



MURRAY STATE
UNIVERSITY

Murray State's Digital Commons

Integrated Studies

Center for Adult and Regional Education

Spring 2017

Creating the Optimal Early Childhood Environment: Research-Based Ideas and Suggestions

Kelsey Braden
k.braden@outlook.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/bis437>

Recommended Citation

Braden, Kelsey, "Creating the Optimal Early Childhood Environment: Research-Based Ideas and Suggestions" (2017). *Integrated Studies*. 27.

<https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/bis437/27>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Adult and Regional Education at Murray State's Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Integrated Studies by an authorized administrator of Murray State's Digital Commons. For more information, please contact msu.digitalcommons@murraystate.edu.

Creating the Optimal Early Childhood Environment: Research-Based Ideas and Suggestions

By: Kelsey Braden

Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of
Independent Studies Degree

Murray State University
2017

Every Monday morning the buses make their routes, the teachers show up, and the doors open wide filling the school with children. Making the building for these precious minds as safe as it can be is an essential element in assuring a bright future for our next generation. Creating an area that allows young children to flourish in education is an in-depth process. Providing the best atmosphere and environment for an early childhood classroom can be a challenging task. Not only must teachers create the perfect atmosphere, but they must also provide the correct materials to allow children to succeed. This paper will provide suggestions and

advice for early childhood teachers to help them achieve the best and safest classroom, inside and out, for students. The wellbeing of the students is the top priority.

A classroom can be considered home away from home for students. Students spend an average of 40 hours a week at school. Setting up a classroom that encourages learning and makes the students feel safe is a process. A classroom is much more than desks and chairs. In a classroom, there are mandatory items that are required to assist in the interior design. A classroom's interior design can affect the students' performance by 25% (Chu, 2014). Keeping the room safe is the number one priority of the classroom. Adhering to the fire codes and being prepared for emergencies ensures the safety of the students. Making sure that the students know what is required of them during emergency procedures is an essential rule to keeping students safe. Teachers should practice emergency drills regularly to keep the students sharp on procedures.

To motivate children, the interior decoration needs to be fun and bright and include playful colors, as each aspect of the learning environment supports student learning in different ways and for different students (Chu, 2014). Assign a certain wall in the classroom that the students can display works of art. This will provide the students with a sense of belonging.

When considering the furniture in the room, it should be age-appropriate. The size of the room should be appropriate for the class sizes. Providing plush, soft furniture can allow the students to have a variety of textures. Bean bags are a good example of ways to add relaxing elements. “Classroom design has physiological impacts on a student’s experience learning” (Chu, 2014, p. 7). Some factors that can be taken into consideration when it comes to the interior design are wall color, natural light, and personalized student decorations. (Chu, 2014) More factors include temperature levels, desk designs, classroom size, activity centers within the classroom as well as noise levels in the room. (Chu, 2014) Making sure that the room is accessible for handicaps and disabilities is something that needs to be taken into consideration. Students should be able to move freely throughout the room without having to maneuver around obstacles. This also ensures for a quick exit for emergencies. Having the appropriate interior design for all disabled students should be a priority. That means making sure that the lighting, reflections, weak lighting and glares are identified so that the educator can best arrange the class. Adjusting the sensory elements in the classroom will accommodate for certain students that will allow them to feel more comfortable and safe in their surroundings.

The classroom should be arranged in a way that creates minimal accident possibilities. “Children are likely to face seven major safety and threat issues

within classroom: mechanical, physiological, chemical, emotional, thermal, organic, and electric threats” (Chu, 2014, p. 8-9). Mechanical threats would be an example of injuries that are from individuals encountering hard or rough objects or surfaces, such as a child colliding with a table corner. Another example of mechanical threat could be children throwing objects that could potentially hit another student. Making sure that the students know how to properly play with toys can eliminate potential threats. Thermal injuries would be from an injury from heat, such as a fire, or hot objects. Remember to keep anything that could burn students out of reach. For example, if teachers are having an art project that requires the use of a hot glue gun, make sure that the hot glue gun is out of reach for children to touch. This will ensure that no injuries are possible. Electrical threats can be caused by coming into contact with electricity that cause electrical shock. An easy and safe way to minimize electrical injuries is to have plug-in covers over all electrical outlets that are not being used. Chemical injuries can be caused when an individual encounters a chemical substance. An injury that can be caused from chemicals are irritation, allergic reaction. Any chemicals such as bleach that are stored in the classroom need to be locked away and out of children’s reach.

