CREATING HIGH QUALITY EARLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL CHILDREN
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nondirective</th>
<th>Mediating</th>
<th>Directive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acknowledge</strong></td>
<td><strong>Facilitate</strong></td>
<td><strong>Support</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Give attention and positive encouragement to keep a child engaged in an activity.</td>
<td>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).</td>
<td>Provide a fixed form of assistance, such as a bicycle’s training wheels, to help a child achieve the next level of functioning.</td>
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<td>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.</td>
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**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 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


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

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

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

- Tot’s Corner, New Zealand