CLI engage

The Principal's Primer

Research-Based Supports for Early Learning Classrooms

Welcome!

This is an introductory newsletter designed specifically for Principals and Assistant Principals with early learning classrooms on their campus. Sign up today to continue receiving this bi-monthly newsletter!

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) and National Research Council (NRC) have recommended that all Elementary School Principals should have the following: *An understanding of developmental science and instructional practices that support pre-K student learning; Knowledge of developmentally appropriate assessment principles and methods; Knowledge of professional competencies for teachers and how to support teachers' efforts to provide quality learning environments for young children; Knowledge of appropriate assessment of educators to improve child outcomes and inform professional learning; The ability to develop partnerships in the community within and across disciplines that touch the lives of children and families; and Knowledge and skills for effective school administration and management (IOM & NRC, 2015).*

In an effort to strengthen your understanding of instructional strategies and developmentally appropriate perspectives, the Children's Learning Institute (CLI) is pleased to provide you with the latest research, best practices, resources for supporting early learning on your campus, and innovations in technology that support collaborative leadership.

This month we are featuring an overview of the Classroom Environment Checklist.

October 2018

In this issue:

Classroom Environment Checklist (CEC):

- Helps teachers evaluate their classroom environment
- Serves as a change agent for teachers
- Allows coaches to track change and progress over time
- Provides direction for coaching and instruction
- Supports accountability and meeting expectations

We know that the arrangement and management of the early childhood classroom has a direct effect on the kinds of behaviors children exhibit as they live and work together. The difference between chaos and an orderly atmosphere that facilitates learning depends in great part on how the teacher prepares the environment.

The **Classroom Environment Checklist (CEC)** was developed to help teachers understand the key elements of the classroom environment and to help principals, coaches and other specialists set goals with the teachers for improvement in these areas.

For teachers the CEC is a tool to help self-evaluate their classroom environment and it is a change agent! Campus Principals that support teacher classroom instruction can use this tool to set goals, create budgets, or plan for professional development needs.

The CEC is a 21-item observation tool that focuses on the presence and quality level of instructional planning tools (e.g. lesson plans, progress monitoring tools), meaningful literacy and print centers and materials (e.g. letter wall, availability of books), and the overall design and management of the classroom and individual centers.

The Classroom Environment Checklist describes essential features of the physical classroom arrangement as well as indicators of a well-organized, functional classroom management system. Arrangement of furniture, clearly defined centers, and a center management system by which children can self-regulate must all be in place before meaningful instruction can succeed. Efforts to satisfy the basics of a high-quality physical environment are essential, but must not be drawn out too long in the academic year because attention should quickly turn to developing a high-quality instructional environment that fosters responsive teacher-child interactions.

By focusing on the environment, the tool helps one recognize whether children have opportunities to be hands-on, self-directed, and clear about their learning goals. The tool places high importance on indicators of a print-rich environment to support children's early language and literacy. It should be used at the beginning of the year and revisited as part of subsequent classroom observations.

At the most basic level, the CEC is a list of environmental indicators organized according to four primary areas. Each categorical area includes specific indicators that are impactful components of an ideal classroom setting. Below is a sample of the CEC and lists of the indicators included in each area:

Center/Independent Workstation Areas and Descriptions: (6 indicators)
Basic classroom management, Center management system, Variety of accessible center materials, Center material labels, Books in centers, and Writing tools in centers

Literacy Areas and Descriptions: (5 indicators)
Book availability, Interactive read aloud supports, Shared or interactive writing, Writing journals and alphabet/PA activities

Meaningful Print Areas and Descriptions: (6 indicators)
Children's names, Letter wall, Authentic print, Children's daily schedule, Rules chart, Helper chart

Instructional Planning & Delivery Areas and Descriptions: (4 indicators)
Lesson plans, Thematic connections, Assessment techniques, Displayed children's work

CIRCLE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT CHECKLIST

Teacher _____ School _____

Coach / Mentor _____ School Year _____

| Area	Rating Description	Observed		
		BOY	**MOY**	**EOY**
CENTER / INDEPENDENT WORKSTATION AREAS*				
Basic Classroom Management	1 Room is disorganized, messy, and/or centers are undefined.	1☐	1☐	1☐
	2 Room is organized with three to six defined centers. There is space for large- and small-group meeting areas. Center definition and/or traffic flow need improvement.	2☐	2☐	2☐
	3 Room is organized with at least seven recommended centers* that are well defined. There is space for large- and small-group meeting areas and good traffic flow throughout the classroom.	3☐	3☐	3☐

In the digital version found on the CLI Engage platform, you can enter results and the generated report will include photographs as examples of high-quality implementation of each item on the CEC. These exemplar photographs can help guide developmentally appropriate pre-kindergarten classroom set-up. Example photographs of indicators are shown below and many more can be viewed on the CLI Engage CEC page.
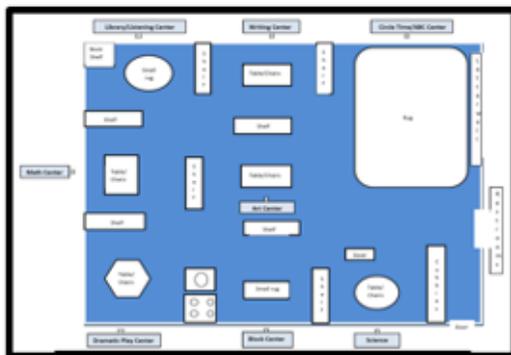
Basic Classroom Arrangement

Center Management System
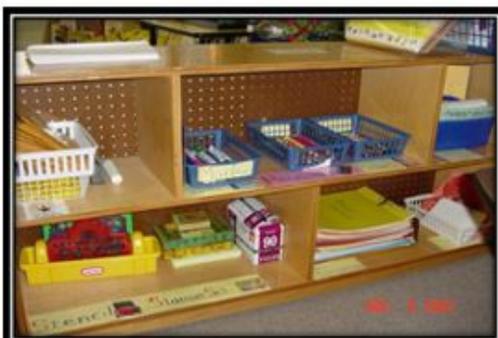
Variety of Accessible Center Materials & Center Materials Labeled

Books in Centers & Writing Tools in Centers

The CEC uses simplistic scoring for ease and speed of use. Each rating has an associated description. The selected rating indicates that every part of the description is visible in the classroom. Marking the CEC requires a choice from the **3-point rating scale**:

- **1 – low**
- **2 – moderate**
- **3** – **high**

It is recommended that the CEC is completed three times per year and used to set goals for change in aspects of the classroom environment. This observation can take place with or without

children in the room and takes only 15 – 20 minutes to complete.

Implementing the CEC in your school is easy to do and can provide numerous benefits for you and your teaching staff.

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"Effective leaders align and focus systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment within and across grade levels to promote student academic success, love of learning, the identities and habits of learners, and healthy sense of self."
(National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015, p. 12)