Organic threats can be considered when an individual comes in contact with harmful organisms, such as, the flu, or a virus. Maintaining a clean classroom will

eliminate any potential threats of organic injuries. Have a routine schedule where toys, furniture, play clothes, dolls, and equipment are disinfected regularly, especially if a student in the classroom has been ill with an organic threat. Physiological threats may cause physical injuries such as muscle strains due to using excessive force or maladjusted sitting positions (Chu, 2014). Emotional threats can be a result of stressful environments. Keeping a positive relationship with students can be comforting to them in times of need. Being able to talk with them or simply listening to them is a way to show them comfort.

For an early childhood classroom, the interior design layout is normally a large space with floors that are weather resistant (Chu, 2014). Carpet should be in all play areas. Cabinets should be accessible for storage for all supplies that will be used for learning. Labels should be provided on all shelving and storage containers to help the students identify where things belong. A single service restroom should be accessible for students, with the proper height of the toilet being age appropriate. The walls should be fun, bright and exciting for the children they see. Having an area where children's art work is suggested because art can reduce anxiety. Windows in the room should be large and provide a good amount of natural lighting. Shades for the windows should be provided so that it can eliminate any unwanted light and glares. Having the right amount of natural lighting in the room can determine the mood of the class room. The amount of

lighting that is displayed in the room can affect the attention from the students. It can also affect the body temperatures, which can alter the alertness of the students. At this age, the temperature can easily affect their attention span. The interior details of the room can play an important part to the feelings that students get from the room. The color of the walls can make different emotions and cause different reactions. The suggested color of the walls for a classroom are warm colors that will encourage the children to have positive and imaginative minds. Warm colors are said to give a sense of safety and security (Chu, 2014). The overall layout and design of the classroom is an arrangement that can greatly affect the behavior of the students. Creating a classroom that allows for students to feel comfortable will allow them to take a few learning risks.

In an early childhood classroom, the realms of the classroom exceed the four walls of the classroom; the playground and outdoors is an addition to where children can maximize learning. Setting aside time for children to explore outdoor elements is important because it encourages learning. Outdoor play encourages children to explore their surroundings. “Outdoor play has been observed by researchers and it has been repeatedly stated that playing outdoors encourages children to communicate, express their feelings investigate and discover the world around them” (Olsen, 2013, p. 12). When children are given the time to explore the world around them, they have a chance to make sense of the

world. Incorporating time for the outdoors into the daily schedule is proven to have positive reinforcements on the children's attention, reduction of stress level, and reduction of childhood obesity. "Nature provides children with an inexhaustible supply of renewable play materials, motivating them to think independently, work together democratically to solve problems, and carry out self-initiated projects, with a sense of pride in their accomplishments" (Olsen, 2013, p. 13) Finding a balance between "play" and "learning" is often a difficult decision to make for educators. A playground is more than just playground equipment. Outdoor play areas are places where children can explore and develop skills like motor, cognitive and social skills that will be important for their education. We have established the importance of outdoor play into children's everyday schedule, but what's even more important than that is to keep it safe and to provide quality goals for the children. There should be an understood agreement of the behavior that is expected from the children when they can play outside. Just as there are classroom rules within the class room, children need to understand that there are established rules outside the classroom.

The concept "playground" is an outdated word that is transforming to a more updated concept. Outdoor play environment is more suitable for the ways in which a playground can be used and understood. It's important for educators to fully understand the purpose of the playground and what it will be used for. How it can

assist with the lesson as a tool is another good consideration to think about. Making the most out of the experiences for the children so that it enriches their learning is another consideration. “Involving the QUALITY opportunities and S.A.F.E. spaces set the framework for creating enriching outdoor environments for young children” (Olsen, 2013, p. 14). “QUALITY opportunities + S.A.F.E. spaces = Enriching Outdoor Environments for Young Children” (Olsen, 2013, p. 13).

Using the outdoor space for its full potential can be challenging for some educators. An example of a proper way to fully expand the lesson from indoors to outdoors would be “if during science children are studying worms, the investigation should be done outside. It does not make sense for children to go outside, collect worms and then bring them back indoors to investigate” (Olsen, 2013, p. 14). For children to fully understand the lesson, it is more appropriate for them to see the worms in their natural habitat.

Quality environment is created when the lesson is incorporated with the outdoor space such as the example above with the worms. Creating an outdoor environment that includes materials and activities that can support the child’s physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development is important. Because there are so many opportunities for the children that need to be provided there are certain opportunities that need to be considered so that they support learning.

