

ECE430 Week One Case Study
Focus: Classroom Environment



Park Lane Early Childhood Center is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Mrs. Ashland was thrilled when the center director, Mrs. Ford, hired her. Mrs. Ashland knew that the center had demonstrated its commitment to using developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and effective teaching approaches in order to become accredited. On a daily basis Mrs. Ashland strives to engage in meaningful relationships with her students and their families, collaborate with her colleagues, and create a safe learning environment.

When you walk into Mrs. Ashland's 4-year-old preschool classroom at Park Lane Early Childhood Center, you instantly feel welcomed. The learning environment provides a secure and stimulating climate. The entryway is covered with a beautiful mosaic made up of primary colored tiles with a skylight above. The children's artwork is displayed along the walls, and you can tell that each child is a valued member of the group. The displays containing the children's work are at eye level, as are the materials for student use, and whiteboards. You can also gain a sense of the appreciation for each child's culture as you look at the friends and family board displayed in the room. Mrs. Ashland has arranged the room so that the children are able to easily move around the classroom, which promotes a social learning environment. Each child has an individual space to store personal belongings or hang jackets. The classroom contains many elements such as rugs, cushions, and rocking chairs that give the class a cozy feel. In the center of the room, there is a large carpeted area where the class can meet as a whole group. At the beginning of each day, the class meets in this area to listen to the daily schedule. Throughout the day, Mrs. Ashland has the children gather on the carpet to listen to stories, engage in language experiences, learn concepts, engage in conversations, and simply build their classroom community. All around the classroom there are learning centers that facilitate a variety of developmentally appropriate activities to be conducted simultaneously.

Mrs. Ashland's classroom also opens up to a covered patio so that student learning can be extended outside. This outdoor area is surrounded by a safety fence that protects the children from accessing the street or other potential hazards. The outdoor learning area includes open spaces for free play, a large sand box for digging, equipment for riding and climbing, and plenty of shade. Mrs. Ashland supplements this area daily with materials to support such areas as gross motor skills, science exploration, social

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emotional development, and creative arts. The children typically play outside for 30 minutes each morning and afternoon. During outside play times, the children are able to develop their social skills, participate in physical activities, and simply be kids.

During center time, the children in Mrs. Ashland's class are free to choose from a variety of activities. The centers are designed to encourage children to be creative with the projects they choose and to engage in meaningful conversations with their peers. While the centers are flexible, they frequently include block building, sociodramatic play, art, music, science, math, manipulatives, computers, and literacy. The materials provided at each of the centers are individualized and challenge children's intellect in a developmentally appropriate way. Mrs. Ashland often uses this time to talk to the children about their activity of choice and documents what she sees in their portfolios. The materials in each center are clearly labeled using pictures so that all students feel successful. All of the materials in the centers are stored on shelves that contain pictures showing where each item belongs.

Finally, you can feel the sense of community in the classroom. The children have opportunities to learn the language of school such as following directions, participating in a class discussion, problem solving, and listening to the teacher. These important daily routines are reinforced throughout the day, which allows all children the opportunity to be successful.