

“The classroom setting conveys strong messages to children about how they are regarded and how they regard each other. The classroom environment that centers the child in the learning and teaching process uses children’s cultural knowledge, provides opportunities for positive interpersonal interactions, enhances a sense of community, and fosters respect among children and teachers. “

Starting Small

The following suggestions are designed to help you construct a nurturing, culturally, relevant learning environment. Periodic evaluations of your classroom climate will allow you to make changes.

Promote a sense of ownership and responsibility for classroom space by involving children in the decision making process when arranging classroom furniture or designing visual displays. For example:

1. Discuss with children how furniture arrangements can encourage or discourage rough-housing, create quiet and active spaces, and enhance small-or large group activities.
2. Ask children to help identify types of activity areas and determine the location, content, and duration of classwork displays.

Model inclusion and collaboration throughout the classroom design process. For example:

1. Display posters, bulletin boards and decorations that reflect a wide variety of interests, abilities, and cultures.
2. Label pictures, objects and artifacts in a variety of world languages.
3. Make all work and play areas equally appealing to boys and girls.
4. Make all areas accessible to children who are physically challenged.
5. Create “Welcome Centers” for guests, and display lists that promote acceptance, respect and caring.

Be resourceful in bridging home, school and community. For example:

1. Include songs, stories and artifacts from children’s homes.
2. Display real photos of children and families.
3. Use community resources such as tourism posters and postcards, local products and public library materials so that children can make connections from school to home to community.