

Environment, Materials, and Program Structure

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CALIFORNIA PRESCHOOL LEARNING FOUNDATIONS



Invite staff to read the Developmental Sequence, PCF, Vol. 2, pp. 56-57. After reading the developmental sequence, discuss different children who they have observed at different developmental levels. Together brainstorm the different types of environment invitations that may best benefit these children.

Provide the appendix of materials. Have teachers walk through their room circling any material they see. Next teachers circle any material they think would be interesting to have in the classroom. Finally, participants choose three materials to add to the classroom in the next week.

Invite teachers to read the article, “Creating Centers for Musical Play and Exploration.” Highlight the section Teachers Roles on page 32. Together with teachers, read each role and definition. Ask teachers to reflect on which role they take on most, as well as which role they take on least and why. Challenge the teachers to each take on the least comfortable role at least once a day.

Ask teachers to think about the last time they re-arranged furniture in their home or bedroom. Was the arrangement right the first time, or did they consider other options and move it around for a few days? This illustrates the idea that works of art take time. We are developmentally focused on the process and want to allow ample time. Together brainstorm ideas of visual art that can be started and returned to over a period of time. Some ideas include: a mural on a flattened cardboard box, sidewalk chalk in a place that won’t get washed away, or a class

collage on butcher paper.

Give teachers the tip sheet, "Drama and Young Children," from the Illinois State Board of Education. Plan with teachers on how to gather pet props (leashes, bowls, stuffed animals, empty food containers, etc.) from families and the community. Work with teachers on creating an "animal shelter" outdoors. Help teachers model themes for children such as feeding the pets, taking the pets to the vet, "adoption" of pets, etc. Suggest extending this activity with appropriate children's literature.

Invite teachers to read the quote on page 26 of the Integrated nature of learning "Jones and Reynolds (2011) list the varied roles assumed by early childhood teachers, one of which they call "stage manager." This role means that the early childhood teacher purposely sets the stage for learning by selecting toys, furnishings, and materials that invite children to explore, experiment, and solve problems" (Integrated Nature of Learning, p. 26). After reading invite teachers to share their thoughts and reactions to the quote. With this in mind invite teachers to find an area of the classroom in which there is potential to increase the visual and performing arts play children experience. Ask teachers to take on the role of "stage manager" and make a list of materials that can be added to that area to invite VPA exploration, and experiment.

"Invite participants to read the last two paragraphs on page 89. Specifically draw participants attention to the quote "Curriculum for visual and performing arts should be open to forms of performance and visual representation reflected in different groups. In some families and cultures, singing and music are central to their daily lives" (FPC p. 89). Ask participants to think about the children and families in their classroom. What do they know about how their families experience visual and performing arts? How do they use this knowledge in planning experiences in the classroom? If they want to learn more how can they plan to gather this information? For example, if they know that one family participates in a Tahitian dance troupe perhaps they can ask them to share some music that could be incorporated into the free dance opportunities in the classroom. Or they could invite the family members to come to school and teach the children a portion of a Tahitian dance.