

AIAN Teacher Webinar Series
Managing the Classroom: Designing Environments

Alma Sandoval: Welcome to our second webinar of our monthly webinar series for teachers working in AIAN Head Start programs. We know how very busy you are, and we appreciate you taking the time to be with us. Today, we will be talking about designing environments. This webinar will provide you with information and a process for creating effective classroom arrangements. This is important because in organized, well-planned environments, children tend to be more engaged in classroom activities, and engagement leads to learning. So this is who we are. I'm Dr. Alma Sandoval, and I'm a tribal liaison working for the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning. And with me, I have two beautiful and wonderful women that are going to be working with me to provide you with this information. Vanessa, would you like to introduce yourself?

Vanessa Maanao-French: Sure, thanks, Alma. My name is Vanessa Maanao-French, and I also work with the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning. I'm based out of Seattle, Washington, in the University of Washington. And for those who are curious, the little girl who's sitting on my lap is my daughter Cecilia, and she's actually sitting right beside me today as I'm doing this webinar, so if you hear a little peeping every now and then, that's my 2-year-old. Thanks.

Alma: Thank you, Vanessa. And Dawn?

Dawn Williams: Hi, everyone, this is Dawn Williams. I'm the project manager for our webinars here at NCQTL, and I'm also here for your technical support during the webinar, so if you have any questions or concerns at any time, please just pop it into chat down there in the lower left-hand corner, and I will try to do my best to help you. You could also just send an email to the link that—the email that was on the announcement that was sent out to you and we can try and help you that way if chat isn't working out for you. And those are my two little girls. They are 3 and 5. And I wish they were with me, too. Hi, Cici. Thanks for joining us today.

Alma: Thank you, Dawn. So let's start by reviewing our framework for effective practice. I know that most of you are already familiar with this, but let's review it one more time. So the house structure supports school readiness for all children. The foundation represents effective and engaging interactions and environments. The pillars represents research-based curricula and teaching practices and also ongoing child assessment. The roof represents highly individualized teaching and learning. All components interact with each other and are essential for effective everyday practice with all children. Our topic of today, designing environments, fits into the foundation of the house, as it is about wellorganized classrooms. While human relationships play a key role in children's healthy development, the physical and temporal environments also have significant impact. When environments are engaging, they support children's participation in activities that promote development and learning. Both indoors and outdoors are important environments to take into consideration, so the central topic today is the interior of a classroom.

Vanessa: I love this topic. I think because the impact of your environment can have such a profound impact on how kids interact not only with each other but with the materials you set out, because your best planning can sometimes be sabotaged by not having things in the right place. It's actually pretty amazing. I think about all of the science—it really is science—that goes behind how people design our grocery stores and the malls we go to. It's all laid out so that we see what they want us to buy. So as teachers, kind of keeping that same kind of mindset, today we're going to think about the effects that having a well-designed environment can have. What do we want our kids to buy into? What do we want them to engage in? And that's what this is all about, designing learning environments. I know it sounds kind of strange, but it really does parallel. So today we'll describe those effects and identify those key components of really effective environments. And we'll also discuss, you know, how can you approach the design, how are you actually going to do it, including what you put on the shelves and how you group children together to create that really well-balanced and really well-organized classroom environment.

Alma: When the environment in a classroom is arranged in an efficient manner, this can highly increase child engagement in learning experiences. The components of these classrooms include well-designed physical spaces, selection of relevant contents, and intentional groupings of children.

Vanessa: So now we have a question for you; we'd love to know what you think. It's a quick true or false question to get you warmed up using some of the tools on Blackboard that we have for you. So true or false, let us know what you think: the design of the classroom environment has an impact on how children behave and interact.

Dawn: Okay, well, I'm going to publish those to the whiteboard and let you know what people thought.

Vanessa: Okie-doke. Well, people agree. The people that voted agree. And, yes, it is very, very true that the design of your classroom environment can really have a strong impact on how kids interact. And I'm sure that those of you who weren't able to figure out quite how to do your vote or if you were voting together, discussing it, you're all shaking your head going, "Yeah, we knew that." All right, so let's move on to our next question. The next question is a multiple choice, and you'll be able to select your vote in the same spot, but here's the question. What is your level of confidence in designing your classroom environment to guide children's behavior? Do you feel very confident, confident, neutral, or not confident yet?

