

Learning Environment: An Overview

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Learning Environments, Standard 7 challenges the beginning family and consumer sciences teacher to “create and implement a safe, supportive learning environment that shows sensitivity to diverse needs, values, and characteristics of students, families, and communities” (National Association of Teacher Educators for Family and Consumer Sciences [NATEFACS], 2004). In this article, several theoretical components of learning environments are explored as a foundation for grappling with this broad Standard. Resources that provide background material and specific ideas are listed to help beginning teachers as they work to establish quality learning environments. Also included is an annotated bibliography addressing values, character education, and emotional intelligence; safety and caring issues; and a variety of diversity topics including race and ethnicity, gender, and poverty.

Introduction

The beginning family and consumer sciences teacher must be able to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enable student learning in four broad content areas: (a) career, community, and family connections; (b) consumer economics and family resources; (c) family and human development; and (d) nutrition, food, and wellness. Additionally, six professional practice standards are outlined including the theme of this article, the Learning Environment. Specifically, Standard 7 requires the beginning teacher to be able to “create and implement a safe, supportive learning environment that shows sensitivity to diverse needs, values, and characteristics of students, families, and communities” (National Association of Teacher Educators for Family and Consumer Sciences [NATEFACS], 2004).

To further delineate the Standard, the following expectations were created: (a) implement strategies that support safe and accessible environments; (b) display and promote tolerance/respect for diversity (exceptionality, race, age, ethnicity, religion, socio economic status, gender, and sexual orientation); (c) consider basic human needs, development, relationships, and family dynamics; and (d) promote a pluralistic environment, engaging students in ethical problem solving and action (National Association of Teacher Educators for Family and Consumer Sciences [NATEFACS], 2005).

What should the beginning teacher do to create that safe, supportive environment that encourages optimal learning for all? What resources, materials, and research can support and guide the beginning teacher in the quest for knowledge to develop the skills and abilities necessary for this practical problem? This article provides suggestions and ideas for addressing issues regarding various types of diversity and values while being sensitive to characteristics of students, families, and communities.

For the purposes of this article, learning environment is defined as the place and setting where learning occurs. It includes not only the physical setting but the interpersonal and instructional characteristics which influence student performance; therefore, it is difficult to separate the learning environment from curricular issues. Safety includes not only physical safety

but emotional safety for the student—e.g., freedom of expression, assurance of confidentiality, and establishment of an atmosphere of respect.

Background and Rationale

When creating the *National Standards for Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences*, consideration was given to previously developed standards from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC). Standard One states that candidates should know and demonstrate the content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and skills, pedagogical and professional knowledge and skills, and professional dispositions necessary to help all students learn. A footnote clarifies that ‘all students’ is intended to include students with exceptionalities and those of different ethnic/racial, gender, language, and socio-economic origins (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], 2007, p.4).

The NCATE supporting statements relevant to this article include, but are not limited to, the following ones. Teacher candidates demonstrate knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to provide learning opportunities supporting students’ intellectual, social, and personal development. They are able to create instructional opportunities adapted to diverse learners. They encourage students’ development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills. They are able to create learning environments encouraging positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation. Teacher candidates foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom. They understand language acquisition; cultural influences on learning; exceptionalities; diversity of student populations, families, and communities; and inclusion and equity in classrooms and schools (NCATE, 2007). Similarities between the NATEFACS and NCATE standards are apparent and reinforce the necessity for the beginning teacher to be able to create a positive learning environment.

Several of the INTASC principles support Standard 7 of the *National Standards for Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences*. Principle 3 states, “The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners” (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium [INTASC], 1992, p. 18). A performance disposition states, “[T]he teacher creates a learning community in which individual differences are respected” (INTASC, p. 19). Principle 5 states, “The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behaviors to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation” (INTASC, p. 22).

