

WIGGLE ROOM: PLACES AND SPACES IN THE PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM

A well organized and thoughtfully planned classroom setup can make the difference between a pleasant, smoothly running classroom that encourages independence and positive social interactions, and one where problems are just waiting to happen! Never underestimate the effect of frustration on children's behavior and interactions.

When a child enters a preschool classroom, the experience is a lot like that of an adult entering a store. Chances are that if it's a store you like, it's well-organized, well-lit, with space to move around. Classrooms should be the same!

1. Do kids feel like they belong here?

- a. Name chart with pictures, personal cubby
- b. Inclusive books, learning materials: variety of ethnic, economic backgrounds, disabilities, family types
- c. Circle time rug with individual spaces (Velcro name tags, colored masking tape or carpet squares)
- d. Kids' artwork creatively displayed

2. Setup

- a. Noisy and active areas should be separated (i.e. library or listening center not next to blocks or music)
- b. Housekeeping, blocks, and dress-up can be grouped to encourage dramatic play
- c. Make sure traffic areas don't go through play centers, especially "building areas"
- d. Have clearly defined paths (colored masking tape arrows)
- e. No large empty areas; well defined play areas: placement of furniture, shelves serves to mark off boundaries,-discourages running, rough play, minimizes distractions
- f. "Wet and messy" needs to be separate from dry (blocks don't need a color makeover!)
- g. Organize materials-- encourages independence and responsibility, facilitates cleanup ("block expert," etc.)
 - 1. Clearly labeled shelves (pictures and words) and not too crowded (too many choices)
 - 2. Grouped by category (small manipulatives and puzzles in separate shelving units)
- h. Play space near storage area (rug or mat near blocks, table near small manipulatives)

- i. Quiet areas to decompress-big pillows, sleeping bags, stuffed or beanbag chair, headphones (many conflicts can be traced to fatigue, "interaction overload.")
 - j. Props to enhance imaginative play (animals, people, cars to be used with blocks (separate storage area from other similar items)
3. Organizing time as well as space
- a. Picture schedule-move clothespin to show where you are
 - b. Sand timer
 - c. Rotate toys
4. Supervision and Safety
- a. Can you see all of them no matter where they are?
 - b. Outside doors must be visible, locked to the outside and from the inside
 - c. Hazardous materials (also check toys for damage and broken pieces)

WEBSITES

<http://updc.org/abc/preschool2.htm> Users.stargate.net/~cokids/

www.abcteach.com ("What We Are Doing" signs) www.bellaonline.com

www.communityplaythings.com

www.earlychildhoodnews.com (especially article: "Landscape for Learning: The Impact of Classroom Design on Infants and Toddlers")

www.pre-kpages.com (picture schedule and rain gutter displays for books)

www.truecoaching.com www.uen.org