

Physical Arrangement of the Classroom

COMPONENT

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Objective: To explain how the physical arrangement of your classroom impacts the success of your students.

THINKING TRAPS

"Why go to all the trouble of arranging my room just so?"

"I like my students to work wherever they feel comfortable."

"I don't have enough furniture or space to make special areas in my classroom."

We often hear these comments as we begin to assist teachers in arranging their classrooms, and we acknowledge that these are valid concerns. We also know that physically arranging a classroom is very hard physical labor! Finding the right type of furniture and enough furniture is challenging as well. No matter how difficult this task of physically arranging your classroom may appear, we recommend that you do it before you attempt to address any of the other components. It will make implementing the other components easier once the physical space is clearly defined. The classroom arrangement is the physical foundation for the 10 critical components.

COMPONENT 1
Physical Arrangement of the Classroom

COMPONENT 2
Organization of Materials

COMPONENT 3
Schedules

COMPONENT 4
Visual Strategies

COMPONENT 5
Behavioral Strategies

COMPONENT 6
Goals, Objectives, and Lesson Plans

COMPONENT 7
Instructional Strategies

COMPONENT 8
Communication Systems and Strategies

COMPONENT 9
Communication With Parents

COMPONENT 10
Related Services and Other School Staff

RATIONALE

In a well-designed special education classroom, the classroom activities that are to take place and the needs of the students must be considered when planning the arrangement of the classroom furniture and where instructional areas will be located. Defining and clarifying the physical space of the classroom enables students to anticipate the activity that will be held in each area, thereby increasing their participation and improving their behavior.

Your classroom space is valuable real estate. This means that every square foot needs to be used for activities that support student learning. Its use should be maximized. When you are making decisions about arranging your classroom, ask yourself, “Is this the best use of this space? Does the way I’m using this space help contribute to the success of my students?”

BENEFITS OF A WELL-DESIGNED CLASSROOM

A classroom that has a well-defined physical arrangement and appears organized will promote a positive learning environment. A well-thought-out physical arrangement is important for any type of special education setting for these reasons:

- Students learn to respect physical boundaries. There are boundaries between students’ areas and teacher-only areas as well as boundaries between each of the student’s individual work areas. This provides opportunities to teach students to respect other people’s spaces and belongings—an important skill in all life settings.
- Students learn to anticipate the specific types of activities that will occur in specific areas of the classroom. This helps students participate more fully in the activity because they will enter the area with the mind-set that corresponds with the anticipated activity. Knowing which activity is next also can ward off misbehavior that often occurs when students are caught off guard or have inaccurate expectations regarding what is about to occur.
- Students will also learn which behaviors are acceptable and expected in each specific location of the classroom and which behaviors are not acceptable or expected in certain other classroom locations. This, too, is a valuable life lesson that is important at home, in the community, and on the job site.
- Proper room arrangement provides predictability, which has a calming effect on many students. When students are better able

to understand their environment and anticipate what is coming next, they tend to be less apprehensive. Their mental states are more conducive to learning new material. A decrease in anxiety typically translates into a decrease in misbehavior as well.

Think of your classroom space as valuable real estate.

- Your classroom materials are readily accessible. When specific activities happen in specific areas of the classroom, the materials needed for those activities can be located in the area where they will be used, allowing them to be retrieved quickly and easily. This decreases down time and misbehavior and increases productivity. (Organization of materials is the topic of Component 2.)

Before we begin to talk about what furniture you may need and how to arrange it, we want to mention again that the 10 critical components all work together to make your classroom a place where your students make progress and thrive. This first component, physical arrangement of the classroom, is the jumping-off point because the classroom environment affects everything that happens there. When an environment is chaotic, the people in the environment feel more harried. When an environment is cluttered, the people in the environment feel more disorganized, and valuable time is lost searching for the correct materials or locating needed supplies. Your classroom arrangement design should begin with a well-thought-out plan for the room and its contents. This component will guide you through the process of making a well-thought-out plan for the physical arrangement of your classroom.