Dawn: Okay. And this time when you go to complete that poll, you'll see an A in the box, and once you click on that A, there'll be four options that come up—A, B, C, or D—and you just select one of those. And also, if you are having a little trouble finding that box, you could put your answer in the chat, and that will help us out as well. Great, I see a B down in chat, thank you. Okay, I'm going to go post those to the whiteboard. Here you go.

Vanessa: Okay. So we've got some confident. Good, good. And we've got some neutral, which means we can bump you right up there after this webinar. And for those that are confident, maybe during this webinar there'll be a couple more little tricks, some more strategies that'll really take you up to that very confident level. And the other thing that I remember from being a teacher is sometimes it's year to year

how my confidence, you know, is based on the groupings of children that I have. So we learn something new with every group of children. I'm sure you guys understand that. So let's keep going, and we'll learn more.

Alma: Thank you, Vanessa. So now we'll start talking about really the content of this presentation. So the first ingredient to a recipe for a classroom that supports children's engagement is a well-designed physical space. So what do we mean when we talk about the design of physical spaces? Every early childhood environment is full of pros and cons. It is how educators work with the many different aspects of a classroom that can make a tremendous difference. Teachers can be surprised by the results when they assess the space for both limitations and strengths, when they strategize how to optimize what they have to work with in their classrooms, or when they try a different arrangement to see what happens and then modify based on what is working and what is not. Sometimes a modification can be minor. For example, raising or lowering a shelf, stop signs over unavailable areas, masking tape to better define a space, etcetera. So please remember that early childhood environments are a work in progress. As the needs of children change, the room may need minor changes or have to be rearranged completely to meet those needs. So now I have to clarify that most Head Start programs typically decide on the number and type of interest areas based on the guidance of the chosen curriculum. The curriculum usually provides detailed information about setting up the learning environment with interest areas and a daily schedule. This webinar does not cover those specific topics. It addresses only the placement of centers or interest areas, the content of the centers, and overall design of the physical space.

Vanessa: Thanks, Alma. One thing I love doing is getting down to the child's perspective, so really getting down at their eye level. And remember just a couple minutes ago, I said, you know, there's a science to designing the stores we go and visit, and there's a science, really, to how you design your classroom. So if you were to think about the store you love to go to, think about what it looks like and feels like when you first walk through the door. I mean, what do you see first? In one of my favorite stores, the first thing I see when I'm going grocery shopping is just this beautiful array of fruits and vegetables. Just the colors are amazing. I want to—you know, right up front they've got the apples and the grapes and the—you know, everything just looks like I've got to go have a snack right now, and that's totally on purpose. I end up spending a lot more time in that store because I'm seeing everything look so inviting. And I'm actually kind of hungry now, so maybe that's not a good example for me. But think about doing that in your own classrooms today. When you go back to your classrooms, or maybe you're sitting in your classroom right now, go to your front door of your classroom and just sit down or kneel there and just scan your classroom from the child's perspective. Get on your knees and kind of think, what is the first thing that grabs your eye? What is the first thing that draws you in? What gets you excited about learning? Does it feel welcoming? Would your children feel like, "I'm so excited to be here, I can't get enough of this place, I want to start playing"? Is there enough space in each of these areas where kids can see right away, "That's where I'm going"? Is there enough space also when you're in those areas? So then go and kneel in each area. Is there enough space, really, if a kiddo wanted to build a huge block structure? Is there enough space for four or five kids to do that? So spend some time today.

And maybe you've done this exercise before, but it's worth doing again each year or every couple of months even, if you rearrange your furniture, to get down at that child's level and ask yourself those questions. Am I excited to be here? Would my kids love this space the way it's designed?

Alma: Now we're going to watch a video, but before we watch this video, let me explain that this video shows real classrooms. They are not featured necessarily to highlight models for best practices, though they do contain some good examples. They are featured here only as an opportunity for you to improve your skills at affecting the environment for children's learning and development. So please keep that in mind.

