Does School Setting Influence Student Success?

Pharaoh Anderson, Shanice Bent, Nayeli Baez
Education and Justice - EDU100, Professor Virginia Diaz-Mendoza

Introduction

The physical condition of schools greatly affects students' academic performance. The setting can either hinder or benefit a student's ability to work productively. More specifically, environmental issues such as lighting quality, thermal comfort, ventilation, acoustics, unsanitary settings, and overcrowded conditions impact student academic performance. In his book, The Shame of the Nation, Jonathan Kozol elaborates on various aspects of the physical conditions of highly segregated public schools and how these conditions can ultimately limit a student's academic achievements. The objective of this research project is to shed light on how detrimental conditions can negatively affect a child’s ability to excel in school.

Discussion Questions

Group members reflected on the following research questions and then found research to better understand the impact of school structure on learning:

- What was the infrastructure like in the schools you attended?
- Do you think the school infrastructure influenced your learning?
- What effects do poor school conditions have on learning?
- Do you feel as though conditions in the schools you attended could have been better or worse?
- What did you do to maintain good conditions or fix poor conditions?

Positive Conditions Improve Learning

**Acoustics**
Students need quiet spaces to hear and understand spoken words.

**Windows**
Eyes and visual processing capability are still developing in young children. Views of nature improve health and well-being.

**Lighting**
Students in classrooms with plenty of daylight improved 20% faster in math and 26% faster in reading tests.

**Ventilation**
Functioning windows are associated with better student performance and are beneficial to provide natural ventilation.

**Temperature**
Temperatures between 68 and 74°F (20 and 24°C) are most comfortable and lead to an optimal learning condition.

Negative Conditions Reduce Learning

**Acoustics**
An enormous amount of noise can produce poor appetites, insomnia, and headaches.

**Windows / Lighting**
Windows without shades create highly illuminated classrooms; however, this can generate increased thermal discomfort and distractions.

**Ventilation**
Poor ventilation construction causes mold, which is related to the prevalence of asthma.

**Temperature**
There is a strong relationship between learning and poor temperature/ acoustics. An uncomfortable learning environment can lead to poor academic outcomes.

**Color**
There is a correlation between mood and color. Paint color can influence performance. The color red was found to decrease student performance on demanding tasks.

Conclusion

In conclusion, physical environment in schools does indeed play a major role in student success. Acoustics, lighting, and even temperature influence how well a student performs in school. Research shows that schools that fail to create a comfortable learning environment tend to have students who are not as successful in school. Students may feel as though they are not being treated fairly and this can impact their behavior and the work they produce in school. It is up to students and families to fight for schools that will treat students properly, schools that will produce more successful students in the long run.

References