Natural play happens when there are natural components that are intertwined with an outdoor play area. Good sources that should be incorporated in all early childhood play areas are trees and vegetation. The trees can provide many aspects that can be utilized in many lessons. Trees are a good source of shade, habitat for wildlife, and sensory variety. “It has been noted that plants provide moods, offer seasonal interests, secret places to play and experience with, color, smells, sounds, and natural loose parts such as logs, stumps, stickers, or branches” (Olsen, 2013, p. 14). Providing children with natural elements such as stumps can be used to encourage children to jump from stump to stump which will help with the development of gross motor skills and balance.

Children have a natural instinct to be curious about the environment around them. “It is through discovery and pretend play that they can learn about themselves, their peers, and their world” (Olsen, 2013, pp. 14-15). Having platforms for children can assist in pretend play, such as stages, gazebos, decks, and amphitheaters. Structures that can be transformed by both teacher and children into a variety of settings provide the opportunity for the imagination to soar. Appropriate pretend play requires props and accessories for children to use to stimulate pretend play. Popular materials that are suggested for pretend play are playhouses, mailboxes, dramatic play vehicles, dress-up clothes, dishes and cash register. Providing storage for all equipment is important when revolving around

outdoor elements. Different sizes of storage containers may be required to provide safe storage, aside from the use of one single large storage container. Being able to keep the props and accessories better organized will result from multiple storage containers. Multiple storage containers will secure and organize materials to allow quick and easy access for teachers. Labeling storage containers is encouraged to promote organization.

“Loose parts consist of materials that children can pick up, throw, kick, examine, arrange, and chase” (Olsen, 2013, p. 15). Loose parts, such as balls allow children to learn developmental skills, like hand-eye coordination skills. It is suggested that providing children with loose parts (balls, racks, and dramatic play materials) completes the outdoor play environment and increases physical activity.

Children have a wide range of imagination. Offering the appropriate materials for children to use will encourage their use of their imagination. This is a key opportunity for children to use materials to build. Materials that are suggested for building are shovels, spoons, blocks, sand, and water areas, containers, stones, and sticks.

Organizing the outdoor play area that allows children the adequate amount of space is suggested so that it encourages children to move around the area.

“Unfortunately, during the past decade there has been an increase in sedentary behavior and a reduction in physical activity with young children” (Olsen, 2013, p.

15). The collaboration of music in outdoor play areas is a useful tool that can encourage and promote vigorous movements, such as running, skipping, galloping, and hopping.

Children have a natural desire to learn about new things. “Incorporating mathematics, literacy, science, and other curricular goals outside encourages discovery play” (Olsen, 2013, p. 15). A good example of incorporating science into outdoor play time is life science; it gives children a chance to closely observe, care for, and enjoy living things. Earth science can be involved when children participate in discovery play when they are observing and studying the surroundings of the outdoor play area. “The outdoor environment has physical science when it has manipulative objects such as wheeled-objects, cars, trucks, and wagons, magnets, balls, marbles, paper airplanes, cooking materials, cylinders, and spheres, hand pumps, ramps, pathways, levers, balances, and weights, floaters/nonfloaters, buckets, and prisms” (Olsen, 2013, p. 15). Encourage children to explore the areas around them so that it will expose them to new materials, equipment, words, and feelings.

The QUALITY part of the framework has a dual part that is required to complete the framework. S.A.F.E. is the second part of the framework that is created by the educator. “Providing QUALITY opportunities with S.A.F.E. spaces set the framework for creating enriching outdoor environments for young children”

(Olsen, 2013, p. 15). The meaning of S.A.F.E. is referring to keeping outdoor play supervised, age appropriate design, fall surfacing, and equipment and surfacing maintenance. “Using this information concerning unintentional playground injuries which is available through the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the National Program for Playground Safety identifies four risk factors (S.A.F.E.), regarding injuries to children on playgrounds: Supervision, Age-appropriate design of equipment, Fall surfacing, and Equipment and surfacing maintenance” (Olsen, 2013, p. 16).

Playground Supervision is a skill that maintains good visualization of each child to ensure safety. Being vigilant can reduce the amount of injuries as well as create a good healthy environment. There is a proper way to supervise and keep a well-managed area. Teachers must keep their eyes moving so that no area goes unnoticed.

Age-Appropriate design is ensuring that the equipment being used is appropriate for the children that are using it, as well as encouraging learning that will help build fundamental skills. The layout of the area should also meet the proper criteria for developmental needs of the children.

