

Aurigema, M. (2001b). Identifying Ekvall's Creative Climate Dimensions in Elementary School Music Classrooms: An executive summary by Maria Aurigema.

This Aurigema (2001b) study addressed the identification of creative climate dimensions (Ekvall, 1987) in the classroom for the purpose of gathering baseline data for the development of a classroom climate instrument (Murdock, 1999). It fit into the Center for Studies in Creativity RD&D theme of Understanding Multifaceted Interactions Among person, Process, Product and Press/Environment.

Aurigema (2001a) noted that Literature pertaining to creative climate in educational settings and more specifically, the arts, was significantly less evident than the literature that pertains to creative climate in business organizations. Gordon (2000) found in her literature there was very little reference in education to the term "climate" and even less when termed "creative climate". Ekvall himself (1999, p. 407) commented that "The accumulated body of research on climate undoubtedly indicates that the climate makes a difference" the question of exactly how strong the influence of climate can be has not, however, been answered. As training stations for our youth, educational institutions are the backbone of our future and provide an enormous amount of opportunities to collect observational artifacts. Artifacts relating to creative climate may help us to better understand creativity in a world where innovation and creativity are becoming the norm rather than the exception. The Aurigema (2001) study focused on aiding the development of a creative climate checklist of rubrics, behaviors and activities that were indicative of creative climate in the music classrooms. To access additional literature reviews from other literature bases that correlate with creative classroom climate and those that do not, see Miloshevski's (2000) literature review of the Wilson Database; Gordon's (2000) review of the ERIC database and Peeble's (in progress) review of general climate from both Wilson and ERIC databases.

The questions that guided the Aurigema study were:

How do Ekvall's climate dimensions manifest themselves in an elementary school music classroom setting?

-What is similar?

-What is different?

What descriptions of creative climate in the elementary music classroom exist in the literature?

What observed behaviors are indicative of creative behavior in the music classrooms of

students from different levels of socioeconomic status?

The methods and processes used in collecting data for the Aurigema project contained: observations of my own classrooms and students. Upon receiving permission from the principals at two suburban elementary schools, I began observations in September 2000. Notes from informal conversations with students in grade three music as well as from teachers, provided a wealth of insightful information and may be found in the appendices of the study.

Observations were conducted over seven-months. I observed and recorded field notes in a total of eight third grade classes once a week for thirty minutes as part of my regular teaching. Each class contained approximately twenty students. Throughout the observation period there were some notable differences in the presence of Ekvall's climate dimensions. Therefore, the results of the study were examined at the beginning (September 2000) and the end (March 2001) of the observation period. In an effort to organize the data, elements presented in each dimension were given a number to signify high, medium and low amounts of manifestation. (1=high presence, 2=medium presence, and 3=low presence)

Socioeconomic data were retrieved under supervision of the principals at both schools and contained only the tallies of those students who qualified for free or reduced lunches. This information provided some indication of socioeconomic differences between the two schools observed.

An overview of these data follow:

School A:

School B:

Total Students: 74

Free Lunch: 63

Reduced Lunch: 8

Not Qualified: 3

Total Students: 82

Free Lunch: 6

Reduced Lunch: 5

Not Qualified: 71

Data were collected by using an observational questionnaire which served as the protocol for all other research on creative climate. (Argona, 2001; Fish, in progress; Gordon, 2000; Jesberger, 2000; Miloshevski, 2000; Peebles, in progress; Richards, in progress). Questions were asked about the presence or lack of Ekvall's creative climate dimensions. Data were later sorted and listed in bullet format according to school. Data are displayed in a way that allows for easy comparison of schools and observational time frames.

In the project itself there are seven appendices that provide a wealth of information that compare and contrast views of students and teachers on the subject of climate dimensions. This information was obtained through informal conversations with students and teachers. Also included are the N.Y. state and local district core requirements for music education in public schools and music advocacy data for the

continued support of the arts within educational institutions.

Key findings from this study confirmed the presence of Ekvall's creative climate dimensions in elementary school music classrooms and furthermore, showed definite behavioral indicators that high levels of these dimensions equate to high levels of creativity within the classroom environment.

The second major finding of this research illustrated how and why socioeconomic backgrounds did not bind or hold back children from displaying creative behavior if they had the guidance and nurturing environment to do so. The students at schools A and B had started off the school year looking very different from each other in terms of the degree of presence of Ekvall's creative climate dimensions, but the important discovery was that students at both schools ended up with virtually the same levels of creative display. Thus for future examination others might want to ask:

(a) What role does the teacher have in developing a creative environment within an educational setting?

(b) How does the level of creativity of the teacher impact the level of creativity in the classroom and among the students?

Thinking about these questions, it may be productive to examine the transformation throughout the history of our educational institutions and the ability of the educator to nurture students into becoming problem finders/solvers and inquisitors of knowledge.

Other findings of this research are listed in bullet format below:

Students in higher socio-economic settings appeared to have more 'outward' displays of the positive attributes of the ten creative climate dimensions.

Highly creative environments in the music classes had lots of body movement wiggly feet, wiggly arms, tilting chairs, moving heads, chatter, laughter, and high levels of interaction among students.

Students tended to view creativity as the physical movement of 'making stuff.'

Creative climate dimensions always existed in the classroom. Positive and negative characteristics may have both been present at the beginning of the school year but in each dimension, positive and negative dimensions eventually reached a norm that was reflective of the teaching style of the instructor.

Positive aspects within each category of creative climate increased at school A and stayed relatively the same at school B.

Positive aspects of the creative climate dimensions were present in both schools A and B but appeared at different rates.

Students at school A exhibited the same characteristics of creative climate as students at school B but both showed different rates of development.

There was a relationship between socioeconomics and creative climate only to the effect of development time.

As baseline data continues to be collected for the overall climate dimension study, further analysis of the completed data pool is needed to shed more light on these and other significant findings.

References

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