

## ASSESSING PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS AND INCLUSION READINESS

Certain features of early childhood classrooms have been shown to support children's social and emotional development (Diamond, Hong, & Baroody, 2007).

*Step 1:* Reflect on the following physical characteristics in a target classroom. List two or three ways each characteristic could support child learning and development in the first column.

*Step 2:* Review the physical characteristics—do they support children with special needs? List one or two changes you can make to better support a child with a disability. It might be helpful to think about one disability (e.g., physical impairment) to focus your recommended changes.

	Step 1	Step 2
Classroom space	1.  2.	1.  2.
Furniture (e.g., size, arrangement, comfort)	1.  2.	1.  2.
Schedule and routine	1.  2.	1.  2.

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	Step 1	Step 2
Centers and activities	1.    2.	1.    2.
Number of adults	1.    2.	1.    2.
Number of children	1.    2.	1.    2.
Ratio of adults to children	1.    2.	1.    2.

# SAMPLE FILLED-IN FORM

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**Step 2:** Review the physical characteristics—do they support a child with special needs? List one or two changes you can make to better support a child with a disability. It might be helpful to think about one disability (e.g., physical impairment) to focus your recommended changes.

	Step 1	Step 2
Classroom space	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Classroom is one level (i.e., no steps or gradation in flooring or surface).</li> <li>2. Shelves and tables are used to "partition" the classroom into centers and areas. For example, two shelves enclose the meeting area that is in the corner of the classroom near windows. Students move through the opening between the two shelves (from a linoleum floor onto an industrial carpet) to enter the area, which helps them build an awareness of space and movement.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Level surface allows for physical accessibility for all children.</li> <li>2. The partitions may limit accessibility and participation for a child with motor issues or physical impairments. Will the opening allow space for a child with crutches or a walker, for example?</li> </ol>
Furniture (e.g. size, arrangement, comfort)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Chairs in the classroom are the same, child-size, plastic, and with a solid back.</li> <li>2. Materials are available for children and within reach if they are sitting or standing. For example, the dramatic play area includes hollow blocks that are stacked on low shelves.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Including chairs with arms may better support children with postural issues or promote spatial awareness.</li> <li>2. Place some hollow blocks on the floor for more immediate access.</li> </ol>
Schedule and routine	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A written schedule is posted on the back of the classroom door.</li> <li>2. The teacher taps a musical wand to alert children to cleanup time and a transition to the next routine.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Place the schedule in an area that children pass by daily, such as a morning meeting area.</li> <li>2. Provide children who have a hard time with transitions a 2-minute verbal or visual prompt that cleanup will begin shortly and/or invite them to tap the wand after the 2-minute prompt.</li> </ol>

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Centers and activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There are several centers in the classroom, including a meeting area with books, dramatic play items, sensory objects, manipulatives, and puzzles that children can choose to play with on the carpet or at tables; a writing center; and an art area.</li> <li>2. During morning meeting, all children are expected to sit on a carpet square that the teacher prearranges.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To promote self-regulation, also include a "quiet" or "cozy" area designed for 1-2 children. Encourage all children to use the area, as they need it.</li> <li>2. For children with postural or attention issues, provide additional seating options, such as a chair with arms or a textured exercise ball.</li> </ol>
Number of adults	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There are four adults in the classroom daily: two lead teachers, a paid student assistant, and a student volunteer.</li> <li>2. At arrival time, parents stand in the doorway. Many stay for about 30-45 minutes chatting with one another.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Great! Are all the adults aware of their roles and responsibilities in the classroom and with the children?</li> <li>2. Welcome parents and gently remind them that the school day will be beginning soon. Placing a schedule near the entrance may be a good way to visually prompt parents that the next routine will begin shortly.</li> </ol>
Number of children	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There are 18 children ages 3 and 4 in the class.</li> <li>2. Of the 18, one child expresses challenging behaviors, one child is medically fragile, and one child has speech and language delays.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure materials and activities are appropriate for a range of abilities, needs, and interests across ages.</li> <li>2. Set aside time during each planning meeting to address supports that will prevent challenging behaviors, physically support the child with medical needs, and address language abilities.</li> </ol>
Ratio of adults to children	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There are 18 children and 4 adults.</li> <li>2. On some days, up to two more parents help in the classroom.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review state and county licensure requirements to ensure the ratio is appropriate for the ages of children.</li> <li>2. Send home expectations for parent volunteers before they arrive in the classroom, or meet briefly with parents at the beginning of the school day to ensure they understand their role in the classroom.</li> </ol>