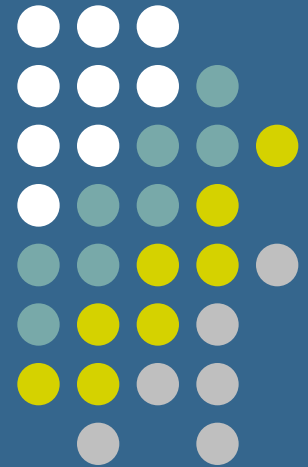


Early Learning Environments

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Introductions—about us...



- Kelly K. Twibell, MS
 - Infant / Toddler Head Teacher
 - Program Coordinator
 - CPIN Consultant
 - Instructor—UC Davis Extension
 - Loves soccer!
- Jen Gonzalez, MA
 - Head Teacher (0-5)
 - Program Coordinator
 - Instructor—UC Davis Extension
 - Loves musicals!

Introductions—about you...



- Please share the following:
 - Your name
 - Your current work
 - What do you want to take away from this workshop? Name one thing.

About the CCFS



ECL Curriculum Statement



- Theoretical influences
 - Piaget
 - Children learn by doing
 - Children learn by discovering
 - Vygotsky
 - Children learn through relationships
- Environmental planning
 - Choice
 - Opportunity
 - Children's initiative



Learning is “hands on”





Learning Outcomes

- To consider the impact of environmental design on behavior
- To plan high-quality learning environments that are organized and aesthetically pleasing
- To provide children with developmentally appropriate challenges that invite discovery and build on children's emerging skills and interests

Close your eyes and...



- picture an environment you feel most relaxed and comfortable in...
- What does it look like?
- What does it feel like?

What types of spaces are we drawn to...this or that?



This or that...



This or that...



What we know...

- “...behavior is influenced by environment. A structured environment gives us clues about how to behave in it” (Gonzalez-Mena & Eyer, 2001).
- “Spending an extended period of one’s life in an environment deemed unpleasant will eventually exact a toll” (Curtis & Carter, 2003).



In others words...



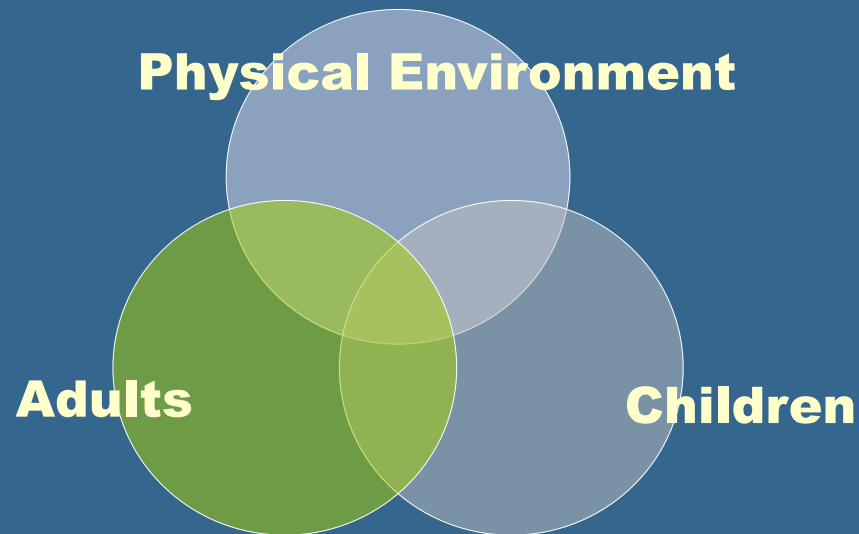
“The environment is the most visible aspect of the work done in the schools...it conveys that this is the place where adults have thought about the quality and the instructive power of space. The layout of the physical space is welcoming and fosters encounter, communication, and relationships...”



The arrangement of structures, objects, and activities encourages choices, problem solving, and discoveries in the process of learning. There is attention to detail everywhere—in the color of the walls, the shape of the furniture, the arrangement of simple objects on shelves and tables.”

