

Seeds of Partnership Website Video Descriptive Text Transcription High Quality Early Learning Environment, HQELE

Key Element: Spaces

Where Do I Begin?

http://www.seedsofpartnership.org/hqele/video/spaces_where_do_i_begin.html

(Description: Center Director seated in front of a large window)

I think you start with something that has personal meaning and some relevance to you. Is there something in this context that resonates with you? That speaks to who you are and supports you as a teacher? Maybe there is a corner of the room that yours, or a nook, or a part of the art

(Description: Shelf top displaying musical instruments and a label stating "music")

or the art area or, "I'm really this part of the room is what grabs me."

(Description: Child and teacher on floor interacting with musical instruments)

Where are children drawn to in your room? Where do they avoid? Where do they not?

(Description: Child sitting on floor playing with musical instruments)

And then invite others in the room to share what they feel too and see what those relationships are, what those connections are. But I think what I would caution people about is not to be so static

(Description: Drinking fountain area decorated with natural rocks, wood, and pictures of nature)

in our defining environments. There's that me-search part of it.

(Description: Center Director seated in front of a large window)

Not just research, there's something that must connect you with your classroom. What is it? I mean, start there.

(Description: Program Specialist Katie sitting on couch in classroom)

A lot of times, they say, "Oh, well my administration will never let me do that." "Oh, we can't have that in our center. I don't think they would ever allow that or in my classroom." Or, "That doesn't look like a classroom to me."

(Description: Panorama of classroom set up and learning areas)

And, "That's just not what a classroom is supposed to look like." A lot of times people thinks, well this takes a ton of time and I just don't have that kind of time to really purposefully think that through. But I do think that you can do it in bits as well and you can do it throughout your classroom year. Even if you focused on one particular area and really, really thought about that one area and set it up very purposefully. Then the next day, even after the children leave you can take a few more minutes to setup the next area.

(Description: Program Specialist Katie sitting on couch in classroom)

Even though we have a large chunk of time at the beginning of the semester, as the semester goes on we still revisit this, we still come back and say, "Oh, our intent was for the children to use the material this way. They're not, they're using it this way." So what does this tell us? And how can we help them to use the material a different way than the way that they're currently using it.

(Description: Teacher Laura sitting on couch in classroom)

There's a few things that we take into consideration and one is what the adults see, and it's not in this order, and the second is what children see. When we are looking at a classroom it's really important to actually get down on the floor, and be the height of a child and see what it looks like and what it feels like to be in different areas of the classroom because something that might look really aesthetic to us as adults and, "Oh, that's really neat," they don't even see it, maybe. And it doesn't stand out to them because of the height of it or the depth of the basket whatever it may be.

(Description: View of kitchen play area from child's view panning up to adult's view)

Just making sure from both levels that it's something that you can see everything and you can just stand in that area and know what to do here I think is really important. And it respects, I think,

(Description: Teacher Laura sitting on couch in classroom)

the people, who are involved here and the children, who are involved here in the classroom and the observers, who come in, and the parents, who come in. It makes it so that anyone, who comes in here, can really feel like, "Oh, okay, I see what going on here."

(Description: Teacher Sarah sitting on couch in classroom)

A lot of people will label each individual shelf what item will go where so that it's easy for cleanup for children to know where things go. Personally, I've felt that it would be more aesthetically pleasing to, instead of have a lot of that print, because it can look cluttered, we have a photo of the shelf

(Description: Photo of materials in shelf in picture frame and placed on a small easel)

set in a frame on an easel at the top of the shelf so that children can easily reference the picture and see where items should be put away.

(Description: Shelf containing materials, a framed photo of the shelf sits on top alongside a plant)

And it's really neat to watch children use the picture. They'll pick up the picture off the easel and look and say, "Where does this black go? Oh, that's not the right one."

(Description: Teacher Sarah sitting on couch in classroom)

It's a simple way to make the classroom look nice and be aesthetically pleasing but it's also that logical thinking that they get to say, "Oh, a picture's a representation of something real."

(Description: Teacher Laura sitting on couch in classroom)

When they come in here, it's not...The kinds of things on the shelves aren't things that they've never seen before. They just feel comfortable in a home-like...Even having families bring things in from home that we display. It could be simple things, like a book that a child likes at home, whatever it is. Family photos and things like that

(Description: Panorama of learning area displaying plants, a lamp, framed photos, and an armchair)

that they feel they are a part of it so when we choose our materials it's really important to make sure that really, no one would look at it and say,

(Description: Teacher and child seated on floor grasping headphones, a child sits in armchair reading a book)

"Oh, I don't know. I don't really feel like I belong here." Really, we want to make sure that everyone feels like they belong here. No matter who you are walking through this door, that this is a space for you

(Description: Teacher Laura sitting on couch in classroom)

And so, knowing families and knowing children for that piece of it is hugely critical. It's probably one of the most important things for me is making sure they feel comfortable here and it relates to them.

(Description: Program Specialist Katie sitting on couch in classroom)

You can make any setting that you're in feel home-like, feel as though children feel valued, and you can still maintain your curriculum that they have designed for you if that's where you need to be. If that's where you feel strongly that that's where it needs to be then you absolutely can. But you can also include the elements that you have found comforting and peaceful

(Description: Child's view of classroom set up with a table set with materials in foreground and loft in background)

and the ones that make children feel valued into your program. Sometimes people don't realize that the environment is part of the curriculum.

(Description: Program Specialist Katie sitting on couch in classroom)

That you can actually...That your environment is the curriculum. So if you have an incredibly rich environment then the curriculum...kind of...that's it. You don't really need to have anything, a whole lot of other things other than a really rich environment. Then all those other little pieces you can definitely put into your day.

(Description: Art area with materials placed inside and on top of shelving and a table)

But if you have that really, really enriched environment then the rest of it is secondary. Educating other as to why you're doing it is a big part of it.