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## Overview

My classroom will reflect my values as a teacher because I value creativity and being culturally responsive. When kids are small they have a lot of creativity, and they use their imagination. Students not only use their imagination when it comes to their artwork but also when they are in different centers. Students have books and activities from which they can mirror themselves. I also value play. When children play they make sense of objects that surround them in their environment.

Valuing dual language learners is important since in many schools children come from a home that speaks another language that is not English. The book *Culturally Responsive Teaching Matters!*, said: “Along the way, students learn to see the classroom and their interactions from more than one perspective so that they can identify potential difficulties that come from assumptions of privilege, the distribution of power (who gets to make the rules), and the assessment of performance and competence” (Kozelski 2). I value my classroom being culturally responsive because when I was younger attending elementary, I did not see things where I could mirror myself. I would read books and I would not see myself doing that or experiencing this in real life. Since my school was majority White, nothing connected back to me or my culture. Now I know what to do to have a culturally responsive classroom, such as adding books that are a reflection of everyone. The inclusion of activities where families bring a dish from their culture that teaches the class is significant to the families’ cultures. These activities and books teach their peers about not only their culture but about everyone else's as well. The students start to open their minds and realize that there are a lot more cultures and diversity.

These culturally responsive activities also connect to dual language learners because “[c]hildren, when provided a safe, nurturing, and culturally and linguistically responsive

environment in which to learn, communicate their experiences and discoveries in a multitude of ways" (Magruder). A culturally responsive classroom includes both dual language learners and also ways to be inclusive. Families should have resources for all kids, especially when a teacher has dual language learners. It is already hard on students coming into a new environment not understanding their classmates and their classmates not being to understand them. As a teacher, I need to have resources to support students in the classroom.

I value play in my classroom because when children are small, they learn a lot through play. They figure out how toys work, ask questions, and wonder why this toy functions in a certain way. They are starting to understand how things work in their environment through play. The book *Basics of Developmentally Appropriate Practice* stated that "In play, children make choices to solve problems, converse and negotiate. They create make-believe events and practice physical, social, and cognitive skills. As they play children can express and work out emotional aspects of everyday experiences" (Copple & Bredekamp 20). Play is such an important aspect because children are not just "playing," they are doing more than that. They are making conversation with their peers; if they run into a problem they are finding ways to solve it. Students work to solve these problems and try new ways to make a toy work. They are touching and moving from one place to another and discovering new things to figure out the environment.

### **Tell Us About Your Layout**

Walking into my classroom on the right students will see cubbies, where they can place their stuff and have easy access to it when they are going home. Next to the cubbies is our meeting area, where we will discuss the topic depending on the week and share our ideas as a class. Next to the meeting area, we have the quiet zone. In the quiet zone, we also have the

library, because many kids enjoy having a quiet place while they read. They have many books at their grade level and have comfy places to sit, like the couch and bean bags. I also have easels for children to paint on. The art area is full of art supplies like markers, crayons, paint, colored pencils, colored paper, paper with patterns, and glue. We have the sink right next to the art area in case any messes occur, or in case the kids want to wash their hands after painting. The closet is full of cleaning supplies and the kids do not have access because I do not want any accidents to occur. The sensory area is where the water and sand table is. They also have the sensory area next to the library because the books help support their understanding. In the movement area, we have blocks, trains, people, street signs, and train tracks. We also have the Dramatic and play area. Here they have costumes, firefighter/police hats, purses, and jackets. They have a play fridge and oven that have pretend fruits and vegetables, pots, and fake silverware. Finally, we have the math and writing centers. The math center is an area where they can play math games. In the writing center, they can practice writing their letters and their names. I also have the numbers and letters around the classroom, so that we can practice the ABCs in our morning meetings. There are windows in my classroom and some windows have plants that kids help water.

Social and emotional development is when children start to understand who they are, what they are feeling, and what they should expect when interacting with others. They experience, manage, and express many emotions. In the centers like the library area, block area, and art area, there will be directions they will have to follow. I will make sure that the center's children are being included in play and taking turns. In the different centers, children are going to encounter problems. If there is a sharing problem, I can come in and explain to the child how this situation is making the other child feel sad and upset. The situation would show them to care

about their friends and the people around them. The children would be able to understand other people's emotions and show empathy. I can also support children's development physically in my centers by creating the space they need. For example, I will not make my art area the same size as my dramatic play area because the dramatic area requires different things. In the meeting area, we can have songs that encourage movement like row row your boat, and the itsy bitsy spider. In the block area, children can build a tower and start from the bottom on their knees and then get up as the tower gets bigger.

Children will explore and engage in problem-solving all around the classroom. Children will encounter problem-solving in social relationships when they have problems with others. In the book *Nurturing Creativity*, it said "children learn how to work with each other and come up with ways to solve problems" (Isbell & Yoshizawa 100). For example, in the block area, a group of children is working together to build the biggest tower but the tower is not stable enough. The children would have to work together and find a way to make the tower more stable. Another example of problem solving can be when children are doing a puzzle and a piece does not seem to fit. We can ask questions like where else would it fit? What if we turn the piece? Problem solving can also apply in the playground when children are not taking turns on the slide. We can say things like what can we do so everyone has a turn? Encouraging problem solving makes a child feel more independent and less frustrated. Children are also going to improve their communication skills, and they will need to talk to their peers to solve the problem.

