Chapter 9
Creating Environments
Creating the Environment

Definition

- The sum total of the physical and human qualities that combine to create a space in which children and adults work and play together

- The “total” picture
  - Physical setting
  - Temporal setting
  - Interpersonal setting

- Safe, effective, and challenging

- “The curriculum’s textbook” (Heroman, et al, 2010)
Aspects to Consider

- Above all, they should be quality places
  - Standards for group size and adult-child ratios
- Physical plant
  - Know the designated spaces for children and their needs
- Resources
  - Materials, equipment, and caring people
- Program goals
  - Reflected in the arrangement of the environment
  - Soft, warm, and responsive
  - Predictable and encourage independence
Developmentally Appropriate Learning Environments

- Create a high-activity, low-stress, and brain-compatible environment
- Build culturally and linguistically responsive environments
- Be sure children have access to enough toys and materials
- Give children an opportunity to make choices
- Consider the developmental levels of the children
- Give families ways to identify their children’s space
- See that children are responsible for caring for the equipment and materials
Developmentally Appropriate Learning Environments (cont.)

- Involve children in planning and setting up the environment
- Provide children with enough time
- Allow children to solve their own problems without adult intervention whenever possible
- Accept children’s efforts
- Communicate expectations
- Be sure staff expectations are consistent
- Make it safe to make a mistake
- Give credit where it is due
- Let children teach one another
Core Values

- The anti-bias environment
  - To explore the differences and similarities that make up our individual and group identities
  - To develop skills for identifying and countering the hurtful impact of bias on ourselves and our peers
  - Every person is valuable, so diversity is valuable
  - Provide materials and encourage an atmosphere of trust and time for conflict resolution
Core Values (cont.)

- The Self-Help Environment
  - Develop children’s own skills
  - Responsible for their own personal care, their own learning, their own emotional controls, their own problem solving, and their own choices and decisions
  - Gives children the feeling that they are capable, competent, and successful
  - Reflects the belief that autonomy and independence are the birthright of every child
Core Values (cont.)

- The inclusive environment for all children
  - Must be safe, secure, and predictable
  - Must provide a balance of familiar and novel
  - Must have adaptations to fit the child better
    - Can the child get to where he or she needs to be?
    - Can he or she use the materials and equipment independently?
    - Are the schedule and activities individualized to include all children?
Central Elements in Planning

- Keep children healthy
- Sanitation guidelines
  - Wash hands and sanitizing and disinfecting areas, materials, and equipment frequently
  - Nontoxic paints and materials
- Temperature, ventilation, and lighting must be comfortable and safe
- Communicable diseases
  - Policies for exclusion due to illness
- Health assessment and program policies to protect children from illness and disease
Central Elements in Planning (cont.)

- Nutrition
  - Regular nutritious meals and snacks prepared in a clean and sanitary way
  - A relaxed meal time with conversation

- Clothing
  - Dress properly for play in varying weather conditions
  - Self-help clothing

- Staff Health
  - Maintain health regulations for staff and ensure a work environment that decreases fatigue, stress, and illness
Central Elements in Planning (cont.)

- Guarding children’s safety
- First aid
  - A first aid kit in every room
  - Teachers trained in first aid and CPR
  - Emergency numbers posted
  - Emergency procedures posted
- Disasters and threats
- Automobile safety
Central Elements in Planning (cont.)

- Maintaining children’s well-being
  - Be aware of a world of violence and how children are exposed to violence in their everyday lives
  - Violence abroad and at home
  - Racist and sexist practices
  - Drug abuse and unresolved conflicts
Basic Arrangement and Materials

- Physical environment
  - Harms and Clifford Environmental Rating Scales
    - Space and furnishings
    - Personal care routines
    - Language-reasoning
    - Activities (motor, cognitive, creative)
    - Interaction (social, emotional)
    - Program structure (schedules)
    - Parents and staff (personal and professional needs)
Basic Arrangements and Materials

Organizing space

- The amount of space devoted to any one activity says a great deal about its value.
- The environment must be flexible to respond to the developing needs and interests of the children.
- The physical environment speaks volumes to children.
- The placement of the interest centers is important.
Basic Arrangements and Materials

- General requirements
  - Ground floor classrooms are preferable
  - Floor and play space minimum 35 square feet
Basic Arrangements and Materials

- **Indoors**
  - **Interest areas**
    - Art
    - Blocks
    - Dramatic play/house corner
    - Library/literacy
    - Manipulatives/table toys
    - Science-discovery/sand & water
    - Music & movement/group times
  - Computers
Basic Arrangements and Materials

- **Indoors (cont.)**
  - **Bathrooms**
    - Adjacent to sleeping and play areas
    - Ease of supervision
    - Separate areas for diapering near water
    - Closed cans for diapers
  - **Room to rest**
    - Cots and cribs labeled
    - 3 feet apart
    - Cozy and individualized
Basic Arrangements and Materials

- Indoors (cont.)
  - Food service
    - Storing formula and milk or perishables
    - Disinfecting equipment and materials
    - Disposable dishes
    - Know eating patterns, proportions, and nutritional needs, and share with parents
Basic Arrangements and Materials

- Indoors (cont.)
  - Adult space
    - A desk and bookshelf for teachers (elementary classrooms)
    - Workroom or lounge for staff (elementary schools)
    - Safe space to store personal belongings
    - Adult bathroom
Basic Arrangements and Materials

➤ Materials and equipment
  ➤ Steer away from toys that:
    ➤ Make electronic technology the focus of play
    ➤ Lure girls into focusing on appearance
    ➤ Model violent and sexualized language or behavior
    ➤ Are linked to commercial products and advertisements
Basic Arrangements and Materials

- Outdoors
  - Children prefer the adventure or creative playground, spaces that have a variety of fixed and movable equipment
  - Raw materials stimulate social and cognitive play
  - Covered area for rainy days
  - Variety of ground surfaces
  - Mandatory fences
Daily Schedule: Time to Learn

- **Routines**
  - Self-care
  - Transitions between activities
  - Group times
  - Beginning and ending of the day
  - Making choices
  - Task completion
  - Room clean up and yard restoration

- **Transitions**
Developmentally Appropriate Schedules

- More choices are available to children as they grow.
- Transitions are handled differently in the various age groups.
- The structure of the day changes with age.
- Sequencing of activities and allocating enough time are major factors in inclusive classrooms.
- The content of group activities changes with age.
The Interpersonal Environment

- Defining the tone
  - A warm, inviting atmosphere
  - Feelings of genuine mutual respect
  - Communication that is open and non-threatening
  - Model cooperative behaviors
  - Take time to show children what to do
  - Body language that is inviting
  - Be patient and give children enough time
  - Encourage and accept mistakes as learning opportunities

- Positive interpersonal environments
  - The most important thing to remember is that the way people feel about each other and how they express their feelings have an impact on children.