Ms. Smith and Mrs. Hahndorf are teachers in an inclusive childcare program.

Ms. Smith has worked in the four-year-old preschool classroom for five years and feels confident in her knowledge of the curriculum.

She is especially proud of the way she has incorporated important learning opportunities into her classroom’s various centers.

For her part, Mrs. Hahndorf is in her first year teaching in the two-year-old toddler room.
One of her greatest strengths, she believes, is being prepared each morning both for the arrival of the toddlers and to greet their parents.

However, both Ms. Smith and Mrs. Hahndorf have cause for concern. Despite their preparation and planning, not all of the children take advantage of every area of their respective classrooms. Instead, many of them choose to remain in a single favored area of and avoid exploring the other centers.

When they recently shared these concerns with one another,
Ms. Smith and Mrs. Hahndorf realized that there are times in their classroom when “traffic jams” occur,

for example when the children are waiting to wash their hands, collect materials,

or put on their coats.

Further, they observed that the children do not play and interact with their peers as they had expected them to.

Finally, they are equally concerned that some of the children with disabilities in their classroom do not seem to be able to take part in all of the classroom activities.
Both Ms. Smith and Mrs. Hahndorf wonder whether they should make some changes to their classroom environments, but neither of them is sure exactly where to begin.

Here’s your Challenge:
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?