

CREATING
HIGH QUALITY EARLY
LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS
FOR ALL CHILDREN

HQELE

QualityStart OC ECE Conference • Fall 2014

Colleagues in Collaboration



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Workshop Description: “HQELE”

- This workshop will invite you to ***think differently*** about the decisions you make and the ways in which you create learning environments in support of *all* young children.
- We’ll begin by compelling you to ***examine your own values and beliefs***, and delineate how these beliefs can be linked to your teaching and your own learning...
- And then see how you might ***create connections*** between your teaching practices, the contexts in which you work and the design of inclusive early learning environments.

From “*Special Needs*” to “*Special Rights*”

- ***Mainstream*** - To pick & choose; re-entry into the regular classroom.
- ***Integration*** - To carefully insert; to combine; to remediate to avoid educational segregation or exclusion.
- ***Inclusion*** - To fully embrace, not merely tolerate or simply accept.... to ***belong***

Core Beliefs and Our Image of the Child



- What shapes your *image of the child*?
- What do you *value* and why?
- How are your values reflected in your *teaching practices....* in what you do?
- Is *what you do* consistent with your beliefs about *how children learn*?

Complementary Approaches to Learning

Early Care and Education

- Child-Selected Activity
- Intrinsic Motivation
- Process-Focused
- Play/Self-Concept
- Readiness Factors
- Developmental Stages
- Facilitation
- Attention to “Whole Child”

Early Childhood Special Education

- Adult-Directed Curriculum
- Extrinsic Motivation
- Product-Focused
- Academics/Behavior
- Rote Learning
- Non-Stage Dependent
- Intervention
- Remediation of “Parts”

Continuum of Teaching Behavior

Nondirective

Mediating

Directive

Acknowledge	Model	Facilitate	Support	Scaffold	Co-construct	Demonstrate	Direct
Give attention and positive encouragement to keep a child engaged in an activity.	Display for children a skill or desirable way of behaving in the classroom, through actions only or with cues, prompts, or other forms of coaching.	Offer short-term assistance to help a child achieve the next level of functioning (as an adult does in holding the back of a bicycle while a child pedals).	Provide a fixed form of assistance, such as a bicycle's training wheels, to help a child achieve the next level of functioning.	Set up challenges or assist children to work "on the edge" of their current competence.	Learn or work collaboratively with children on a problem or task, such as building a model or block structure.	Actively display a behavior or engage in an activity while children observe the outcome.	Provide specific directions for children's behavior with narrowly defined dimensions of error.

Stepping IN

Stepping BACK

Source: CDE (2000). Prekindergarten Learning and Development Guidelines

Ingredients for Success: Blended Practices

- There are ***unique contributions*** of both *ECE* and *ECSE*
- ***Positive child outcomes*** depend on...
 - ▣ Consideration of individual needs
 - ▣ Parent-professional partnerships
 - ▣ Respect for cultural diversity
 - ▣ Collaboration among all involved
 - ▣ ***Systematic planning of responsive environments***

Selected DEC Recommended Practices

- E1. Practitioners provide services and supports in ***natural and inclusive environments*** during daily routines and activities.
- E2. Practitioners consider ***Universal Design for Learning*** principles to create accessible environments.
- E3. Practitioners work with families and other adults to ***modify and adapt*** the physical social and temporal environments.
- INS5. Practitioners ***embed instruction within and across routines, activities and environments*** to provide contextually relevant learning opportunities.

The Learning Environment

- **The environment as the “third teacher” and a powerful teaching tool**
 - Encourages focused activity, involvement, discovery, variety of media
- **Offers specific “messages” to children, families, and teachers**
 - “You belong here.”
 - “This is a place you can trust.”
 - “There are many things to learn here.”
 - “You can do things on your own and with others here.”
 - “This is a place to explore and try out your ideas.”

Program Goals, CA *Preschool Learning Foundations* and the Design of the Environment

- *To create a sense of security and promote trust*

SELF/2.0 Self-Regulation

- *To encourage initiative-taking*

SELF/5.0 Initiative in Learning

- *To support exploration and social interaction*

SOCIAL INTERACTION/2.0

Interactions with Peers

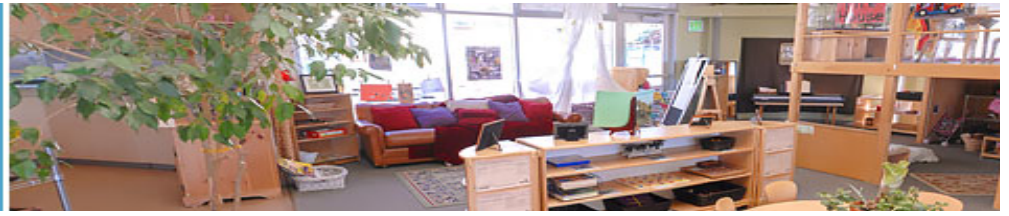
- *To enhance children's sense of group responsibility*

