

## Early Childhood Environments: Designing Effective Classrooms

Use this outline to follow along with the module's main features. The blank "Notes" panels below each section are interactive and can be filled in using Adobe Acrobat. Otherwise, print this document and record your notes by hand.

### Module Home

- **Module Description:** This module, a DEC-recommended practices-approved 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).
- *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 Content 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 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.

Notes

### 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?

Notes

# Early Childhood Environments: Designing Effective Classrooms

## 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 IRIS Module aligns with the following licensure and program standards and topic areas...

Notes

### ❖ 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

Notes

## Early Childhood Environments: Designing Effective Classrooms

### ❖ 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 environment 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

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### ❖ 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

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### ❖ 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]

## Early Childhood Environments: Designing Effective Classrooms

- 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

Notes

### ❖ 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

Notes

### ❖ Page 6: References & Additional Resources

- Suggested module citation
- References
- Additional Resources

### ❖ Page 7: Credits

- Suggested module citation
- Content Experts
- Module Developers
- Module Production Team

## Early Childhood Environments: Designing Effective Classrooms

- Media Production Team
- Media
- Expert Interviews
- Acknowledgments

### Wrap Up

- Summary of the module
- Audio: Ilene Schwartz summarizes the components of an early childhood environment and how to integrate them to create a high-quality setting that supports the learning and development of all children
- Revisit your Initial Thoughts responses

Notes

### Assessment

- Complete the numbered questions. Please note that the IRIS Center does not collect your Assessment responses. If this is a course assignment, you should turn them in to your professor using whatever method he or she requires.

Notes

## Early Childhood Environments: Designing Effective Classrooms

Notes

### You Have Completed This Module

- Give Us Your Feedback
  - Link: [Module feedback survey form](#)
- Professional Development Hours
  - Link: [IRIS PD Options](#)
- Related Resources [[links](#)]