Identifying Ekvall’s Creative Climate Dimensions in an Aesthetic Education Setting

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Identifying Ekvall's Creative Climate Dimensions in an Aesthetic Education Setting

A Project in Creative Studies

by

Cynthia A. Argona

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

August, 2001
Abstract

This project identified the similarities and differences of Ekvall’s ten dimensions of creative climate (1983, 1984, 1987) in an aesthetic education setting.

The questions that guided this study were: (1) How do Ekvall’s climate dimensions manifest themselves in an aesthetic education setting? (2) What descriptions of creative climate in aesthetic education exist in the literature? (3) What observed behaviors are indicative of creative behavior in aesthetic education classes? (4) How does aesthetic education help to enhance creative climate in the classroom?

Nine classes from grades K-2 were observed in an urban elementary school setting. Classes were observed using a personal observation protocol (See Appendix C) and teacher observation protocols (See Appendix B). These data were collected, examined and sorted into characteristics similar and different to Ekvall's definitions. Each dimension was summarized and identified considerations for further research. In addition, a literature review presented key behaviors of creative climate in education and the importance of aesthetics in education. Ultimately, both the data and literature demonstrated the benefits and behaviors of aesthetic education. However, further research is needed to solidify the importance and benefits of aesthetics in the academic setting.
Buffalo State College
The International Center for Studies in Creativity

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Cynthia A. Argona, Candidate

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SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

This section will present the

- Rationale and significance of the project;
  and
- Purpose of the project.
Rationale and Significance

Creative Climate is a topic that is gaining interest in a variety of contexts.
According to Lauer (1994, p. 158) "...creative climate is a variable that may be assessed, and has important implications to research focused on creativity." Göran Ekvall's climate research in organizations (1983; 1984; 1987) contains one framework for assessing and working with creative climate in organizations. Ekvall's organizational approach along with that of Amabile's (1989) have been central in bringing attention to creative climate. Although there is a significant amount of literature pertaining to creative climate in organizations, similar information is lacking in the educational sector (Aurigema, in progress; Gordon, 2000; Jesberger, 2001; McDonagh, in progress; Miloshevski, 2000; Peeble-Peters, in progress; Richards, in progress).

With the recent revising of New York State standards, the ability to teach students in a creative climate has become crucial. The payoffs for creative climate in education include "student growth, discovery and vision" (Litterest, 1993). The importance of better understanding the teaching/learning dynamics among students and between students and teachers in regard to creative climate can help educators to ensure that the content learning for which they are accountable actually transfers to the students. Psychological climate with its creative climate dimensions has been shown to have an impact on organizations. This study is one of several designed to examine these same aspects in the classroom.
Purpose

This project belongs to a set of investigations on creative climate in the classroom (Aurigema, in progress; Gordon, 2000; Jesberger, 2001; McDonagh, in progress; Miloshevski, 2000; Peebles-Peters, in progress; Richards, in progress) which will be used in developing the Creative Climate Checklist About School Settings (CLASS) (Murdock, 1999). The purpose of this project was to identify rubrics, behaviors and activities that were indicative of creative climate in the aesthetic education classroom. This study will provide a foundation for further research in the field of climate in education and the impact of aesthetic education in the classroom by identifying similarities and differences to the initial organization climate work begun by Göran Ekvall (1983; 1984; 1987). The questions that guided this study were:

- How do Ekvall's climate dimensions manifest themselves in an aesthetic education setting?
- What is similar?
- What is different?
- What descriptors of creative climate in aesthetic education exist in the literature?
- What observed behaviors are indicative of creative behavior in aesthetic education classes?
- How does aesthetic education help to enhance creative climate in the classroom?

This section has described the general framework and purpose of the project.

Section II contains a review of pertinent literature.
SECTION TWO: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

This section will present the

- Background to the literature;
- Creative climate in literature; and
- The purpose of aesthetic education.
Background to Literature

According to Treffinger, Isaksen and Dorval, climate relates to creative problem solving in that “climate information helps us increase our ability to meet goals, resolve challenges or concerns, and reach toward new opportunities” (1996, p. 2). For those who support climate’s relationship to problem solving and learning, classroom climate has become an area for examination in education. In reviewing the current literature related to creative climate for this study there was as Lauer (1994) noted earlier, clearly a lack of research involving characteristics of organizations in relation to education. However, I did find a number of studies based on creative environment in the classroom which contained characteristics, behaviors and activities that pertained to Ekvall’s ten dimensions (Amabile, 1989; Ambrose, 1996; Eisner, 1985; Fleith, 2000; Litterest & Eyo, 1993; Manzo, 1998; Pruitt, 1991). I also found a significant amount of literature based on classroom climate in aesthetic education (Alter, 1995; Balke, 1997; Bromer, 1998; Cohen & Hoot, 1997; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Downey, 1995; Edwards, 1990; Johnson, 1998; Schoon, 1997; Smith, 2000; Willis, 1995). The purpose of this literature review is: (1) to touch upon the previous research on classroom climate in relationship to Ekvall’s ten dimensions; and (2) to describe the purpose of aesthetics, specifically dance and drama.

The literature for this review was found in the Infotrac database. In performing the search, the following words were used: aesthetic education, creative classroom environment, classroom climate, and dance education environment. There were a total of 76 hits (26 hits for aesthetic education, 23 hits for creative classroom environment, 21 hits for classroom climate, and six hits for dance education environment). Of those hits, six were directly linked to identifying creative climate in the classroom in relationship to
Ekvall’s ten dimensions, and 10 were found to be pertinent in identifying the importance of aesthetics in education. In order to dig deeper into further research involving aesthetic education, I also searched through the Ebsco database using the words, “aesthetic education,” and came across an additional 43 hits. Of the 69 total hits in my literature research on aesthetic education, there was not one hit which discussed the manifestation of creative climate through aesthetic education. However, I identified nine direct links of how aesthetic education can help manifest creative climate in an academic classroom. (See Section V of this project).

Miloshevski (2000) and Gordon (2000) used a similar process in identifying current literature in the area of classroom climate. Their work can be found in Butler Library and the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State College, Buffalo, New York.

Creative Climate in Literature

Miloshevski stated about creative climate in education: “It is essential that this area of study be pursued further because it could have important uses for educators in the future” (2000, p. 90). There has been a growing trend to learn more about the significance of creative climate in education. In relation to the literature found, two major themes were present. The first theme involved how to cultivate creativity in the classrooms (Manzo, 1998; Fleith, 2000). The second theme involved the blocks and barriers to creativity in the classroom (Amabile, 1989; Fleith, 2000; Pruitt, 1991). These two themes are an integral segment of what creative climate in education entails.
Manzo discusses the need for critical thinking and creative intellectual processes in the classroom (1998). He states the key ingredient to promoting constructive process is to incorporate creative thinking processes into class. He believes these “stand-alone activities can establish a climate and a schema for creative thinking in most classrooms” (1998, p. 287). These activities include problem-solving and product, social and system improvements. This information represents the significance of problem solving in the classroom climate. Questions for further research pertaining to this information includes:

1. If activities such as these are incorporated into classrooms, how is the climate changed?  
2. How might activities, particularly problem-solving ones help manifest a more creative climate?  
3. In further research of Ekvall’s ten dimensions of creative climate in education, under which dimensions does problem-solving fall?

Blocks and barriers are also identified in relation to creative climate in education. Amabile states that evaluation, competition, restricted choices, conformity pressure, frequent failure and rote learning destroy creativity in classrooms (1989). Several of these behaviors relate to Ekvall’s dimensions (competition- debate; restricted choices- idea support;). This leads to further questioning about the negative dimensions of creative climate. Ekvall identified conflict as a negative aspect in climate in his organizational research (1983; 1984; & 1987). However, where do these other behaviors fit in? In what ways might blocks and barriers be further identified in the classroom? In creating the Creative Climate Checklist About School Settings (CLASS) (Murdock, 1999), how might these blocks and barriers be identified to the teachers?

The literature I found in my search had a direct link to identifying creative climate in education according to Ekvall’s definition. This particular statement by Fleith (2000, p.
149) identified behaviors of four of Ekvall’s dimensions:

“In the educational setting, an environment that fosters creativity should include the following components: allowing time for idea creative thinking [idea time]; rewarding creative ideas and products [challenge]; encouraging sensible risks [risk-taking]; allowing mistakes; imagining other viewpoints; exploring the environment; questioning assumptions [debate] (Sternberg & Williams, 1996); finding interests and problems; generating multiple hypotheses; focusing on broad ideas rather than specific facts; and thinking about the thinking processes (Starko, 1995).

