



Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane Australia

This is the author's version of a work that was submitted/accepted for publication in the following source:

Beamish, Wendi & [Saggers, Beth](#) (2013) Creating a warm and supportive learning environment for young children. *Early Edition Magazine : Childcare Queensland News*, p. 20.

This file was downloaded from: <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/62291/>

© Copyright 2013 Childcare Queensland

Notice: *Changes introduced as a result of publishing processes such as copy-editing and formatting may not be reflected in this document. For a definitive version of this work, please refer to the published source:*

CREATING A WARM AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

By Dr Wendi Beamish (Griffith University) and Dr Beth Sagers (QUT)



Planning and managing the classroom environment in relation to daily schedule, activities, and routines is vital to creating warm, supportive learning environments for young children.

Environmental arrangements in and outside of the classroom can either promote or detract from efforts of staff to build positive, supportive, and accepting environments in which all children can feel safe to learn and take risks.

The classroom should be arranged not only to support learning but also to deter challenging behaviours and nurture social emotional learning. The ten basic guidelines for designing environments are:

1. Create safe and comfortable spaces with clear physical boundaries. Have an inviting space for leave-takings where the child can separate and reconnect with parents and staff. Also have some cosy spaces to which children can retreat if feeling anxious or angry, or for taking a break from activities or people;
2. Arrange spaces for staff to readily observe the group so that emerging cues from individual children can be effectively responded to;
3. Allow choice and a degree of flexibility within activities and the daily schedule so children have some sense of control over the environment;
4. Create a language rich and communication-friendly environment where all children are encouraged to augment spoken language using gestures, dramatic representations, and electronic devices;
5. Offer specific activities that allow particular staff and peer proximity and time to build positive relationships with an individual child and allow the child to build reciprocal relationships and social skills;
6. Encourage children to learn to listen to each other and, wherever possible, use small group activities for peer modelling and peer coaching;
7. Set up predictable routines with clear structure and defined limits so that all children feel secure and safe;
8. Establish clear and reasonable class rules (3-6 in number) for expected behaviours, provide ongoing explanations as

to why each rule is important, identify consequences for following and not following each rule, and reward child approximations of each rule;

9. Make sure that good behaviour is encouraged and acknowledged throughout the day and that behaviours of concern are dealt with in a planned, proactive, and consistent manner by all staff; and
10. Design daily schedules and activities to minimize the amount of time children spend transitioning from one activity to another and, wherever possible, intersperse preferred and non-preferred activities.

It is also important that services reflect on the effectiveness of environmental arrangements. A simple way is to regularly ask the following questions:

- Is the environment welcoming and reflect the cultural diversity of the children?
- Does the physical arrangement of the classroom promote aggressive or disruptive behaviour?
- Does the traffic flow need to be assessed?
- Do clearly defined limits need to be instituted for activity areas?
- Do children need more intensive scaffolding and support in certain activity areas?
- Is a cool down space needed?
- Are private spaces available and are they easily supervised and visually accessible.
- Does the socio-emotional arrangement of the classroom foster interaction and peer modelling?
- Does the arrangement of materials and learning centres promote self-regulation?
- Is the environment stress free?