Dawn: Hi, folks, this is Dawn again. You're going to see your screen change for just a moment, but don't be alarmed. The video should start playing for you right away, and if it does not, please just press the play button that'll be underneath the video. [music plays] Narrator: Designing an early childhood environment is an opportunity to explore the impact of the physical space on children's learning and development. These are real classrooms used every week by children and teachers. In all of the examples depicted here, as with any classroom in use, you will see strengths and limitations. As you look at these images, ask yourself about the traffic patterns, the boundaries, the teacher's line of sight, the homelike features, and the reflections of culture. How are each of these addressed in the different spaces? Can children easily move about the room? How flexible is the space to accommodate gross motor movement? Do the furnishings look sturdy and child-sized? Are the quiet and active areas in proximity or spaced so as not to disrupt one another? Do you think these centers would be interesting to children? Why or why not? Will children be overstimulated in this environment or understimulated? Are the areas set up so children know how to make the best use of them or at least so children know what to do in each? How do these learning environments compare to yours? How do your spaces support child-directed activities? How does your environment support learning goals? Like the early childhood environments depicted here, every space is full of limitations and strengths. Can you now improve on your design? These examples were provided to enhance an educator's skill in maximizing children's learning and development through the design of the environment. We wish you the best in your classroom.

Vanessa: Great. Thank you. I hope you all had a chance to watch the video. If you weren't able to see it, let us know in chat. We're always trying to make sure that you're getting the full—oh, one group couldn't watch it. The access was blocked. Okay, so we'll have to figure out a way for you to be able to watch that video. It's also a part of your in-service suites box that your education manager has. It's located within the PowerPoint. So we'll figure out a way to make sure you get a chance to see that video. I just noticed a group said they can't watch it. But let's move on to our next activity, and this is where that paper and pencil comes in handy. And I know you may have done this exercise before, but it'll really help us think about the next concepts we're going to talk about during the webinar today. So if you would, take the next three to five minutes to sketch out your classroom's floor plan. Where do you have your learning centers, tables, bookshelves? It doesn't have to be perfect, it just has to be able to help you kind of see in your classroom during the rest of this webinar. And while you do that, I'm going to kind of set one up on your screen as well. I had to do it with, you know, computer squares and rectangles, so it won't be nearly as pretty as yours, but take a few minutes, and I'll draw along with you.

Dawn: Hi, everyone, I started a timer up there for you. We're going to give you about five minutes to go ahead and do this. So when the timer is down to zero, you'll know that your time is up. It's up at the very top in the middle of your screen there.

Vanessa: Okay, you've got about a half a minute left, so finish up that learning area, put in those bookshelves. About 30 seconds.

Alma: Okay, so let's get started again. So you may be asking yourself at this point, "Where do I start?" The first thing you need to pay attention to when assessing your classroom is the space, the boundaries. Ask yourself, "Are the centers clearly defined with furniture, rugs, or shelves? Is there enough space for all children to easily move around the room? In each defined area, is there adequate space for the number of children using it?" Once you have done that, you can assess the proximity, the distance. Are the quiet and noisy areas in proximity or separated? Are centers located near things that children need to complete projects? For example, is the art center near the sink? Also, are game shelves within reach of tables? Are teachers able to see children in all centers? Now, when you do an assessment of the home and culture factor in your classroom, you could ask yourself, "What homelike features are included in the classroom? How is the culture reflected in it?"

Vanessa: And also think about the things which you can change and acknowledge and embrace the things you cannot. There are some things about your classrooms that are just permanent. One of my favorite classrooms that I worked in had these beautiful, amazing windows. They were nearly floor to ceiling. The problem was that now I didn't have places to put up kids' artwork. There was also this radiator that ran the entire length of that wall, which meant I couldn't put furniture up against it. We have to then also embrace what our room gives us. You know, most times we don't get to choose our room. But what can we be flexible about? What can we move? You know, I think that just about everybody in Head Start and early learning, we have cubbies, right? Those things are huge, and they take up lots and lots of space. And sometimes you have to have them in your classroom, so how do you work them into your classroom design? Or is there a possibility to put them out in the hallway instead of in your classroom? So think about the things you can change and the things you can't. And also, you guys know this because you're in your classrooms every day, your environment can really make a difference in how kids interact and behave. Think to yourself, or talk with your teaching team, where do those challenging behaviors occur most often? You know, you're probably thinking right now, "Well, it's at the block area," or whatever area it happens to be. And think if there are ways to change that. Are there enough materials in that center? Is it a matter of noise, right? Is it too loud for kids in that area? Or is it too distracting, is there too much to look at? So think about these things as we move along. And also, on the other side, are there areas where kids are just always really positively engaged with one another? You know, it's just an area where there are no issues, right? Maybe it's the manipulative table where you have the puzzles set out, kids just seem to naturally cooperate there. So what can we borrow and learn from that area to apply to another area that may be more challenging?