What is significant in this statement is not only the relationship to some of Ekvall’s definitions (see my inserts in italics above), but the identified behaviors of creative problem solving needed to create creative climate. All of the components identified by Fleith that are not related to Ekvall’s definition, have components of creative problem solving. To me, these observations indicated a lack of clarity in identifying which of the ten dimensions problem solving fits into, if any. Further research on this issue would be useful.

The Purpose of Aesthetic Education

Another important aspect of this literature review was the importance of aesthetic education. Aesthetic education involves looking through a viewpoint of art, music, theatre or dance in an educational setting (Smith, 2000). Several studies noted the fact that aesthetics help in cognitive processes (Eisner, 1979; Johnson, 1998; Litterest & Eyo, 1993). For example, Eisner states, “when the classroom becomes more “aesthetic,”
students take part in conversations and learn questioning, criticizing, opinion-giving and argument” (1979, p. 11). These activities are an integral part of creative climate that related strongly to Ekvall’s dimension of debate. Because of its improvisational nature, aesthetic education allows students’ to view things from their own lens and to formulate ideas and judgments that enable them to be good decision makers (Johnson, 1998). In aesthetic education, there is no “right” way or “wrong” way to ensure students to think about what they are doing, or to trust themselves as individuals. This type of environment “connects the world of play and imagination to the world of reason and knowledge” (Johnson, 1998, p. 3), which makes it likely that the creative process and decision making occur.

It is evident that the world of play was connected to the world of reason and knowledge through the qualitative data that were compiled in this study (See Section IV). These data resulted from a unit I taught through the Arts in Education Institute of Western New York. The unit I taught was specifically a dance unit which also encompassed elements of creative drama. It was based on the work of art entitled, *Cinderella*, performed by the Pick of the Crop Dance Company. Dance and creative drama have many benefits of extending into an academic classroom. For example, we extended dance into the literature base of Cinderella. The students each read at least seven different versions of the story and wrote their own endings. Students also did research on the medieval era to learn more about when Cinderella took place.

Although dance and creative drama can have positive effects in academia, it is an area which is much neglected in schools across the country. In an average classroom, teachers do not have the knowledge to teach dance. Even in the physical settings of gym,
dance is most often not taught. The school that participated in this study was an inner city elementary school. Prior to this year, grades K-4 received no formal class time in art, music, dance or gym because of the lack of funding in the Buffalo School system. This particular school, became a focus school with the Arts in Education Institute. They received a grant which would allow them to have aesthetics taught in the classroom for three years (first year- K-2; second year- K-3; third year, K-4;). However, this is a unique circumstance. For the most part, students are not exposed to the aesthetic world unless parents take a particular interest in signing them up for some kind of class outside of the academic day. Even then, it is unusual to find students who are exposed to works of art involving theatre, dance, art and music. In what ways are aesthetics important in education? Why isn’t this problem addressed by educational leaders? I believe there is a lack of clarity involving what aesthetics do and how they benefit the classroom, specifically classroom climate.

Dance and creative drama are primary components of aesthetic education. Dance is the interpretation of a child’s ideas, feelings and sensory impressions expressed in movement forms through the unique viewpoint of the body. This can highly benefit students that have a difficult time expressing themselves in words. The body is an “excellent vehicle for expression and communication in instructional settings” (Schoon, 1997). It is a way to engage students in problem-solving activities in which their bodies provide a means to a solution. Therefore, the emphasis is on process rather than product. This can benefit their self-image and bring confidence into the ways in which their bodies are able to move (Alter, 1995). Because of its multifaceted nature, dance education can be integrated into cognitive outcomes in other areas besides dance (Hetland & Winner,
11

(2000). All in all, Schoon states that dance is an “excellent vehicle for expression and communication in instructional settings” (1997, p. 82).

Creative drama is another aesthetic component that focuses on process rather than product. According to Johnson, there are four necessary components of creative dramatics: (1) structure; (2) open-endedness; (3) safe environment; and (4) feedback; (1998, p. 4). “Safe” environment is not a term that has been closely viewed in research. What does a safe environment entail, and how does it relate to creative climate?

One of the elements of Johnson’s safe environment was literally keeping the classroom door closed during class to develop a sense of safety and community (1998). This relates closely to Ekvall’s dimension of trust and openness. I believe closing the classroom door is explicit to aesthetic education, and not particularly necessary in an academic classroom. When learning through drama or dance, there is a level of spontaneity involved, and students often tend to become embarrassed if other students catch them “in the act.” The second element Johnson described was for the teacher to be willing to take creative risks by modeling and participating (1998). This was closely related to Ekvall’s dimension of risk-taking and was also apparent from the data found in this project (See Section IV). However, this characteristic was not found in the research pertaining to regular classroom settings (Gordon, 2000; Miloshevski, 2000). Therefore, it may only be noticeable in an aesthetic education setting.

The third element of Johnson’s safe environment was positive, specific feedback (1998). This behavior was cited in both my observations and the teachers under Ekvall’s dimension of idea support (See Section IV). It was also a characteristic identified in the classroom setting (Gordon, 2000; Miloshevski, 2000). The final element of a safe
environment according to Johnson was for the teacher to never force students to participate (1998). I believe this behavior is once again, very specific to aesthetic education. As a teaching artist, I often witness students who are unwilling to participate because they are afraid of failing. I never force any students to dance or perform, in fear of making them feel insecure and permanently marked with embarrassment. By the end of the process, it is usually those fearful students who are volunteering to go first.

I believe Johnson's idea of a safe environment in creative drama closely integrates with Ekvall’s ten dimensions and the data found in this study. It is apparent that dance and drama provide a process to explore and discover. According to Litterest and Eyo, the “student who is allowed to engage in discovery is more likely to grow and mature and develop the quality of vision” (1993, p. 277).

The overall effects of aesthetic education are beneficial for both the students and the teachers. According to Litterest and Eyo, “climate of the aesthetically formed classroom allows discussion to grow out of the participation of the students, frees the teacher from needing to orchestrate interaction and attempts to draw out the best in student thinking” (1993, p. 275). Although Litterest and Eyo identify how climate is manifested in the classroom it doesn’t state what the climate consists of.

This lack of support is something identified by Smith. “A basic problem with many studies in aesthetic education is their failure to distinguish between correlation and causation” (Smith, 2000, p. 22). Problem solving relates to the process of creating through aesthetics. However, does aesthetics cause students to be more prominent problem solvers? How might quantitative and qualitative data be collected and measured to determine how aesthetics are related to or caused within the academic classroom?
It was clear from this literature review, that there was a significant lack of information regarding both the effects of aesthetic education in an academic setting and the manifestation of creative climate through aesthetic education. The outcome of this gap is that students are not being given the opportunity to learn about the arts, or more importantly, the process of creating through the arts. Although this gap was identified in 1979, it still rings true today: “If we want to strengthen those processes in which the invention, boundary pushing, and boundary breaking occur, we need an aesthetically formed classroom” (Eisner, 1979, p. 12). Learning and teaching about creative climate may be one link in this strengthening process.
SECTION THREE: PROJECT PLANNING

This section will present the

- Qualitative approach and analytic procedures used to develop this project.
Method and Approach: An Overview

According to Miles and Huberman, "All data are qualitative; they refer to essences of people, objects and situations. We have a raw experience, which is then converted into words or numbers" (1994).

The participants in this project were teachers and students from an urban Buffalo Elementary School. I taught nine classes in grades K-2 based on the aesthetic element of dance. I taught each class for three, forty-five minute sessions. Each class had one teacher and twenty to twenty-five students. Classes were taught throughout the course of the academic school day. Qualitative data were collected for this project through my personal observations using an observation protocol (Appendix C) developed by Gordon (2000). Additional survey data from six classroom teachers at the same school were gathered from classroom teacher observation protocols (Appendix B) also developed for the overall classroom climate initiation by Miloshevski (2000).
The following five steps were central in developing this project:

• Preparation
• Collecting Data
• Organizing and Analyzing Data
• Synthesizing Data
• Communicating Data
Preparation:

*Prior to any work with participants I...*

- Identified the need for project along with goals/objectives;
- Developed concept paper;
- Secured human subjects proposal;
- Met with director of Arts in Education to discuss who, what, where, why and how;
- Chose a specific area of aesthetic education to focus upon; and
- Reviewed the process and protocols which had been used with other members of the research team.
Collecting Data:

Consisted of the following steps...

