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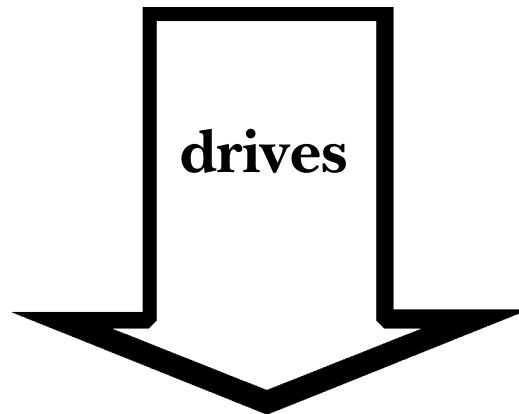


Managing the Atmospheric Pressure

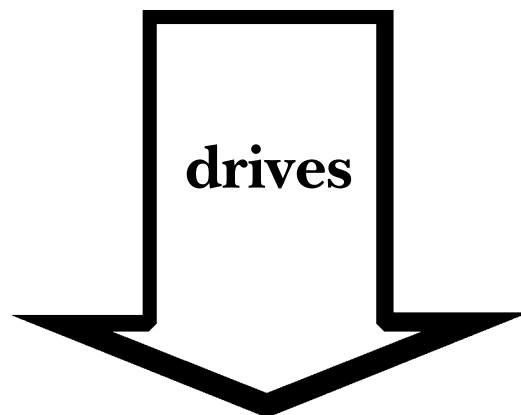
Emotion drives attention, which drives learning and memory. Emotion and attention have been ill-understood gateways to learning and memory, which have always been the central focus of most of what we do in school.

Robert Sylwester

Emotion



attention



learning & memory



Emotions in the Classroom

Emotion focuses our attention and helps in the formation of long-term memory.

Think of your earliest memory of school. Perhaps it was the first day of kindergarten or an event in Year 3. Your memory is either very pleasant or unpleasant. It may even be an embarrassing memory. Events with high emotional content tend to be easy for us to recall. Many of us can remember with great clarity where we were when President Kennedy was assassinated or when the Challenger disaster occurred. Emotion plays a role in the formation of memory and in getting our students ready to learn. Therefore, we need to practise procedures and rituals that eliminate threats and stress, and design activities for our learners that engage positive emotions.

Teachers are the ones who touch students and interact with them. They are the ones who implement educational policy and curriculum content, scope and sequence. And – most important – they are the one who establish an educational climate and who structure learning experiences. In short, they have almost complete power over the process that takes place in the classroom. And it is my contention that process is more important than content in education.

JJ Foley

Procedures and Rituals

Procedure

action, process, modus operandi, strategy, regulations, conventions, proceedings, etiquette, standards, ins and outs, red tape

Procedures help eliminate confusion and wasted time. Just as flight attendants review safety procedures at the beginning of a flight (buckling seatbelts, emergency exits, oxygen masks and flotation devices), procedures in a classroom establish clear expectations.

A procedure is a 'do'. There are no consequences for not following procedures. Effective teachers have classroom procedures for checking attendance, practising fire drills, dismissing students, and collecting homework and assignments. Other procedures include how students enter the classroom, how students form groups, and how to get students' attention.



A procedure is simply a method or process for how things are to be done in the classroom.

Harry Wong

Ritual

prescription, form, code, protocol, formality, ceremonial, routine, convention, custom, tradition, habit

When a procedure is practised over and over it may become a ritual. Rituals are predictable. You may fix a cup of coffee and read the newspaper each morning before getting into the shower. If you are unable to complete your morning ritual, you may find that you start the day 'stressed out'.

Students also need procedures and rituals that help establish a positive classroom environment, one which is free from threat and stress. One of the most powerful rituals, and management strategies, is to greet your students at the door as they enter your classroom. Making eye contact, speaking to each student or just smiling as students enter your room allows you to acknowledge each student as an individual. Addressing each student by his or her name and smiling demonstrates your interest and respect for each individual learner.

Just as the cabin pressure is controlled and adjusted by the pilots in an aircraft, the teacher is responsible for helping students to get in the best emotional state for learning. After greeting students at the door, the procedure might be that students look at their daily syllabus or read the directions on the board for what they will be doing in class that particular day. This gives them a 'road map' or 'you are here' map and avoids the dreaded question, 'What are we gonna do today?'. This strategy will also minimise stress for students who are left hemispheric (logical, linear) thinkers.

When students know what is expected of them they are generally successful.

Harry Wong