Well-Defined Areas Clarify Student Expectations

In our homes and offices, certain areas are used for specific activities. We use the kitchen to cook and use the kitchen table to eat meals. Though there are sinks in both the kitchen and the bathroom, brushing one's teeth is expected to take place at the bathroom sink. In an office, specific areas are used for individual work, while other areas are used for group work or meetings. Social conversations take place more often in an employees' lounge or break room, while discussions about work products take place more often in one of the work areas.

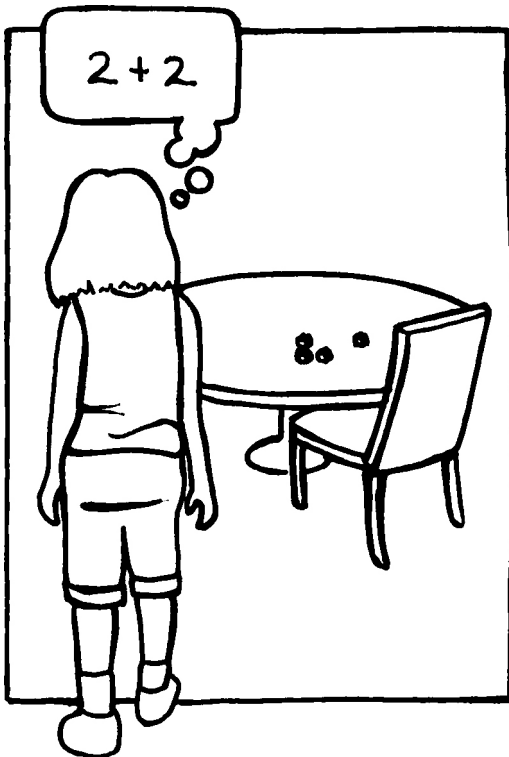
In the well-designed classroom, specific areas are dedicated to specific types of activities as well. Why? Well, think about the mind-set you have when you sit at the kitchen table. Compare it to the mind-set you have when you sit at the computer desk in the study of your home. The expectations you have about what type of activity is about to take place is based upon the location.

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When we walk into a library, we anticipate a certain type of activity will occur, but when we walk into the grocery store or a restaurant, we expect different activities. We know that the behaviors that are expected are dependent on the environment and that different types of behaviors are acceptable in some locations but not in others. Even in our own homes, we anticipate certain activities and expect to display certain behaviors depending on where we are. We depend on the physical environment to help us determine what activities will occur and what behaviors will be expected of us.

In the same way, our students need to be able to develop expectations and the proper mind-set for the different types of activities that take place during their school day. In some parts of our classrooms, it is important to help our students understand that we expect them to sit and work quietly. In other areas of the classroom, talking and visiting during the activity is acceptable. For an example of this, compare the difference between the individual desk area where students are doing math or completing a worksheet and the area of the classroom where they gather for teacher lecture or perhaps a snack. A thoughtful physical arrangement of the classroom helps the students anticipate and participate in the activity and adjust their behavior in each area as well.

Figure 1.1 Anticipating the Next Activity



A well-planned classroom has clearly defined boundaries designating where different types of activities will take place. This helps you teach what the expected behavior is for that specific area and activity. Boundaries need to be as visually clear as possible. Furniture arrangement can provide physical boundaries and clarity. Signs that label the area are also helpful. Keeping clutter to a minimum helps maintain specific spaces and make clear the separation between areas. Color coding by using a rug or colored tape on the floor may also be used to define different spaces and areas.

In most homes, it is fairly easy to determine which major activities occur in the various areas because the walls make good visual boundaries

and because the furnishings vary with area. For example, cooking and eating take place in the kitchen, of course, and most people sleep in a bedroom. In classrooms, those distinctions are not naturally made clear. If the classroom is not well planned and set up for student success, it can be very difficult to determine the use of different areas. This not only can cause confusion for students, substitutes, and visitors, but it also makes it harder for students to learn and teachers to teach.