- Taught nine classes, for three forty-five minute sessions;
- In each class, I observed and evaluated classroom climate using observation and a self-reflection protocol (Appendix C); and
- After unit was complete, I distributed and collected teacher observation protocols (Appendix B).
Organizing and Analyzing Data:

*After collecting data from six teacher protocols, and several sheets of my observations I...*

- Reviewed past formats of climate research;
- Sorted through data by dimension to separate similarities and differences compared to Ekvall; and
- Entered data into computer, labeling each set for future use.
Synthesizing Data:

*After sorting and categorizing responses according to dimensions, I...*

- Summarized data according to similarities and differences in Ekvall's definition and sorted each according to the appropriate dimension;
- Added category of "Things to consider for further research" to allow for emergent ideas and connections; and
- Reported key insights of study in short summaries at the end of each dimension.
Communicating Data:

As a final step I...

- Examined document in its entirety;
- Reread for errors and inconsistencies;
- Finalized written project with advisor, Dr. Mary Murdock;
- Prepared abstract and Creativity Based Information Resources (CBIR) annotation of project; and
- Bound copies of project for distribution.
SECTION FOUR: RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

This section will present the

- Data for each dimension;
- Individual summaries for each dimension;
- Things to consider.
Section IV Findings:

The purpose of this study was to identify rubrics, behaviors and activities that were indicative of creative climate in an aesthetic education class. Ekvall's ten dimensions of creative climate in an organizational setting were used as a basis of comparison. As a teaching artist of the Arts in Education Institute of Western New York, I went into an urban elementary school and taught nine different classes between grades K-2. Each classroom had a one-hour lesson each week for three consecutive weeks. Each week I filled out the observation and self-reflection protocol (Appendix C). When the unit of study was finished, six teachers completed the classroom teacher observation protocol (Appendix B). The data were compiled and sorted.

This section contains lists of rubrics and my analytic summaries which identify Ekvall's Climate dimensions in relationship to the similarities and differences in the data. It also contains points to consider when reviewing the data.
**Dimension A: Dynamism and Liveliness Descriptions**

Ekvall's Definition: Describes the eventfulness of the life of the organization. A highly dynamic situation is when new things occur often and alternations between ways of thinking about and handling issues often occur. The atmosphere is lively and full of positive energy. "Full speed," "Go" (Lauer, 1994, p. 189).

**Similarities in my classroom observations...**

*External:*
- Working together produces high energy
- Fast moving
- Enthusiasm
- Eagerness to participate
- Excited
- Trying something new
- Interactive

*Internal:*
- Imagination

**Similarities in teacher surveys...**
- Students *explore* new ideas
- Students *excited* about taking on new ideas
*Spontaneity

Although this description was used verbatim by teachers in describing their perceptions of dynamism, it is technically used by Ekvall to define playfulness and humor.

Differences in my classroom observations...

**Involving kinesthetic movements:**

- Dancing
- Skipping
- Playing
- Moving with and without music
- Acting out

**Indicators of enjoyment:**

- Laughing
- Smiling

**After effects:**

- Inability to calm down
- Leaving class high strung

Differences in teacher surveys...

- Students "piggy-back" into other ideas
- Students add to what was already modeled
Things to consider...

- Can an environment be too dynamic?
- How can educators bring their classroom to a dynamic level without becoming out of control?
- How to maintain structure through dynamism and liveliness.
- At what point should the level of dynamism and liveliness be brought down?
- How might imagination create dynamism and liveliness?
- Kinesthetic movement is a clear indicator of dynamism and liveliness in aesthetic education. How might educators incorporate kinesthetic movement into their classroom?
Dimension A: Dynamism and Liveliness Summary

Ekvall's definition of dynamism and liveliness followed many parallel lines in both my observations and those of the classroom teachers. The similarities in my observations generally fell under two categories: external and internal displays of dynamism and liveliness. External displays included words such as fast moving, enthusiasm, eagerness to participate, excited, trying something new, interactive, and high energy resulting from working together. An internal display of dynamism included the use of imagination. Similarities in teacher interviews used such words as explore and excited to parallel Ekvalls' definition.

There were three subgroups of differences I found between Ekvall's definition and my observations. The first subgroup was related to kinesthetic movement in the classroom. In aesthetic education, dancing, skipping, moving with and without music, and acting out exuberant liveliness. If the students are participating in the activities, liveliness will be shown within the energy of their movements. The second subgroup included indicators of enjoyment using words such as laughing and smiling. The last subgroup described the after effects of dynamism and liveliness in the aesthetic education classroom. The inability to calm a class down and students leaving class high-strung were both negative after-effects. Teachers need to consider a cool-down method to assist with this problem.
Differences in the teacher surveys indicated student's piggy-backing onto other ideas, and students adding to what was already modeled. These observations indicate the use of SCAMPER, elaboration, and thinking action.

A significant thing to consider in the aesthetic education classroom is how to allow for dynamism and liveliness without the class becoming overly rambunctious and out of control. To what degree is dynamism too high? Often, my students left with highly intensive energy. How might the dynamism be decreased and refocused? Does dynamism and liveliness always have to be high energy? How might an educator maintain structure through dynamism and liveliness?

Another key point to consider from these data was where imagination might fit in the climate approach particularly with Ekvall's definitions. Do the dynamic aspects of movement, dancing, etc. create imagination, or does imagination create dynamism? When students are encouraged to visually, kinesthetically and mentally use their imagination, how does the level of dynamism and liveliness increase? In these data about aesthetic education, kinesthetic movement is a clear indicator of dynamism and liveliness. In what ways might an educator bring kinesthetic aspects into the classroom to increase the level of dynamism and liveliness?
**Dimension B: Trust and Openness Description**

Ekvall’s Definition: Refers to the emotional safety in relationships. When there is a strong level of trust, everyone in the organization dares to put forward ideas and opinions. Initiatives can be taken without fear of reprisals and ridicule in case of failure. The communication is open and straightforward (Lauer, 1994, p. 225).

**Similarities in my classroom observations...**

- Open relationship between teaching artist, classroom teacher and students
- Students willing to try everything I asked them to do
- Students love to be called on
- Students eager to open up to anyone willing to open themselves up
- No pressure to participate
- Raised hands
- Volunteers asking to demonstrate

*Includes elements of risk-taking:*

- Teacher always encouraging "far-out" ideas
- Willingness to stand up and perform in front of their peers

*Includes elements of idea support:*

- Never laugh at or ridicule one’s ideas or thoughts
- Positive feedback

**Similarities in teacher surveys...**

- Students felt a certain "comfort level" to participate and show their vulnerability in sharing ideas
- Students never laughed at others work or performance
- Willing to share ideas

Differences in my classroom observations...
- Students always raised hands even if they did not know the answer

Differences in teacher surveys...
- *Share* oral, written and painted stories
- Willing to try something new
- Support each other through applause, high-fives and encouraging words
- Eager to participate
- Some students felt more vulnerable and need more exposure

Things to consider...
- As a teaching artist, I only go into the classroom three to five times. How might a teaching artist establish a trusting environment in a short amount of time?
- How might any guest in a classroom establish trust and openness?
- How does the relationship between the teaching artist and the teacher establish trust/openness in the aesthetic educational classroom?
- How does the discipline factor effect the level of trust and openness?
- How to give the students more exposure to the teaching artist before the unit under study begins.
Dimension B: Trust and Openness Summary

There were many of the same characteristics found in the teacher surveys and my observations that were similar to Ekvall's definition. These characteristics included no pressure to participate, raised hands, volunteers wanting to demonstrate, and students willing to try anything I asked them to do. The openness was clearly demonstrated through the communication between the students, teacher and teaching artist. Also noted in similarities was the willingness to stand up and perform in front of their peers, and the teacher always encouraging "far-out" ideas. Both of these observations can be crossed over to the dimension of risk-taking. Another cross over recorded was the observations of positive feedback and never laughing at or ridiculing one's ideas or thoughts. These observations could also fall under the dimension of idea support.