--Lella Gandini (2002), author and Reggio Children liason

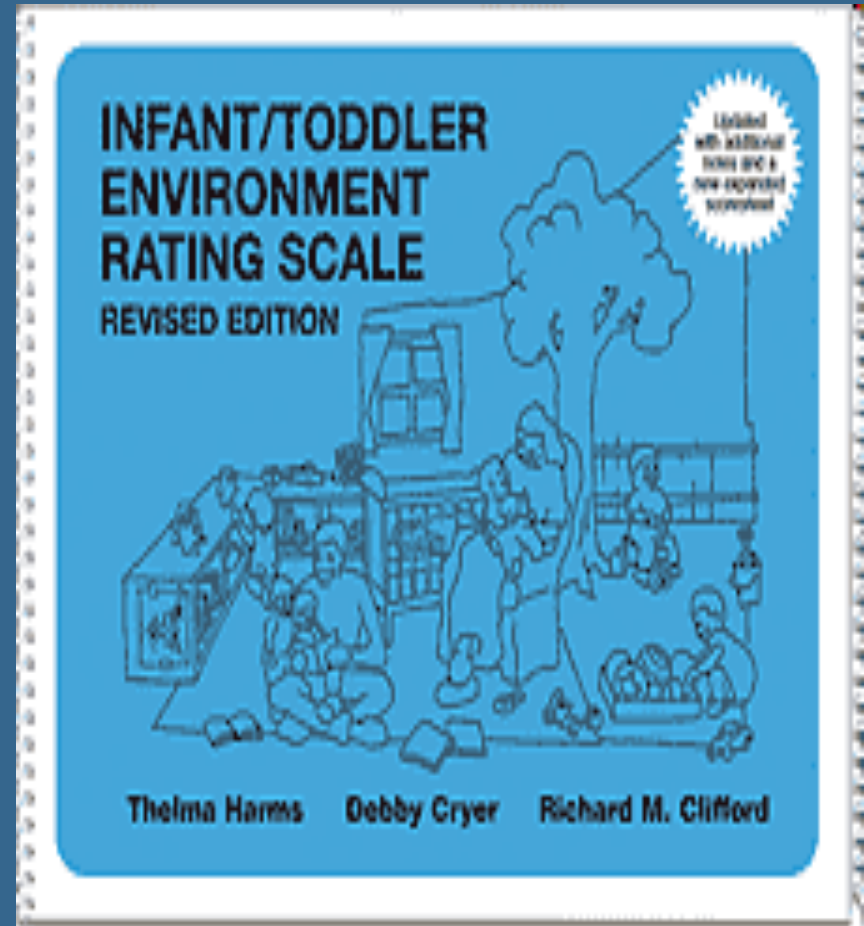
Early Learning Environment



Program Quality Assessment Tools

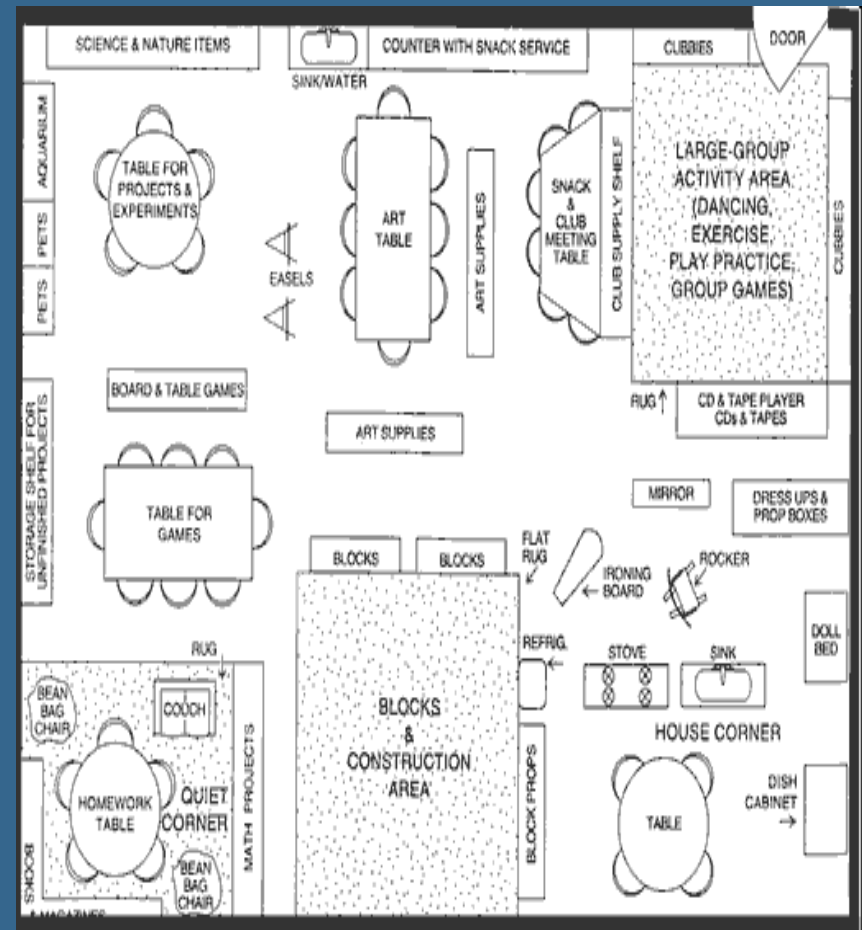


- ITERS/ECERS
- NAEYC Environment Checklist
- PQA (Preschool)
- ELLCO (Preschool)
- Tools from texts (see handouts)



Sketch Your Space

- Draw a simple floor plan of the room you are currently working in.
- Keep your sketch simple.
- Provide just enough information to help you use the sketch in later activities/discussion.