The 10-Minute Rule

Curious about whether your classroom's physical arrangement is sufficient? Use what we call the 10-minute rule: If a visitor can come into your classroom and correctly answer the following types of questions within 10 minutes, then you have a well-designed classroom that clearly delineates where specific activities and lessons will take place.

- Where are math, reading, and other academics taught?
- Does there appear to be an area for group instruction?
- Where are individual work areas?
- Is there an area for special activities such as arts and crafts?

The 10-minute rule is one way to determine if your classroom is well designed.

For those readers who already have a classroom, take a few moments to think about your own room arrangement. Based on what we've discussed so far, make a list of areas that are currently clearly well-defined and a list of areas you may need to rethink. For preservice teachers, think about classrooms where you have observed, and list areas that were in those classrooms.

ARRANGING YOUR CLASSROOM

Now that we have explained the importance of room arrangement, let's consider some critical questions you must answer in order to determine the different areas you will need in your classroom. The driving force behind your classroom arrangement is the needs of your students. Start by answering the following questions. These questions can also be found on a reproducible form at the back of the book for your use.

- How many students do I have?
- Do I need various sizes of chairs and desks to accommodate my students in order for them to sit with their feet flat on the floor,

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knees bent at a 90° angle, and elbows resting on the desktop for writing?

- Do any of my students have specific medical needs that require special equipment (i.e., wheelchairs, standers, privacy screens, etc.)?
- If special equipment is needed, where will it be stored?
- Do any of my students need a work area for part of their day that is separate from other students?

Location of Internet connections and electrical outlets determine where many pieces of furniture will be located.

- If any of my students need an area for sensory activities, can it be located in the classroom, or will an alternate location need to be created (e.g., a motor lab shared by occupational therapists, physical therapists, and adaptive physical education teachers)?

- If any of my students need to be changed or tube fed, where could I create a private area?
- Do any of my students have specific behaviors I need to consider when arranging my classroom (i.e., leaving the room without permission or climbing on things)?
- Are there any other safety issues I need to consider?

In addition to the above questions, there are three other questions that will undoubtedly impact your room arrangement:

1. What furniture is available?
2. Is there a sink in my classroom?
3. Where are the electrical outlets and the connection for the Internet?

The answers to these questions will guide you in making the appropriate decisions on how to use your classroom space and what furniture you will need. If your students are small, adult-size chairs won't work. If you have a student who uses a wheelchair, tight spaces in your room won't work. If you have a student who uses special equipment during the day, it will need to be stored near or in your classroom when not in use. Medical procedures, diapering, or tube feeding requires a private area to preserve dignity and to respect the right to privacy of those students.

In one classroom, the challenges presented by a specific student's behavior were addressed in part by rearranging the classroom.

Certainly, the staff would continue to teach and reinforce the student to remain in her assigned area, but changing the physical arrangement of the classroom had an immediate and direct impact on this student's

challenging behavior of running. Not only was a safer environment created for the student, but the student's time on task increased, and her rate of progress was impacted in a positive way as well.

The Runner

We were asked to help a teacher with the arrangement of her classroom. This was a small classroom with a number of challenging students. One happened to be a darling little girl with the gift of speed who frequently ran out of the classroom while several adults attempted to catch her before she exited the building. The staff had positioned a bookcase next to the student's desk, thinking that this would slow her down because she would have to step around it before making her move. It did not slow her down one bit.

In order to give the staff every extra second they could get before the student exited the room, we created a "private office" for her on the opposite side of the room from the door. A blackboard provided one wall of her "office," a filing cabinet was another wall, and we positioned the paraprofessional's chair on the third side, leaving the student only one way in and one way out of her area. These changes helped create a more physically structured setting for the student. The staff later reported that the student seemed to prefer her more structured location, and the running events had lessened.

Required Areas

Now, you are ready to think about areas that are needed in every special education classroom. Each area will be described and explained to help you understand why it is needed. In addition, the furniture you will need to create the area will be discussed. Keep in mind the concept of valuable real estate when considering how to use your classroom space.

Home Base

Like their peers in a general education classroom, each student in your room needs his or her own desk or home base. What do we mean when we talk about home base?

