

Tip Sheets

Infants and Toddlers Environment as Curriculum



Environmental surroundings have a powerful effect on people of all ages and there is not one

environment that works for everyone. Creating early education environments that support infants, toddlers, and families includes understanding the role of the environment. In this context, the word “environment” refers to *indoor and outdoor early education settings where infants and toddlers are cared for* and includes elements such as lighting, noise, air quality, furniture, equipment, materials, the daily schedule, and most importantly, people.

Planning environments is an important, reflective process that starts with careful observation. Some important questions to consider when reflecting on an environment for infants and toddlers include:

- Is the environment responsive to children’s interests and individual needs?
- Do children have ample opportunities for self-initiated exploration?
- Does the environment respect the experiences of all children, including cultural and linguistic diversity and diversity in ability?
- Does the physical environment include areas to support children’s natural curiosity and initiative to learn through play?
- Are there a variety of materials to meet individual needs and interests?
- Does the schedule include uninterrupted time for exploration and play?

- Do program policies and practices promote each child’s sense of trust and secure relationships with caregivers?

Guiding Principles for Infant and Toddler Environments

The environment is a valuable teacher and can be utilized to support the:

- Development of children in all domains
- Competencies and interests of the child
- Child’s exploration and engagement

People are a key part of the environment, and infant and toddler learning and development are grounded in relationships. Planning environments should happen in partnership with families.

Additional Resources

Early Introductions to Sensory Gardens
<https://growing-minds.org/early-introductions-to-sensory-gardens-infants-and-toddlers>

For more information, visit www.inclusivechildcare.org.

Copyright © 2024 Center for Inclusive Child Care

These materials may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. Information in this tip sheet has been modified from multiple sources.

Funding provided by the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

www.inclusivechildcare.org