Correlated with the INTASC Standards and based on theoretical research and empirical studies that explored improved student learning, a framework for teaching was developed (Danielson, 2007). The framework divided the complex activity of teaching 22 components clustered into four domains:

1. Planning and Preparation
2. The Classroom Environment
3. Instruction
4. Professional Responsibilities (p.1).

The framework is valuable when examining state standards, professional association standards such as those of the National Association of Teacher Educators for Family and Consumer Sciences (NATEFACS), and other national standards such as those from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Domain 2 breaks the classroom environment down into five components:

1. Component 2a: Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport
2. Component 2b: Establishing a Culture for Learning
3. Component 2c: Managing Classroom Procedures
4. Component 2d: Managing Student Behavior
5. Component 2e: Organizing Physical Space (Danielson 2007. p. 28).

This article concentrates on Components 2a, 2b, and 2d.

Additionally, several common themes relevant to Standard 7 are woven throughout the framework. These themes include equity, cultural competence, and attention to individual students, including those with special needs. A commitment to equity is apparent in Domains 2 and 3--those that deal primarily with student interactions. For example, Component 3b of Domain 3 states that classroom instruction uses questions and discussion techniques in the classroom. Consistent with the equity theme, *all* students would be invited to participate in discussions as well as respond to questions. Cultural competence is addressed in Component 1b of Domain 1 which states that the teacher demonstrates knowledge of students (Danielson 2007). For example, teachers who are aware of their students' cultures and customs can exhibit and model sensitivity when interacting with students whose cultural backgrounds may differ from many teachers' expectations of respect.

Utilizing a common framework and determining standards for what the beginning family and consumer sciences teacher should know and be able to do facilitates discussion across teacher education units and builds consensus in the profession. Although there may be varied opinions on exactly how the instructional setting should be structured, most would agree that what is expected from schools today is very different from what was expected a little over one hundred years ago. In the early 1900s, instruction often centered on recitation of lessons and having students mimic skills, e.g., the correct way to form letters when learning to write. There was little intentional application by the student of the knowledge gained. However, theories changed as evidenced by John Dewey's (1916) observation that children need to be able to integrate what they learn at school with the greater environment while also utilizing outside life experiences within the classroom. Connections must be made between the two environments. This is especially true when looking at families' cultural impact on the classroom. Dewey also supported the belief that a moral education, taught not as abstract lessons but in the context of real life events, was most effective.

Curriculum reform that advocated constructivist classrooms was supported by the belief that "each of us makes sense of our world by synthesizing new experiences into what we have previously come to understand" (Brooks & Brooks, 1993, p. 4). Based on the work of Piaget, Vygotsky, and others, classroom activities shifted from teacher-centered to learner-centered educational settings grounded in cognitive theory. Specifically, Vygotsky's dialectical constructivism theorized that knowledge is socially constructed (Woolfolk, 2001). The source of knowledge rests in the interaction between the learners and their environment. As such, the teacher and students co-construct knowledge with the teacher permitting the students to be active thinkers and questioners. Family and consumer sciences classrooms are well-suited to helping students synthesize experiences because of the discipline's emphasis on practical problem solving, e.g., using case studies or scenarios, and process-oriented curriculum utilizing activities such as the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America's (FCCLA) Power of One.

Strong quality learning environments tend to be active places where students are engaged in what they are studying and exploring. The quality of the learning environment is not merely a function of *where* the students "end up" at testing time or *how many* students "end up" there, but

instead that the students are stimulated, treated fairly, and engaged in the process (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). If students are simply encouraged to perform through memorization rather than gain understanding through exploration, little long-term knowledge is retained. Additionally, to encourage actual student learning rather than simple coverage of material, classrooms must be relatively organized, teachers need to be patient and supportive, work must be challenging, and learning tasks must be authentic (Woolfolk, 2001). Authentic tasks are those that have connections to real-life problems that students will face at some point in life. Memorizing definitions simply because they will be on a test or covering material that has already been mastered provides little motivation to learn and be engaged in learning. For example, having students interview a family member regarding family background, traditions, and customs provides a real-life context for exploring family culture and relationships as well as develops social and questioning skills.