Alma: Now that we have talked about the well-designed physical space, it is time to move on to the second component of a recipe for effective environments, which is relevant content. So it is optimal if all of the materials and activities in a classroom relate to children's interests and developmental needs. It is easier to reach educational goals when a teacher selects the contents for relevance of learning—to

learning. You have to ask yourself here, "Are there materials or objects which reflect the culture of the community? Is this really relevant to my children?" It is also important to consider variety and quantity. Are there items for different developmental levels? Are there duplicates of favorite items? Is there enough but not too many? All those are important questions to take into consideration. We also need to pay attention to the integration of learning domains in centers and individualizing for children. Are relevant books and writing materials in every area? Are there items that match children's interests?

Vanessa: Let's take a look at a classroom to kind of see how that all comes together, all the things that Alma just talked about. And I love this photo because I was actually there when this photo was taken. So this photo was actually from—where was this? And I'm going to say it wrong. I know that this is Teacher Teresa. And, oh, at Oneida. Yes, thank you. My memory came back to me. This is Teacher Teresa, and the little boy holding the book, his name is [inaudible]. So let's look at Teresa and this little small group and see what she's got going on as it relates to content within her classroom. So you can see that she's got books and she's got music kind of set out. And I love the way it's displayed; you can see it right away. The visual displays, it's not only, you know, learning materials but also things that children have done, which is lovely. There are materials and toys in this area, and obviously you guys all recognize this as the block area, but it's not just blocks, there are other things, too, which is really exciting. And then finally, they're engaging in activities. And what's wonderful about this photo is that they're taking the books from one area and bringing it over and extending play through what they're reading about in the books. It's really, really cool stuff.

Alma: So here we have more examples of areas in the classroom. In what ways are children in these rooms being supported to make independent choices around learning? Well, we can again see, as Vanessa mentioned, books and music, visual displays, materials and toys. Now, it is important to remember that when you're trying to determine what things you can add or take out, you consider the things that we already mentioned, which are the relevance to learning, variety and quantity, and integration and individualization.

Vanessa: So now we'd love to hear from you. I feel like Alma and I have been chatting quite a bit, and though we both have lovely voices, it'd be nice to have some input from you all. So when you think about what you're putting on the shelves for the children, what's some of the thinking that goes behind that, right? You're putting toys and art material and music out there, but why? Is it based on children's interests, have the kids asked for it, is there something going on currently in the community that you're bringing into the classroom? Give us your ideas. We'd love to hear from you. And we'll read them out as we see you typing away. I can see some folks are typing. Ah, availability, that's—yes, thank you for putting that out there. That's absolutely true. Sometimes what we put out is what we have, right? Absolutely true. I see the—just the word "culture." I'm assuming that means cultural relevance. That's awesome. Thank you, thank you. I've worked in classrooms before, [inaudible] classrooms where they kind of waited a little while to put out those scissors because they had young 3s and so they kind of worked their way up to where the kids were able to have the fine motor skill to be able to use those. And, you know, in some classrooms, you have a variety of types of scissors even. You know, the kind that are just plastic and you can't hurt yourself to the ones that are a little bit more not really grown-up kind, but you know what I mean.

So just really thinking about the children's current abilities is also one way to think about it. I know doing home visits, you learn a lot about the children. You know, some kids are really interested in dinosaurs, so you've got to make sure you've got at least one dinosaur out if you can so when they come to school the first day, they see, "Oh, my gosh, a dinosaur! I'm home." So little things like that can make a huge, huge difference. Let's see, I'm trying to think if there's anything else I can think of off the top of my head that really comes out for me. You know, if there are cultural celebrations happening in the classroom, I mean, happening in the community, excuse me, and you want to bring that into the classroom, that's certainly something that you'll want to think about, and maybe that's what our friends were mentioning when they said cultural. So thank you for sharing with us. Please continue to keep writing. Oh, cost. Ooh, good one, yes. That does drive how we stock our classrooms, right? What's available and how much budget we have to put stuff into the classroom. I worked in a classroom with a—we had a really small budget, and so teachers would, to keep things fresh in their classrooms, sad to say, they would swap materials from classroom to classroom because the kids in my classroom didn't see the cars or the puzzles from the other classroom, right? And so we would swap back and forth just to keep things interesting. So I just want to move on, but please feel free to keep chatting away with us if you've got more ideas, because then we can share that with the rest of the groups. Thank you. So I'm going to walk us through a little activity. Well, it's more of a "me talking at you thing," but follow along, this is good. It's about how you can match your classroom content to a learning goal.