CIVICS/2.0 Responsible Conduct

- Interest centers clearly defined
- Diverse materials available, organized, & labeled
- Shelves are low & inviting
- Cozy welcoming area
- Individual & group space
- Center boundaries well defined
- Children's work is displayed
- Furniture is child-sized
- Materials are open-ended & accessible

HQELE

High Quality Early Learning Environment



HQELE tool is a comprehensive panoramic virtual tour that emphasizes principles of a quality classroom design and incorporates key strategies on how to replicate highlighted elements.

The tool is for general and special educators and is intended to support continued **self evaluation** and **reflection** to encourage increased consideration of the ***early childhood learning environment as an extension of teaching.***





- ❑ What stands out for me in the classroom?
- ❑ What is particularly appealing to me and why?
- ❑ What is the greatest challenge in applying what appeals to me?
- ❑ How can I begin to take the next steps in my classroom?
- ❑ What are the **core beliefs** that shape the design of these classroom spaces?
- ❑ How is **intentionality** embedded within the environment?
- ❑ How does one blend **children's interests** with **desired outcomes**?

Terminology Associated with Environmental Practices

Campbell, P.H., & Milbourne, S.A. (2014). Together is Better: Environmental Teaching Practices to Support All Children's Learning. *Young Exceptional Children*, Monograph Series No. 16.

Term	Example
Adaptations: Something that is altered, modified or redesigned to make it suitable for a new purpose	A classroom includes picture exchange communication cards (PECS) in all interest centers
Assistive Technology: When a device is used by a child to do something that otherwise could not be done	Most children communicate using words, gestures and facial expressions but some children may communicate best by pointing to a picture or using a tablet
Visual Supports: These assist children in their ability to maintain attention, understand spoken language, and sequence & organize their environment	May include visual schedules, choice boards, first-then boards, cue cards, activity sequences, scripted stories & feeling charts
Universal Design: Creating physical environments that can be useable by all children without the need for adaptation	Could include an entry with ramp access and automatic doors; toilets, sinks, chairs and tables of varying heights

Inclusive Early Care and Education Strategies

□ Strategy 1: **Environmental Support**

- Move furniture to define area - p. 36
 - Create a small space in a large area
- Visual contrasts - p. 36
 - Placemats
- Menu - p. 36
- Different large group experiences
 - Obstacle course - p. 37



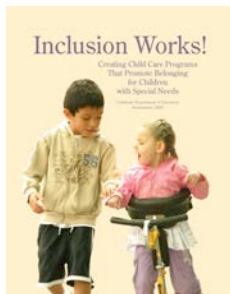
Source: CDE (2009). *Inclusion Works! Creating Child Care Programs That Promote Belonging for Children with Special Needs*

Inclusive Early Care and Education Strategies

- **Strategy 2: Materials Adaptation**
- Height/levels
 - ▣ Sensory table on floor
 - ▣ Tall and low easel layout
 - ▣ Same toys on higher and lower shelves – blocks
- Different types of tools (e.g., large and small brushes, thick and thin pencils)
 - ▣ Duct tape around handles for thickness (p. 41)
- Braille on books and labels



Inclusive Early Care and Education Strategies



- Strategy 3: **Activity Simplification**
 - Supervise potentially dangerous activities (e.g., small parts) - p. 41
 - Velcro on blocks for stacking - p. 41
 - Variety of books (paperback and cardboard) - p. 41

Inclusive Early Care and Education Strategies

□ Strategy 4: **Child Preferences**

- Observe or ask the child
- Adapt policy (e.g., change “no computer game” rule) - p. 43
- Blocks – visual schedule
- Open-ended materials
- Loose parts



Inclusive Early Care and Education Strategies

□ **Strategy 5: Special Equipment**

- Administering medication – p. 45
- Epi-pen training (as much as fire extinguisher training, CPR, first aid...)
- Gait trainer
- Inserting hearing aids



Inclusive Early Care and Education Strategies

□ **Conclusion**

- Individualize for the child
- Involve the families
- Partner with specialists
- Be creative
- Involve all children (e.g., ASL, PECS, etc...)
- Stay true to your knowledge of your classroom and programming





Comments and Questions

"It is the relationships between places and people that shape who we are"

- Tot's Corner, New Zealand