To help students develop the ability to integrate daily classroom tasks with real-life situations, it is suggested that such tasks must be plausible and believable from the students' perspective. To avoid simply enculturating students into current practices by providing simplistic and well-defined activities, teacher educators must carefully create and compose the activities that comprise the work of the learning environment (Herrington & Herrington, 2006). Because real-life is not simple, if problems are to be deemed pragmatic and worthwhile, the activities chosen should be complex with real-world relevance.

Another characteristic of strong learning environments is that a valid context is developed for how that genuine activity will be used in life. There is a realistic rationale for why this particular task is being studied. For example, rather than simply memorizing the correct components of a business letter, a student could compose a letter thanking a prospective employer for an interview. Herrington and Herrington (2006) further propose and discuss seven additional guidelines for designing quality learning environments. Students should:

1. Have access to experts who perform real-life tasks,
2. Be exposed to multiple perspectives,
3. Participate in collaborative activities,
4. Have opportunities for meaningful reflection,
5. Participate in opportunities for articulation and justification of beliefs,
6. Be coached rather than told by the teacher what should be done, and
7. Be assessed in ways that are consistent with the tasks.

An example for a nutrition class would be to examine the ingredient labels on cereal boxes to compare the calories and nutrients of each. Groups of students could then research the merits of the ingredients and select the more nutritious cereal. The students could be required to justify their choice(s) based on specific criteria, e.g., low sugar, low calorie, high fiber, least amount of preservatives, etc. By requiring students to make informed choices and justify their reasoning, this activity could help prepare the students to grapple with real life.

Experiencing environments that are positive, nurturing, stimulating, and interactive can help enhance students' mental abilities. Research has shown that not only can the brain change positively in structure and function due to learning but also negatively (Campbell, Campbell, & Dickinson, 2004). Teachers need to establish affirmative, "smart" and safe classrooms that will offer their students opportunities for positive interaction with each other on learning tasks.

Clearly, classrooms must function as safe, supportive learning environments that show sensitivity to the needs of all students. Beginning teachers must demonstrate that they can create and implement such environments. Research has demonstrated that threats and stress can affect

students' learning because a stressful classroom results in an ineffective learning environment (Jensen, 1998). These threats can originate from the greater environments of home and community as well as from within the classroom, but generally hinder learning from occurring as students grapple with the threats. "Threats activate defense mechanisms and behaviors that are great for survival but lousy for learning" (Jensen, p. 57). Although outside environmental stressors may not be controllable, threats from within the classroom, e.g., bullying tactics of other students, should be minimized. Inappropriate actions by a teacher, such as inconsistent enforcing of classroom discipline, can also contribute to a stressful learning environment. Utilizing stress management techniques, increasing physical activities to elevate moods, and establishing classroom opening routines are all suggestions that teachers can use to help students feel less stressed within the learning environment.

Beginning family and consumer sciences teachers are charged with creating environments that show sensitivity to diversity of students, families, and communities. Diversity, including gender, lifestyle, and socioeconomic differences as well as the more commonly thought of ethnic and cultural differences, will continue to affect classrooms of the future as communities change. The proportions of United States ethnic minority populations are continuing to grow at much faster rates than the general population. Students of color may account for almost 48% of the student population by 2020 (Banks & Banks, 2005). Non-white and lower socio-economic students are becoming a larger portion of schools' populations. While such diversity can be considered challenging, it can also provide great opportunities for enriching the curriculum and learning environment. Helping students acquire knowledge and skills to be able to take personal, social, and civic action to promote harmonious living in our pluralistic nation and world could be a major goal of the beginning family and consumer sciences teacher's classroom.

Resources and Materials

To create and implement the safe, supportive learning environment that Standard 7 calls for, the beginning teacher will need the theoretical background and also resources that address values and diverse needs. The following section presents major sources that look at values as evidenced in emotional intelligence and character education programs; racial, ethnic, gender, and multiple intelligence diversity; safety in caring and non-violent classrooms; and practical problem solving within the classroom. Several of the resources and concepts are interrelated so it is difficult to examine one area without flowing into another. For example, the term "safe" can refer to emotional as well as physical well-being so violent behavior and bullying can be as relevant as stress and anger. Similarly, "supportive" can refer to teachers caring for students, students caring for each other and the greater community, and the formation of learning communities.

