



Pre-Kindergarten Classroom Environment

Research tells us that children from birth to age eight learn through hands-on, active exploration of quality materials in a safe environment where they feel secure. Children need time to manipulate materials with an adult nearby to help in facilitating that deeper level of learning. Children learn through play and this active learning promotes development in all domains.

The physical environment is so vitally important in setting the stage for early learning experiences. It is a large part of instruction in the early care and learning field. Interest areas that are strategically placed throughout the classroom and housed with self-correcting, high quality materials; areas of quiet and active places for learning; walls and spaces that reflect children's ownership of the room showcasing individualized artwork, projects, documentation charts with pictures and stories all of these aligned to Pennsylvania's Learning Standards for Early Childhood. Lastly, a schedule that is balanced between child-directed/teacher-directed activities, outdoor/indoor free play and routines (don't forget that routines provide wonderful opportunities for learning as well).

This document can help with classroom environment staging and maintenance. Please feel free to reference it often and add to it where appropriate.

Sand and Water Interest Area	Library and Reading Interest Area	Science Interest Area																																																														
<p><u>NOTES:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careful supervision is needed as children can drown in two inches of water. Change water daily. Children should wash hands before and after water/sand play. <u>FYI:</u> The material housed in a sand table must be able to be scooped and poured to count positively in ERS scoring. Add a bit of liquid soap and food coloring for added fun and discovery. 	<p><u>NOTES:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rotate the books and materials in your reading corner monthly – preferably more often. Strive to incorporate books that positively reflect diversity in culture, ages, gender, races and abilities. Include books with pictures of real objects as well as fantasy. Informally read to the children during free play/center time/ work time. Incorporate softness to make an inviting, cozy reading area for children. 	<p><u>NOTES:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collections of objects are a wonderful addition to your science center and can change with the season. (i.e. rocks, seashells, fall leaves, pressed flowers) House science books depicting real life photographs within your science area. A live plant or animal is a great enhancement and a fabulous way to teach children leadership responsibility within their own classroom community. Position a recycling box in this area and use it as an on-going teaching tool. 																																																														
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<p>How to choose materials? Keep in mind:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>SAFETY</u> – Non- toxic Smooth edges No choking hazards Age-appropriate <u>DURABILITY</u> – Warranty Age-appropriate <u>ADAPTABILITY</u> - Multiple uses <u>INSTRUCTION</u> – Developmentally appropriate Age appropriate <u>ECO-FRIENDLY</u> – Many programs are looking for ways to incorporate environmentally friendly materials into the classroom ~ using them as on-going teaching tools.

USEFUL TOOLS

ECERS—R

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale

designed to assess group programs for preschool-kindergarten aged children, from 2 through 5 years of age

ITERS-R

Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale

designed to assess group programs for children from birth to 2 ½ years of age

FCCRS

Family Child Care Rating Scale

designed to assess family child care programs conducted in a provider's home

SACERS

School Age Care Environment Rating Scale

designed to assess before and after school group care programs for school-age children, 5 to 12 years of age

<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecers/>

Music Interest Area	Math and Manipulative Area	Dramatic Play Interest Area
<p><u>NOTES:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a diverse selection of music for the children to listen to. • Offer unique instruments that are found within other cultures and have them accessible during free play/center time/work time. • Be intentional about the amount of time you play music for the children. It should be a meaningful experience rather than background noise. 	<p><u>NOTES:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise the use of graphs, tally charts and other visual tools to enhance math understanding. • Use practical life activities, such as mealtimes and transitions, as opportunities to incorporate math. • Steer clear of worksheets and dittos and offer hands-on activities. Children need to be able to construct their own mathematical understanding through the manipulation of real, tangible objects. 	<p><u>NOTES:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate dramatic play materials outdoors for spontaneous, child-initiated role-playing from a differing perspective. • Include gender specific clothing in dress-ups as children are just learning to develop gender role identity at this age. • Include everyday, real life props. Examples: CLEAN cereal boxes, pizza boxes, etc. • Rotate themes in and out of the area such as : Doctor's office, Mailroom, Animal Hospital, Grocery Store etc.
<p><u>MATERIALS:</u></p> <p>Maracas Drums Tapes Cymbals Scarves Triangles Ribbons Rhythm sticks Rainsticks Bells Home made instruments</p>	<p><u>MATERIALS:</u></p> <p>Pattern blocks Stringing beads Color cubes Abacus Money Number puzzles Sorting materials Counters Lacing cards Shape puzzles Geoboards Legos Balance scales Lincoln logs Bristle Blocks Pegboards/Pegs Measurement tools Clock Cash register</p>	<p><u>MATERIALS:</u></p> <p>Magnifying glasses Thermometer Hand lenses Kaleidoscope Plants Feathers & straws Class pet Pulleys Collections Gears Fossils Inclined planes Rocks Tornado tubes Balance scale Life cycle charts Root view experiment Science puzzles Ant farm Flashlight Prisms Pinwheels Locks, bolts, keys, nuts Color paddles</p>

Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning....They have to play with what they know to be true in order to find out more, and then they can use what they learn in new forms of play.

--Fred Rogers of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood



It is becoming increasingly clear through research on the brain as well as in other areas of study that, childhood needs play. Play acts as a forward feed mechanism into courageous, creative, rigorous thinking in adulthood.

--Tina Bruce, Professor, London Metropolitan University

Block and Construction Area	Art Interest Area	Writing/Literacy Area																																																										
<p><u>NOTES:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position the block area in a location that is protected from traffic where building structures can not easily be toppled. Offer at least 3 different types of blocks for the children to build with. Blocks are materials that can be <u>stacked</u>. Take caution not to confuse fine motor materials with blocks. Allow children to continue work in progress from one day to the next when building large structures. 	<p><u>NOTES:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's art should be individualized. Be very conscientious not to offer a model for replication. Offer children the opportunity to work with three dimensional materials (clay, wood etc). Keep current the display of childrens' artwork. Labeling with the date of completion will help. 	<p><u>NOTES:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek opportunities to link children's spoken language to print and post in the classroom at their eye level ~ (experience charting with childrens' input, project documentation with quotes from children etc.) Include examples of environmental print in the classroom whenever possible. It is a natural starting point in teaching children to read and offers them a concrete connection to everyday print. 																																																										
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The PA Learning Standards for Early Childhood are research based standards that identify key learning areas of development for children. The Standards guide practitioners to intentionally integrate developmental knowledge with the attitudes, skills, and concepts children need to make progress in all learning areas.

It is important and best practice to document the Learning Standards in lesson planning, children's artwork and display such as experience charts, graphing etc.

For more information:



<http://websites.pdesas.org/ocdel/2010/4/30/47302/page.aspx>