) that exhibit caring and nurturing learning environments. Browse through them. Look at their policies, teachers' and students' information, activities and other related information. From these, try to find things that you can do or employ in your own school, then share it with a group. Explain why and how you think you can do this.

Website of Tilford J. Miller and Ina E. Driscoll Schools: http://www.wilton.k12.ct.us/md/

Website of Earhart Elementary School: http://www.lsc.k12.in.us/earhart

Website of Merrrimack Elementary School: http://mer.sbo.hampton.k12.va.us

Remember

Do not forget the important points of this lesson.

*   In order to have a caring and nurturing learning environment, the following tasks have to be done:

    – Form new identities and roles.
    – Expand the variety of assessment techniques used.
    – Reeducate parents and other sectors of the community.

— Assess current school and classroom conditions.

- In a caring and nurturing learning environment, the students are knowledge producers, the teachers are the facilitators, the school staff are the mediators and the administrators monitor the whole interaction.

Apply What You Have Learned

Answer the following questions as best as you can.

1. What are the four tasks involved in initiating changes for a caring and nurturing learning environment?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Cite three alternative assessment techniques to traditional paper-and-pencil tests.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. In your own words, describe the new roles which students, teachers, school staff and administrators should take in order to attain a caring and nurturing environment.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

You can check your answers using the *Answer Key* on pages 24-25. If you got most of the answers right, very good! If not, go back and review the lesson especially the items you missed.

Summary

Do not forget the important points of this module.

- The physical environment and the social-emotional environment are the two elements of the school environment which you, as a teacher or school administrator, can improve to create a caring and nurturing learning environment.

- The physical environment has an effect on the achievement of the school's educational goals because:

  — it can communicate the type of interaction that will take place; and

  — it affects the effectivity of teaching and learning.

- The social-emotional environment can either be teacher-centered or person-centered.

- A person-centered environment is characterized by:

  — a caring atmosphere;

- appreciation of individuality;
- task orientation;
- organization;
- student autonomy;
- advocacy for self-discipline; and
- high expectations but lots of ladders.

- The encouragement model stresses these six practices:
  - making relationships a priority;
  - respectful dialog;
  - daily encouragement and affirmation;
  - shared involvement in decision making;
  - resolving conflict; and
  - having fun.

- You should learn how to distinguish between words of encouragement and praises. Encouragement focuses on the deed, while giving praises focuses on the person.

- In order to have a caring and nurturing learning environment, the following tasks have to be addressed:
  - Form new identities and roles.
  - Expand the variety of assessment techniques used.
  - Reeducate parents and other sectors of the community.
  - Assess current school and classroom conditions.

What Have You Learned?

Answer the following questions.

1. What is the difference between the physical environment and the social-emotional environment? (2 points)

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. How does the physical environment affect the achievement of educational goals? (1 point)

   _____

   _____

_____
_____
_____

3. Differentiate a teacher-centered classroom from a person-centered one. (2 points)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Explain the encouragement model and the six practices it advocates. (6 points)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. How should you go about making your school a caring and nurturing learning environment? (4 points)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Check your answers using the *Answer Key* on pages 25-26.

So, how did you do in the test? If you got:

12 — 15 Very good! You learned a lot from this module.

9 — 11 Good! However, you can still improve your performance. Go back to the test items you missed.

7 — 8 Reread the parts of the module you didn't understand well.

0 — 6 Read the entire module again. I'm sure you'll understand it better the second time.

Application

After what you have learned, ask yourself how you envision your classroom to be.

Summarize this in one sentence and create a poster that you will post on your class bulletin board.

Example:

> *I envision my classroom as a haven—a place where my students can test their ideas, develop moral autonomy, find answers to their questions and learn about what interests them.*

Write an essay on how you intend to accomplish your vision. Submit this to the module facilitator for feedback, using this address: ely@seameo-innotech.org.

