

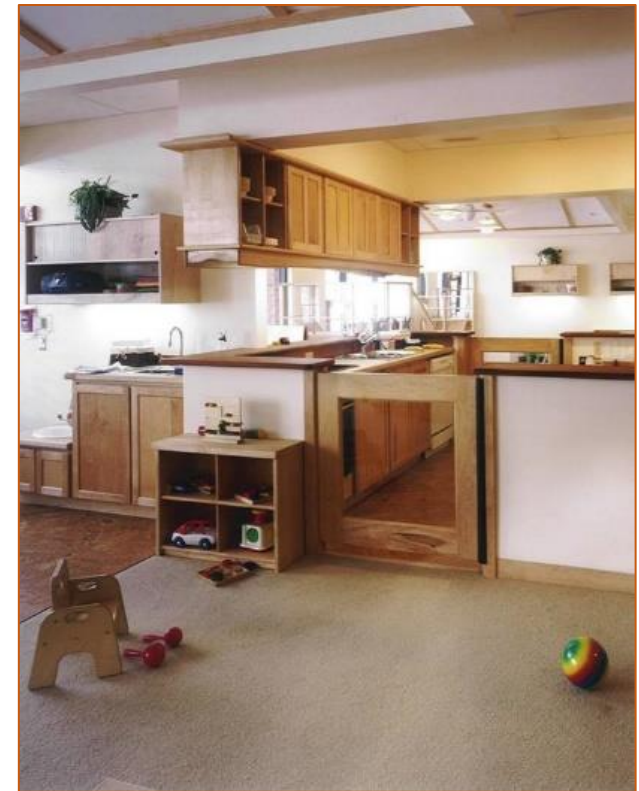
# Early Learning Facility Design Criteria Classroom Best Practices

## “Checklist”

A Resource to Identify Classroom Facility Improvements

September 2017

Companion document to  
ELF Design Criteria - Classroom Best Practices “Guide”



Dates of Use	
Site Name	
Classroom	
User (s)	
Tools Needed	Camera to document possible improvements

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## Background

As it needs to be in ECE, most energy and attention goes to developing responsive relationships with the children, families and staff to provide quality programs. Along with the demands of center’s daily operations, there is very little time for thinking about improving the classroom’s facility. We get used to classrooms with sinks that are not installed at child-height with handles children cannot properly use, adult instead of child-sized toilets, not enough lighting, inadequate odor ventilation, worn flooring, unacceptable acoustic levels, etc. We make do and have for too many years. In 2017 the ECE field needs to advocate and act to increase the quality of our facilities to provided optimal environments for children, staff and families. Ones that fosters relationships, nurtures development, promotes health and wellness and facilitates learning.

When funding is available for classroom improvements, it can be overwhelming to know where to start and what improvements to pursue. Few resources are available to help identify improvements and best practice solutions. The *Early Learning Facility Classroom Design Criteria - Best Practices Checklist* and **Guide** is this type of resource. The **Checklist** is used to do a quick classroom assessment and the **Guide** is used to assist in deciding why and what improvements to make. The **Guide** provides the context of the best practices, further items to review and options for resolving issues. The **Checklist** was not developed as a stand-alone tool.

## Instructions

Use this checklist as an initial review to identify areas for possible improvements. It is recommended to take photos of the areas. Photos help refresh one’s memory and come in handy when determining potential resolutions. After the “**Checklist**” is complete or a specific section filled out, refer to the **Guide** for an explanation of why the item is a best practice, additional conditions to review and suggested ideas for improvements.

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## 1 Diapering and Toileting Areas

Yes No NA

- Are the diapering & toileting areas in the classroom?
- Are the toilets child-sized toilets and installed at child-height? No steps are necessary for children to use toilet.
- From the classroom, is there excellent line-of-sight into the toileting area?
- While diapering, can the staff look up & see into classroom?
- Does the diapering table have stairs?
- Is there a child-height privacy for one of the toilets in the preschool toileting area?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

## 2 Child-Height Sinks

Yes No NA

- Are there child sinks in diapering and toileting areas?
- Are sinks installed at child-height? Steps are not used for children to use sinks.
- Are there child-height sinks located near the classroom’s eating and art areas?
- When children use the sinks, water stays in the sink & does not splash or drip onto the floor.
- Do children dry their hands with paper towels? Hand blow dryers are not used to dry hands.
- Is there excellent line-of-sight of children using all sinks?
- Is there child-height sink in each outdoor yard?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

## 3 Classroom Adult-Height Sinks

Yes No NA

- Is there 1 adult-height sink dedicated for diapering?
- Is there 1 adult-height sink dedicated for food prep and washing dishes?
- Is there 1 adult-height sink dedicated for non-food activities, i.e. art, etc.?
- Are the sinks located in the areas the activities take place?
- Do the adult sinks have single lever handles and swivel faucets?
- Do only adults use adult sinks? Children do not use adult sinks.

