

CREATING CLIMATE CHANGE

Preparing for the most effective classroom environment.

by Deanna Barnes

Years ago, a Sunday school superintendent, in the midst of his teacher training session, looked directly at me as he described the woes of “Last-Minute-Lucy” teachers. I squirmed. I knew the description fit.



A bumbling teacher scrambling for items at the last minute misses important ministry opportunities. I still struggle to overcome my lifelong battle with procrastination and my propensity for late arrivals. As a laborer in God’s

Kingdom, I must improve. He deserves my best.

Moreover, students of His Word—the children—need optimal classroom environments. The teacher holds the key to creating climate

change in the classroom.

Excellent learning conditions happen with advanced planning, organized supplies, and a smiling teacher ready to welcome arriving students. That’s climate change. So, for all of us—especially Last-Minute Lucy and her associates—I am proposing three Cs: CUT, CLIMB, and CONCENTRATE.

CUT

First, CUT extra stuff. Effective leaders focus. As we review our teacher’s manuals, overflowing with ideas, activities, and decorations, we must be selective. It’s all good information. However, teachers aiming for a climate of learning select appropriate methods to reach their particular students. By keeping a list of our students inside our teacher’s manual, we can pause to pray over each child as we study. The Lord will provide wisdom to formulate goals specific to our students. Some children need extra memory work. Other children

need further life application. Active students respond to energetic hands-on activities. As we develop a perception of our students’ needs, we can delete distracting deviations. Once we determine the perfect fit for our students, we can concentrate on the most important lesson points.

In the midst of the cutting process, we should not trim study time. With deep examination of related Bible verses and background history, we gain insight. Details permeate our hearts and minds. Even if we don’t share all the information during class time, the knowledge is there if we need it. A student may ask a complex question. Another student may have a special need. When we study completely, God works with our voices and teaching styles to display His love for each child.

CLIMB

After we have cut, trimmed, and perfected our approach, the next step toward classroom climate change is CLIMB. We should climb to the top of our most difficult preparation task. Maybe we need to tackle the boring job of cutting out all those tiny pieces. We can push ourselves to shop for snack ingredients. Dig into that list of Bible verses. By working on the hard items first, we release ourselves from procrastination guilt. Then we are free to complete the tasks we enjoy.

The next step of the climbing process involves rising above the opposition that attacks all defenders of truth. Pesky distractions pop up to take us away from lesson preparation. Life happens. Cars break down. Children get sick. Ephesians 5:16 instructs us to redeem the time because the days are evil. Darkness opposes the light of godly instruction—especially for innocent, impressionable children. Right in the middle of our busy lives, prayer will help us capture slippery minutes and use the time for God’s glory. For example, if we’re

waiting for an appointment, we can make a list. Jot notes. Develop ideas. During quiet moments spent by a child's bedside, we can pray, think, and plan. While taking care of errands, we can look for garage sales where lesson props await. Right in the middle of grocery shopping, we may discover clearance items and lesson-related snack supplies. Each redeemed minute evolves into a climate change opportunity.

CONCENTRATE

Finally, in our pursuit of classroom climate change, we arrive at CONCENTRATE. Children need teachers with clear vision and spiritual anointing. If we've followed the steps to cut and climb, we can concentrate on the kids—our most important resource. My pastor's wife, Sister Sara Copple, always reminds teachers to focus on the children. Once we're in the classroom, every other distraction should fade into the background. We hold an important position. We affect the future of each child. And here's where we might need to stray from our structured preparation plan just a

bit. We can't be so stiff and attached to a certain plan that we overlook the needs of the kids. We should take time to laugh and play. We must make our classrooms loving, caring, fun places.

Even as we follow the three Cs toward creating climate change in our classrooms, we should be flexible. Sometimes it all falls apart in spite of our prayerful preparation. An unruly child disrupts. Church schedules change. Circumstances cloud our thoughts. Nevertheless, if we have given our best efforts to creating an effective classroom environment, we can compensate and move forward with a smile. God understands and He will complete the necessary climate change.



Handy Hints from an organized teacher . . .

- When you receive the teacher's resource packet at the beginning of a quarter, separate each item by lesson. Cut out any pieces, writing the lesson number on the back of each piece. If the items are small, place them in a sandwich-size zippered plastic bag. Then group all items together by lesson number. Place each group of items in large zippered plastic bags marked with appropriate lesson numbers.
- Create a hanging file, folder, and zippered plastic bag for each lesson. When you pull out a lesson, everything is ready to go.
- Enter all Bible verses, key words, and phrases, in a computer file folder. Each item will be ready to print as needed.

-- Ideas submitted by Christine Braden from Orange, California. Used with permission.