Institutions will have utilized a variety of educational psychology texts within their teacher education programs. These textbooks provide theoretical background information for the beginning teachers. One example, *Psychology Applied to Teaching* (Snowman & Biehler, 2003) has the following chapters that would be relevant to creating a learning environment: (a) Chapter 5, Addressing Cultural and Socioeconomic Diversity; (b) Chapter 6, Accommodating Student Variability; and (c) Chapter 11, Motivation. Another example of relevant textbook support is found in *Becoming a Teacher* (Parkay & Stanford, 2007). The following chapters could be applicable: (a) Chapter 7, Teaching Diverse Learners; (b) Chapter 8, Addressing Learners'

Individual Needs; and (c) Chapter 9, Authentic Instruction and Curricula for Creating a Community of Learners.

The *National Standards for Family and Consumer Sciences Education* (National Association of Administrators for Family and Consumer Sciences [NASAFACS], 2008) provides the framework for what the beginning family and consumer sciences teacher will be expected to do and teach in the classroom. This document advocates posing problems through real-world scenarios, using higher level questioning, and linking academic and family and consumer sciences content so it is aligned with the concepts of the constructivist classroom. The Reasoning for Action Standard provides the foundation for teachers and students to explore the complex practical problems that are a part of life (Fox, 2007).

If beginning teachers are expected to be able to pose practical problems and encouraged to ask critical thinking questions, they should be able to observe and experience the curricular philosophy during their education. Teacher educators must be willing to conduct our classes in the same manner that we expect students to be able to in the future. One professor's struggles and successes with the curricular philosophy are recounted and could be used as a reading resource for students (Fox, 1997).

To explore some of the major trends in family and consumer sciences, the beginning teacher could be referred to *Family and Consumer Sciences: A Chapter of the Curriculum Handbook* (Laster & Johnson, 2001). This comprehensive document provides a presentation of the major trends in family and consumer sciences, selected research, and a listing of curriculum resources including an annotated bibliography and notable state and local programs. It provides excellent background for the expectation statement that the beginning teacher will promote an environment that engages students in ethical problem solving and action.

It is generally accepted that the learning environment develops over time, in part due to how teachers interact with students and to the teachers' expectations for the classroom. Some educators refer to the unique nature of a teacher's learning environment as their classroom culture. Culture can have other meanings including "the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; ...and the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization..." (Webster.com). It is generally the way of life common to a group of people. In this article, culture is used to refer to two groups. One is the culture (or common ways) in the classroom and the other pertains to the racial and ethnically diverse populations in the classroom.

Each classroom develops its own culture when a community of learners is created. The ways in which teachers and students participate in common activities determines that classroom's culture or atmosphere. A quality atmosphere would convince students that teachers care about them and believe that they can learn, are sensitive to their differing needs and abilities, have knowledge of their subject matter, and are able to maintain effective classroom discipline. There are three important dimensions of a positive learning environment including the caring atmosphere of the classroom, the physical classroom environment, and the organization of the classroom. Teacher educators may include caring pedagogy to help form the moral foundation of responsible citizenship (Parkay & Stanford, 2007).

Values

To create safe learning environments, beginning teachers need to maintain an atmosphere that is non-violent and not harmful. A safe and caring atmosphere can foster a healthy learning environment. Character education and emotional intelligence, with emphasis on affirmative

values, responsibility, and social skills, can also strengthen healthy student relationships and a positive learning environment. Emotional intelligence is the term that represents the body of skills commonly portrayed as character (Goleman, 1995).

Character education can help create caring communities where students learn to serve others, develop strong personal ideals, and examine universal principles. Lickona (1991) suggested ways to encourage character development in the classroom. Some of his twelve strategies included acting as a caregiver and mentor, building a moral classroom community, using cooperative learning, teaching conflict resolution, fostering caring beyond the classroom, and recruiting parents and the community as partners in character education. These strategies are useful in any classroom and make a positive contribution to the learning environment.