And so what I have for you right now are just a couple learning goals that you might have towards the beginning of the year, which is kind of where we're at, right? Kind of sort of in the beginning of the year? So it could be that your learning goals for the children are to be able to greet each other and to invite one another to play, right? So to be able to learn names and learn the steps to say, "Hey, come play with me," which is kind of a big thing when you're only 3 or 4. And then the second learning goal may be to appropriately grasp a marker or crayon for writing. We're talking about those fine motor skills, okay? So those are the learning goals we've got in our head. And then we even match some of your program-wide school readiness goals. So let's look over the next column, which is what are the interests of the children? How am I going to coax them in to want to do these two things? So I'm watching the kids, and I'm noticing that they really, really enjoy painting. If I break out the easel, if I take out the watercolor paints, I have so many kids gathered around the table that want to do it, and they're engaged for a long time. So I'm paying attention to that. I also notice that during my circle time, kids really enjoy singing, so we sing a lot of songs. So how can you think about incorporating singing into these learning goals? And then finally, the kids seem to really like stories about animals. Okay, so I'm thinking about these three things that have the interest of the children. How can I match that with content? So here are some ideas. I can find a CD—I can borrow from the teacher next door—that has songs about how we greet our friends. Easy enough. We can work that into our morning circle. Animal stories about friendship, okay? We can find some of those, too, to bring those in. Local library or maybe I already have some on my bookshelf. To really work on that fine motor, since kids are interested in painting, I'm going to try different tools for them to use while painting. Whether it's different sizes of paintbrushes, maybe I'll have them paint with different things, right? Maybe they can paint with pinecones. You know, I'll be creative. And then finally, I want to make sure that since they gravitate towards that easel, that I put some other writing tools over there, too. So it's not just paintbrushes all the time maybe. Maybe I have paintbrushes some days and some days it's chalk and some days it's colored pencils, just mixing it up.

Trying to get the kids to be more engaged with one another. And as I'm there sitting with them, I'm encouraging them to use language to invite each other to join one another in play and to talk to one another about what they're doing, what they're painting. So here just are some quick ideas about how to link learning goals with content.

Alma: Okay, so now let's start talking about intentional groupings, which is the third component in our recipe to support children's engagement. Throughout the schedule of the class, intentionally grouping children can enhance a teacher's ability to provide instruction. This can be done entirely in the moment or planned well in advance. Either way, educators should decide on the purpose, determine the composition, and develop a plan. Now, please be aware that these points that I highlighted don't have to be time-consuming, but they are instrumental to the success of the grouping purpose. Teachers should be able to group children easily and with better outcomes when they clearly articulate educational goals for classroom activities, when they know which skills children are working on currently, and when they know their children. And here, I'm talking about knowing what is their developmental level and preferences. So let's talk about how to maximize learning. My recommendation to teachers is to match the group size with the type of activity that the class is engaging in. For introducing concepts, routine activities, and building community, large groups tend to work well. While introducing skills can be successful, teaching them is less effective in this type of grouping. For engaging interactions and increased opportunities to support children's learning, small groups are most effective. This is where instruction can be tailored for each group of children. Any child may need a periodic boost of one-on-one instruction.

When introducing a complex skill or when a student is struggling, highly individualized instructions offer the best outcome. So to review, let's summarize the three steps for grouping children. Step one is to decide the purpose. Here you are going to be deciding if you are going to be introducing a concept or teaching a skill. You're going to be asking yourself, "Will this activity benefit from lots of interactions, or is it about building the classroom community?" And when you decide on the purpose, please don't forget to do something that is fun based on children's interests. Now, step two is to determine the composition. So here, you're going to answer the question of how many. You will decide on the number of children. Are you going to be matching skilled children with less precision ones, or are you going to be clumping similar skill levels? That is what you have to decide in step two. So for step three, you will develop a plan. You will designate how the children will be grouped and what activity each group will do with each teacher or volunteer. You will be in control. That's why you will need to plan.

