

THE CONDITIONS OF DEEP LEARNING

MIRA Notebooks

NOTEBOOK 6 · THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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# MIRA and Group Cohesion

*The school climate as a result, not a requirement*

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MIRA model

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*Many improvement projects begin the same way: 'first we have to create a good atmosphere, and then we'll work on the academic side'. The intention is good, but the order is misleading. Atmosphere is not the antechamber of learning: it is what happens when learning is well designed. You don't build a good climate in order to then apply MIRA — you apply MIRA, and the good climate appears.*

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There is a widespread idea that group cohesion is a prerequisite: something the school must secure before it can teach well. It is worth questioning, because it inverts the real relationship between things. Cohesion is not so much the starting point as the result of a particular way of working — and MIRA, by how it is designed, produces it almost as a side effect.

This does not deny that a conflictive group makes work harder. What it denies is that atmosphere is an independent variable to be fixed separately, with a tutorial session or a one-off activity. Atmosphere is built in what the group does each day — and if what it does each day activates MIRA's four conditions, the atmosphere improves without needing to be treated as a separate problem.

## Why MIRA generates cohesion

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Three of the model's four conditions have, by their very nature, a direct effect on the group's climate. It is neither coincidence nor an add-on: it is in their design.

**Inner life** builds shared meaning. When classroom work connects with what students truly care about — when there is space to ask why something is worthwhile — the group stops being a set of individuals who happen to share a classroom and starts to share a purpose. A group that knows what it does what it does for is a more cohesive group than one that merely completes tasks.

**Peer co-assessment** installs a constructive gaze. In MIRA, students do not score each other: they help each other improve, anchoring their assessment to the evidence and posing questions that move the other's work forward. That habit — looking at a classmate's work to help them, not to judge them — transforms the relationship within the group. Where there used to be comparison or competition, a culture of mutual support takes hold.

**Collective Agency** creates belonging. Authentic-production projects with a shared impact — a neighbourhood campaign, a Service-Learning project — give the group an experience of shared achievement. Having built something together that matters beyond the classroom is one of the strongest bonds a group can have. Belonging is not preached: it is produced by working towards something common.

*The good atmosphere of a MIRA classroom is not decreed in a tutorial session. It is built every time students share a meaning, help each other improve with criteria and produce together something that matters.*

## The virtuous loop: lever and effect at once

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What is interesting is that the relationship works both ways. Cohesion is an effect of applying MIRA — but, once it exists, it becomes a lever that makes MIRA work even better. A cohesive group dares more to make mistakes in public (Resilience), shares more honestly what it thinks (Inner life), and engages more in common projects (Agency).

It is a virtuous loop, not a vicious circle: each turn reinforces the next. Applying the model improves the climate; a better climate enhances the model; a more powerful model improves the climate still further. That is why it makes no sense to wait for the perfect atmosphere before starting — you start, and the atmosphere is built in the process itself.

## How the school measures it: the link with the SAT

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The school atmosphere does not remain a subjective impression. It is one of the three indicators the Tutorial Support System — the SAT — uses for the school to assess its own application of MIRA, together with academic results and absenteeism. This closes the circle: cohesion is not only produced, it is also observed and improved.

When the SAT detects that a group's atmosphere is not improving, the data is not interpreted as a coexistence failure requiring a separate intervention, but as a signal that something in the application of MIRA can be adjusted: perhaps the projects do not have enough shared impact, perhaps the co-assessment is not being anchored well to the evidence, perhaps there is a lack of space for inner life. Atmosphere thus becomes a thermometer of the quality with which the model is applied — and its improvement, a consequence of fine-tuning that application.

## In summary

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Group cohesion and a good school atmosphere are not a prior requirement the school must resolve before applying MIRA. They are, above all, a result of applying it well — an effect of the Inner life that shares meaning, of the co-assessment that installs a constructive gaze and of the collective Agency that creates belonging. And once they appear, they become a lever that enhances everything else. The school does not have to choose between caring for the climate and teaching: in MIRA, they are the same thing.