Schools historically addressed topics such as citizenship, responsibility, and morals but recent deterioration of everyday civility has pointed toward an increased necessity to teach social and emotional competencies (Pickard & Toevs, 2006). These social and emotional learning skills can be nurtured and encouraged through the activities of the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), a career-technical student organization. Several lesson plans focusing on self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation, and aligned with the *National Standards for Family and Consumer Sciences*, are presented in the monograph, *Enhancing Students' Emotional Intelligence* (Pickard & Toevs).

Asset-building schools are regarded as helping to develop “whole” or complete students by not just providing them with the facts that are needed to succeed in life, but with the skills or building blocks that are needed to become valued members of communities and society. These building blocks, called developmental assets (Starkman, Scales, & Roberts, 1999), are the relationships, values, attitudes, and attributes students need for the future. The developmental assets can guide the creation of safe and healthy school and classroom learning environments in which students can achieve academically. School and community success stories demonstrate the importance of this holistic view. Although building developmental assets in young people is fostered best by entire schools and communities, individual teachers can incorporate these strategies into their own classrooms to improve the classroom learning environment.

Safety

Students have the right to feel safe in their classrooms, and teachers have the responsibility to create safe learning environments. Safety includes not only physical safety but also emotional safety. Family and consumer sciences classes provide opportunities for incorporating programs that address bullying, conflict resolution, and school and community violence. The stated purpose of the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) program, STOP the Violence—Students Taking on Prevention, is to empower young persons to recognize, report, and reduce the potential for youth violence using a peer-to-peer perspective. Trained FCCLA members work within their communities to not only report violence but also take action by implementing projects to help reduce dangerous situations within their schools (Family, Career and Community Leaders of America [FCCLA], 2004; Stop the violence, 2004). Another program that would help teachers address bullying while providing a safe learning environment for students would be “Operation Respect: Don’t Laugh at Me,” a character development curriculum.

For an emotionally safe learning environment to be created, students need to feel safe to share what they think. Establishing ground rules that include confidentiality and respect will work towards that goal. What is said in the classroom should stay in the classroom. Also,

students do not have to agree with others' statements, but they should refrain from dismissive behaviors such as eye rolling or smirking (Social Psychology Network, 2008). Students should be free to opt out of discussions or activities that make them feel uncomfortable, providing they tell the teacher their reasons. Teachers have the responsibility to respect students' views by offering positive comments when sensitive or embarrassing feelings are shared. Even though a teacher may disagree with a student's comment or viewpoint, the teacher should not belittle the remark but turn it into a learning opportunity so that students feel safe to express their opinions.

Thus, the safe, caring learning environment includes not only the physical aspects of the classroom but protection from domination and intimidation within the learning environment. Successful teachers would expose power relationships and share power with the learners, subsequently empowering the students to confront inequalities. For example, if students are encouraged to advocate for others, they learn to take proactive stances in situations that could be harmful. Effective family and consumer sciences teachers would encourage students to respect the diverse needs and developmental levels of classmates and others (Laster & Johnson, 2001).

Diversity

The Standard calls for beginning teachers to be able to show sensitivity to diverse needs of the students. Diversity can refer to many differences in our population. Although the most obvious one is racial and ethnic diversity, gender, socioeconomic class, and types of intelligence also may be considered and explored. "Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students—regardless of their gender and social class and their ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics—should have an equal opportunity to learn in school" (Banks & Banks, 2005, p. 3). Family and consumer sciences teachers, due to the real-life, hands-on nature of the field, are in position to provide those opportunities for all students.

