



Learning Environment *Emotionally Safe with High Expectations for ALL*

“Emotion drives attention which drives learning, memory, problem solving, and just about everything else.”

Robert Sylwester

“How an individual feels about himself, how he feels about those with whom he is associating, and how he feels about the situation in which he finds himself, highly influences the tasks he is willing to attempt, and the commitment he is willing to make to carry them out.”

Bob Eberle

Studies of effective schools have consistently shown that a safe and orderly environment is necessary before learning can occur in schools. The classroom that fosters children’s success is a classroom environment that encourages all students to trust one another, take risks, share ideas and learn successfully (Purkey and Smith, 1983; Lane, 1990; Sleeter and Grant, 1988). Threat can make it difficult to perceive what’s going on, overloading other circuits of attention, memory, learning, cognition, emotional stability, or any other function (Ratey, 2001).

An atmosphere of inclusion and belonging creates a positive learning environment for every member in the class. Students feel safe because they are valued and recognized as important contributors; therefore, they are more willingly involved in the learning. Every individual needs to feel included with opportunities to share ideas, opinions, and experiences that require no set response; thus, they are given freely and accepted without judgment or criticism. Teachers have the opportunity to build a sense of community that encourages mutual respect, appropriate relationships, and acceptance.

How does social and emotional learning fit into an already crowded academic agenda in today’s schools? A growing body of research indicates that social and emotional learning, in fact, lays a foundation for academic achievement. A positive and safe learning climate will help a school or district reach its academic achievement goals.

By identifying opportunities to integrate social and emotional learning with academic activities, teachers can meet dual goals: they can address academic standards in meaningful ways and also give their students practice using the skills that are integral to their intellectual and emotional development. There are four major components to creating an emotionally safe learning environment. They are:

1. TPS Community Guidelines and LIFESKILLS
2. Inclusion
3. Agendas
4. Procedures

THE TULSA MODEL

Learning Environment Rubric for Assessment

	Stage 1	Stage 2 (Incorporates Stage 1)	Stage 3 (Incorporates Stages 1 and 2)
<u>Learning Environment</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is an emotionally safe environment, and the classroom is clean and healthful. 2. Clutter has been removed and classroom materials are organized. 3. Classroom is organized and reflective of procedures. 4. Desks are grouped into clusters some of the time. 5. The colors are calm, cool, and relaxing. 6. Educators and students use calm voices. 7. TPS Community Guidelines and LIFESKILLS are prominently displayed. Daily Agendas, Procedures, Multiple Intelligences, and Bloom's are easily accessible to students and teachers. 8. Direct Instruction occurs in a focused area with no distraction. 9. Student work displays have explanatory title posted and are organized in a way that allows others to learn something from them. 10. Books, magazines, software, and real objects related to what the students are learning are grouped together and available to students. 11. A quiet place where students can go to relieve stress, take some time out, or just think has been established. 12. Environmental factors are considered (such as lighting, plants, music, and fabric) to create a comfortable, welcoming space. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The physical environment increasingly focuses on what is being learned. 2. The availability of hands on materials and manipulatives increase focused sensory stimulation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers prominently post the theme or big idea along with essential understandings and learning objectives. 2. Students take responsibility for maintaining physical and emotional learning environment. 3. Students demonstrate collaborative skills (active listening, taking turns, respect). 4. Technology is available at all times and used productively as learning tools.