Home base is used for a variety of purposes. It is a place where students do independent work. It is often where students sit to check their schedules and prepare to transition to the next subject or activity. For some students, it is a safe place where they can engage in a calming activity. Home base

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Every student needs an individual home base.

can be the place the student waits for the next lesson to begin. For some students, a private study carrel serves to block distractions and is used as the home base.

Home base is a specific location where each student sits. In some classrooms, teachers have successfully set up home base at tables with each student having an area at the table clearly labeled with the student's name. Sometimes, the student's area at the table is made more specific by using colored tape, which defines the boundaries between individual student's areas. More often, each student has a desk and chair in the classroom, which is home base. For a student in a wheelchair, a wheelchair desk is usually needed to allow the wheelchair to fit under the desk and to create a workspace for the student.

Regardless of whether your students have individual desks or sit at tables, the proper size of the chairs, desks, and tables is important. As we mentioned earlier, students should be able to sit with their feet flat on the floor, knees bent at a 90° angle, and elbows resting on the desktop. This allows for proper positioning and helps the students maintain time on task with less fatigue.

Many factors must be considered when determining where home base will be located and how desks can best be arranged:

- Behavioral issues of students (i.e., grabbing materials from other students' desks, touching other students, or exiting the classroom without permission)
- The size and shape of your classroom
- Permanent fixtures such as sinks, kitchen appliances, restrooms, and built-ins such as cabinets or shelves

Whether individual desks or tables are used as home base, it is a specific work area clearly labeled for each student with his or her name. Your classroom arrangement and how you design home base might easily vary from year to year depending on your students' needs.

Group Instruction Area

In some classrooms, two different areas are needed for group activities. One of these areas is for small group instruction, where academics such as reading and math take place. The second area is for group lessons and activities such as arts and crafts, cooking, or eating. From a practical point of view, if a sink is available, the messy activities need to be done as close to the sink as possible.

Why set up and use two different areas? First, the type of instruction in the two areas is very different. One may require pencil and paper or reading materials, with students likely using the materials independently. The other type of instruction may require materials for activities such as a painting project, where students may be sharing materials or working together on the activity. Second, the behavioral expectations will differ based on the type of activity or lesson that takes place in the two different areas. Often, academic small group instruction is more teacher driven, with students listening and participating. Arts and crafts or cooking activities are often more interactive. For example, students may share ideas or tools and actively comment without being expected to raise their hands before speaking. Having two separate areas helps the students anticipate what type of activity will occur and what the expected behaviors in each area will be. This will improve both their participation and their behavior.

Within each area, you will need something on which to write such as a dry erase whiteboard, an interactive whiteboard, an easel, chart paper, or a chalkboard. You will also need a place to store the materials you will use during group instruction lessons. Materials can be stored on a shelf or in something portable such as a basket, a rolling cart, or a plastic tub.

Teacher Work Area

This area is important and indispensable. Teachers need a place to plan, answer school e-mail, write individualized education programs (IEPs), and keep records. Remember that most of the valuable real estate in your classroom needs to be used directly for your students' needs and activities; therefore, the teacher work area should be fairly small. A teacher desk and chair, a bookshelf or cabinet, and a filing cabinet are usually sufficient furnishings. The location of the Internet connection can also impact where your teacher work area will be located. Make certain that you are able to visually scan the entire classroom when sitting in the teacher work area. Paraprofessionals or classroom aides do not need a desk of their own as the majority of their time is spent working directly with students.

As a teaching tool, having a specific and well-defined teacher work area allows opportunities to teach students the important concept of honoring and respecting boundaries. Students must learn that some places or sections of the classroom are off limits to them. For example, you most likely knock and gain permission to walk into your principal's office. You know that this is his or her separate and private work area, and you understand the importance of gaining permission to enter. Our students need to learn and understand the importance of boundaries and

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private areas as well. This directly translates into appropriate work habits that will be required for the successful employment of our students in the future.

