Module Home

- Module Description: This Module, a DEC-recommended resource, offers information on how to set up effective inclusive early childhood classroom environments for young children. It also provides details about the interrelated physical, social, and temporal components of those environments, as well as adaptations to help teachers meet the needs of children with disabilities (est. completion time: 1 hour).
- DEC Recommended Practices seal
- STAR Legacy Cycle
- Related to This Module
  ◦ Link: Module Outline
  ◦ Video: Navigating an IRIS STAR Legacy Module
  ◦ Link: IRIS and Adult Learning Theory
  ◦ Wrap-Around Concept Map

Challenge

- Video: Ms. Smith and Mrs. Hahndorf are teachers in an inclusive childcare program, and both of them have some concerns about the design of their classrooms. Despite their preparation and planning, not all of the children take advantage of every area of their respective classrooms. Both teachers wonder whether they should make some changes to their classroom environments, but neither of them is sure exactly where to begin.

Initial Thoughts

- (Opinion) What elements make up a well-designed early childhood environment?
- What can teachers do to make the classroom environment more conducive to children’s learning and development?

Perspectives & Resources

❖ Module Objectives

- After completing the entire Perspectives & Resources section and reviewing the accompanying activities, you should be able to:
  ◦ Define and describe the difference between the physical, social, and temporal environments of an early learning program
  ◦ Describe why a well-designed physical, social, and temporal environment benefits all young children
  ◦ Understand unique considerations in arranging an infant/toddler environment
  ◦ Understand the importance of adapting environments to meet the unique needs of
young children with disabilities
  ◦ Describe how families and teachers can work together to create environments that
    nurture and support the development of all children
• This Module addresses the DEC Recommended Practices (RP) topic areas related to
  ◦ Environments

❖ Page 1: Early Childhood Environments
• Overview of early childhood classrooms
• DEC Recommended Practices
• Well-designed classroom environments... [bullet points]
• Research Shows
• Three interdependent components of early childhood environments
  • Audio: Ilene Schwartz discusses how the three components of the environment are
    intertwined to help children succeed
• Including Children with Disabilities
• Note on the Module’s terminology

❖ Page 2: Physical Environment
• Definition of physical environments
• Drop-down menus:
  ◦ Arranging Furnishings and Floor Coverings [bullet points]
  ◦ Selection and Placement of Materials [bullet points]
  ◦ Design and Display of Visual Materials [bullet points]
  ◦ Lighting and Sound [bullet points]
• For Your Information
• Including Families
  ◦ Teachers can collaborate with families by... [bullet points]
• Including Children with Disabilities
  ◦ Changes to the physical environment [bullet points]
    ▪ Link: assistive technology (definition)
    ▪ Link: communication board (definition)
    ▪ Link: flip book (definition)
• Did You Know?
  ◦ Link: Techs for Tots
• Audio: Abby Green talks about how she arranges the physical environmental to help the
  children understand classroom expectations
• Audio: Ilene Schwartz talks about the concept of Universal Design for Learning in an early
  childhood environment
• Additional Considerations for Infants and Young Toddlers
Arranging a classroom for infants and toddlers requires some specific considerations [bullet points]
Audio: Rob Corso explains why it is so important for teachers to create a nurturing and responsive environment for infants and toddlers

Research Shows
High-Quality Environments versus Less-Supportive Environments [bullet points]
Activity: Inspect a picture of the preschool classroom below and discuss the strengths of the physical arrangement, as well as some possible changes you could make to improve it

Page 3: Social Environment

Definition of social environments
Drop-down menus
Group Size and Composition [bullet points]
Teacher-Versus Child-Initiated Activities [bullet points]
Materials and Activities That Promote Interaction [bullet points]
Including Families
When they partner with families to design the social environment, teachers should [bullet points]
Including Children with Disabilities
Some children with disabilities might need extra support to participate in the social environment [bullet points]
Audio: Abby Green talks about ways to support positive interactions with young children
Audio: Ilene Schwartz discusses some of the ways that teachers can help young children with disabilities participate in the classroom social environment
Research Shows
For Your Information
Link: scripted stories (definition)
To learn more about developing and teaching rules, visit the following IRIS Module
Additional Considerations for Infants and Young Toddlers
Link: responsive caregiving (definition)
Audio: Rob Corso discusses one of the biggest challenges teachers face when working with infants and toddlers

Page 4: Temporal Environment

Definition of temporal environments
Drop-down menus
Vary Activity Levels [bullet points]
Plan Effective Transitions [bullet points]
Teach Routines and Schedules
Audio: Abby Green shares how she has made transitions more effective for young children
in her classroom
• Including Families [bullet points]
• Including Children with Disabilities
  ◦ Additional considerations for children with disabilities [bullet points]
  ◦ Audio: Ilene Schwartz illustrates why visual supports help children with disabilities be successful in early childhood settings
• Research Shows
• Additional Considerations for Infants and Young Toddlers
• For Your Information

❖ Page 5: Putting It All Together
• After attending a training on effective early childhood environments, Ms. Smith and Mrs. Hahndorf...
• Ms. Smith’s Classroom: Before and After [bullet points]
• Mrs. Hahndorf’s Classroom: Before and After [bullet points]
• Audio: Rob Corso discusses how setting up an effective early childhood environment can help prevent challenging behaviors

❖ Page 6: References & Additional Resources
• Suggested Module citation
• References
• Additional Resources

❖ Page 7: Credits
• Suggested Module citation
• Content Experts
• Module Developers
• Module Production Team
• Media Production Team
• Media
• Expert Interviews
• Acknowledgements

Wrap Up
• Developing well-designed classrooms is important because [bullet points]
• Components of Early Childhood Environments [definitions]
• Audio: Ilene Schwartz summarizes the components of an early childhood environment
Early Childhood Environments:
Designing Effective Classrooms

and how to integrate them to create a high-quality setting that supports the learning and development of all children

Assessment

• Complete the numbered questions

You Have Completed This Module

• Give Us Your Feedback
  ◦ Link: Module feedback survey form
• Professional Development Hours
  ◦ Link: IRIS PD Hours Shop
• Related Resources [links]