

## Early Childhood Environmental Design Community of Learners

### Session 1 Homework | Practitioner Action Research: Environments that Speak to Us

*“The environment is the most visible aspect of the work done in the schools by all the protagonists. It conveys the message that this is a place where adults have thought about the quality and instructional power of space. The layout of the physical space is welcoming and fosters encounters, communication and relationships. The arrangement of structures, objects, and activities encourages choices, problem solving, and discoveries in the process of learning. There is attention to detail everywhere — in the color of the walls, the shape of the furniture, the arrangement of simple objects on shelves and tables.”*

— Lella Gandini, Reggio Children

Choose a space in your program (classroom, entryway, etc.) to reflect upon. Document strengths and ideas for change for each environmental dimension below. Photograph/sketch elements of the environment that are important to you and areas you would like to improve upon.

	Reflective Questions	Strengths	Ideas for Change
<b>COLOR</b> Evaluate the color in your classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are the colors chosen with intention to set a tone and create meaning for an area?</li><li>• Are there more natural colors or more primary colors?</li><li>• If primary colors dominate, what can be changed or removed?</li></ul>		

<p><b>TEXTURE</b></p> <p>Compare soft surfaces with hard surfaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there soft textures such as rugs, pillows, fabric, curtains?</li> <li>• Are there natural textures (vs. plastic) such as baskets, wooden toys, wooden trays, wooden objects, shells, dried flowers, seeds, sticks, leaves, and living plants?</li> </ul>		
<p><b>ORGANIZATION</b></p> <p>How are areas of the classroom organized?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there distinct learning centers separated with clear, visible boundaries and pathways for each area? (Boundaries may be signified by physical objects such as rugs, bookshelves turned to provide a barrier, large plants, and platforms.)</li> <li>• Are a variety of materials in different areas accessible to children throughout the day? ·</li> <li>• Are centers located to enhance and support one another? For example, are loud and quiet areas separated?</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a quiet space/nook for children?</li> <li>• Are there areas of teacher clutter than can be organized?</li> </ul>		
<p><b>AESTHETICS</b></p> <p>How can you make the classroom attractive and homelike and reflective of the children in your care?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the room appealing and comfortable?</li> <li>• Is there children's artwork and documentation of child work on the walls?</li> <li>• Are there attractive and intentional displays?</li> <li>• Are natural light sources covered or open?</li> <li>• Are there living plants inside?</li> <li>• Is the classroom visually cluttered with too many colors or too many commercial posters on the walls?</li> </ul>		

Adapted from Exchange Out of the Box Training, *Environments that Speak to Us* (Voss-Rodriguez, Duncan & Albrecht)