Proper fall surfacing over the entire playground is vital to keeping the environment safe. Take all surfaces into consideration when selecting equipment. “Selecting the appropriate surfacing for a specific playground involves

the determination of (1) acceptable surface materials, (2) the height of equipment and depth of material, (3) the surfacing coverage in the use zone, and (4) the depth-maintenance requirements of materials within the use zone” (Olsen, 2013, p. 16).

Equipment maintenance can be easily avoided, yet is the primary cause of injuries. Keeping a good maintained play area prevents injuries as well as keeps the equipment lasting longer.

“All children deserve a right to play in meaningful and purposeful environments” (Olsen, 2013, p. 17). Incorporating outdoor activities and play is important for children to get exposure to. Successful outdoor play areas are a place where children can explore, learn, and discover.

Creating a preschool environment that provides all the components that will ensure a child to blossom and flourish is more extensive than most would assume. Many things must go into consideration to provide children with the essentials to develop and learn. It is not an easy process, but if the proper guidelines are followed, the outcome can be outstanding. Toys can be useful materials to promote learning. “Toys can be used to promote children’s cognitive, physical, motor, language, social and emotional development” (Taylor, Morris, & Rogers, 1997, p.235).

The appearance of toys can be deceiving when it comes to the safety of the toy. When it comes to the selection of toys for children, parents, family, and

teachers need to consider the whole aspect of the toy and not just the developmentally appropriateness. “Parents and teachers must be equally as diligent in carefully examining toys from all sources. There can be four reasons that are identified as examples of why accidents happen. First, some toys are “inherently dangerous toys.” This is the biggest cause of accidents. An estimated 10 children died between the time of 1993-1994 while they were playing with tricycles or other riding toys. Secondly, **inappropriate** use of toys is the second most common cause of accidents. An estimated twenty-two children lost their lives because of choking on balloons, balls, toy darts, toy figures, pieces from games, caps of water toys, and or detached toy parts. Thirdly, toys that can be considered developmentally inappropriate are toys that are not suited to their abilities. “Even though, for example, toys are labeled by manufacturers as suitable for children under the age of 3, the specific child’s abilities must also be considered when selecting toys” (Taylor, Morris, & Rogers, 1997, p. 236). There are several considerations that need to be made when choosing toys, with those being the child’s coordination skills, large and fine motor skills, and the ability to follow directions. It’s important for any caregiver to make sure that toys that are intended for older children are keep out of reach for younger children because they can cause injury. Finally, toys that are used without attention to rules for safe use such as “tricycles, toy trucks, cars, wagons, and game pieces can be dangerous

when children do not follow safety rules” (Taylor, Morris, & Rogers, 1997, p. 236). All caregivers need to use proper equipment such as helmets with the appropriate toys. “Toys are supposed to bring children pleasure and joy, but too often they cause pain and sometimes even death” (Taylor, Morris, & Rogers, 1997). There are guidelines that help caregivers of all ages help in selecting safe play materials and equipment. It is noted that there are certain types of toys that children tend to gravitate to. For example, toddlers like toys that allow them to employ their motor skills. For toddlers, it is important to remember these helpful suggestions for toy selection. Toys for infants should be:

- too large to swallow
- washable
- vivid colors
- free of small or removable parts
- free of sharp material and edges
- free of toxic materials
- nonelectric
- durable
- suitable for children’s skills
- variety of textures

Appropriate examples of toys that would be suitable for toddlers are rattles, bells, music boxes, cloth balls, soft blocks, teething toys, colorful picture books, stacking toys, toy telephones, and many more.

“Toddlers enjoy toys that allow them to jump, pull, run, climb, and stack, thus employing their motor skills (Taylor, Morris, & Rogers, 1997, p. 236-237). The encouragement of language skills is also appealing to toddlers. Toys for toddlers should be:

- too large to swallow

- free of sharp material and edges

- suitable for the child’s abilities

- free of brittle materials that could break during play

Appropriate examples of appropriate toys for toddlers are pull toys, balls, simple puzzles, pegboards, storybooks, and riding toys.

“The active imagination of preschoolers enable them to use toys as well as other objects during pretend play” (Taylor, Morris, & Rogers, 1997, p. 237). Toys that entertain preschoolers provide them with exercise and let them interact with other children. Preschools should use toys that are very durable, nontoxic and flame resistant, promote children’s development and imagination. Toys that are best suited for preschoolers are pretend clothes, art materials, simple board games, woodworking sets, sewing kits, bead stringing kits, and books.

