

One Page Resource: 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*

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 well-being. 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.

POSITIVE SIGNS



MATERIALS ON SHELVES

- EI 5.1 Listens and follows directions**
EI 12.1 Sorting
EI 23.2 Explores new things

WHAT CHILDREN LEARN

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

SIGNS FOR CONCERN



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

LIBRARY CENTER



- 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



- EI 6.1 Converses Effectively**
EI 13.1 Creativity
EI 17.4 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



- EI 20.2 Social-problem solving**
EI 24.2 Independence

WHAT CHILDREN LEARN

- Fight for materials
- Not much, too many distractions

