Physical Space Design

There are several design principles that support positive behavior in preschool. These include:

- Eliminating large open spaces where children feel overwhelmed or will run. In your classroom or program, furniture should be used to help define spaces and encourage safe traffic patterns. Low shelves provide safe boundaries for play and movement.

- Providing clearly defined spaces for play, learning, and personal needs. For preschool children, this might mean having defined interest areas or learning centers such as dramatic play, blocks, sensory play, or library.

- Providing adequate materials. Work with your trainer or coach to come up with an inventory of classroom materials and to make sure you have the materials you need. There should be sufficient materials to provide children with a variety of choices each day. The materials should be chosen with the interests and cultures of the children in mind. All materials must be safe, engaging, and developmentally appropriate. Care should be taken to provide multiples of favorite items whenever possible, to support positive interactions and children’s play.

- Defining the boundaries on number of children in an area. Some spaces can accommodate larger numbers of children than others. Always consider the needs of children in a space. For example, does a block area become overwhelming when more than four children build at the same time? Does challenging behavior (arguments) or disengagement (children sitting with no materials or nothing to do) happen when a certain number of children try to play in the art area? If possible, consider increasing the size of learning areas/centers that are particularly popular, to accommodate more children.

You can find additional information, resources, and visuals in the Learning Environments course.