

Checklist for Assessing the Visual Material Environment

The toys, materials, and equipment you put out for children; the posters, pictures, and art objects you hang on the wall; and the types of furniture and how you arrange them all influence what children learn. What children do not see in the classroom teaches children as much as what they do see.

Rate each item:

N—not yet; **S**—still working on it; or **Y**—yes, we do this well

Dramatic play materials that support . . .

- The home lives of children, families, and staff in the program
- Diversity of gender roles
- Diversity of cultures in your community, city, and state (supplementing the diversity of children, staff, and families in the program)
- Economic class diversity
- Accessibility and diverse abilities
- A variety of ways to care for a family, cook and eat, keep house, play, and so on

Manipulatives that reflect . . .

- Diversity in racial identity, ethnicity, gender, physical ability, and occupation (for all manipulatives, including puzzles, memory games, reading and number literacy games, and other small toys)
- Diversity of skin tones, body shapes and sizes, physical abilities, clothing, and ages for play figures of people
- Accurate depictions of people in terms of current life in the United States, avoiding stereotypes of all kinds

Language: Every day the staff support . . .

- The languages that children, families, and staff speak through songs, labels and signs, stories, and interactions among children and with adults
- The ongoing development of children's home languages and the development of English language skills
- Regular opportunities to engage with American Sign Language and braille
- Children's different communication styles, giving everyone equal opportunity to voice their ideas and feelings

Art materials are regularly available, including . . .

- A range of skin tone paper, paint, crayons, markers, and playdough
- Mirrors for children to reflect on their own physical features
- Collage materials with images of diverse people and cultures
- Items meant for individual and for group art activities

Dolls (purchased and homemade) that represent . . .

- ___ A fair balance of the physical characteristics of children, staff, and families in the program and in the community
- ___ Diversity in the United States beyond what is represented in the classroom
- ___ A fair balance of males and females, and also some anatomically correct dolls
- ___ People with different kinds of disabilities (along with a range of doll-size equipment that supports people with disabilities)
- ___ A variety of types of clothing (e.g., not gender stereotyped; not just dominant culture styles)

Children's books that contain accurate, nonstereotypical depictions of . . .

- ___ Physical characteristics and lives of the children, families, and staff in the program
- ___ Different languages, especially those spoken by children, families, and staff in the program and in the community
- ___ Diversity of gender roles, racial and cultural backgrounds, and abilities
- ___ A range of occupations and income levels (that support and supplement the diversity present in the program)
- ___ Many different family structures, so there are no token books of any particular type of family

Books that . . .

- ___ Present accurate images and information, with no overt or covert stereotypes
- ___ Challenge unfairness and prejudice
- ___ Encourage children to take action when faced with unfairness toward themselves or others

Posters, signs, photographs, puzzles, and games that authentically reflect . . .

- ___ All aspects of identity of the children, families, and staff in the program (e.g., economic class; aspects of physical appearance such as skin color, hair texture, eye color, and body size; physical abilities; language)
- ___ Children and families from the racial and ethnic groups in your community, city, and state
- ___ Diversity in families: single parents, extended families, LGBTQ families, interracial and multiethnic families, adoptive families, etc.
- ___ Elderly people of various backgrounds doing different types of activities
- ___ A balanced ratio of images depicting women and men doing jobs in the home and outside the home, and all different kinds of work (e.g., doctor, teacher, factory worker, truck driver, chef, firefighter, artist)
- ___ People of various backgrounds with different abilities and disabilities with their families and working. People with disabilities as active and independent
- ___ Creativity of artists of diverse backgrounds and cultures (e.g., paintings, drawings, sculptures, weavings)
- ___ Images of influential people, both past and present, including people who participate(d) in important struggles for social justice
- ___ Balance and variety, so that there are no token images of any particular group