



DESIGNING CLASSROOM AREAS

A GUIDE FOR EARLY YEARS AND PRIMARY GRADE TEACHERS

**This resource aligns
with Principle 2:**

Design with Diversity

[Purpose]

Create a space where every individual student and teacher feels acknowledged, valued, and safe.

Creating a classroom environment that caters to diverse learning styles and activities is essential for fostering student engagement and development. Drawing inspiration from Rosan Bosch's design principles, this guide outlines key areas to incorporate into early years, pre-K, kindergarten, and first- and second-grade classrooms, along with suggested materials for each. In my book, I explain the importance of providing these materials up to second grade.



DRAMATIC PLAY AREA



[Purpose]

Encourages imaginative play, social interaction, and language development

DESIGN TIPS



- * Provide a flexible space (e.g., kitchen, store, doctor's office).
- * Include props and costumes.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS

- ☐ Dress-up clothes and accessories
- ☐ Play kitchen set with utensils
- ☐ Toy cash register and play money
- ☐ Puppets and puppet theater
- ☐ Themed props (e.g., doctor's kit, shopping baskets)



NUMERACY AREA



[Purpose]

Supports the development of mathematical concepts through hands-on activities

DESIGN TIPS



- * Provide a variety of manipulatives to explore numbers, patterns, and shapes.
- * Incorporate visual aids like number charts and shape posters.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS

- ☐ Wooden counting beads
- ☐ Number puzzles
- ☐ Pattern blocks
- ☐ Measuring tapes and rulers
- ☐ Number cubes and sandpaper number cards (to trace with their fingers)



LITERACY AREA



[Purpose]

Promotes reading, writing, and language skills

DESIGN TIPS



- * Create a cozy, inviting space with comfortable seating.
- * Display a diverse selection of books at eye level.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS

- ☐ Variety of picture books and storybooks
- ☐ Alphabet charts
- ☐ Writing materials (e.g., paper, pencils, crayons)
- ☐ Magnetic letters
- ☐ Story sequencing cards



CALM AREA



[Purpose]

Provides a quiet space for relaxation, self-regulation, and independent reading

SUGGESTED MATERIALS

- ☐ Soft cushions, secondhand armchairs, and/or beanbags
- ☐ Stuffed animals
- ☐ Calming sensory bottles (optional, depending on the class group)
- ☐ Books of different themes: At this age, about animals is a perfect match.
- ☐ Noise-canceling headphones

DESIGN TIPS



- * Use soft furnishings like cushions, rugs, and beanbags.
- * Incorporate soft lighting and calming colors.



SENSORY AREA



[Purpose]

Engages the senses and supports sensory exploration and integration

DESIGN TIPS



- * Rotate materials each term to maintain interest.
- * Include items that stimulate various senses (touch, sight, sound).

SUGGESTED MATERIALS

- ☐ Sand or water table
- ☐ Textured fabrics
- ☐ Musical instruments (here, depends on you. Maybe you already have a music classroom/space.)
- ☐ Light tables with translucent materials
- ☐ Aromatherapy diffusers/bottles with child-safe scents



HANDS-ON AREA



[Purpose]

Facilitates crafting, building, and fine-motor skill development

DESIGN TIPS



- * Provide tables with ample space for creative projects.
- * Organize materials for easy access and cleanup.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS

- ☐ Art supplies (e.g., crayons, markers, glue, scissors)
- ☐ Building sets
- ☐ Clay or playdough
- ☐ Crafting materials
- ☐ Recyclable materials for construction



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LOOSE PARTS AREA



[Purpose]

Stimulates creativity,
problem-solving, and
open-ended play

DESIGN TIPS



- * Set up on the floor with a pallet covered in artificial grass to define the space.
- * Offer a variety of loose parts for children to manipulate and combine.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS

- ☐ Shells, pebbles, and pinecones
- ☐ Bottle caps and corks
- ☐ Fabric scraps and ribbons
- ☐ Wooden discs and spools
- ☐ Buttons and beads



TECHNOLOGY SHELF/CUPBOARD



[Purpose]

Provides access to technology resources in a controlled manner

DESIGN TIPS



- * Store devices securely and out of direct sight to minimize distractions.
- * Introduce technology purposefully, aligning with learning objectives.

Limiting screen time in early childhood is crucial for healthy development. Research indicates that excessive screen exposure can negatively impact cognitive, social, and emotional growth. For instance, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than one hour of high-quality screen time per day for children aged two to five years (Mayo Clinic Staff 2024). Therefore, incorporating brief, purposeful screen-based activities, such as a twelve- to fifteen-minute session during a reading carousel or math rotation, can be beneficial when balanced with interactive, hands-on learning experiences.

References

Mayo Clinic Staff. 2024. "Screen Time and Children: How to Guide Your Child."
Mayo Clinic, June 19.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS

- ☐ Tablets with educational apps
- ☐ Audio players with headphones
- ☐ Digital cameras
- ☐ Interactive storybooks

