

One Page Resources:

CLASSROOM DESIGN STRATEGIES THAT PROMOTE SELF-REGULATION & LEARNING

Adapted from "Creating Indoor Environments That Decrease Sensory Overload" by Cynthia Saarela, September/October, 2007, *Exchange Magazine*

POSITIVE SIGNS

MATERIALS ON SHELVES



Ever enter a room full of stuff and so loud that you felt the need to flee? Or conversely, walked into an area that made you want to sit peacefully and enjoy what was enveloping your senses?

The environment a child visits daily can impact his or her learning, as well as the child's emotional wellbeing.

Look at your classroom. Are you creating confusion and sensory overload or promoting a sense of peace and belonging? The Reggio Emilia educational approach talks about the environment as "the third teacher" (after the family and teachers). Take time to think about your classroom design choices. They affect your students.

WHAT CHILDREN LEARN
EI 5.1 Listens and follows directions
EI 12.1 Sorting
EI 23.2 Explores new things

SIGNS FOR CONCERN



WHAT CHILDREN LEARN
• Not much, children jump center to center
• Learning is hard, can't find materials
• Clean-up is not important

LIBRARY CENTER



WHAT CHILDREN LEARN
EI 7.1 Enjoys books
EI 23.2 Explores new things
EI 24.2 Independence

WHAT CHILDREN LEARN
• Books are not important, get lost/damaged
• Don't learn parts of books (cover, spine)
• Books are not sources of information

ART DISPLAY



WHAT CHILDREN LEARN
EI 6.1 Converses effectively
EI 13.1 Creativity
EI 17.5 Family, Community, Culture

WHAT CHILDREN LEARN
• When children's art work is so similar they might not be able to identify which work is theirs.

PEACEFUL OR SENSORY OVERLOAD CLASSROOM



WHAT CHILDREN LEARN
EI 20.2 Social-problem solving
EI 24.2 Independence

WHAT CHILDREN LEARN
• Fight for materials
• Not much, too many distractions

OTHER SIGNS OF CLASSROOM

OVER-STIMULATION
• No space for large motor activities

• Play centers too small

• Too many commercial materials hang from walls

• Music selection and volume does not change according to children's needs

• Children jump from center to center

• Lots of difficult behaviors heard (e.g., fighting, crying)

• Teachers focus on children's negative behaviors and correct more than encourage

• Teachers introduce a difference in familiar activities or routine without warning

• Materials are used for inappropriate purposes (e.g., pillows for gross motor play in the library)

• Teacher needs to help too much at clean up time, telling children often what to do and where to put materials

• Not enough time to play, children have difficulty with transition

• Children's play is not purposeful or meaningful. Teacher is unable to guide/support play

• Teacher is emotionally and physically tired daily