“Children that are above the age of 5 enjoy games with rules and role-playing activities, toys that should encourage their interests in science, art, music, math, social studies, reading, and creative endeavors” (Taylor, Morris, & Rogers, 1997, p. 237-238). Toys for this age level should be designed to expand children’s school experiences, be suitable for their skills, foster individual and group play. Toys that would be appropriate for young children would be simple card games, table games, sports equipment, puppets, crafts, photographic equipment.

All toys that will be accessible to children should follow guidelines that ensure safety. Reducing the number of accidents is the whole goal. “If guidelines are followed, there will be fewer toy-related accidents and toys will truly bring new insights, pleasure, and joy to children rather than cause pain, injury, and even death” (Taylor, Morris, & Rogers, 1997, p. 238).

Life in today’s society is evolving. The traumatic events that kids are being exposed to are rising exponentially. “It’s reported that 71% of children have been exposed to at least one potentially traumatic event in the past year, and almost 70% of children have experienced multiple exposures” (Berson & Baggerly, 2009, p. 375). Trauma can be established as large-scale events that are impacting, such as war, terrorism, or disaster. Traumatic events can be small scale; these include house fires, illness, family death, or abuse. In 2006, 412,500 U.S. families experienced house fires, which resulted in 2,620 deaths and 12,925 injuries

(Berson & Baggerly, 2009). Educators of all levels have a key role in helping children cope and move forward. “Exposure to a traumatic experience has short- and long- term consequences in a child’s life and can contribute to physical and mental health problems as well as educational impairments” (Berson & Baggerly, 2009, p. 375). Exposure to trauma is a very damaging event; causing anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder being the top disorder. Numerous physical, social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive symptoms can emerge from the consequences of trauma. Physical, social, emotional, and behavioral characteristics can cause a child to cope in many ways. “Physically, children may experience injuries that manifest a child to use to get comfort, attention, and physical closeness to a significant adult” (Berson & Baggerly, 2009, p. 375-376). Fear, anxiety, depression, irritability as well as many other symptoms may result from social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive events. The higher the traumatic experience, the more it is that a child will experience more than one symptom. Children spend on average seven hours in school. Teachers become an important role model in each and every one of their student’s lives, but teachers should manage their own problems before they try to take on the problems of another. Support must start from the bottom and build to the top, making the changes from within so that an individual can make true changes in others’ lives. Appropriate resources should be available for teachers to use as a support

mechanism for their own benefits so that they can properly cope with their own problems while maintaining a well-structured classroom. “Teachers need to create a classroom environment that is safe, nurturing, and responsive to the needs of children who have been exposed to traumatic events” (Berson & Baggerly, 2009, p. 376). Children have individual needs that adhere to each one of them. Communication is a top characteristic in creating a safe classroom. Keeping a consistent routine, that allows flexibility for children that suffer, is important. “Open and supportive communication occurs by sharing accurate, age-appropriate information about the event; identifying feelings; normalizing typical symptoms; addressing misunderstandings; and ending with a positive focus of helping or offering comfort” (Berson & Baggerly, 2009, p. 377). When a traumatic event arises, it may be hard for a child to process and fully understand the event and how it is affecting them. Good teachers can notice when a child changes their attitude. Even when a child can’t come up with the words to describe the way they are feeling, teachers must remember that listening is a powerful tool. If teachers can listen to their students, then they can answer them with clearness. Seeing a child act out because of certain situations that might be going through their lives is a common coping mechanism. It’s a simple cry for help. As for all teachers, it is their responsibility to have the appropriate resources to provide for their students when they need them. The age of the child determines

the resources that are required for proper and positive outcome. For young children, hands-on activities are helpful for expressing feelings. These activities include watching puppet shows, drawing pictures, reading books, doing art projects, writing letters, making music, and taking action to help (Berson & Baggerly, 2009). Some resources that are useful in the coping process for young children are rescue materials, building blocks, and puppets. Talking through play allows children that are struggling with emotional differences to work through their problems. This approach allows a child to use materials that are familiar that don't have a negative relation. Allowing children to express themselves with playing with dolls and puppets and drawing pictures that lets them describe details will help them overcome their problems. "If play activities take on a destructive bent, adults should redirect the interaction to encourage substitute endings and caring themes, such as acting play, art, and literary activities afford children the opportunity to find a solution that reestablishes a sense of control" (Berson & Baggerly, 2009, p.378). For teachers that have students that have been traumatized, it is important to have a team of support. Having a therapist that can have one-on-one's with the children to provide additional help that teachers can't meet is invaluable. Playing positive music, drawing colorful and positive pictures, talking about how to be safe and things that are safe, and focusing on positive thoughts and words are ways to provide a safe classroom for children that need

