

Exercise 2.3

Reflections on Cognitive Traits of Learners and the Environments That Support Those Traits

Teachers and administrators should consider whether the environments of their classrooms and schools support the learning traits we now know about (National Research Council, 2000). Building administrators can use this activity at a faculty meeting to discuss the school's progress toward offering students positive learning environments.

Because we know . . .	Class and school environments should . . .
Children and young people are active learners	Support meaning making versus absorption of content
Learners construct their own meaning and learn what they come to understand	Promote active involvement in learning
Students naturally set goals, plan, and revise	Call on and continually develop goal-setting, planning, and revision skills
Each student works within a zone or bandwidth of readiness and competence	Provide for variance in student readiness
Students grow in readiness as they are supported by others in developing the new competencies they need to move ahead	Provide supportive peer and teacher partnerships focused on a particular student's next steps in growth
Students have different learning predispositions, so they learn in different ways	Be flexible enough to emphasize students' various strengths and work with their various weaknesses
Students of the same age learn on different timetables	Be flexible enough to address students' varied needs for practice
Students develop multiple strategies for solving problems gradually, and with practice and guidance	Promote experimenting with solutions and provide plenty of practice time for developing, understanding, selecting, and refining solutions

Students learn best in communities	Provide many and varied opportunities for students to work collaboratively and to develop the skills and attitudes necessary to do so
Students learn best with many tools, artifacts, and materials to support their learning	Be rich in tools, materials, artifacts, and other resources

Source: National Research Council. (2000). How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school (Expanded ed.). Washington, DC: National Academy Press.