Family and consumer sciences teachers must be able to create bias-free learning environments that are welcoming to students of all cultural backgrounds (Allison, 2003). According to Allison, this can be accomplished through several strategies:

1. Analyze and gain understanding of one's personal cultural identity;
2. Learn about the cultural backgrounds of one's students;
3. Develop competence in cross-cultural communications;
4. Explore learning preferences and styles of students from varied backgrounds;
5. Implement sound, research-based strategies;
6. Utilize culturally relevant materials and aids;
7. Employ multiple modes of assessments to accommodate the diversity of learning styles;
8. Express the belief that all students can learn and achieve;
9. Actively engage parents or guardians in children's education; and
10. Encourage participation in Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA).

Numerous suggestions for implementation of these strategies, as well as the research background that informs Allison's ideas, are presented in the article.

Rehm and Allison (2006b) found that Florida family and consumer sciences teachers, who participated in a survey, generally revealed an interest in many cultures and a desire to learn more about the cultures. "Multicultural education can be broadly defined as the use of multiple instructional strategies to empower all students with knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to actively participate in and successfully function in a culturally diverse democratic society"

(Rehm & Allison, p. 260). The teachers were willing to adapt courses to meet diverse needs as well as employ special strategies. These strategies included cooperative learning, peer tutoring, visual aids, and alternative assignments. Greater breadth and depth of multicultural experiences in the teacher education program were advocated to insure a healthy learning environment and better prepare beginning teachers for the multicultural classrooms of the future (Rehm & Allison).

Experienced family and consumer sciences teachers in Florida offered several suggestions for teacher education programs based on their perceptions of working with culturally diverse populations (Rehm & Allison, 2006a). Often, multicultural education is not completely integrated into the teacher education program but offered separately, which hinders the seamless exploration of beliefs that would provide the beginning teacher with the confidence needed to work with culturally diverse populations. Several teachers advocated the acquisition of a second language by beginning teachers while others suggested that beginning teachers gain experience with methods for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages).

Although many of the comments from teachers in the Rehm and Allison (2006a) study were directed towards teacher education programs, the teachers also offered suggestions that could be helpful to the beginning teacher. The belief that diversity could result in strong bonds within the classroom was evidenced by two statements, “celebrate differences as making life more interesting” and “celebrate ways we are alike” (Rehm & Allison). Teachers found that food preparation courses offered a vehicle for students to learn to appreciate and respect each others’ cultures. Other suggestions included using team building activities, cooperative learning teams, knowledgeable guest speakers, and alternative delivery method for lessons, all of which have the potential to contribute to a positive classroom learning environment.

Focusing on the family and consumer sciences middle school classroom, Allison and Rehm (2006) surveyed sixteen Florida teachers to explore how they met the needs of their diverse learners. Teachers adjusted ways they communicated with students, such as the types of strategies used, or words used to give instructions. Pictures and visual teaching aids were judged to be effective strategies by these teachers. Alternative forms of assessments were deemed necessary. Consistent with other research, cooperative learning and peer tutoring strategies were perceived as effective strategies. When employed with heterogeneous groupings, these strategies tend to encourage inter-ethnic friendships, develop communication skills, and improve academic performance, as well as improve the learning environment.

According to the study participants, strategies that appeared to be less effective included usage of dual language printed materials, guest speakers, and field trips. However, other research has indicated that guest speakers and field trips may be effective because students can experience realistic situations within the community while applying practical knowledge (Allison & Rehm, 2006). Hands-on experiences, common to the family and consumer sciences classroom, such as laboratories, simulations, demonstrations, and field trips allow students of many cultures to be actively engaged in the learning process (Allison & Rehm, 2007).

Providing a safe and secure learning environment for all students should extend to sexual and gender issues also. Advocates of gender education, in addition to sex education, Gurian and Henley (2001) suggest that human growth and development courses should be mandatory. Similar to other “best practices,” sex education should not be a one-time class but should be taught each year of high school becoming increasingly sophisticated and geared to students’ interests as they mature. Addressing issues openly may minimize some problems such as sexual

harassment, gay bashing, sexual objectification, and inappropriate sexual involvement, thus improving the learning environment.