A significant observation was recorded which differentiated between Ekvall's definition and my observations. Students felt so comfortable in answering questions that they would raise their hands when most times they did not know the answer. In giving a "nice try" or "maybe" response to the wrong answer, another student would raise his/her hand and then repeat the same answer. In identifying this point, I realized this characteristic is most likely typical to the K-2nd graders. Children at this young age are in a state of innocence as far as many social behaviors and expectations are concerned. They have a difficult time understanding the difference between a "right" or "wrong" way to answer. As a teaching artist, I would ask a vast array of questions and most of the time when they raised their hands, it was more of a contest as to whom I would call on. Ninety percent of the time, they did not even have an answer! In examining the data, it seemed that trust and openness was something that young students automatically gave to their
teacher. Only when there has been a breech in this trust, does the doubt and ambiguity of risk come into view.

Other differences in the teacher surveys included sharing oral, written and painted stories, willingness to try something new, support of each other and eagerness to participate. A theme I see emerging is the relationship between idea support and trust/openness. I can see these two dimensions working closely together. When an educator supports her/his students, the student is more likely to trust and open up to that person.

A point to consider is something that was brought up to me at the Expert-to-Expert alumni conference held at Buffalo State College on June 20, 2001 in a session on creative climate research with Dr. Mary Murdock. In reviewing my material, a colleague asked how it was possible to establish trust and openness within a classroom when I am a visiting teacher, and I am only with the students for a short amount of time. After much thought, I explained to him that it was first necessary to develop a trusting and open relationship with the classroom teacher. Upon entering the classroom, the students could see the verbal and non-verbal messages of trust and openness between the classroom teacher and I. This would dissipate to the students, and they would be more open to trusting me. In cases when the teacher was not demonstrating his trust with me, the students would model this behavior as well.
Dimension C: Idea Time Description
Ekvall’s Definition: Refers to the amount of time people can use (and do use) for elaborating new ideas. In the high idea time situation, the possibilities exist to discuss and test impulses and fresh suggestions that are not planned or included in the task (Lauer, 1994, p. 241).

Similarities in my classroom observations...
- Students test the way different emotions feel with their bodies
- Students explore new movements with their bodies
- Students are given time between my visits to think beyond and extend

Similarities in teacher surveys...
- Students are given enough time to express themselves - not rushed
- Every child is given an opportunity to respond and participate, but not forced

Differences in my classroom observations...
- Highly exposed to unit of study (students read at least seven versions of story)
- Teaching Artist lesson was once a week for four weeks
- Class is full speed, therefore, not a lot of time spent incubating during class
- Not a lot of time to allow cognitive thinking

Differences in teacher surveys...
- Students act out characters in song, dance or puppet theatre
- Students read different versions of Cinderella and compare and contrast the different stories

Things to consider...

- How to create idea time within a short time span?
- How to extend teaching artist lessons beyond the visit?
- Is idea time always necessary?
- When is idea time necessary?
- How much idea time can be maximized without the students becoming bored?
- How to know how much idea time is needed to foster creativity?
Dimension C: Idea Time Summary

Idea time in the classroom followed along several of the same descriptors as Ekvall's definition. For example, testing ideas, allotting time between my visits to think beyond and students receiving enough time to express themselves, were all similar components of idea time as identified by the classroom teachers and myself.

There were several significant differences noted in my classroom observations in relation to Ekvall. The first difference dealt with a high level of exposure to the content area. For example, before the students had met me, they had already read over seven versions of the Cinderella story and had a discussion with their classroom teacher on the purpose of a teaching artist and how to tell a story through movement. Therefore, when I came into the classroom for the first time, they already had questions and ideas they wanted to try and experiment with. Listening to their ideas, I would allow them to discuss and explore their ideas through the movement exercises. If the classroom teacher had not exposed the students to what was going to happen when I came into the classroom, the amount of idea time would have been deficient.

The second difference I found in my observations dealt with the amount of time designated. Since I only had one hour with each class, I had to make the class fast paced in order to achieve my objectives and goals. In grades K-2, if too much time is spent allowing students to test impulses, not much would be accomplished. Therefore, I had to thoroughly monitor each idea a student would want to test out. Although there was not a lot of idea time in class, I always left students with a "beyond question", to keep them thinking about the unit throughout the week.
I believe idea time is pertinent in all classrooms. With the standards raised, teachers often tend to center their classroom activities on what to think and not how to think. A point to consider is how might teachers teach content through process skills using idea time.

There are also a few other things to consider. When teachers only have a short amount of time to deal with, how can idea time be incorporated? Is idea time always necessary? When is idea time necessary? As students reach higher grade levels, should the amount of idea time be increased or decreased? How might a teacher monitor the amount of idea time needed to foster creativity? Finally, how much idea time can be maximized without the students becoming bored or off-target?
Dimension D: Playfulness and Humor Description
Ekval's Definition: Refers to the spontaneity and ease that is displayed. A relaxed atmosphere with jokes and laughter characterize the organization which is high in the dimension (Lauer, 1994, p. 192).

Similarities in my classroom observations...
- Giggles
- Laughing with one another
- Jokes
- High energy
- Students mimic my voices and facial expressions
- Playing with a hula hoop

Similarities in teacher surveys...
- Students felt comfortable laughing while attempting different movements
- Laughing & giggling
- Students listen to and laugh at stories
- Smiles

Differences in my classroom observations...
- Having the kids hug me after just meeting me
- Classroom teacher performing the jester dance
- Performing the jester dance
- Pretending to be something you are not
- Using imagination
- Uninhibited
- Dancing

**Differences in teacher surveys...**
- At ease enough to show their humorous side

**Things to consider...**
- In what ways might teachers incorporate their personal sense of humor into the classroom?
- In what ways is classroom content enhanced/weakened by a high level of playfulness/humor?
- How might an educator deal with inappropriate humor?
- How might an educator tell the difference between "kidding around" and teasing?
- How does the level of humor effect the level of trust?
- How does the level of playfulness/humor effect the level of risk-taking?
**Dimension D: Playfulness and Humor Summary**

Playfulness and humor were both highly identifiable terms to educators. Similarities in both my observations and the teachers were jokes, laughter, high energy and giggles. These descriptors are easily defined by students of any age, and are highly inclusive to making an aesthetic classroom creative.

There were however, several differences in Ekvall's definition to my observations. In aesthetic education, imagination is the primary foundation for playfulness and humor. When students try imaginative exercises, they often go outside of their own comfort zone. If trust/openness and playfulness/humor were not part of the atmosphere, students would not allow themselves to go outside of this zone, and creativity would not take place.

Along with imagination, a key difference from Ekvall's definition was the presence of inhibition. Although inhibition is not mandatory in all classroom atmospheres, there is a certain lack of inhibition that is needed in aesthetic education. If students are feeling anxious, fearful or nervous, the level of creativity will decrease. If they are willing to "play" with the teacher and try new ideas, the ability to create will be greater.

Spontaneous emotional expression was also identified within the differences in my observations. An example of this occurred when the students hugged me good-bye after just meeting me. I believe this happened because of the high level of playfulness and humor that occurred during the class. They felt so at ease with me, I became one of
their friends. Therefore, they felt completely natural wrapping their arms around me to say goodbye.

Other differences specific to an aesthetic education classroom included the performance of the jester dance by the students, teacher and teaching artist. This jester dance was a learning activity designed to make people laugh. When teachers would model the silly behavior of the jester, the students would respond in a similar fashion. The use of such a deliberate learning activity is more than a warm-up. In educational settings there are more activities that are designed to be playful and promote learning.

Something that needs to be evaluated is how teachers might incorporate their personal sense of humor into the classroom. I believe humor stems from the ability to laugh at oneself and one's own mistakes. If the teacher has this ability, the students are likely to model the same. Another point to consider is how classroom content is enhanced or weakened by a high level of playfulness/humor.

Additional considerations should be given to how teachers might deal with inappropriate humor. Students may chime in with "potty" or "sexual" humor to test the waters with the teacher and to seek response from their peers. In what ways might teachers handle this? In this same context, students may directly or indirectly tease one another to receive a laugh. How might students and educators draw the line between "kidding around" and actual teasing?

