



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ **Provide a safe environment**
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care Providing a Safe Environment

Creating Developmentally Appropriate Environments

Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers thrive in environments tailored to meet their individual needs. According to Linda Armstrong, author of *Family Child Care Homes: Creative Spaces for Children to Learn*, the environment is defined as everything the child touches, uses, and experiences daily.

Knowing each child's developmental level and creating spaces and activities to meet their individual needs is called Developmentally Appropriate Practices, or DAP. Creating a developmentally appropriate environment has a profound impact on children's learning, behavior, and long-term success. Jim Greenman, author of "Caring Spaces, Learning Places," states that children's spaces need order and structure to help them make sense of the world and to allow them more experiences every day.

In thinking about how to set up your environment, keep in mind these three areas of developmentally appropriate practice:

- **Child development** – Know and understand milestones and how a child develops to promote growth and learning for each child. In your environment. Use child-sized, safe, and accessible furnishings to define spaces, and show children where and how to use the materials in each space.
- **Individual needs** – Each child develops in their own, unique way. Create learning zones based on children's interests, approach to learning, and abilities to support their focus, autonomy, and meaningful engagement in play. Regularly rotate materials to match evolving interests and developmental stages.
- **Cultural appropriateness** – Be responsive to each child's cultural and family background by utilizing culturally diverse materials.

In this newsletter, we will share strategies on how to set up your environment so all children can thrive.



Child-Sized Furnishings and Storage

One important milestone for young children is the ability to do things independently. One way to assist children to learn this skill is to store materials on low, open shelves. The types of storage you choose, including bins, baskets, and/or containers, can affect how easily children can access materials and put them away.

- Low, open shelves (such as a low bookshelf or shoe shelf) can display the toys and materials in a simple and attractive way. For young infants who are not yet mobile, materials need to be brought directly to them. However, as soon as children are able to crawl to materials, they should be encouraged to independently select and access the materials.
- Use an area rug in front of the shelf to better define each zone. Show the children how to take the toys off the shelf and put them on the rug to play with them.
- Store books on a shelving unit that allows children to see the front covers of books. This may spark greater interest in reading and make it easier for children to choose a book.
- Storage bins should be open (without lids) for materials that you want children to access themselves. They should also



be made of lightweight material (e.g., plastic vs. metal) and not too large or too heavy so that children can handle them independently.

Learning Zones

Learning zones are areas (big or small) that help organize the environment to support a range of interests and skills. They help children know where they can play. Here are some key considerations to keep in mind when creating zones.

- Safety is essential. Arrange furniture and household items so you can always see the children. Baby gates can be used to create a small, separate infant zone for non-mobile infants to play, and be safely away from toddlers and preschoolers, yet not confining the infant to a playpen.
- Create several zones in the child care area, if space allows, and based on children's interests. If you notice the children always playing with blocks, puzzles, and books, consider creating a quiet zone with books or puzzles for 1 or 2 children to be alone, and a work zone for construction vehicles, cars, and building blocks.
- Position the different zones within your child care space to be sensitive to children's temperament. It is best to have quiet zones away from the louder, larger play areas so each child can feel safe and comfortable in each space.



Toys and Materials

When selecting toys and play materials for your family child care home, prioritize safety, durability, and accessibility. In addition, choose toys that are age-appropriate and that reflect the culture and family background of the children in care. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

Selection of toys and materials:

- Ensure toys and materials are non-toxic, lead-free, well-constructed, and free of small, detachable parts (for infants and young toddlers).
- Toys should match each child's age and development, encourage open-ended play, and promote skills such as creativity, problem-solving, and social interaction.
- Include a variety of books, toys, and art materials (such as crayons representing different skin tones) that represent different cultures. This can include dolls with a variety of skin tones, toy food that represents different cultures, and books that have real pictures of diverse people.