Physical Layout



“A well designed environment...supports infants’ and toddlers’ emotional well-being, stimulates their senses, and challenges their motor skills.”

--Louis Torelli

Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers



The infant/toddler caregiving environment should:

- Ensure **safety**
- Promote **health**
- Provide **comfort**
- Be **convenient**
- Be **child-sized**
- Maximize **flexibility**
- Encourage **movement**
- Allow for **choice**

Video: Spaces to Grow





Dyad discussion

- In pairs, discuss 2-3 key points of the video segment.
- Consider what information would most helpful in training or mentoring new staff?
- How might you use this information to help parents make sense of your early learning environment?

Also consider the following...



- Play spaces vs. caregiving spaces
- Designated spaces for discovery
(quiet vs. active)
- Appropriate traffic flow
- An environment that is touchable and says
“yes”!
- Fine and gross motor activities
- Soft and hard materials and play spaces

Let's take a look...



Aesthetics



“Filling your environment with aspects of the natural world can further soothe the senses and sensibilities of those present. When you contrast something as simple as a shelf of plastic baskets with a shelf containing natural fiber baskets, the different sensory experience is immediately apparent.”

--Curtis and Carter, *Designs for Living and Learning: Transforming Early Childhood Environments*

Audio / visual stimulation



Color schemes



Furnishings



Containers



Wall hangings



Organizing Materials



“Because infants and toddlers create constant disorder as they spread toys and materials around, pull things apart, dump, and rearrange everything they can get their hands on, the environment needs to provide a sense of basic order that is a contrast to the constant mess on the floor.”

--Gonzalez-Mena and Eyer, *Infants, Toddlers and Caregivers*

Supplying the Space



Young infants like...

- Soft, washable, brightly colored toys
- Scarves
- Balls
- Rattles
- Action reaction toys (e.g., squeeze toys)
- Plastic keys
- Plastic beads
- Photos and pictures of familiar people
- Crawling area



Supplying the Space



Older infants like...

- Cloth, cardboard books
- Variety of hats
- Dolls
- Plastic or wooden cars and trucks
- Play or real telephones
- Nesting toys
- Objects from adult world (e.g., pots, pans, wooden spoons)
- Musical instruments
- Active play equipment





Supplying the Space

Older infants like...cont.

- Push and pull-up toys
- Large, lightweight blocks



Supplying the Space



Young toddlers like...

