Setting up the Physical Environment Guidance Form

Both the indoor and outdoor space should provide a safe physical environment that is conducive to learning and reflective of the different stages of development of each child. Appropriate space and materials will be provided to conduct a variety of activities that promote development in each developmental domain. Functional areas allow for individual activities and social interactions. The physical environment supports positive behaviors. The environment also reflects acceptance that supports and respects gender, culture, language, ethnicity and family composition.

In the Classroom:

1. Establish traffic patterns for entering the room, moving to and from activity areas, bathroom, and children’s cubbies.

2. Minimize large open spaces and obstacles.

3. Organize the room so you can see as much as possible from every location to ensure children's safety.

4. Provide individual spaces for children to hang their clothing and store their personal belongings. Label spaces with their names and a photo (see label guidance)

5. Make every effort to include the children's home language in the signs and labels around the classroom. (See label guidance)

6. Display a visual graphic reminder of Behavior Expectations/ Classroom Rules Chart
   a. Second Step rules posters need to be displayed
   b. If using an additional rule chart then gather children’s input and follow guidance below:
      1. For font size and style – see label protocol form
      3. Positive words to direct behavior will be utilized, for example: Walking Feet, hands to myself, inside voices, wait for my turn, share with my friends, take care of our toys
      4. Post at children's eye level at large group
7. Display a Classroom Picture (pocket) Schedule

a. For font size and style follow label protocol form.

b. Utilize real photos of children

c. If Pocket Charts are not available, classroom staff will use a white piece of tag board and display the schedule reading from top to bottom

d. Words will be written first and then the picture next to it

e. The schedule will begin with Arrival and will end with Departure, both will need times

f. Mealtimes will need to have times displayed (times of meals should never be changed unless approved by USDA Manager) Infants will be feed on demand.

g. Outdoor times will need to have the time displayed

h. Other activities and transitions will not need times due to teachers being flexible and meeting the needs of children, but an established routine should be followed daily and accommodations made only when needed.

i. Established activities will need an estimated amount of time

1. Large group 10 to 15 minutes for preschool and 5 to 10 minutes for Infant & Toddlers.
   a. Curriculum time
   b. Music and IMIL
   c. Story time / Nursery Rhymes
   d. Welcoming and Goodbye
   e. Morning Message & Question of the day

2. Meals 30 minutes

3. Outdoor time for preschool up to 40 to 60 minutes depending on program (split in 2 sessions)

4. Outdoor time for infant toddlers up to 20 min 2x a day (if possible)

4. Choice Time up to 60 minutes of uninterrupted time (for preschool)

5. Rest time 45 to 90 minutes (depending on program), Infants are on their own schedule

7. Incorporate routine tasks into the program and daily schedule
   a. Allow time for routines such as toileting, eating, dressing, hand washing, tooth brushing
f. Display schedule at children’s eye level and will be posted at large group time

9. Other Classroom Charts

a. Classroom helper chart
1. See label guidance form for font style and size
2. Keep a minimal amount of helpers to better support each job: table helpers, light helper, door helper, 5 minute warning helper, line leader and plant helper

b. Who is Here Chart
1. Staff will utilize the Pocket chart
2. See label guidance form for font size and style
3. White sentence strips will be used
4. Child’s photo and type name will be placed on sentence strip
5. Teaching staff will develop a system of using pocket name chart as a sign in system

c. Weather chart (optional)

d. Calendar
1. Calendar should be utilized to teach today tomorrow and yesterday concept
2. Calendar will not be used to count the days (not age appropriate)
3. Days of the week can be introduced as what events will occur that day for example: On Monday we will have a field trip
4. Seek support from School Readiness Coach or School Readiness Content Specialist on how to utilize calendar at an age appropriate practice

9. Establish Interest Areas

a. Clearly define areas by using room dividers or furniture. Consider floor covering, lighting, and location of resources (e.g. electric outlet, water source, etc.) when setting-up areas.

10. Arrange the space to allow children to work individually, in small groups, or in a large group.

a. Have the Management System in place for entering and exiting areas to help balance the amount of children in each area (preschool only).

b. See label guidance form for font size and style

11. Interest Areas for preschool
a. Blocks/Building (may be in Large Group Area)
b. Dramatic Play
c. Manipulative Area (includes Math and Games)
d. Sensory Area
e. Creative Arts
f. Literacy (writing table or desk)
g. Discovery (includes Science)
h. Library Area (May be in Large Group Area)
i. Music Area (can be incorporated in another area)

For Infant & Toddlers:

a. Greeting area
b. Diapering / Toileting Area
c. Rest Area
d. Nursing/Eating Area
e. Areas of exploration and experiences
f. Gathering area

12. Materials in the Classroom:

a. Choose and/ or adapt materials that meet the interests (attractive and relevant to children's experiences and culture) and needs (challenging but not frustrating) of the children.

b. Ensure that all equipment and materials in classroom are in good condition.

c. Provide multiples of basic materials to minimize sharing problems.

d. Change the materials in the learning centers based on children's interest, skill level and promote high order thinking skills. (E.g. Dramatic play area can be housekeeping, store, flower shop, and farm.)

13. Organize materials.

a. Display materials on low, open shelves to promote accessibility and independent use by children.

b. Use containers to hold materials and toys with small pieces (e.g. plastic containers, baskets, etc.)

c. Have a designated place for everything in the classroom.

d. Utilize both pictorial and language labels for items in the room
1. See label guidance form for font size and style

2. Labels will be Velcro to the shelf, utilizing a small round piece of velcro

3. Labels will be placed on shelves for children to see and recognize what material needs to be place in the shelf

4. If clear containers are not available to hold materials, then a label will also need to be placed on the container for children to identify what goes into the storage container

14. Plan classroom display

   a. Reserve most of display space for children's learning and work. Keep displays simple.

   b. Display children's work at children’s eye level, label with compute print of child’s name or child’s signature.

   c. Change displays regularly.

   d. When displaying store bought pictures and materials, ensure that imagines are non-stereotypical (no cartoon characters or holidays) and authentic depictions of children and families.

15. Adapt and modify space to meet the needs of all children. Consider the needs of children with physical and sensory disabilities. Consult Special Service Mental Health Content Specialist for materials and equipment to accommodate special needs.

16. Provide a space for children to utilize when they need to calm down their bodies or have some alone time- can be a couch or a comforting area. Refer area as the calm down area verbally.