Answer Key

Test Your Knowledge *(page 2)*

1. F, the physical environment and the social-emotional environment are both important aspects.

2. T

3. F, in teacher-centered classrooms, the teacher takes responsibility for all the paperwork and organization.

4. T

5. F, encouragement is better. Praise means too much flattery.

6. T

7. F, teachers should help their students dream big. However, they should also provide the necessary guidance on how these dreams can be achieved.

8. T

9. F, there are a variety of assessment techniques that can test a student's skills.

10. T

Lesson 1

Apply What You Have Learned (page 9)

1–2   •   Physical element

      •   Social-emotional element

3–4   •   It can communicate the type of interaction that will take place.

      •   It affects the effectivity of teaching and learning.

5–6   •   Person-centered

      •   Teacher-centered

7–9   (any three of the following in any order)

      •   A caring atmosphere

      •   Appreciation of individuality

      •   Task orientation

      •   Organization

      •   Student autonomy

      •   Advocacy for self-discipline

      •   High expectations with lots of ladders to achieve them

Lesson 2

Apply What You Have Learned (page 14)

A. 1. Encouragement model

    2. Alfred Adler

    3. Praising

B. 1. (any three of the following in any order)

    - Making relationships a priority

    - Carrying on a respectful dialog

    - Practicing encouragement and affirmation daily

    - Making decisions through shared involvement

    - Resolving conflict

    - Having fun on a regular basis

    2. (any three of the following in any order)

    - Setting high expectations or unreasonable standards

    - Focusing on mistakes to motivate

    - Making pessimistic interpretations

    - Comparing people

    - Dominating by being too helpful

Lesson 3

Apply What You Have Learned (page 19)

1. - Forming new identities and roles

    - Expanding the range, variety and multiplicity of assessment techniques

    - Reeducation of parents and other sectors of the community

    - Assessing current school and classroom conditions

2. (any three of the following in any order)

    - Directly observing students' performance in problem-solving situations

    - Collecting portfolios of selected student work over time

    - Observing performance in extended projects

    - Inviting students to keep logs or journals

    - Interviewing students about their own self-concept and perception of themselves as learners

- Making videotapes of student interaction

- Collecting writing samples over time

- Keeping checklists that record indicators of dispositions and habits of mind exhibited during group projects and discussions

- Recording critical incidents

- Employing technology to assist in collecting and recording information about students over time

3. Students — will be envisioners of their own desired states and will come up with their own goals and plans to achieve them

Teachers — will be mediators of learning

School staff — will be mediators of teachers, staff members and the community

Administrators — will monitor the community ensuring that the intellectual growth of all is being taken care of

What Have You Learned? *(pages 20-21)*

1. The physical environment refers to the aspects of the classroom that exist independently of the people who inhabit it like chairs and tables. On the other hand, the social-emotional environment refers to the emotional tone and comfort level students feel with the teacher, learning tasks and with other students. (2 points)

2. The physical environment affects educational goals because it communicates a message of what is expected to be done at a particular place. Secondly, the physical environment plays a practical role in the learning situation. It can hinder or help in the learning process. (1 point)

3. In teacher-centered classrooms, the teacher is the sole leader of the class, he/she takes responsibility for all the paperwork, authority comes mostly from him/her and students are given limited responsibilities. On the other hand, in person-centered classrooms, leadership is shared, both the teachers and the students facilitate the operations of the school, all of them are part of classroom management and they share in school responsibilities. (2 points)

4. According to the encouragement model, a transformation in schools will happen if the people in it help one another, enjoy one another's company and contribute to finding solutions to problems. There are six practices suggested in this model:

- making relationships a priority;

- carrying a respectful dialog;

- practicing encouragement and affirmation daily;

- making decisions through shared involvement;

- resolving conflict; and

- having fun on a regular basis.

  (Total: 6 points)

5. To create caring and nurturing learning environments, the following tasks should be done:

   - New identities and roles should be formed.

   - A variety of assessment techniques should be used.

   - Parents and other sectors of the community should be reeducated.

   - Current school and classroom conditions should be assessed.

     (Total: 4 points)
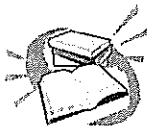
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