- Dress-up clothes
- Housekeeping tools and equipment
- Steering wheels

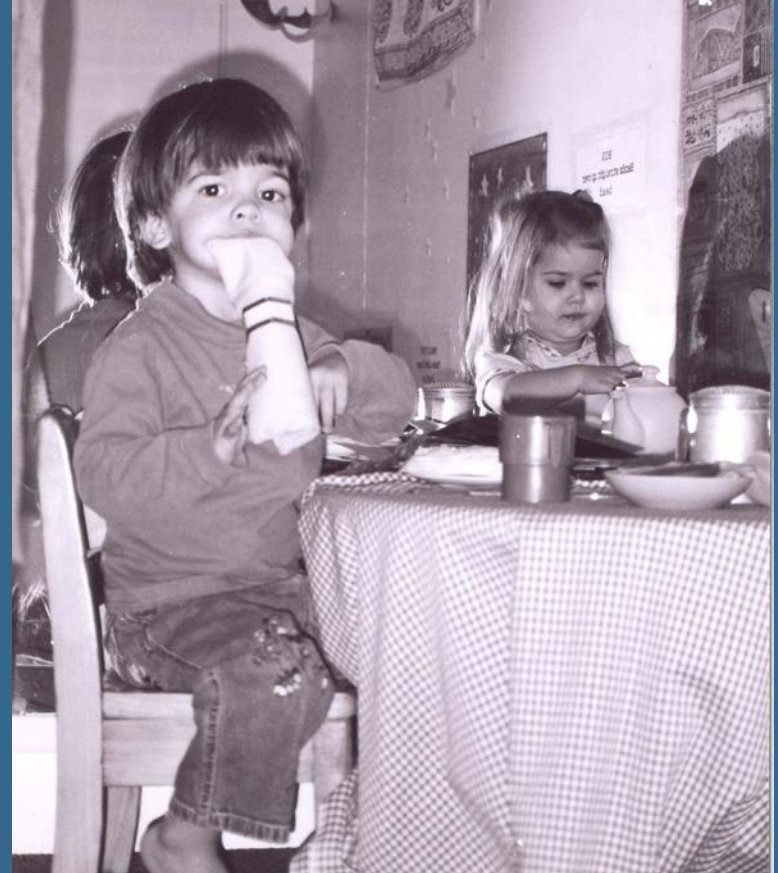


Supplying the Space



Older toddlers like...

- More sophisticated dramatic play
- Small figures, dolls, snapping blocks, beads to string



Grouping like items



Creating attractive displays



“The storage of materials is consistent, personalized, and accessible so that infants and toddlers can reach or get to the materials they see and want to explore.”

--Post and Hohmann, *Tender Care and Early Learning: Supporting Infants and Toddlers in Child Care Settings*



Room Tour



Look for:

- Documentation of children's work
- Use of homemade toys
- Inclusion of diversity



Reflecting on our work

- Use the sketch you made of your early learning environment to reflect on the following questions:
 - What elements of your program are you most satisfied with?
 - What elements might you like to adapt or modify?
- In pairs, share your initial ideas and impressions.

Additional ideas for reflection



- I can see who I am and what I like to do here.
- The natural world can be found here.
- My caregiver leaves out a special object out here everyday so I can keep trying to figure out more about its properties and how it works.
- I can feel powerful and be physically active here.
- I can learn to see things from different perspectives here, literally and through assuming roles in dramatic play.

--Adapted from *Designs for Living and Learning: Transforming Early Childhood Environments*



Creating a plan for action

- Use the handout provided and assessment tools to create an action plan.
- Be sure to include both
 - short term (what can you work on or address right away)
 - AND
 - long term goals (what you can work on in the next 2-3 years).
- What support and resources will you need?
- Be specific!

Homemade Toys





Individual Reflection

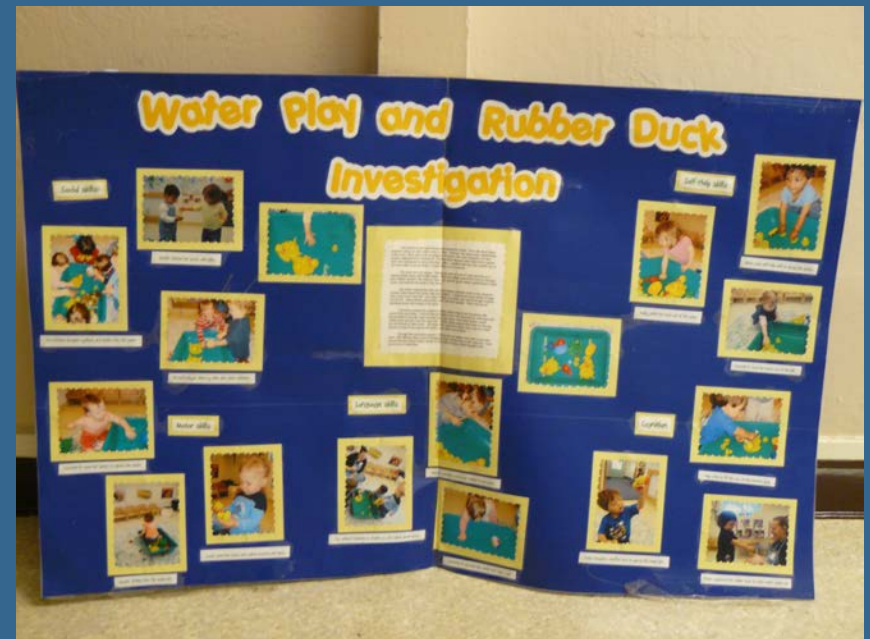
- Review the packet of homemade toys and activities.
- Which activities have you already tried?
- Which activities would you like to try next?



Documentation



- Use documentation to:
 - Promote a sense of self and community
 - To inspire discovery
 - To encourage reflection
 - Create a sense of history



Sustaining the Space



Start simply and then...

- Maintain
 - Consistent physical layout
 - Program quality assessment tools
 - Schedule regular deep cleans
- Enhance
 - Flexibility
 - Offer additional materials to match individual needs
 - Incorporate new aesthetics
- Extend
 - Emergent curriculum
 - Use observations and child assessment tools to determine next steps

Questions and Answers