A resource I will offer to encourage children's development as emerging readers and writers is an area full of books that are appropriate for their age. I will have read alouds and have the children interact with the reading. I might have cutouts of the animals or figures in the books and when those sections come up, have them make the sounds that the animals make. I will come

up with activities that help support what the children have learned from the read-aloud. I will be able to encourage their development as writers by having the resources available for them. When they are young they are going to school, and the first things they have to learn are the ABCs and their numbers. I will have ABC strips around the classroom and have the children sing the ABCs. At the beginning of class when the students are walking in, I will have them write their names on the entrance chart paper.

The materials I will offer for art experiences are painting, coloring, writing, and making crafts. The materials will also have different textures and fabrics. An activity I can do for creative expression could be a collage. When I give children a lot of materials they can create a variety of collages. They all interpret every texture and material differently. The article *Collage and Construction in School* by Lois Lord stated that “children explore with their senses the world of simple things. The delight of the child in his world is intense. It is an adventure for him to explore, then learn all he can about what is around him. He learns not only by looking but by feeling as well” (Lois Lord 10). This quote shows the creative expression there is when one includes collages in their classroom. Another activity that offers creative expression is pretend play. With pretend play, the children can express themselves through costumes and actions. In the block area, the kids can grab the block and come up with infinite ideas of what to build. They can also pretend that the blocks are other things like phones and cameras.

### **Your Classroom Community ( body paragraph )**

I will create a culturally responsive community in my classroom by making sure the areas are a reflection of the students’ cultures. The video “Mirrors, windows and sliding doors” by Reading Rockets explains how the books children read should be a reflection of who they are. The books are not only of children who always see their reflection, but of everyone else as well.

The video mentions windows because one can look through them and see different worlds, compare and contrast them, and be able to understand them. I agree with this video because growing up I did not see a lot of books that were a reflection of me. They were more stereotypical of what they thought Mexicans were. I do not want my students to go through something like that because it made me feel excluded from my classroom. To prevent this from happening I would have educational books that represent everyone's backgrounds. I would also have read-alouds that connect back to activities supporting their understanding. In the article, *Culturally Responsive Teaching Matters* by Kozleski said “Culturally responsive teaching creates these bridges and in doing so, offers the possibility for transformational knowledge that leads to socially responsible action” (Isbell and Yoshizawa 43). Kozleski explains that teaching culturally responsive classrooms leads to having an environment that is good for children to socialize with each other. Divergent learning connects back to a culturally responsive classroom because there are multiple ways to teach inclusivity.

I will encourage divergent learning by using open-ended materials. For example, the book *Nurturing Creativity* mentions that “open materials, such as blocks, balls, playdough, pipe cleaners, cellophane paper, and buttons, inspire imaginative, inventive play because of their ability to be integrated into different play experiences” (Isbell and Yoshizawa 106). These materials encourage divergent learning because they use these materials and turn them into their own creations and designs. One child might use play dough and buttons to create a person, but another child might stick pipe cleaners into the playdough to make a person. The book *Nurturing Creativity* mentions that “adding an old coffee marker to the dramatic play center might inspire a child to pretend to make a coffee but little else” (Isbell and Yoshizawa 106). I can add materials like empty milk gallons, juice boxes, egg cartons, and other recycled materials to the dramatic

and play areas. The activity causes children to think of different ways to use them. In the block area, kids pretend that a block has different uses. For example, in an observation I did last semester I saw a little girl use a block as a cell phone and she would walk around the classroom pretending to talk. She then used it as a camera and took a picture of the children she was playing with. I can add materials like aluminum foil or cardboard to make children use their creative thinking skills, which causes them to combine the different materials and create new things. Another example of materials that can encourage divergent learning is books, according to Isbell and Yoshizawa: "Books that inspire or challenge children to come up with unique ideas, think in flexible ways, ponder questions, solve dilemmas and venture into new territories" (114). Books are a great material that helps support children's ideas. Children can use books as a way to add to the ideas they have in mind. There is no need to constantly buy new materials because they can be expensive. I could use recycled materials such as milk cartons, paper plates, buttons, string, and old wrapping paper. The number of things children can create with these materials is surprising. An activity that can go with these materials is creating collages.

### **Conclusion of the paper**

I want children to go into my classroom and have all the materials they need to grow from their experience and their knowledge. I want them to walk into the classroom and find activities and books in which they can see themselves and relate. I can have a little of everything around the classroom so that they feel more comfortable. I want my classroom to be a safe place for them to be who they are and not have to change. Every area has a different effect on children, from the library area to the block area and even into the dramatic play areas. They all rely on each other. If we are learning about our five senses, the students have books that they can rely on for extra support. Then the children can go to the art area and draw a picture of what they feel,



taste, smell, and see at the beach, for example. They can also act out what they see at the beach in the dramatic and play area. According to the article *Pre-k Spaces Design For A Quality Classroom*, Buckminster Fuller says that “If you want to do something good for a child, give him an environment where he can touch things as much as he wants” (10). I want kids to be able to touch the toys and come up with questions. Children should also be able to observe an object, find its function, and determine why it moves in a certain way. Piaget states that play is a very important part of children’s development because they can learn through play, and I agree with that. I want children to play and observe. I also want them to question everything they see in the classroom and may come across in the real world. They can use their imagination and creativity in all areas of play, and they can share their ideas with the rest of their classmates.

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