

ARTICLE REVIEWED

Examining the Pathway to Motor Skill Competence in a Mastery Motivational Climate: An Appreciative Inquiry

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THE PROBLEM:

Research has shown that students can significantly benefit from an autonomous environment (student-centered), rather than a controlling one (teacher-centered). Autonomous environments are known for promoting mastery-motivational climates. That is, when students successfully master a skill, they want to keep learning and experiencing that same success. When motivated in a mastery climate, students experience three ways in which they are motivated to learn: 1) students have an intrinsic drive to master tasks on their own; 2) students demonstrate mastery of tasks, even under the most challenging of circumstances; and 3) students play it safe by selecting moderately challenging tasks on their own. When trying to master a skill, students give it their all, that is why implementing a mastery-motivational climate is critical. The younger a child experiences mastery-motivation, the more likely they will succeed later on in life.



Research Summary:

Participants were 4-year-old children who attended a daycare center (11 total, 9 boys). Seventy-two percent of the children were African American. The rest of the children were Latina and white. All 11 children participated in a motor activity program twice a week for 26 weeks at the university where the research was conducted. Sessions were 45 minutes in length and took place at multiple circuit training stations that the participants could rotate to and from. The activities were designed to help achieve mastery of locomotor skills, manipulative skills (handling an object), and strength and stability. The last 15 minutes of the 45-minute session involved the participants playing outdoors and practicing their skills. To discover whether the children achieved mastery, they completed the Test of Gross Motor Development-2 (TGMD-2) twice – once in the beginning of the motor activity program and once during the final week of the program. Locomotor skills and object-control skills were assessed. The teacher of the 11 participants was also interviewed once a month about the positive aspects of the motor activity program.

Conclusion:

By the end of the 26 weeks, the 11 participants experienced significant gains in their gross-motor skill development. At the conclusion of the motor activity program, an analysis suggested that there were three specific stages that the children encountered as they advanced throughout the program. The first stage was called Exploration and Captivation. During this initial stage, children were eager and motivated to explore their environment, regardless of performing the skill correctly. The second stage was known as the Cooperation and Consolidation stage. About midway through the program, the children's behavior improved. From working alongside one another, to following the teacher's rules, children were much more cooperative at this point in the program compared to before. The third and final stage was called the Dedication and Collaboration stage. During this final stage, the children would take it upon themselves to seek out the teacher's help so they could perform the skill better. This stage really highlighted the intrinsic desire the children had when it came to learning gross motor skills. Additionally, the children were more likely to collaborate with their peers and participate in organized play during the motor activity program.



Key Takeaway:

The three stages mentioned above helped the children in this study to improve their gross motor skills. The mastery-motivated climate that the children experienced helped them to learn and adopt various tasks, while enjoying learning throughout the process. This type of climate would be beneficial in physical education, as it drives children in a positive, more effective, task-oriented direction. The more student-centered the lessons, the more likely children will take it upon themselves to master the tasks presented to them.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- TGMD-2: <http://33202576.weebly.com/uploads/1/4/6/8/14680198/tgmd-2-2.pdf>