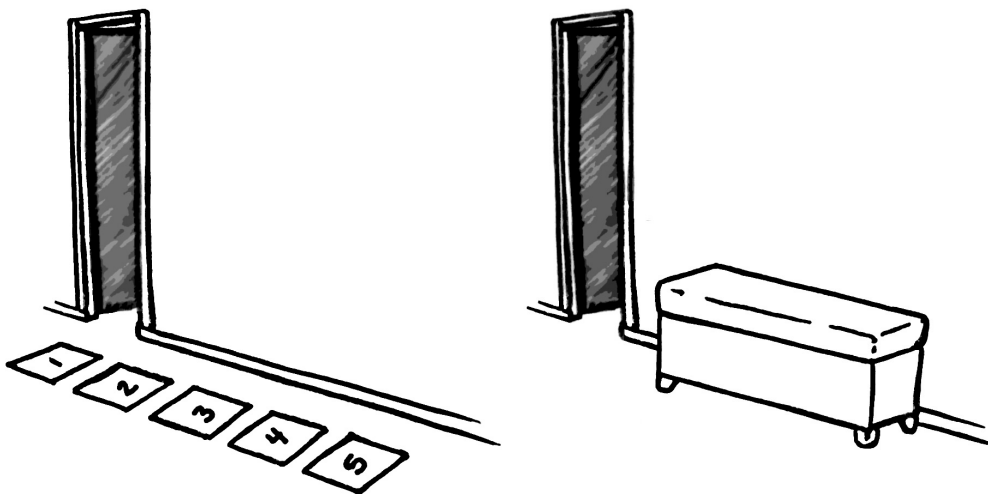
Transition Area

A transition area is an area where students wait for the next activity or for the lesson to begin. Think about the amount of time we spend waiting. We wait at the doctor's office, for a meeting to start, at a stoplight, in line at the grocery store, and many other places. Learning to control oneself while waiting and how to keep busy (such as reading a book) during waiting times is extremely important and is a lifelong skill.

In addition to being useful in teaching the skill of waiting, the transition area serves another important function as well for some of our students—it signals that something different is about to happen. It is another example of using the environment to help students predict what comes next, so they can begin to ready themselves for a change. Again, this heads-up often helps to decrease the misbehavior that occurs when some of our students (especially those on the autism spectrum) are surprised or caught off guard by an unexpected change.

What the transition area looks like and where it is located will depend on the needs and ages of your students. Teachers in some classrooms have chosen to use a separate area with chairs, marks on the floor, a rug, or a bench by the door. These areas indicate to students where they should stand or sit. Generally, an older student's transition area is home base. For younger students, if pushing and touching others is a concern, you could use chairs or marks on the floor that are spaced to discourage this behavior.

Figure 1.2 Two Examples of Transition Areas



The transition area, whether a separate area or at the student's desk, is often the same location where students check their schedules at the beginning and end of each activity or lesson. No matter where the transition area is located or what it looks like, it is important to teach where and how to wait.

Student Schedule Area

Although we cover the topic of student schedules in detail in Component 3: Schedules, we mention it here because it sometimes requires your consideration when arranging your classroom.

All students need an individual schedule. Sometimes the students' schedules are located near the door. They could be on the wall, on the door of a cabinet, or on a shelf. Some students' schedules are in a notebook, which works well if the students need to take their schedules to other classes. Other students' schedules may be kept at home base. Some students will not need their schedules as much as others. For these students, a class schedule posted on the board, in a notebook, or at their desks will be sufficient. Some students will use the same type of schedule as their general education peers. For these students, schedules posted in a specific area of the classroom are not necessary. Regardless of the format of the student's schedule, each student needs his or her schedule to be located where it can be easily seen or located.

Work Station

We feel strongly that a work station should be set up in every classroom to teach and promote independent work habits. A work station is a place for individual students to begin a task, do the task, finish the task, and put the finished task away without assistance. The use of a work station is an instructional strategy that teaches appropriate work habits and independence. How to use work stations is thoroughly discussed in Component 7: Instructional Strategies, but we introduce it in this component as well, so you can make plans for its location while you are planning the layout of your classroom.

