



Environments and Activities

to support teachers in working with
challenging behaviors

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Objectives

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand the ways that children process sensory information from their environment.
- Identify environmental factors that contribute to challenging behaviors.
- Support teachers in assessing environments and developing strategies for working with children with challenging behaviors.

Agenda

1. Challenging Behaviors and the Senses
2. Environmental Elements
3. Considering Schedules
4. Activities and Equipment
5. Q & A



Peaceful Environments for Learning

Considering Environments and Challenging Behaviors

Goal: Design environments that support sensory regulation and decrease challenging behaviors.

Environmental Elements:

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| I. Layout | IV. Furniture |
| II. Light | V. On the Walls |
| a. Natural Light | VI. Presentation of Materials |
| b. Lamp Light | VII. Sound |
| c. Windows | VIII. Connection to Nature |
| d. Light tables | IX. Engaging the Senses |
| III. A Natural Palette | |

Activity: Examining the Physical Environment

- Diagram of your classroom.
- Color noisy/big body play areas red.
- Color cozy areas blue.
- Circle areas with natural or lamp light with yellow.
- Star areas where children can connect with the natural world.
- Put an X through areas that are just for adults.

Consider the classroom/school as a whole. What sensory messages are the students getting? How can you modify those to minimize challenging behaviors?



Time to Play, Time to Learn

"Play is our brain's favorite way of learning."

-Diane Ackerman

At the heart of learning is play, and play is:

- Play is pleasurable and enjoyable.
- Play has no extrinsic goals; there is no prescribed learning that must occur.
- Play is spontaneous and voluntary.
- Play involves active engagement on the part of the player.
- Play involves an element of make-believe.

(from *Einstein Never Used Flash Cards*)

Sample Schedule

8-8.30	Arrival/Journals/Open Choice
8.30-8.45	Morning Meeting
8.45-10.30	Choice Time <i>Centers, Integration Time with Resource Teachers, Projects/Small Groups/Open Snack</i>
10.30-11.30	Outdoor Play/Projects/Walks
11.40-12	Meeting <i>Reflection, singing and read-aloud</i>
Noon	Lunch

Examining Schedules

- Circle teacher-directed activities
- Star all opportunities for play
- Draw a green line under Outside Time
- Box all large group activities
- Draw an arrow by each transition
- Square activities that are either individual or small group activities

Consider what changes could be made to eliminate transitions. What work that is currently done in large groups could be done one-on-one, in small groups, or during Choice Time?



JOY AND LEARNING

WITH TAMARA CLARK, MA ECE

Hands On!

<p>Large Motor Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ yoga✓ table stand✓ crab walk✓ wall push-ups✓ easel work✓ heavy work<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ pushing○ pulling○ carrying	<p>Sensory Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ water✓ sand✓ shaving cream✓ rice✓ beans✓ finger paint✓ ooblek✓ flubber✓ clay✓ playdough✓ coffee grounds <p><i>See Ooey Gooey Inc for hundreds of creative ideas</i></p>
<p>Calming Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Breathing✓ Sand-hands✓ Fidgets✓ Deep pressure✓ Head presses✓ Big squeezes✓ Shoulder squeezes✓ Weight-bearing large motor activities<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Carrying a backpack,○ shoulder yoga	<p>Equipment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Sand hands✓ “Disco-sit” Inflated cushions (just slightly inflated)✓ Exercise balls (should create a 90° angle at the hips, knees, ankles, which is about a beach ball size for this age group)✓ Fidgets✓ Ear muffs✓ Beanbag chairs✓ Weighted blankets and lap blankets



Books

The Out-of Sync Child by Carol Stock Kranowitz

The Out-of-Sync Child Has Fun by Carol Stock Kranowitz

Sensational Kids by Lucy Jane Miller

Ooey Goopy Handbook by Lisa Murphy

Designs for Living and Learning: Transforming Early Childhood Environments by
Deb Curtis and Margie Carter

*Big Body Play: Why Boisterous, Vigorous, and Very Physical Play Is Essential to
Children's Development and Learning* by Frances Carlson

Classroom Materials and Inspirations

www.communityplaythings.com

waldorfsupplies.com

www.novanatural.com/waldorf-materials

www.arborday.org/shopping/sourcebook

www.dollartree.com

www.ikea.com/USA

www.worldmarket.com

reggioinspired.ning.com/photo/albums/adding-natural-materials-to

www.pier1.com/

Thrift shops, yard and garage sales, dumpster diving, and your basement!