In relation to the other dimensions, a final consideration related to how the level of playfulness/humor affects the level of trust the level of risk-taking?
**Dimension E: Debate Description**

Ekvall’s Definition: Involves encounters, exchanges, or clashes among viewpoints, ideas, and differing experiences and knowledge. In the debating organizations, many voices are heard and people are keen about putting their ideas forward. Where debates are missing, people follow authoritarian patterns without questioning. Debate focuses on issues and ideas (Lauer, 1994, p. 201).

**Similarities in my classroom observations...**

- Physical and verbal viewpoints are individually expressed
- Students have their own ideas of how an emotion is expressed through movement

**Similarities in teacher surveys...**

- Children eagerly join in discussions and feel at ease to offer answers even if they are wrong
- Students *compare and contrast* different Cinderella stories
- Students *give opinions* of performance
- Students *agree or disagree*

**Differences in my classroom observations...**

*Process Exchange Examples:*

- Discussing preference to use/not to use props
• Searching for solutions from the questions asked ("I think it's this," "No, I think it's that")

• Debriefing

_Signal to Exchange Ideas:_

• Are encouraged to dig deeper
• Hands raised
• Always asking questions
• Eager to participate
• Show a desire to share ideas

_Differences in teacher surveys...

_Specific Behaviors:_

• Students can voice opinions in an orderly fashion
• Students generally eager to participate and respond

_Things to consider...

• How to tell the difference between a "good" debate and a "bad" debate?
• How long should a debate go before the teacher should intervene?
• What is the relationship between debating and asking questions?
  • A) Are general questioning strategies a form of debate?
  • B) What is the impact of provocative questions on debate and interaction?
• How to teach students to have an open mind?
• How to teach students to have an opinion?
• How to teach students to respect the opinion of their classmates?
**Dimension E: Debate Summary**

In my personal observations, one descriptor paralleled Ekvall's definition: \textit{physical and verbal viewpoints that were individually expressed}. Students were given an opportunity to express themselves though music, movement and words. When students were asked to perform an emotion, they would each have their own interpretation. When given a prop to perform with, they would each have an idea of how a jester would act. When I played a piece of music, they would have their own view as to what would be happening in the Cinderella story.

Several concrete descriptors paralleled Ekvall's definition within the teacher surveys. These were \textit{compare/contrast, agree/disagree, opinions shared}, and \textit{willingness to join discussions}.

There were several differences in Ekvall's definition found in my observations. They fell under the category identified as \textit{Process Exchange Examples}. These examples were: (a) discussing with one another the desire to use/not use the prop when they performed the role of the jester; (b) searching for solutions from the questions asked, and (c) debriefing. Another category indicated signals through which students exchanged ideas with one another or the teacher. These signals were noted as follows: \textit{digging deeper, hands raised, always asking questions, eager to participate, and showing a desire to share ideas}.

The teacher surveys differentiated themselves by using the words "orderly" and "eager." These specific behaviors were a significant identifier of how teachers do debate in the aesthetic education classroom. Their descriptors were indicative of behaviors and the expectation of both disciplined behavior and motivation.
Although debate appears to be a dimension of creative classroom climate, I believe debate in the classroom may be more centered around the behavior of inquiry. Inquiry would include the ability to ask questions, and dig deep into both content and process. The more a student asks questions, the deeper the learning will extend. Students, especially at a young age, are willing to believe anything they see or hear. What students need to be taught is how to challenge what they see, and ask questions when they are unsure. In classrooms, these behaviors are manifestations of debate.

There are several points to consider around debate. The first question is how long should a debate go on before the teacher must jump in? If students are standing their ground regarding a situation, is it okay to allow them to resolve it on their own? Or should the problem be resolved by the teacher? What if there is in no resolution? What is the relationship between debating and asking questions? Are general questioning strategies a form of debate? What is the impact of provocative questions on debate and interaction?

Future considerations include: (a) how to teach students to have an open-mind? (b) how to teach students to have an opinion? (c) how to teach students to respect the opinion of their classmates?
Dimension F: Risk-Taking Description
Ekvall’s Definition: Refers to the tolerance of uncertainty and ambiguity exposed in the workplace constitutes risk-taking. In the high risk-taking climate, bold new initiatives can be taken even when the outcomes are unknown. People feel as though they can “take a gamble” on some of their ideas. People will often “go out on a limb” to put ideas forward (Lauer, 1994, p. 232).

Similarities in my classroom observations...

What the student does:

- Trying out new ideas
- Allowing me to take them through a process, without knowing the outcome
- Eager to try new things

Contains elements of trust/openness:

- Performing exercises in front of the rest of their peers
- Raising hands to answer questions they usually don't know the answer to

What the teacher does:

- Experimenting is encouraged

Similarities in teacher surveys...

None

Differences in my classroom observations...

- Trying new movements with their bodies
- I model first to create a safe environment
- No wrong answers
- Answering questions

Differences in teacher surveys...
- Willing to accept new concepts and ideas
- Students willing to try something new if guided and motivated correctly

Elements of trust and openness:
- Students can be creative as they like without being laughed at
- Able to try out or express a new idea without feeling that others would be laughing at or criticizing them

Things to consider...
- How might teachers teach risk-taking?
- How might teachers encourage risk-taking?
- How does the level of trust relate to the level of risk-taking?
- Is it wrong to "push" students to take risks?
- How might teachers incorporate risk-taking into their classroom activities?
Dimension F: Risk-Taking Summary

Similarities of risk-taking in to my observations generally fell under two categories according to Ekvall's definition. The first category involved what the student did to demonstrate risk-taking, and the second involved what the teacher did to demonstrate risk-taking. Observations regarding the student contained descriptors such as trying out new ideas, allowing me to take them through the process without knowing the problem and eagerness to try new things. The second category establishing teacher displays of risk-taking derived from the phrase, experimenting is encouraged.

There were no similarities observed between Ekvall's definition and the teacher surveys.

There were several "cross-overs" between risk-taking and trust/openness in the similarities of my observations. These included performing exercises in front of the student's peers and raising hands to answer questions they usually did not know.

There were several differences from Ekvall's definition in my observations. These included no wrong answers, answering questions, trying new movements with their bodies and the teacher modeling first to create a safe environment. When a teacher models unusual behavior first, the student's generally take on the same behavior.

There were two crossovers in the differences according to the teacher's surveys. These crossovers were between the dimension of risk-taking and trust/openness. These observations included the ability of students to be as creative as they like without being laughed at, and the ability to try out or express a new idea without feeling that others would be laughing at or criticizing them.
There are several other points to consider. First, how might teachers encourage risk-taking in their classroom? In aesthetic education, it is mandatory for the teaching artists to set-up a climate where students feel comfortable taking risks. Movement can often feel "silly" because it is something students are not used to. If a teacher or teaching artist uses words of praise and encouragement while trying new ideas, then the students are more willing to take risks. Second, how might teachers teach risk-taking in their classroom? Is risk-taking something that can be defined and modeled? Third, how does the level of trust relate to the level of risk-taking? Fourth, how might teachers incorporate risk-taking into their classroom activities? Lastly, is it wrong to push students to take risks? How far is too far?
**Dimensions G: Conflict Description**

Ekvall’s Definition: Refers to the presence of personal, interpersonal, or emotional tensions (in contrast to idea tensions in the debate dimension) in the organization. When a level of conflict is high, groups and individuals dislike or hate each other and the climate can be characterized as “warfare”. Plots and traps are common, gossip and back-stabbing occur (Lauer, 1994, p. 215).

Similarities in my classroom observations...

*Physical Tensions:*

- Pushing
- Arguing who goes first

Similarities in teacher surveys...

None

Differences in my classroom observations...

- Between grades K-2, conflicts appear very low

*Elements of Debate:*

- Boys thinking dancing is for girls

Differences in teacher surveys...

- Students work together in groups and discuss differences
- Students try every day to respect one another
- Sometimes people disagree, but everyone has a chance to express himself
- Children are sometimes impulsive in their actions, but not mean or uncaring
- Students behave in a very mature manner, very few disruptions
- Behaved in a well-mannered, orderly fashion

Things to consider...

