

Principles for Creating Invitations for Learning

Principle: Create orderly, beautiful arrangements

Arranging materials with order and beauty in mind beckons children's engagement highlighting the magic and wonder and possibilities the materials. Calming colors and orderly arrangements draw the children in, helping them to focus and inspiring their exploration and creativity.

Principle: Provide a background for the materials

Arranging materials with a background provides a figure-ground focus and a clear palette for the work of exploring that can be done with interesting materials. A background both draws your eye to focus on what is available and creates a container for the exploration process.

Principle: Store diverse items in matching containers or baskets

When diverse materials are offered in matching containers or baskets you can clearly see the individual items and their unique attributes. Beyond the orderly, attractive appearance, an arrangement of diverse materials in similar containers allows the children to see what is available for their use and communicates a respect for the materials used in the room.

Principle: Group together similar materials with different attributes

Materials that have common elements such as color or texture, but have different elements, such as shapes and sizes allow children to see more clearly how the materials are the same and different.

Principle: Arrange invitations with attention to size, shape, scale, and levels

Offering children the same materials overtime, but changing their size, shape, scale or the level at which to work with them, encourages children to draw on their previous experiences and take their exploration to a more complex level.

Principle: Arrange materials to suggest how they might be used.

Offering a suggestion such a beginning construction on a tray next to a basket of the materials used attracts children's focus and attention. These kinds of small suggestions spark the children's thinking and communicate that it's okay to dive in and get started.

Principle: Reposition materials to spark a new interest

Moving materials to a different location in the room can stimulate a new interest and new way to use them. For example, inviting children to use materials outdoors evokes different uses for the materials and extends the outdoor learning.

Principle: Display books and other visual representations along with the material

Adding visual and symbolic representations to an invitation of materials gives children another resource for investigation and learning as they make connections between the real objects and the photos, drawings or stories about them.

Principle: Offer collections of materials that highlight a particular learning domain

Collecting and arranging materials to highlight a particular learning domain or concept, helps children discover attributes, principles and concepts or practice skills that are part of our desired learning outcomes.

Principle: Offer materials to initiate a study based on theme or values

Offering a collection of materials to launch a study of a particular curriculum theme allows teachers observe what the children do and say about the topic through their investigation of the initial invitation and then teacher can plan more from there.

Principle: Combine materials to include layers of possibilities

Starting with a sensory base such as sand or play dough, and gradually adding materials related to different kinds of play extends the amount of time and complexity for children's play, The sensory materials keep them reinvesting in the invitation, which allows them to see more possibilities for the other objects available.