For each work station, you will need a desk or a table, a place to put the work or assignment that is to be completed, and a place to put the finished work. The work assignment and finished work areas are usually placed next to the work station. If the student is physically active and needs to move frequently, locating the work a short distance away so that he or she must leave his or her seat to get or put away work allows opportunities for purposeful movement. Some teachers use stacked rolling bins, shelves, or filing bins on the floor beside the student's chair. Wherever the work is placed, it is important that the student can access it quickly and easily.

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The work station, sometimes referred to as “the office,” is usually placed in a quieter area of the classroom and often faces a wall. The work station may be used for independent work jobs or tasks and also when the student requires a separate area in which to work away from the rest of the class for a time. For these reasons, an area relatively free of distractions is most beneficial. If the work station must be placed in a busier area, a study carrel may be used to block visual stimulation from the student. A work station is sometimes set up in a general education classroom for one or two specific students identified with special needs. This might be a student who is being served in an inclusion setting or perhaps attends general education for several specific subjects. It is common for general education teachers to discover how useful work stations can be not only for one specific student but for others in their classroom as well.

Figure 1.3 Work Station



Technology Area

How and where the technology area is set up will differ from district to district and from school to school depending on the current technology available to you and your students. Some schools have wireless Internet access, while others do not. Some classrooms have only one wired access area in the classroom.

This area may contain computers, listening stations, card readers, or an interactive whiteboard. Because this equipment requires electricity, the area needs to be in close proximity to electrical outlets. The computers may need to be close to a specific wall in order to be connected for Internet access. The location of electrical outlets and Internet connections can be the single most important consideration and the starting point for how you arrange your classroom. In addition, the location of computers should be such that students who are not working with them will not be distracted by those who are.

Additional Areas

In addition to the areas we consider required, you may find that other areas are necessary due to the needs of your students. If you have students who are working on functional goals and objectives, areas will need to be set aside for teaching and practicing self-help skills such as eating, cooking, and personal hygiene. If you do not have students working on self-help and other functional goals, then these areas may not be needed in your classroom.

The following areas are sometimes needed in special education classrooms in order to provide an area for activities when working on specific IEP objectives in a functional and creative manner.

Arts and Crafts, Eating, and Cooking Areas

These three areas will be discussed together because of their similarities. Students are usually working together in a group when these activities occur. The behavioral expectations for these areas are usually somewhat different than the expectations for students in other areas of the classroom. These areas typically allow students to practice sharing materials and taking turns. They also provide opportunities to practice social conversations in a group setting. Finally, these areas are similar because these activities are frequently messy. Therefore, locating these areas near the sink (if you have one in your classroom) is important. The only furniture usually required for these areas is a table large enough for the activity, enough chairs for a small group of students, and a place to store needed materials. Because space is sometimes limited, one table may serve as the location for all three of these group activities.

Personal Hygiene Area

For some of your students, learning to be independent with their personal hygiene and other self-help skills is of utmost importance. The more things your students can do independently or with minimal assistance

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when they are adults, the better their quality of life will be. If you have students with these types of needs, then an area designated for certain types of self-help activities will be needed in your classroom.

For example, if learning the steps for teeth brushing is a part of the student's IEP, then materials and a location for practicing this skill is needed. This area might be within the classroom, but it could also be in a restroom within the school that is used daily by your students. If a student is working on dressing skills, however, a private area is needed to learn and practice these skills.

One self-contained classroom we visited was down the hall and around the corner from the nearest bathroom. This teacher needed to use the only sink in the classroom for hand washing prior to snack time, cleanup, and for some students practicing teeth brushing. The staff in this classroom were careful to thoroughly clean the area between the different activities.

Sensory Area

The equipment you will need in the sensory area is dictated by the needs of your students. (Note: Not all students have needs that are sensory in nature.) Frequently recommended by the occupational therapist working with your students, this area's objective is to provide a designated space to address students' identified sensory needs. Many classrooms simply do not have enough space for a designated sensory area. In some schools, we have seen a separate room used as a motor lab, which is used for many students, often under the direction of the occupational therapist.