- In observing grades K-2, conflict in aesthetic education was low. How would conflict be different in high school education? How does it defer in urban versus suburban schools?
- How to teach students to respect one another’s ideas/values.
- What stimulates conflict?
- When does debate become conflict?
- What happens when conflict occurs between student and teacher?
- How does a teacher monitor conflict when a guest teacher is involved?
- What strategies can assist a teacher when conflict occurs?
- How to train students to have their own strategies when dealing with conflict?
**Dimensions G: Conflict Summary**

According to Ekvall, the level of conflict should appear low in creative organizational climate. Ekvall's definition refers to the presence of personal, interpersonal, or emotional tensions. There were only two descriptors in my personal observations that were similar to Ekvall's definition: *pushing* and *arguing as to who would go first.*

An interesting paralleled point emerged in the data received by the teachers. Not one teacher made an observation of conflict that corresponded with Ekvall's definition. There are several hypotheses regarding this occurrence. The first one is that conflict does indeed exist in the classroom, but teachers fail to realize it is there or avoid considering it because of negative association with classroom control. A second hypothesis is that conflict such as Ekvall describes is very rare in classrooms of this age group. The third hypothesis is that teachers may not know how to adequately describe conflict in this age group.

Differences in observations from Ekvall's definition were marked by behaviors such as *respect, impulsive, mature,* and *well mannered.* Several teachers pointed out the fact that students worked together to discuss differences, but there was no mention of tension involved. If students were "discussing," then this behavior would fall into the dimension of debate.

I disagree with using the term conflict as a dimension descriptor. If an average person were to scan down the list of dimensions for creative climate, it would appear as if conflict within the classroom was a positive thing. I discussed this disagreement with Dr.
Gerard Puccio, who also agreed with this predicament. He suggested using Ekvall's terminology, but to reword "conflict" as "absence of conflict." I believe absence of conflict is a more precise descriptor which can be used in the classroom.

In regard to conflict in the classroom, another point to consider is the fact that I was working with grades K-2. Younger students tend to demonstrate less tension both physically and verbally in classrooms. It will be useful to follow this dimension through all grade levels to see if the tension increases as the grade level increases? What causes this tension? How does the degree of conflict differ in suburban versus urban school?

The second point to consider deals with authoritative assumptions. The classroom is a unique context in that respect with many social norms (and actual responsibilities) around who is in charge and who has the power and authority to act. What happens when conflict occurs between a student and the teacher? To what degree does the teacher have authority? How does a teacher monitor conflict when a teaching artist is involved? What strategies work best to assist a teacher when conflict occurs? How might we train students to have their own strategies when dealing with conflict?
**Dimension H: Idea Support Description**

Ekvall’s Definition: Involves the way new ideas are treated. In the supportive climate, ideas and suggestions are received in an attentive and kind way by bosses and workmates. People listen to each other and encourage initiatives. Possibilities for trying out new ideas are created. The atmosphere is constructive and positive (Lauer, 1994, 182).

Similarities in my classroom observations...

- Students, teacher and teaching artist all attentive to one another's ideas
- Students and teachers supportive of one another's ideas
- Students encourage one another to try new ideas
- Compliments made by teachers
- High fives *(non-verbals)*
- Positive feedback
- Positive attitude

*Includes elements of risk-taking:*

- Willingness to take risks

Similarities in teacher surveys...

- Willing to utilize new ideas
- Embrace new ideas with an open mind
- Clapping for each other *(non-verbals)*
- Share ideas

Differences in my classroom observations...
Teacher would never say "that's wrong!"

Students "out of the box" thinking was minimal

Teachers and students showed a respect for ideas

Fun/play/spontaneity (what surrounds idea support)

Differences in teacher surveys...

- Incorporate new ideas into their dance movements

*Elements of risk-taking:*

- Students try new motions suggested by classmates

Things to consider...

- How might idea support be taught?
- How might the teacher model idea support in the classroom?
- How might new ideas be rewarded?
- How might students to think outside the obvious?
- How might teachers and students support an idea they may not agree with?
Dimension H: Idea Support Summary

Idea support as it appeared in the aesthetic classroom was close to Ekvall's definition. Similarities in my classroom observations included student's paying attention to one another's ideas, general support and encouragement, compliments, the manifestations of positive attitude and feedback. Similarities in teacher surveys included the student behaviors of willingness to utilize new ideas, embracing new ideas with an open mind, and sharing ideas. There were two observations of non-verbal similarities. These were high fives and clapping for each other.

The differences between Ekvall's definition of idea support in my observations included, respect for ideas, fun, never responding with "that's wrong," and the fact that "out of the box" thinking was minimal. Because students were unable to be wrong in their responses, they continuously responded with the first answer that came into their mind. They had no apparent reason to stretch their thinking skills to dig deeper. For example, if I asked the students to "tell me the emotions Cinderella has," they would all raise their hands. Student A would respond with, "sad." I would reply with "good answer." Student B would raise his hand and respond, "sad." I would reply with "good. We know sad is an emotion. What other emotions does Cinderella have?" Student C would respond with "sad."

Differences in the teacher surveys from Ekvall's initial definition were particular to an aesthetic education classroom. For example, when students incorporated new ideas into dance movement they were supported in doing so. The element of risk-taking was also found in how students try new motions suggested by classmates.
There were several things to consider. How might idea support be taught in the classroom? How might the teacher model idea support in the classroom? How might new ideas be rewarded? This leads to a difficult situation. Suppose a student raises his hand, and gives a "new" idea. The teacher then responds with high praise. The next student raises his hand, and gives an "old" idea. How might the teacher respond and continue to encourage the second student to dig deeper? How might a teacher support an idea he/she may not agree with?
Dimension I: Challenge Description
Ekvall’s Definition: Refers to the degree to which members of the organization are involved in its daily operations and long term goals. In a high challenge climate, people are intrinsically motivated to make contributions, and find joy and meaningfulness in their work and invest much energy (Lauer, 1994, p. 162).

Similarities in my classroom observations...

- High energy
- Students try movements
- Students always searching for answers
- Students attempt to answer all questions
- Appear engaged and listen attentively when I speak
- Students and teachers willing to put themselves on the line
- Students asking when they are going to see me again
- Students and teacher practice movements in between my visits
- Students and teacher engage in content material in between my visits

Similarities in teacher surveys...

- Students highly motivated
- Enthusiasm
- Ready and willing to participate
- Students eager to learn and help one another

Differences in my classroom observations...
- Excited about stretching their movement abilities
- Teacher and students allow themselves to be taken into an aesthetic world

Differences in teacher surveys...
- Look forward to teaching artist visit
- Students apply previously learned knowledge
- Students excited about attending aesthetic workshops

Things to consider...
- Does extrinsic motivation constitute challenge?
- How to create challenge within a classroom.
- How to challenge students to take charge of their learning.
- How to motivate students to challenge themselves.
- How to help students find joy and energy from the work they do.
**Dimension 1: Challenge Summary**

According to my observations and the teacher comments, challenge was a highly identifiable term in aesthetic education. Similarities to Ekvall that involved the students were trying out new movements, searching for answers, attempting to answer questions, engaged and listening, motivated, enthusiastic and eager to learn and help one another. Similarities involving interaction between the classroom teacher and students were practicing movements in between my visits, willingness to put themselves on the line and engaging in content material in between my visits.

There were also several differences in Ekvall's definition to my observations and the teacher surveys. First, students were excited about stretching their movement abilities. For example, when the class would end, several students would come up to me and ask if they could show me their own movements. They demonstrated their desire and ability to stretch beyond what they were learning in class. Second, both the teacher and student would allow themselves to be taken into an aesthetic world. The arts, especially movement and theatre, are often difficult to engage in because of the individualistic nature of the content. Teachers and students alike need to take risks in order to allow themselves to be expressive individuals in the arts, particularly in front of their peers. When they take this risk, they often find meaningfulness in their work and are willing to invest much energy.

The differences in teacher surveys dealt with intrinsic motivation: looking forward to teaching artist visit; students apply previously learned knowledge; and students excited about attending aesthetic workshops. These observations lead to the
question "Does extrinsic motivation constitute challenge?" Often times, teachers give
their students specific rewards (ie. trips, chocolate, toys) to do their work. Is it possible
for students to find more joy and invest more energy in their work if they know they will
be receiving these rewards?

