



PRESCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

Reflective Planning Guide

Introduction

This Reflective Planning Guide is a resource to help educators and caregivers consider their environment with a reflective lens. Like so many aspects of a teaching practice, the cycle of observation and reflection supports the design of a thoughtful, responsive learning space that grows and changes as children's needs, abilities, and interests evolve. Please feel free to adapt or adjust these exercises to best suit the needs of individual programs, spaces, and philosophies.

A note for new teachers: while you might find it helpful to partner with a colleague for some elements of these exercises don't underestimate that value that your fresh perspective offers.

Part 1 - Centering Your Purpose

In the space below, name values or objectives that you hope your classroom environment will support. Then, name aspects of your environment that you plan to continue that are already in alignment with these goals. Finally, brainstorm new ideas that you would like to implement in support of these outcomes.

Value / Objective:

Value / Objective:

Value / Objective:

Current practice:

Current practice:

Current practice:

New possibilities:

New possibilities:

New possibilities:

Part 2 - Area Specific Reflections

Use the guide below to consider individual centers or interest areas in your classroom. Is there one center that often feels particularly joyful, efficient or collaborative? If so, start there! Once you've had a chance to notice elements that support positive and productive use of space and materials, you'll be ready to problem-solve around more challenging or frustrating areas.

Revisiting documentation or family communication, especially photos, can help refresh your memory. If this is a new setting for you, pull from previous experiences in other spaces or observations of other early learning environments.

Copy this page to repeat this exercise as needed for additional areas in your learning space.

Interest Area:	
Worked Well:	Challenges:
Wonderings and considerations moving forward:	

Part 3 - Materials Inventory

Now that you've identified your goals and considered the functionality of your space, let's evaluate materials. Revisit each center, considering your materials and observations about the use of this space. Do you notice areas where supplemental materials might reduce conflict, extend creativity/collaboration, or otherwise support effective use of this space? Are there centers where too many materials made it difficult for children to use the space well or to tidy up independently? Are there items currently included in centers that will not be present at the beginning of the year, but thoughtfully reintroduced as children become oriented to your space? Use the area below to collect your observations.

Add supplemental materials:

Reorganize or reduce quantity:

Remove:
(to be introduced at a later time)

Needs repair or replacement:

What's next?

Your students are ever growing! These exercises are most effective when part of a year-round reflective practice. Plan to revisit these prompts during natural transitions in your year such as seasonal breaks, when planning for a room reset, or when you've noticed many of your students making developmental leaps.

Think about your thought-partners in your context. Who can you team up with to talk through your observations and ideas? Directors and curriculum coordinators have a wealth of experience and institutional knowledge to share. A teaching partner is a likely choice for ongoing collaboration. Colleagues that work with children both older and younger than your current age group can often provide valuable insight as well. Don't forget to visit ShopBeckers.com to access our products and resources!

As you might have guessed, there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts. Hopefully, taking the time to work through these reflective invitations has activated a lens of curiosity and a growing sense of how environments can support both community and individual learning objectives. Your new class will be full of children with their own unique combinations of strengths, interests, sensory needs, and social dynamics. As you grow to connect with your students, individually and as a group, you'll have insight to inform how you might adjust your environment to best support joy, wonder, and learning.

Reflective Planning Checklist

- Observe: Notice what's going well and what's challenging.
- Be curious: How might adjustments to your space and materials support your goals?
- Visit ShopBecker.com for all of your early childhood needs!