A sensory area may contain a mini trampoline, a swing, a bean bag chair, or a quiet area such as a small tent. In some classrooms, the sensory area may be where equipment such as a Move 'n' Sit wedge or a T-Stool is stored until the student needs it at his or her desk. The sensory area might have a shelf containing a box of fidgets. A collection of these small items such as Koosh balls and stress balls can be kept in a small, clear plastic shoe box for students to use who seem to always need something in their hands. We suggest that each student who needs fidgets has his or her own box.

Recreation and Leisure Activity Area

For some students, learning how to play is a skill that must be taught. For other students, learning to take turns is a critical social skill. For a number of your students, communication and language are the primary focus of their educational programs. And for many students, academic skills such as counting and identifying colors are a part of their IEPs.

All of these skills can be addressed by using leisure-type activities such as board games, card games, and other leisure-based lessons. Many board games use money (e.g., Monopoly), and other games such as Clue or checkers emphasize thinking and reasoning skills. Playing the card game Uno emphasizes color recognition, number recognition, and turn taking. For some students, grasping and moving a game piece around the board is a fun way to practice needed fine motor skills.

Many classrooms have an area set up for these types of activities. For instance, in a classroom for very young students, a rug area may be used for building blocks or playing with cars and trucks. In an elementary classroom, a table for playing games or a bean bag chair for leisure reading may be appropriate. At the secondary level, a place to listen to music, read magazines, or play cards with classmates may be needed. Some high school special education classrooms have areas much like a living room, where students can sit on sofas or chairs to chat with classmates.

However you arrange an area for recreation or leisure activities, it should look different than the areas used for academic work. For instance, if the table used for small group instruction is also used for recreation/leisure activities, putting a tablecloth on it during recreation or leisure time helps make the area look less academic. This helps students change their expectations about what is going to happen at the table. Remember, we want our students to anticipate what type of activity is going to take place and what types of behaviors are expected depending on where they are in the classroom. We expect a different set of behaviors at game time than we do at small group instruction time.

GETTING STARTED

First, think about the areas you need in your classroom, and make a list. You might like to use the form *Areas for My Classroom* found in the forms section at the back of the book.

Next, with your classroom dimensions in mind, draw the shape of your classroom including any built-ins, doors, electrical outlets, and Internet connections. If you prefer working with pencil and paper to plan (and replan!) your furniture arrangement, you might like to use the planning grid at the back of the book.

For those of you who prefer to work on a computer to design your classroom, there are helpful Web sites that can assist you with this task. One such site is called *Classroom Architect* found at 4teachers.org, where you can move icons of furniture onto a grid representing your classroom.

SUMMARY

Physical arrangement of the classroom is the first of the 10 critical components for a good reason: It is the place to start for your students, yourself, and other staff members. Making the best use of your valuable real estate physically sets the stage for the progress your students will make. Because your students will be better able to predict their next activity, they will better understand what is expected of them both academically and behaviorally.

As you begin to address this component in your classroom, you will find yourself also addressing Component 2: Organization of Materials. You will also begin to think about parts of Component 7: Instructional Strategies. With this first component in place, you and your staff are off to a great start!

Real-Life Applications

We are including a section of real-life applications at the end of each of the 10 components. They are based on our many years of experience and represent the many different students, parents, and teachers we have met and with whom we have worked over the years. It is our hope that these real-life applications will help you think of creative ways to use the information from each component.

Let's take what you have just read in Component 1 and apply it to four different situations.

SAM

Sam is a student with the handicapping conditions of intellectual disability (ID) and speech impairment (SI). He does not talk and uses photographs for his schedule and communication system. Sam will leave the classroom if not closely supervised.

How can his teacher use ideas covered in Component 1: Physical Arrangement of the Classroom to help create a safe environment for Sam?

Sam's teacher must always keep in mind that he will attempt to leave any instructional area if he is not closely supervised. His home base, any area where he is receiving instruction, or his place in the cafeteria for lunch should be as far away from an exit as is practical.