Vanessa: Great. So let's try putting this into real-life perspective. It's really good information, so now let's try thinking about some of those activities you might do during the course of the day and what kind of grouping it should be in: one-on-one, large groups, or small groups. So here are some common activities, right? So we've got pedestrian safety lesson, which everybody does in the first 30 days. And then we've got counting with one-to-one correspondence, okay? So that's a skill. Tooth brushing, also another requirement, so how do you guys do that? And then learning to write letters or learning to write your name. So how do we help kids do that? And when I say let's try it, what I'd love for us to do—actually more you than me—is to have you actually type the letter of that activity into a column. So, Dawn, can you explain how they can find this tool?

Dawn: Certainly, that would be my pleasure. So we've got a new tool to introduce to you, and on the side of your panel, you'll see that next to the part that's been boxed, there's a panel with a lot of different tools for you to use. We're going to use the text box tool, and it's—you'll either see an A with some lines or an uppercase A. You can use either one of those options. And what you'll do is click on that and then drag your cursor over to the whiteboard and hold it down and drag a text box to whatever size you want. And then you can actually just type your letter in there. So it's just like you're typing on a computer, the same thing you would do in Word or another program if you were using a text box. So that's what we want you to do here on this next slide.

Vanessa: Perfect, thank you, Dawn. So we are asking you, though, to play around with Blackboard and use these tools, because we'd love to keep using them in the future to keep things more interactive. So now here are the letters again. So where would you put A, pedestrian safety lesson? Would you put that under large group, small group, or one-on-one? And feel free to pop in that letter where you think it goes. And I know somebody out there may be thinking, "What if I think I would do it in both?" Great question. If you can make it sit right on the line, we'll take that answer, too.

Dawn: Yeah, and just go ahead and pop that wherever you can, folks, and I will move it around if it's on top of someone else's. So you just go ahead and pop that in wherever you feel comfortable. Excellent. Oh, what quick learners you all are. You love the text tool. Good job!

Vanessa: Loving it, loving it. Brilliant group. I appreciate that you all are taking a little leap of faith and trying it out. This is good. And I know that there's a group of you together at one computer, so feel free to confer or maybe each person can choose which one that they would like to contribute to the column.

Dawn: That's a great idea, just pop in multiple answers for each person.

Vanessa: There you go.

Dawn: All right. Great.

Vanessa: Maybe just another few seconds, get your votes in there. There are no wrong answers, by the way. So feel free to put down what you normally do.

Dawn: It's a great decision to use this tool, Vanessa.

Vanessa: I love it. Have some smart people out there. Okay, this is great. Thank you all so much. In my experience, you know, working with teachers who are much better teachers than I was, they would tell me sometimes, too, "Sometimes you do one-on-one, and then it becomes a small group, and then it's reinforced again during a large group." So, again, it really just depends on what your purpose is, right? What's your intended goal? And then, you know, how would you group your kids together, and what your plan is, and it's always great to have a plan. So we're going to keep going, but thank you so much. I know this was something new, we're asking you to be interactive, and you guys just did it. Awesome, love it. So this next slide is a handout for you, because I want you to be able to take this away and do it again, because perhaps you're not sitting with your full teaching team, right? So you can download this form; Dawn's put it into chat for you. So if you click on the link, it'll pop up for you, and it walks through

the same content that Alma just shared and basically the activity we just shared. So you can think about each component of your day, those major activities, and think to yourself, "We've been doing tooth brushing in large groups. Is that really working for us?" There are people that do tooth brushing in large groups, and it can be effective. Or do we want to switch to small group? Or maybe there's some kiddos who really need to do one-on-one with us. So it helps you think about those key activities and be really mindful of how you would like to design it. And thank you, Dawn, for letting me know that I was on mute.

Dawn: No problem. Yeah.

Vanessa: And thank you all out there for bearing with that silence, that awkward pause.

Dawn: No problem. And the link to this is over there in the chat. So as you see resources, we'll be putting a link in there in chat, and then you'll also get it after the webinar as well.

