



Healthy Settings for Learning

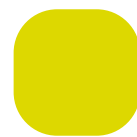
by Jean Gorman (Nayar)

Defining the characteristics of a one-size-fits-all classroom or training environment is a challenging exercise at best. Nevertheless many experts agree that certain environmental conditions promote learning. The following is a snapshot of what some believe stimulates the synapses.

Opportunities for hands-on learning: "You don't read a book to learn how to use a computer, you have to be at the computer," says Janet B. McCracken, international consultant on early childhood education and editor of the professional journal *Dimensions of Early Childhood*.

Multiple teaching tools and spaces: "Exposing students to a wide range of opportunities in art rooms, music rooms, science labs, library rooms, and media rooms that address different styles of learning is best," says Paul Abramson, a consultant to School Planning and Management magazine and president of Stanton Leggett & Associates, an educational consulting firm in Larchmont, N.Y.

Clustered classrooms and small group training: "Organizing students in family-style, small groups and keeping them together with the same teachers for three years provides students with a sense of identity within a larger society," says Abramson.



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Healthy Settings for Learning, continued

Access to the natural world: “Looking at nature and having access to greenery helps people focus and solve problems and lets them reflect at a deeper level,” says Susan Saegert, director of the Center for Human Environments at CUNY.

Developmentally appropriate settings: “Toddlers need to be safe and have room to roam and explore so they can learn through the senses by touching, manipulating, and moving things,” says Sara Wilford, director of the Sara Lawrence Early Childhood Center in Yonkers, NY.

Opportunities to understand real-world applications: “The best way to teach an inner city kid about physics is to take him out on the basketball court, where he can learn about force and velocity by shooting a free throw,” says Larry Lezotte, senior vice president of Effective Schools Products, a publishing company and consultancy for improving school systems.