Gardner (1993), in his theory in practice book on multiple intelligences, conceptualized a wider range of intelligences than previously had been tested by typical standardized tests. He defined intelligence as the ability to solve real-life problems, to generate new problems to solve, and to produce something or create a service that is valued within one's culture. The eight intelligences, because they are influenced by the cultures in which people are born, work with the cross-cultural perspective which will be required in the classroom of the future. It should be noted that Gardner originally described seven intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal, then added an eighth: naturalist.

To gain an understanding of the multiple intelligences and how to utilize them to reach all students, beginning teachers could explore Gardner's (1993) work. For a more pragmatic approach rather than a theoretical one, beginning teachers could use *Teaching and Learning through Multiple Intelligences* by Campbell, Campbell, and Dickinson (2004). This book explores each of the eight intelligences thoroughly by (a) defining the intelligence, (b) providing a checklist of qualities, (c) defining learning processes, and (d) demonstrating how to establish each in a learning environment. Activities, lesson plans, and ways to include technology expand the description of Gardner's multiple intelligence theory. The authors present a balanced view of Gardner's work responding to those who dismiss the work as categorizing students too soon in life and failing to nurture the whole child. Campbell, Campbell, and Dickinson underscore the utilization of methods such as project-based teaching while deemphasizing teachers' perceived pressure for "coverage". A framework for assessing, as well as instructing, the multiple intelligences is also discussed. Acknowledging that students learn in different ways can help to establish a positive learning environment.

Students of poverty also learn in different ways. Beginning teachers may need to explore their own knowledge of, and beliefs about poverty to be able to work well with all students. Poverty has been defined as "the extent to which an individual does without resources" (Payne, 2005, p.16). Not only does that include financial resources but also emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical resources plus support systems, role models, and knowledge of hidden rules.

Payne (2005) believes that poverty can handicap the success of a student. To support the student of poverty, she suggests that cognitive strategies as well as coping strategies need to be taught to the students. Self-discipline as well as content material should be part of the curriculum to foster a quality learning environment. Lack of the skills and strategies can hinder the student of poverty. For example, students who respond to conflict by physically fighting may not have cognitive strategies, such as impulse control, to solve problems in other ways. These students may bully because that is the behavior they see modeled at home, and they have no other strategy to accomplish what they want to achieve. By helping students to develop coping strategies, the teacher can foster a safer learning environment.

Research has shown that students from poverty are motivated to achieve through the development of relationships (Payne, 2005). Teachers who (a) demonstrate that they care about students, (b) promote student achievement, and (c) serve as role models are all more likely to connect with students than those who do little or nothing to establish relationships. These relationships can do much towards supporting the positive learning environment.

Conclusion

Standard 7 is very complex and must be considered in light of all the other Standards. The importance of creating and implementing a safe, supportive learning environment is vital for the beginning teacher, but challenging because of the expansiveness of the Standard and Expectations. This article has provided a general overview for the Standard and listed several major resources that could be utilized by the beginning teacher. The majority of the resources have additional references, curriculum materials, and sources that could be beneficial to the beginning teacher in establishing and maintaining a healthy and positive learning environment.

Brief Annotated Bibliography

Values, Character Education, Emotional Intelligence, and Caring

Devine, T., Seuk, J. H., & Wilson, A. (2001). *Cultivating heart and character: Educating for life's most essential goals*. Chapel Hill, NC: Character Development Publishing.

An extensive discussion of the foundations of character education is presented in this comprehensive book. The book also discusses challenges facing youth, plus ways that healthy lifestyles can be supported.

Hunt, G. M., & Hampton, B. J. (2002). *Honey for a teen's heart*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

For the beginning teacher who might not have an extensive background in adolescent literature, this book provides an annotated list of books that could be used to help with value integration in the classroom. One caveat is it does present the material from a Christian worldview, so it may not be appropriate in its entirety for all audiences.

Lickona, T. (1991). *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*. New York: Bantam Books.

Ways that respect and responsibility can be modeled and encouraged in the classroom are presented in this comprehensive book. Lickona offers help on creating a democratic environment such as a class meeting and working with cooperative learning.