support. “Educators may be among the first professionals to interact with a child during and following the traumatic event.” (Berson & Baggerly, 2009, p. 378). Teachers can’t do this alone; with the support of the families, neighborhoods, and the whole community, can this be done. With the backing of the school, teachers have the ability to create a strong relationship between themselves and their students. Creating a future for the next generation that is safe and secure for their children is an ongoing process. Tragedy is promised just as the sun sets. Overcoming tragedy is the way a situation is handled, and it is our responsibility to ensure our future has a promise for tomorrow to see the sun rise.

“Social/emotional learning (SEL) is the process in which children are able to acknowledge and recognize the emotions of others, develop empathy, make good decisions, establish friendships, and handle challenges and situations effectively,” (DeMeulenaere, 2015, p. 8). Early childhood educators can have a strong impact on children with SEL. There will be difficulties along the way for children. Early childhood educators can make it easier for the children by creating a safe classroom that shows support, focuses on the child and their feelings and promotes development of language.

A child has more possibilities in an environment that promotes positive learning. Without these elements, a child doesn’t have the best atmosphere to grow.

“A positive trusting environment includes:

- - A daily schedule
- - An orderly classroom arrangement
- - Respect between teacher and student, and
- - Clear open communication between the student, parent, and teacher”

(DeMeulenaere, 2015, p.8).

When creating a daily schedule for an early childhood classroom, it is important to maintain balance: balance between active and quiet activities, balance between teacher initiated and child initiated activities, and balance between independent and peer activities. “The physical aspect of an early childhood classroom allows for active learning where children interact with each other and make choices”

(DeMeulenaere, 2015, p. 8). A good quality classroom is clean and provides safe equipment that is specialized for their age. The arrangement of the classroom should have “clear paths, labeled centers, a management system, clearly labeled classroom rules, and areas that promote quiet and active play” (DeMeulenaere, 2015, p. 8).

“An effective teacher encourages children to participate in classroom activities, listens to what children say and expands upon their language, building vocabulary and knowledge” (DeMeulenaere, 2015, p. 8). Early childhood teachers need to create opportunities that encourage play and interactions. “The quality of

interactions with adults and peers in the early childhood classroom allows children to develop self-regulation, empathy, and friendship” (DeMeulenaere, 2015, p.

9) When communicating with a young child, remember to approach the child at their level, talk with words that they can understand, and speak in a tone that is friendly. Children learn best at this age by what they see. Hands-on activities are best for children at this age. Teachers should encourage and support their students to be respectful of others. Keeping good communication with each student is a positive reinforcement that prompts children to value self-worth. Communication between the parent and teacher should be a frequent occurrence. This communication can occur through casual conversation, phone call, or a note home. Keeping an on-going record of conversation is a professional thing to do so that it provides written documentation. Keeping an open communication between the parent and teacher creates a good transition from home to school. Transitions can be difficult for children that have SEL. Preparing preschoolers for times of change will help them during the transition to not be scared. Exposing the child to the transition gradually will be a better experience rather than transitioning without patience.

The development of emotions for children now is about how to express and process their emotions. Children must learn the difference between positive and negative feelings. “It is through repeated experiences and exposure to SEL that

children can learn techniques to manage their emotions and get along better with their peers” (DeMeulenaere, 2015, p. 9).

Again, children learn best at this age through visualization. Observing others in their environment is how children learn. This even includes watching adults express their feelings. Children can easily sense emotions that come from their surroundings. Emotions are a new territory for children to understand. This is another reason that children look to caregivers for help. Children can get overwhelmed easily by emotions and how to deal with them. “Early childhood providers influence children’s social and emotional development by providing a safe environment in which the children feel comfortable expressing their feelings” (DeMeulenaere, 2015, p. 7). Keeping a consistent routine that allows flexibility is critical for a preschooler who has suffered any major or minor trauma event and important to every preschooler’s sense of well-being and safety. As a result, it is very important for every child care center to write, follow, and communicate a set of standardized operating procedures and routines. “An early childhood environment in which the children express healthy emotions, regulate them, and understand the emotion of self and others, creates a successful school experience” (DeMeulenaere, 2015, p. 9).