His home base might be positioned next to a wall with a bookcase containing his instructional materials, creating an L-shape. This would provide visual and physical boundaries for his instructional area. It might also slow him down if he attempts to leave his area of the classroom or leave the

room itself. Because Sam appears to need to move (or would like to anyway), his daily schedule should be positioned a short distance away from his work area and away from the classroom exit. This would provide many opportunities throughout the day for him to move to check his schedule.

JEFFERY

Jeffery is a student identified with ID and SI and is other health impaired (OHI). He uses a wheelchair most of the day but also spends some time each day in a stander and uses adaptive seating. Jeffery grabs items within his reach whether the items are for his use or for others.

What does Jeffery's teacher need to keep in mind when arranging the classroom? Can his grabbing materials and items that are not for him be addressed through the arrangement of the classroom?

Because Jeffery is a student who uses a wheelchair most of the day, it is critical to allow space for him to maneuver his wheelchair throughout the classroom. It is imperative that he can access all areas of the classroom where he will receive instruction as well as safely enter and exit all areas of the school. For Jeffery, a portable schedule might be more efficient as it takes Jeffery extra time to manipulate his wheelchair about the classroom.

It is also necessary to consider Jeffery's behavior of grabbing items that belong to others as you plan the physical arrangement of the classroom. For example, his spot at the group instruction table might be at the corner with the student next to him seated an arm's length from Jeffery. This area of the group instruction table needs to be able to accommodate the space his wheelchair will require.

Jeffery will be spending periods of the day in a stander and might use other adaptive equipment as well, so space is needed to accommodate the storage of this equipment. In some schools, there are guidelines regarding where items can be stored when not in use. For example, in one school, we encountered the rule that there be nothing stored in the bathroom that adjoined the classroom. In this case, it was not a school rule but a regulation that the local fire marshal enforced. This was a very large bathroom and used by the students in the self-contained classroom only. So, while it appeared at first glance to be a great place to store large pieces of special equipment, a different solution had to be found. In this classroom, we designated a corner of the room for the equipment storage.

JOSÉ

José is a student with autism and SI. He spends his day in three different instructional areas of the school: general education, English as a second language instruction, and the resource and academic coach classroom. José becomes upset when changes occur either in his schedule or in his environment.

How can the information contained in Component 1 be applied to help José? José does not have any physical or behavioral needs that need to be addressed regarding the classroom arrangement. However, he is a student with autism and usually does not like it when his schedule changes. His teachers have also noticed that he has a loud reaction or a meltdown when he is asked to sit in a different seat during reading group or stand in line any place other than last. So for José, it is important that his teachers allow opportunities for him to experience and learn how to manage changes in the physical arrangement of his classrooms. Remembering that the 10 critical components are intertwined, here are some examples of how to use some instructional strategies to assist José with learning how to respond to changes in his instructional settings: Prior to making a seating change, José's teachers could tell José that a change in his reading group seating assignment would take place. José might be assigned to draw the new seating arrangement for his reading group the day before the change would take place. If José is a student for whom Social Stories (discussed in Component 7: Instructional Strategies) have been effective, then a Social Story could be written and provided to him regarding the specifics of changing seats at reading group.

Note: *Social Stories* is a term that refers to a story written following Carol Gray's Social Story Guidelines (The Gray Center, n.d.). You can find Carol Gray's own examples of Social Stories in her books and on the Web site operated by the Gray Center for Social Learning and Understanding (n.d.) at <http://www.thegraycenter.org/>.

KIMBERLY

Kimberly is a student with autism who is in general education for all her subjects. She and her peers have desks that serve as home bases in the classroom. Kimberly is usually quiet during class and attentive during class discussion. However, when it is time to begin her independent seat work, she usually is found looking around at what the other students are doing or gazing out the classroom window.

Is there some way the physical arrangement of Kimberly's classroom can help address her inattentiveness during independent practice?

Kimberly might well benefit from having a second desk located in a place in the classroom away from the other students and distractions. This could be called a "private office" and used by Kimberly or any other students needing a less-distracting environment during independent work.