Alma: Okay, other considerations. When teachers are designing their classroom environments, there are some other considerations to keep in mind. Rotation is the first one. Please avoid grouping the same children together all the time, especially when pairing skilled with less skilled children. Many teachers limit the number of children per center and create a system for rotating children throughout favorite areas. Many teachers also regularly rotate the toys to generate a sense of newness. Now, instruction can be tailored within small groups to meet educational goals. For example, one group of children that is working on learning numbers can read a counting book, another group working on fine motor skills can do beading, still another group of children working on social skills could practicing joining play. Now, it is important to emphasize cooperation by choosing toys and activities that require that. For example, large appliance boxes, games that need two or more players, balls for throwing back and forth, etcetera. And as the last advice, whenever possible, keep the design elements simple, both for the teachers' sake and because simple tends to be longer-lasting, we all know that. So also some aspects of designing can be done spontaneously and quickly and still be effective.

So my wish is that if someone will ask you today what did you learn about early childhood environments, you will be able to say, "Well, today I learned the components of effective environments, which include well-designed spaces, relevant classroom contents, and intentional groupings. I also learned how to assess, strategize, arrange, and modify the physical spaces. I now know how to select classroom content, taking into consideration relevance to learning, variety and quantity, and integration and individualization. And finally, I also learned today ways to design groupings of children by deciding the purpose, the composition, and plan." So at this point, I would like to make a request. I would like you to start thinking about what actions you will take in the coming weeks to increase the effectiveness of your classroom environment. It would be great if you could share with us your ideas about what you would like to do, let's say, by next Monday. You can use the chat box to share with us your thoughts. So we will give you a few seconds or a few minutes, let's say that, to give us your feedback about what would you like to do now that you have received this information. What is an idea that you have that you could apply in your classroom? Please share that with us. Okay. I see that there is a group that will rearrange the classroom. Okay. So I hope that the tips that we've shared today will help you to do that more easily.

So take good note of what works and what doesn't and keep rearranging those classrooms as needed. Thank you for sharing with us.

Vanessa: Yes, thank you. And one quick one could be, too, that you're just going to sit at the front door of your classroom at child's eye level and scan it and just kind of take notice of what you see. A real quick, simple, easy thing to try out. All right, keep typing, but I'm going to do some takeaway tips for us and kind of wind us down because we've just got a couple more minutes left with you. So takeaway tips for you. So we have another handout that's now available in that chat box from Dawn. Thank you, Dawn. And this summarizes what we've shared with you today, kind of those high level tips as well as strategies to think about. My advice to you, download it and stick it in your planning binder. That way it's always kind of present in your thinking, because it's not only about planning your lesson plans or the activities for the day, but also being mindful of your environment as well. So that's a takeaway for you. Also, there is another tip sheet for you in there, and it's called More Resources! And this is available now also in chat, and what I love about this is there are so many here. I mean, there are articles, there are books, there are chapters of books. And you are teachers, as I used to be a Head Start teacher. I know that you don't have time necessarily to read chapters in books, but let me highlight a couple for you. This one, Using Environmental Strategies to Promote Positive Social Interactions, is great. It's actually a PowerPoint presentation which you can kind of click through, which I like. And then the other is a quick article from Young Children, actually their web-based platform called Beyond the Journal. It's a shorter article, really good information, but this one is Environments that Support Exploration and Learning. So it's just more information to kind of extend what we covered here today.

Alma: And if you would like to receive a certificate of participation, please use the link that Dawn is going to put in chat to complete a brief survey. Once you have completed that survey, we will send you a certificate in an email.

Vanessa: And I'm sure you guys want credit for your time, so... And it also helps us to know how to improve our webinars going forward, so your feedback is definitely going to be something we take very seriously, and we will, you know, use in upcoming webinars. The next one will be December 13th on schedules and routines, so I hope you come back. So I'd like to leave us all with a quote to kind of carry us through into the rest of our day and the weekend. And to me, it really is about teaching. "If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people." I just love this quote, and it really speaks to the importance of our work and how long-lasting it is. And this is a photo of a young girl from Alaska at Cook Island Head Start. It's beautiful. And that is our last slide, and I guess it's just time for us to say thank you. We appreciate your time, we know how busy you all are, and it was a joy to spend this time with you. Alma?

Alma: Thank you, everyone, and please don't forget to visit our website or you can contact NCQTL at ncqtl@uw.edu or 877-731-0764. Thank you again for joining us and have a wonderful day.