



Early Childhood Environments: Adapting for a Child with a Disability

Est. Time: 30 Minutes

Objective

Consider how to make adaptations to the physical, social, and temporal components of an early childhood environment to promote the full participation of a child with a developmental delay or disability.

DEC Recommended Practices

This Activity addresses the DEC Recommended Practices (DEC-RP) topic area outlined below:

Environment

E1. Practitioners provide services and supports in natural and inclusive environments during daily routines and activities to promote the child's access to and participation in learning experiences.

E2. Practitioners consider Universal Design for Learning principles to create accessible environments.

E3. Practitioners work with the family and other adults to modify and adapt the physical, social, and temporal environments to promote each child's access to and participation in learning experiences.

E6. Practitioners create environments that provide opportunities for movement and regular physical activity to maintain or improve fitness, wellness, and development across domains.

Overview

Early childhood teachers often have a difficult time knowing how to create environments that support their children's learning. Well-designed classroom environments:

- Support responsive caregiving
- Foster independence and feelings of competence in young children
- Encourage staff efficiency
- Promote children's engagement
- Decrease challenging behavior
- Facilitate appropriate social interactions among children
- Provide structure and predictability

The table on the page below describes three interdependent components of early childhood environments: physical, social, and temporal. These three components need to be carefully



The contents of this resource were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, #H325E120002. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officers, Sarah Allen and Tracie Dickson.



Early Childhood Environments: Adapting for a Child with a Disability

Est. Time: 30 Minutes

designed and implemented to create an environment that is conducive to the learning and development of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Components of Early Childhood Environments	Definition	Examples
Physical environment	Overall design and layout of a room and learning centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangement of furnishings (e.g., bookcases, tables, shelves, easels, pillows) and floor coverings (e.g., carpet or foam for quiet areas, center area rug) • Selection and placement of materials (e.g., toys, books, art materials) • Design and display of visual materials (e.g., posters, bulletin boards, pictures) • Lighting (e.g., natural, lamps) • Sound (e.g., quiet areas)
Social environment	Interactions that occur within the classroom between peers, teachers, and family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group size and composition • Teacher- versus child-initiated activities • Materials and activities that promote interaction • Family involvement
Temporal environment	Timing, sequence, and length of routines and activities throughout the day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vary activity levels • Plan effective transitions • Teach routines and schedules • Include families

Activity

Think about an infant, toddler, or preschooler that you know who has a developmental delay or a disability and, as a result, an Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP) or an individual education program (IEP). Next:

- Describe the strengths and needs of this child.
- List four adaptations that could be made to the physical, social, and/or temporal environments to support this child's full participation in her or his classroom.