

Setting Up the Classroom Environment for Success

Welcome back to another new program year! As we think about the significance of the beginning of the year, we understand that teachers getting to know the children and their families, is key in setting up a classroom learning environment for a successful year. Becky Bailey shares that creating a “School Family” community early on “builds connections between families and schools, teachers and teachers, teachers and students, and students and students to ensure the optimal development of all.” Below are a few strategies and talking points to help us guide teachers in creating an environment for a successful school year!

Routines/Rituals

- Establishing both rituals and routines for children at the beginning of the year is a key factor in creating and maintaining a safe, nurturing, and positive classroom learning environment.
- Routine: a consistent, predictable factor in a daily schedule that is represented clearly through phrases, pictures, and words
- *Examples: a classroom schedule; clean-up time
- Ritual: activities that connect a group through eye-contact, presence, and playfulness
- *Examples: daily welcome/morning greeting; acknowledging birthdays through small celebrations; gathering songs/poems to bring the community together.
- Both routines and rituals not only help build a classroom community, but also prevent challenging behaviors and withdrawals.

Arrival	8:00
Bathroom & Wash Hands	8:00-8:05
Breakfast	8:05-8:30
Bathroom & Wash Hands	8:30-8:35
Outside	8:35-9:05
Transition Let's Talk About It Let's Find Out About It	9:05-9:10
Morning Meeting	9:10-9:25
Centers Clean up	9:25-9:40
Story Time	9:40-10:55 10:55-11:00
Music & Movement	11:00-11:20
Small Groups	11:20-11:25
Songs, Word Play and Letters	11:25-11:45
Lunch	11:45-12:00
Outside	12:00-12:30
Hands Wash	12:30-1:00
Quiet Time	1:00-1:05
End of the Centers	1:15-1:30
Dismissal	1:30-2:25
	2:30

Transitions

- Transitions refer to a change to in the environment
- It's Important to plan for these transitional changes when creating a daily schedule to maintain an engaged learning environment for children
- Transitions can provide opportunities to gain information about children (interest and/or assessment-based)
- *Examples: auditory; visual clues (such as posters); concrete object transition (carrying a blanket to their cubby as they prepare for the next activity); novelty/kinesthetic way transition (standing on one foot and hopping to line up)
- Being clear about classroom expectations during transition time can help keep children engaged as well as lessen behavioral challenges.



Mentor Minute (cont.)

School Family Community:

- It's important to make sure that both the children and their families know how important they are in this year's journey and throughout their educational experiences
- Positively reinforcing children's choices and behaviors and sharing these milestones with families will promote a sense of intrinsic motivation and accomplishment
- Assigning each child a classroom job promotes a sense of responsibility and community in the classroom
- Providing multiple opportunities for parents to volunteer both in and outside of the classroom (such as helping with small groups, being a guest reader, cutting items out at home, etc) will allow all parents to feel like a contributor
- Learning about the diversities of children and families to support the awareness of the cultures (perhaps suggest sending out an optional survey about a family's cultural background could be a great way to discover such information!)
- The elements within standard two, as well as our resource manual, are also great tools in helping teachers brainstorm ideas in which classroom community can be created and continue to flourish throughout the year!



Below are some guiding questions you might ask teachers to think more about setting up the classroom environment for success:

- What are your expectations (dreams/hopes) for your classroom as you start a new year?
- What are some ways that you support children's success in building a "School Family"?
- How do you support your children in learning routines in the classroom? What routines during your class day seem the most successful and why do you think so?
- What are some ways that you create rituals in your classroom to support a positive learning environment and build classroom community?
- How do transitions support children's success in the classroom?
- How do you support children with differing needs during transitions?
- How can you use transition times as opportunities for collecting information on children's learning?
- What are some ways that you include families in their children's learning?
- How are children and their families different cultures included and celebrated in the classroom?

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