Other points to consider were: how to create challenge within a classroom; how to
challenge students to take charge of their learning; how to motivate students to challenge
themselves; and how to help students find joy and energy from the work they do.
**Dimension J: Freedom Description**

Ekvall's Definition: Refers to the independence of behavior exerted by the people in an organization. In climate with much freedom, people are given autonomy to define much of their own work. People are able to exercise discretion in their day-to-day activities, and people take the initiative to acquire and share information (Lauer, 1994, p. 175).

**Similarities in my classroom observations...**

- Students were able to design their own movements
- Students performed their own choreography

**Similarities in teacher surveys...**

- Students were allowed to create their own dance movement
- Freedom of expression

**Differences in my classroom observations...**

- Students were able to take off shoes; when in regular class, shoes must remain on

*Freedom in Thinking Process:*

- Given the freedom, there was sometimes an inability for students to refocus their thoughts

*Freedom in movement:*

- Using a designated personal space, students were able to move as they desired
• Students were given the ability to choose which parts of their body they were
going to move at any given moment in the music

• Students and teachers improvised

**Differences in teacher surveys...**

• *Expressing* themselves

• Showing their feelings

• Fun in singing, dancing, and exercising

• *Free to create* new movements

• Felt free to *express* themselves in dance and pantomime

• Willing to *experiment* in actions and dances

• Watched and imitated while introducing some of their own individual
  techniques

**Things to consider...**

• What level of freedom is needed to foster creative climate?

• How to incorporate freedom into the class without students behavior
  becoming out of hand.

• How to give students freedom and still keep them on task.

• Pending age and maturity level, how much freedom should be allowed?

• How to create structured freedom?

• How to teach students to take responsibility for their freedom?
Dimension J: Freedom Summary

There were two of my observations that paralleled Ekvall's definition of freedom. These were students' ability to design their own movements and students performing their own choreography. In aesthetic education, it is common for students to create an individualistic form of expression, which constitutes freedom through "defining their own work." Therefore, freedom according to Ekvall's definition is imperative in aesthetic education. Similarities in teacher observations concluded the same ideas: students allowed to create their own dance movement; and freedom of expression.

The differences in my observations generally fell under two categories. The first category involved freedom in the thinking process. Students would often become so excited about creating, experimenting and expressing that the level of dynamism and liveliness would be very high. The actual movement itself added to the heightened positive "tension". When it came time to regroup the class, it was often times very difficult to refocus their thoughts into new activities. The second category involved freedom in movement. This was also very specific to aesthetic education and contained examples such as students improvised, chose which parts of their bodies they were going to move and any given moment in the music and were able to move as they so desired.

The differences in teacher surveys included many descriptors of freedom in aesthetic education. These descriptors were expressing themselves, showing their feelings, singing, dancing, exercising and experimenting.

There were several points to consider around the dimension of freedom. What level of freedom is needed to foster creative climate? In relationship to this, how might
teachers incorporate freedom into the class without student's behavior becoming out of hand? How might teachers give students freedom and still keep them on task? Pending age and maturity level, how much freedom should be allowed in the class? How is freedom different in an aesthetic classroom? How might teachers and students learn to create structured freedom? How might students learn to take responsibility for their freedom?
SECTION FIVE: ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION OF OUTCOMES, KEY LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section will present the

- Project outcomes;
- Evaluation of project outcomes;
- Key learnings; and
- Recommendations for further research.
Project Outcomes

The following were the outcomes that resulted from the completion of this project:

1. The collection of data for the development of the Creative Climate Checklist About School Settings (CLASS) (Murdock, 1999).

2. The creation of a list of identified rubrics, behaviors, and activities that are indicative of creative climate.

3. Information to begin research on how aesthetic education can help manifest creative climate in an academic classroom.

Evaluation of Project Outcomes

I believe the outcomes of this project were generally met. The first outcome, the collection of data for the development of CLASS (Murdock, 1999) is significant to the current research going on at the International Center for Studies in Creativity. These data are part of other studies (Aurigema, in progress; Gordon, 2000; Jesberger, 2001; McDonagh, in progress; Miloshevski, 2000; Peebles-Peters, in progress; Richards, in progress) which will be compiled and sorted through a second strand of research (Peebles-Fish, in progress). The second outcome is closely linked to the first outcome of this project: The creation of a list of identified rubrics, behaviors and activities that are indicative of creative climate. This list can be found in the data sections and summaries of each dimension in Section IV.

The third outcome was specifically geared toward my work as a teaching artist. When I conducted a research overview (See Section II) on the effects of aesthetic
education in the academic classroom, I found only a minute amount of research pertaining to this area. In compiling and sorting the data, I found a number of direct links of how aesthetic education can help manifest creative climate in an academic classroom. They are as follows:

(1) Kinesthetic movement was a clear indicator of dynamism and liveliness. Therefore, when one brings dance and theatre into the classroom, the level of dynamism and liveliness will increase.

(2) Trust and openness was often modeled between the teaching artist and classroom teacher. When students can see what trust and openness looks like, they are more likely to open up to the teaching artist. This level of trust and openness can be later integrated into any guest teacher experience.

(3) The structure of this particular aesthetic education class gave students the idea time to think beyond their normal activities and into the world of arts. They were able to test impulses in their movements and to later discuss how different movements felt.

(4) When students see their teaching acting out, making faces or attempting different body movements, it gives them the opportunity to see their teacher in a student role. In this "student" role, teachers are making mistakes, laughing and having fun. Therefore, the degree of playfulness and humor is increased.

(5) In terms of debate, students were able to discuss their different viewpoints of the work of art, without the fear of being wrong. Students had a chance to say what they liked or didn't like about what they saw.
There was a high level of individual risk-taking involved in aesthetic education. Students often had to go out on a limb to express themselves through movement. Because the level of playfulness and humor was heightened, students were more willing to take a risk.

Idea support was very apparent in aesthetic education. In the arts, individualism is highly encouraged. Aesthetic education gives students the opportunity to be an individual while being supported by their teacher and peers.

Because the dimensions of playfulness/humor and idea support exist in natural abundance in aesthetic education, students were likely to be challenged and intrinsically motivated to learn more.

Freedom was apparent through the form of individualist expression. Students had the opportunity to create their own art while maintaining the structure of an academic classroom.

**Key Learnings**

Throughout the course of my life, I have had a great love for the arts. My favorite thing to do was draw, paint, dance, sing and listen to music. It felt very natural when I became a teaching artist because I had so much passion for the arts, specifically dance and theatre. I knew I would have an impact on children's lives, I just didn't know why. In doing the literature review for this project, nothing jumped out at me as being the reason why the arts are so important in children's lives. However, as I was sorting through my
data, two words struck me—*individual expression*. I reflected upon these two words and what they meant to me. I have always wanted to be an individual and not follow the crowd. I didn't play sports, because it was the same thing over and over, and there were always winners and losers. I sought out my individualistic nature through the arts. The arts allowed me to explore what is inside through the means of paint, movement or writing. Nothing in art was wrong, because I designed it myself. There were no set patterns I needed to follow and my "mistakes" proved to highlight the essence of the work of art.

The foundation of learning and teaching in the arts is to uphold a creative climate. This climate must contain playfulness/humor, risk-taking, idea support, trust, idea time, challenge and freedom. If the climate is set up properly, the students ability and desire to be artistically creative is endless. When students feel safe in creating, they are able to break out of the realms of average and normal. Isn't that a beautiful thing!

All in all, I feel as if I have only begun my work on the impact of aesthetic education in the academic classroom. I believe I am at a good starting point, and will continue to strive to dig deeper. I will continue to help my students nurture their artistic creativity and foster a creative climate for individual expression.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

In addition to the research directions suggested in the section "things to consider" that follow each of the dimensions in Section IV, there are several broad areas to consider for further work. This project and the ones that proceeded it are only the beginning of research on creative climate in education. Once the first phase of projects are completed,
the second phase will begin finding similarities and differences in the rubrics, behaviors and activities of the classroom. When the *Creative Climate Checklist About School Settings* (CLASS) is compiled (Murdock, 1999), it will need to be tested in different types of classrooms. CLASS will then need to be resorted into different age groups and different environments. It will need to be re-tested for validity and reliability. Research will then need to focus on the repercussions of teaching in a creative climate classroom. How does creative climate enhance learning? How does the existence of creative climate increase grades? How does climate integrate with learning styles?