Rotation and display of materials:

- Use clear bins or baskets to store the same kind of toys. This works because children can see the contents without dumping them out.
- Create a picture label (photo or drawing of the toy with the words printed on or next to it). Place the labels on both the bin and on the shelf, so children know where it goes when it is time to clean up.



- Have a rotation system so the children are not overwhelmed with the number of toys available or become bored with the same materials.
- Store the toys that are not being used out of sight (e.g., in a locked cabinet or high shelf). Place labels on the lidded bins so it is easy to access when needed to rotate toys.

By combining low, open shelving with categorized, clearly labeled bins, and a sensible toy rotation, you create a system that is safe, encourages independence, and makes play and daily cleanup much easier for both you and the children.

Citations

Armstrong, L.J. (2012). *Family Child Care Homes: Creative spaces for children to learn*. Redleaf Press.

Penn State Extension Better Kid Care. (2016). *Exploring Developmentally Appropriate Practice* <https://bkc-od-media.vmhost.psu.edu/documents/TIPS1401.pdf>

Virtual Lab School. (2023). *The Indoor Environment* <https://www.virtuallabschool.org/fcc/learning-environments/lesson-2>

Training Opportunity

Beyond the Shelves and Manipulatives: Learning Environments That Nurture Young Children

Register for Early Childhood Investigations Webinars to view this recorded webinar and earn a 1.5-hour certificate of participation. This webinar will inspire you to think about your learning centers and gain ideas for creating meaningful play zones.

<https://earlychildhoodwebinars.com/webinar/beyond-the-shelves-and-manipulatives-learning-environments-that-nurture-young-children-by-berna-artis-ma-ed>

Featured Activity

Dump and Pour



What you need:

- A plastic bin that is small enough for the child to pick up
- Safe, Developmentally Appropriate toys or materials to grasp

What to Do:

1. Show the child how to fill the bin with the safe materials.
2. Show her how to turn the bin over to dump out the items.
3. Encourage her to copy you. Give her positive encouragement as she does so. You can say “Wow! You did it just like I did. Great job.”
4. Count the items as she puts them in. If you speak more than one language, you can count in different languages, e.g., in Spanish, “uno, dos, tres.”
5. Talk about what she is doing when she puts the items into the bin. Use words you want her to learn, such as “You are cleaning up.” Show her where the bin goes on the shelf when the game is finished.



Safety Alert! Items that are small enough to fit through a toilet paper tube can cause choking if swallowed. Check the size of the items for safety before you let the child play with them.

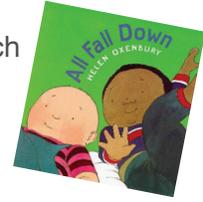
Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the Hawai'i State Public Library www.librarieshawaii.org

All Fall Down

by Helen Oxenbury

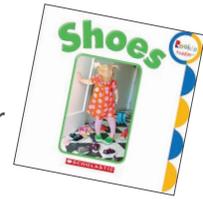
Infants will love this book, which features very few words but great pictures of babies doing the things they do, such as singing, walking, and, yes, falling down.



Shoes

by Scholastic

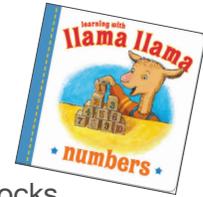
Sneakers for the playground, slippers for the beach, and sometimes no shoes. Footwear changes depending on where we are going. Toddlers will be able to relate to this book from Scholastic.



Learning with Llama Llama: Numbers

by Anna Dewdney

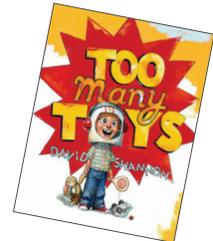
It's time to tidy up! Join Llama Llama as he helps his mama clean and count the mess he made, by putting toys and books where they go, sorting socks, and being a big Llama Llama.



Too Many Toys

by David Shannon

Spencer has too many toys! His Father and Mother trip and fall over them; the house is overflowing with too many! Spencer finds a place for everything and even gives some away, except one.



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