



Unit 3 – Physical Development: Key Topic 2: Getting to Know Environmental Factors That Support Physical Development

Focus of Unit 3 – Key Topic 2

Students become familiar with environmental factors that can be used to support children’s physical development and have opportunities to explore some ways these factors can be applied.

Curriculum Alignment Project (CAP) Student Learning Outcomes

The Curriculum Alignment Project’s (CAP) lower division eight courses and student learning outcomes are mapped onto each instructional guide key topic. See Appendix A for the specific student learning outcomes, objectives, and examples of course content and topics for the courses listed below.

- Introduction to Curriculum
- Principles and Practices of Teaching Young Children
- Observation and Assessment
- Practicum-Field Experience

Instructional Methodologies

- Categorizing
- Note-taking outline
- Guest speaker
- Class discussion
- Reflective discussion—large group
- Small group work
- Interview—teacher
- Observation—classroom
- Class presentation



- Individual reflection
- Literature review
- Short paper

California Early Childhood Educator Competency Areas to Consider

The Faculty Initiative Project will be undertaking a comprehensive process in the future to map the content of the instructional guides to the California Department of Education, Child Development Division’s California Early Childhood Educator Competencies. The “Competency Areas to Consider” below are listed in this instructional guide as a preliminary exploration of how particular competency areas might be addressed through these key topics.

- Child Development and Learning
- Observation, Screening, Assessment, and Documentation
- Learning Environments and Curriculum
- Professionalism



Unit 3 – Physical Development: Key Topic 2: Getting to Know Environmental Factors That Support Physical Development

Before You Start

The environmental factors described in the physical development domain refer to both the physical environment of the preschool program and teacher actions that contribute to the environment. This section differs slightly from the environments and materials sections found in other domains of Volumes 1 and 2 of the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework*. Whereas those domains contain specific items about materials, there are not distinct items related to materials in the list of environmental factors in the physical development domain. Some equipment and materials are suggested within some of the environmental factors; others can be found in the interactions and strategies for each substrand.

This learning experience focuses on having a preschool teacher as a guest speaker for the class. The purpose of the presentation is to provide students with concrete examples of how the teacher has addressed the seven environmental factors in the physical development domain. Students prepare some interview questions for the guest speaker that can be shared with the speaker prior to the presentation. Also, the guest speaker should be provided with a copy of the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2* to become familiar with the environmental factors.

Encourage the guest speaker to bring photos or slides of his or her classroom—both indoor and outdoor areas—that are used for active physical play and physical development activities; these photos or slides should illustrate one or more of the environmental factors. Also ask the speaker to be prepared to describe any adaptations that ensure the participation of children with disabilities or children who may be young dual language learners.

This learning experience is presented as part of two class sessions but could be done in one class session. If instructors plan just one session, students could do the reading and develop their key points and questions prior to class. Then the class could develop the questions before the guest speaker arrives. If instructors plan this over two sessions, the “Getting it started” and “Keeping it going” segments could be done in addition to other work.

An alternative approach would be to have students visit a preschool program and interview the teacher. These observations and interviews could be done individually or in small groups. It is suggested that the students prepare some questions as a full class. If instructors choose to have students conduct interviews, it may be helpful to remind them to first find out what the protocol is for observations at that preschool program.



Information Delivery



Slides 2-4

The seven environmental factors on pages 136–137 of the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2* are the main content for this key topic.

Depending on the students' background, instructors may also want them to become familiar with these topics in the framework:

- “*The environment as curriculum: Interest areas to support children’s play and child-initiated learning*” (pp. 17–19)
- “The Daily Schedule” (pp. 19–25)

Active Learning



Slides 2-4

Getting it started

Begin by having students review the environmental factors described on pages 136–137 of the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2*. Ask them to note key points for each factor and any questions about how the factor would look in practice. Point out to students how the section on environmental factors differs from the environments and materials sections in other chapters of Volumes 1 and 2 of the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework*. This review could be done by students individually, in pairs, or in small groups.

Keeping it going

Then explain to the class that a guest speaker will be at the next class session to share how she or he implements the environmental factors. Invite students to share the questions they generated. Similar questions could be grouped together and summarized in an overarching question. Depending on the number of questions identified, instructors may ask students to come to agreement on the top five to eight.

Online Options

Students could post interview questions online and review the other students' questions prior to the class session. Then the full class could decide which questions to ask the guest speaker or to use in their interviews.

Taking it further

At the next session, ask the guest speaker to make their presentation. In addition to having the speaker respond to the prepared questions, encourage students to ask additional questions suggested by the presentation.

Putting it together

After the speaker leaves, ask the students to reflect on the presentation by discussing these questions:



Slides 5-6

- Which environmental factor and example described by our guest speaker stood out for you?
- How did the presentation help you better understand some of the environmental factors that can support children's physical development and active physical play? Which ones?
- What are some new or different perspectives to the environmental factors because of this presentation?
- What are three examples from the presentation that you want to use when planning active physical play environments for young children?

Online Options

If students interview teachers, the interview summaries could be posted online. Students would then review their peers' summaries and write responses to the reflective questions individually or be prepared to discuss the questions in class.

Another approach

Students could interview a teacher instead of having a guest speaker. Depending on students' access to preschool programs and teachers, instructors may suggest that small groups of students interview a teacher together. The whole class could develop the questions that each student or group of students would use.

If an observation of part of the preschool program day is possible before the interview, ask students to look for examples of one or more of the environmental factors. These observations could inform their interview with the teacher. If an observation while the children are present is not feasible, suggest to students that they ask the teacher to give them a tour of the classroom and explain the daily schedule.

Students would then share summaries or highlights of their observations and interviews at a class session. The summaries could also include responses to the reflective questions in the "Putting it together" section, or instructors could again use those questions for a class discussion about the students' interviews.

Reflection

The two sets of reflective questions offered for this key topic could be used as a class discussion or for students to respond to individually in journals or another written format. This first set focuses on the work done specifically on the environmental



Slides 7-8

factors for the physical development domain:

- Which concepts and examples about the environmental factors from your reading or the presentation (or interview) stood out for you?
- Which environmental factors do you think you could easily address? Which ones might be more challenging? Why?
- What should you keep in mind regarding the environmental factors in a preschool when thinking about your city or community—the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity of the children and families?
- What skills as a teacher would you like to improve so that you can better implement or address the environmental factors to support children’s physical development?

This second set of questions is more general and can be used for individual reflection here and with the other key topics.

- What part of this class session stood out most for you today?
- Which ideas or concepts from today’s work reinforced what you have already learned or experienced? Which ones gave you a new perspective or insight?
- How might you apply a new idea or perspective to your work now or in the future?
- What information or support do you need to do this?
- What is a first step you could take to locate this support or information? What steps could you take to start applying the new idea or perspective?

Deeper Understanding

Remind students that the teacher resources (pp. 216–218), endnotes (pp. 219–221), and bibliography (pp. 222–224) of the chapter on physical development in the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2* list books, articles, Web sites, and organizations that provide additional information on environmental considerations for young children’s physical development and active physical play. Ask students to review these pages as a starting point for a literature review on the topic of environmental factors. They could then identify three



resources and write a one-page summary of each resource. Instructors may wish to suggest that the following information is included in each summary:

- Full citation for the resource
- Description of the resource
- Key points or concepts related to environmental considerations in planning curriculum for all children's physical development and active play
- Linkage between the key points and one or more of the seven environmental factors described on pages 136-137 in the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2*.