A second area of research I think would be significant is how Creative Problem Solving fosters creative climate. Methods of problem solving including building off other ideas, deferring judgement and seeking the unusual were identified in this study throughout the dimensions. In what ways might incorporating Creative Problem Solving enhance creative climate?

The third area of research I think is pertinent is the need for aesthetic education in the academic classroom. Although there is evidence in the literature that people think aesthetic education is important, there is very little substantial research as to why it is important or on the role that aesthetics play in a student's education. It would be valuable to do a longitudinal case study on aesthetic education and the impact it has on student's lives.

As a final remark, I think the work being done on creative climate at the International Center for Studies in Creativity is critical. With standards being raised in New York and other states, teachers need to make the most of the time spent with their students. If creative climate makes the learning environment fun, the intake of process
and content will inevitably increase. This increase will result in higher grades, self-confidence and the motivation to continue in a path of learning.
References


Appendix A: Concept Paper
Project Title: Identifying Ekvall's Creative Climate Dimensions in an Aesthetic Education Setting

Rationale and Questions: This project will address the identification of the ten creative climate dimensions in an aesthetic education setting. The purpose of this data will ultimately be used for the development of the classroom climate instrument. This will fit into the Center of Studies in Creativity Research and Development theme of Understanding Multifaceted Interactions among Person, Process, Product and Press/Environment.

The Questions that will guide this study are:
- How do Ekvall's climate dimensions manifest themselves in an aesthetic education setting?
  - What is similar?
  - What is different?
- What descriptions of creative climate in theatre education exist in the literature?
- What observed behaviors are indicative of creative behavior in aesthetic education classes?
- How does aesthetic education help to enhance creative climate in the classroom?

Statement of Significance: Lauer (1994, p. 158) states "... creative climate is a variable that may be assessed, and has important implications to research focused on creativity." There is however, a significant amount of literature pertaining to creative climate in organizations that is lacking in the educational sector (Miloschevski, 2000; Gordon, 2000; Peebles, pending;). The significance of my study is to understand how theatre education can help to manifest creative climate dimensions in an elementary school setting. This study belongs to a set of investigations of creative climate in the classroom (Miloschevski, 2000; Gordon, 2000; Peebles, in preparation;). It will focus on identifying rubrics, behaviors, and activities that are indicative of creative climate in a theatre class. This data is pertinent to the future research of creative climate in education.

Description of the Method and Process: The process will involve:
- Select a setting for climate observation.
- Keep a journal about classroom observations.
- Observe and record data.
- Sort and analyze by climate dimension.
- Discuss information with other members of the climate research team.
• Review/analyze current information in regard to creative climate in the classroom.
• Select teachers to interview or participate in focus group.
• Audio tape interviews with teaching artists, teachers and students and focus group.
• Report results.

Learning Goals:
• To assist in developing the Creative Climate Checklist About School Settings (CLASS).
• To identify how a teaching artist can enhance creative climate in an elementary classroom setting.
• To learn how Arts in Education can help manifest creative climate in an educational setting.
• To develop strategies in conducting qualitative research.

Outcomes:
• Reporting interview and observation results.
• Continued use of climate observation protocol.
• The identification of a baseline pool of behavioral indicators of a creative classroom climate pertinent to theatre education.
• A summary of current literature regarding creative climate in aesthetic education classrooms.
• Executive Summary for CBIR (5 annotations, one must be my own).

Timeline:
2000 November Concept paper drafting
Literature Research
Meet with Margaret Foster regarding the four w’s
Contact Climate Team to clarify baseline indicators

December Speak with appropriate administration to get approval to conduct observations, interviews, and conversations
Concept paper approved
Human subject form completed
Continue literature research and readings

2001 January Develop interview questions
Contact school, administrators, and teachers
Begin observations
Collect data from observations using journals and audio tapes

February Continue observations
Finish up all observations and interviews

March Analyze data
Begin first draft

April First draft reviewed with advisor
Subsequent drafts

May Final Draft

Principal Investigators: Dr. Mary Murdock, Advisor
Cynthia Argona

Climate Team: Margaret Foster
Maria Auregema
Rebecca Peebles
Bill McDonagh
Kimberly Miloshevski
Tammy Gorden

Related Literature:


Appendix B: Classroom Teacher Observation Protocol
FOLLOW UP FEEDBACK FORM
(to be completed after Cinderella Unit)

Name (optional) __________________________________________

CHALLENGE

This is the degree to which the students of a classroom are involved in its daily operations and long-term Goals.

High Challenge = intrinsic motivation  Low Challenge = feelings of indifference

What does challenge look like in aesthetic education?

FREEDOM

The independence in behavior exerted by the students in the classroom.

High Freedom = students take initiative in activities and actions.  Low Freedom = work tasks are prescribed

What does freedom look like in aesthetic education?

IDEA SUPPORT

Involves the way new ideas are treated.

High Support = ideas and suggestions are received in an attentive and kind way by classmates and instructors.  Low Support = disinterest and criticism of new ideas.

What does idea support look like in aesthetic education?

Definitions adapted from Kim Miloshevski, CRS 690, February 2000.
FOLLOW UP FEEDBACK FORM  
(to be completed after Cinderella unit)

Name (optional) ________________________________

TRUST & OPENNESS

This refers to the emotional safety (trust) in relationships.

High Trust = willingness to share new ideas without fear.  
Low Trust = workers are afraid of being exploited and robbed of good ideas.

What does trust and openness look like in aesthetic education?

DYNAMISM AND LIVELINESS

This refers to the eventfulness of the life in the classroom.

High Dynamic = new things and ideas occur often.  
Low Dynamic = everything remains status quo.

What does dynamism and liveliness look like in the aesthetic education?

PLAYFULNESS & HUMOR

Refers to the spontaneity and ease that is displayed within the classroom.

High Playfulness = relaxed atmosphere with jokes and laughter.  
Low Playfulness = atmosphere of gravity and seriousness.

What does playfulness and humor look like in the aesthetic education?

Definitions adapted from Kim Miloshevski, CRS 690, February 2000.
FOLLOW UP FEEDBACK FORM
(to be completed after Cinderella unit)

Name (optional) ____________________________________________________________

DEBATE

Refers to the encounters, exchange, or clashes among viewpoints, ideas, and differing experiences and knowledge.

High Debate = many voices are heard, people eager to share ideas.
Low Debate = people follow authoritarian patterns without questioning.

What does debate look like in aesthetic education?

CONFLICTS

Refers to the presence of personal, interpersonal or emotional tensions in the classroom

High Conflict = groups and individuals dislike or hate each other.
Low Conflict = people behave in a more mature manner and exercise control over impulses and emotions.

What does conflict look like in aesthetic education??

RISK-TAKING

This is the tolerance of uncertainty and ambiguity exposed in the classroom.

High Risk-taking = people feel as though they can take a gamble on new ideas.
Low Risk-taking = people are cautious and hesitant, they try to be on the safe side.

What does risk-taking look like in aesthetic education?

Definitions adapted from Kim Miloshevsiki, CRS 690, February 2000.
FOLLOW UP FEEDBACK FORM  
(to be completed after Cinderella unit)

Name (optional)  

IDEA TIME  

Refers to the amount of time students can use (and do use) for elaborating new ideas.  

High Idea Time = possibility exists to discuss and test impulses and fresh suggestions.  
Low Idea Time = Every minute is booked and specified creating pressure.  

What does idea time look like in aesthetic education?  

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:  

Definitions adapted from Kim Miloshevski, CRS 690, February 2000.
Appendix C: Observation and Self-Reflection Protocol
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation Protocol</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class</td>
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**Dynamism and Liveliness**

-  
-  
-  
-  
-  

**Trust and Openness**

-  
-  
-  
-  
-  

**Other, What else, How else:**
Idea Time
+
+
+
-
-
-

Other, What else, How else:

Conflicts
+
+
+
-
-
-

Other, What else, How else:

Idea Support
+
+
+
-
-
-

Other, What else, How else:
Debates
+
+
+
-
-
-

Other, What else, How else:

Playfulness and Humor
+
+
+
-
-
-

Other, What else, How else:

Challenge
+
+
+
-
-
-

Other, What else, How else:
Challenge
+
+
+

Other, What else, How else:

Freedom
+
+
+

Other, What else, How else:

Risk-Taking
+
+
+

Other, What else, How else: