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### **Learning Environment Project**

My classroom is a place of nurture, connectiveness, and creativity. Learning is a natural process for humans and a well-designed environment and support team of teachers and peers enhances this process. It is important to me that the students have an environment where they have the freedom to express themselves and individuals and as a community. To achieve this, it is important that everything is accessible to them in the classroom. “[Montessori] believed that part of sensory experience for children is having tools and utensils that fit their small hands and tables and chairs that match their small bodies. Beautiful orderly, child-sized environments and sensory play are part of Montessori’s legacy” (Mooney, 38). I incorporated this philosophy by choosing age appropriate furniture and choosing dividers which double as storage that all students can reach on their own. The color scheme is dominated by natural woods and neutral walls. The seating (green in layout design) will be made out of different materials and colors for a sensory experience both tactile and visual. It was important that there is a lot of natural light to enhance the beauty of the room and I will add low-maintenance plants on the dividers to add to the natural feel. I have chosen two dedicated walls to display work on. The alphabet wall and the student art gallery. “Children’s work usually shows to best advantage on neutral walls or against backgrounds that do not compete with the work” (Tarr, 4). I want the students to feel pride of their gallery which will change themes with our units. The alphabet wall will be next to the reading and writing center and I will work with the students to add alphabet art to the display.

The room division gives the students the choice of activity. It is divided in louder and quieter areas to allow for individual and collaborative play and work. “Learning centers provide an enriched environment for nurturing the creative process, encouraging children to explore their interests by selecting a center and choosing what to do there” (Isbell, et all. 49). They will have a place to withdraw if they need it and places to collaborate with others. I chose the art- and writing centers to be in the middle of the room to make them the center of learning. They are a buffer between the louder and quieter areas, as they can be both themselves, they can be places for individual expression and for collaboration.

### **Room Layout**

The room is divided into six areas, entry, reading center, art and writing center, science and construction center, block center, and pretend play center. The storage of personal belongings is just outside the door that doubles as a bench for students to sit when they take off their jackets. The entry is the wet zone that has a sink and access to bathrooms. The “north” centers (art and science center) have the potential to be wet zones as well and are in a line to the sink. The “south” is the dry areas and is along the walls with windows.

The Reading area is the quiet zone for children to read books or retreat onto a comfortable chair when they need a break. It is surrounded by dividing bookcases that give it an isolated feel to allow children to get absorbed into the world of books. It is by a window to allow some natural light while reading. The alphabet wall is in the area to help develop the literary skills. The pretend play area is in the other corner of the room. It includes seating, a pretend kitchen, and storage of materials and costumes, as well as musical instruments. It will be a largely collaborative space for the students where they can come up with stories and songs in small groups and act them out. If the students come up with bigger stories, they can take some of

the space in the block area and extend the pretend area onto the carpet. The block area has a large carpet in the middle to dampen some of the sounds. It can also double as a group meeting space. It has a large shelf with different blocks that the children can use to build with. The space allows for children to play individually or to build together. Next to it is the construction table where the students are able to build different things that could be used in the block area as well, creating a flow between the two centers. Next to it is the science center, which is mainly for one to two students to experiment. There would be general items as well as rotating items dependent on our curriculum themes. For larger experiment, the children can move to the large table in the middle of the art center.

The art and writing center are in the central part of the classroom. Art is an important aspect of symbol development which is important for both literacy and math. The math materials are stored in the middle of the two areas to connect the symbol making to the mathematical development. The writing center is to the south next to the reading center where the alphabet wall is. The connection of the two will support the literary process and lets them discover the connection from reading stories on one side, playing stories on the other, and writing them in the middle. The art center has two storage units. One is next to the big table and one is closer to the small tables. This allows to have collective art projects as a class at the same time.

### **My Classroom community**

The art gallery is on the longest wall of the classroom. This makes the students art in the collective of the gallery the center of the vertical space. I will hang a large piece of paper with the students' handprint and signature on the door of the classroom to signify that it is their classroom and create a bonding activity for the students. The library includes books on different topics that are covered in the curriculum units and books that have themes of inclusivity, loving ourselves and others, community and books that represent the cultural heritage of the students

and the school's broader community. These stories can be taken into the other areas of the classroom to play out, draw, write and built our own stories inspired by the books and will help the students to make the classroom a place of their own where they feel confident and empowered.

The design of my classroom is divided into different centers, yet there is a flow and connection between these centers. The reading center is connected to the writing, which is connected to the pretend play through story telling. The construction center allows children to create things they can use for the block center. This allows children to create and collaborate through the different centers, while giving them the space they need as individuals. The science center encourages them to examine the themes of the curriculum and different materials and ideas they found in other areas of the room and outside. It encourages creative thinking and builds connections between areas and allows children to branch out and find new links between activities that they are comfortable with and new areas. All materials are accessible to the students and can be used independently for experimentation and exploration to support their divergent thinking. This creates an environment where children can test new things and support each other in the process.

### **Conclusion**

My classroom is a place of learning through creative thinking, collaboration, and connectiveness. The different centers nurture the process of discovery and learning through play. The room itself should be a space that feels beautiful, and the material will be accessible to the children without assistance to support their independence and collaboration between each other. While each center has a main purpose, they all are connected to each other and support divergent thinking. It is a place of support where they can develop their skills with the support of the

teacher and their peers, while also being able to experiment on their own. It is kept in a neutral tone to help with sensory overload and allows the children to fill it with their own colors.

Work cited

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