Pickard, M., & Toevs, B. (2006). *Enhancing students' emotional intelligence*. Ellensburg, WA: Family and Consumer Sciences Education Association.

Drawing on the theory of Daniel Goleman, Pickard and Toevs offer lesson plans to help teachers develop self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation in students. The lesson plans are linked to the *National Standards for Family and Consumer Sciences*. The comprehensive plans include learning activities, process questions, and worksheets.

Ryan, K., & Bohlin, K. E. (1999). *Building character in schools: Practical ways to bring moral instruction to life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Notable quotes from famous individuals are only one of the appendices in this book. Also provided are frameworks for developing character within classrooms, schools, and communities. Action strategies, including one hundred ways to bring character education to life, help to make this a useful resource for teachers.

Starkman, N., Scales, P. C., & Roberts, C. (1999). *Great places to learn: How asset-building schools help students succeed*. Minneapolis, MN: The Search Institute.

Developmental assets can improve academic success for students. Read success stories that can serve as inspiration for change in schools and communities.

Safety

“Operation Respect: Don’t Laugh at Me” Retrieved from <http://www.operationrespect.org>. A character development curriculum is available as well as a CD and music by Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul, and Marry. The organization promotes creating compassionate, safe, and respectful environments.

STOP the violence—Students taking on prevention. Retrieved from, <http://www.fcclainc.org> The peer-to-peer education program empowers Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) members to take action in their schools and communities to recognize, report, and reduce violence.

Thompson, J. G. (2007). *The first-year teacher’s survival guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Thompson believes that a safe and orderly learning environment is established through positive classroom management. This book offers many suggestions for managing through early intervention. Working with many types of diversity, e.g., students who are gifted, at-risk, non-English speakers, have special needs, or live in poverty, is also discussed.

Diversity

Understanding Prejudice

To uncover hidden biases, beginning teachers could take the Implicit Association Tests at this Web site. Reading lists for all grade levels are provided and cover the topics of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination. Originally developed to support a college text, the Web site links to over 2,000 resources, as well as interactive exercises. Retrieved from <http://www.understandingprejudice.org>.

Banks, J. A. (2003). *Teaching strategies for ethnic studies*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. Banks provides background and ideas for working with many different ethnic and racial groups. Also included are strategies for creating and evaluating units and lessons. An extensive reading and resource list is also included.

Allison and Rehm

These two authors have conducted several studies therefore their articles are full of strategies that practicing teachers have deemed successful. Also offered are suggestions for needed research that beginning teachers could consider conducting in the future.

Thompson, J. G. (2007). *The first-year teacher’s survival guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Thompson believes that a safe and orderly learning environment is established through positive classroom management. This book offers many suggestions for managing through early intervention. Working with many types of diversity, e.g., students who are gifted, at-risk, non-English speakers, have special needs, or live in poverty, is also discussed.

Cushner, K. (2006). *Human diversity in action: Developing multicultural competencies for the classroom*. New York: McGraw Hill.

This workbook encourages students to learn by reflectively thinking about a wide range of diversities including gender, ethnicity, and class. For example, the plight of women is examined through activities dealing with hourly wages and nutritional anemia. A case study activity has students examine how low-income mothers of various ethnic groups, e.g., Jewish, Chinese, Native American, and Islamic, would react to a school expense.

Payne, R. K. (2006). *Working with students: Discipline strategies for the classroom*. Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc.

This compact and inexpensive book provides checklists for teachers to reflect on their current practices, plus suggestions on how to respond to various types of students and parents. Payne highlights strategies for developing mutual respect with students of all ages.

Multiple Ways of Learning

Campbell, L., Campbell, B., & Dickinson, D. (2004). *Teaching and learning through multiple intelligences*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Practical applications of multiple ways of teaching and learning are presented in this workbook. Appreciating differences, global problem-solving, creating an empowering school culture, and examining cultural diversity through the arts are some of the topics that could be of interest to the family and consumer sciences teacher.

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