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

## 4 Classroom Teacher Support Area

Yes No NA

- Is there dedicated space in the classroom for staff to do administrative tasks? Desk/counter space, adult chair, file storage, etc.?
- Is there an adult food prep space within the classroom? Kitchenette, upper & lower cabinets, sink, garbage disposal, dishwasher, etc.?
- Is there excellent line-of-sight from the teacher support areas into the classroom.

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

## 5 Ease of Visual Supervision

Yes No NA

- Is the classroom configured for excellent visual supervision of each activity area?
- Are the activities areas defined by low shelving, panels or walls?
- If ceiling hangings are allowed, are they placed so as not to create a visual barrier?
- Do the interior & exterior doors have full-lite visibility panels, “windows”. See “[Guide](#)” for full-lite visibility panels definition.
- See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & information and recommendations.

## 6 Natural Light in Classroom

Yes No NA

- Does the classroom have at least 2 windows that let in natural daylight?
- Does the classroom have child-height windows that have an outside view?
- If there are no child-height windows, is there a platform/loft that brings the child up to the window?
- Are the window coverings easy to clean and operate? Are they opened during the day to let natural light in the classroom?
- If there is glare & excessive brightness in the classroom, is it mitigated by the window coverings and/or awnings?
- Are the windows clear of display items that can block light?
- If needed, are the walls and ceiling painted colors that reflect light?
- See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

## 7 Optimal Electrical Lighting

Yes No NA

- Are all table top activity areas well lit?
- Is the reading area well lit? No shadows are present.
- Are the teacher support spaces, desk, sinks, counters, etc., well lit?
- Are the classroom lights dimmable?
- Do the ceiling light fixtures have a lens covering the light bulb?
- Does the toileting light stay on while children are in the classroom and it is not a motion sensor light fixture.
- Are the classroom light switches conveniently located for staff to operate?
- Does the classroom have multi-level switching? 50% of lights can be turned off while 50% stay on.
- Does the classroom have some residential type of lighting?
- See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

## 8 Acoustic Levels

Yes No NA

- In the classroom with children, can you be clearly heard & understood in normal conversation without raising your voice?
- When the classroom is empty, is the room is quiet? There is no background noise coming from inside or outside the classroom.
- Do the ceilings have sound absorbing material or are they designed to redirect sound?
- Are the infant & toddler rooms located in the quietest part of the center?
- See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

## 9 50 Usable Square Feet per Child

\_\_\_\_\_ **Usable** classroom square footage is the total Classroom square footage minus the square footage for used for diapering, toileting and teacher areas, circulation paths, etc. Best practices recommend 50 square feet of usable space/child.

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for how to calculate.

## 10 Sculpted Learning Environments – Define Areas, Relationship Building, Maximize Sq. Ft.

Yes No NA

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Are the activity areas sculpted along the classroom’s perimeter?

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Are low walls, shelving, partitions used to define each area?

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Does the classroom have intimate spaces to encourage relationship building? (child-adult & child-child)

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Does the classroom entrance have child-parent transition space? A place for parent and child to sit.

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Does the classroom include private spaces for children to decompress, rest and rejuvenate?

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Are the circulation paths well-defined & minimized?

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Wide-open spaces that encourage unfocused play, (e.g. running, etc.), are not present?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

## 11 Convenient, Plentiful & Organized Storage

Yes No NA

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Is there storage in the classroom for frequently used items?

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Is there upper wall-cabinets storage located where materials are most often used?

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Is there storage outside the classroom for infrequently used and/or large items?

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Are all items properly stored? Items are not stored in corners, hallways, diapering, toileting areas creating safety hazards.

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Are all the storage spaces well organized?

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Are materials stored in containers that easily fit into the storage unit & allow for clear visual access?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

## 12 Thoughtful Visual Environment

Yes No NA

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Is the classroom clutter-free? Clutter-free tops of cubbies, storage units, cabinets, and shelving.

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Is the children’s work displayed in well-defined spaces & located at child-height?

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Are the windows & ceilings mainly clear and are not used as display space?

\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Does the classroom have some residential design elements such as plants, lamps, area rugs, futon/sofa, color pallet, etc.?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

**13 Direct Access to Outdoors**

Yes No NA

Does the classroom have direct access to its outdoor yard?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

**14 Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning - Air Quality**

Yes No NA

Is the classroom well heated & cooled? There are no drafts or cold spots.

Do the heating & cooling systems operate quietly?

Are the filters changed every month when system is used?

Are yearly maintenance inspections performed on each system?

Can the classroom staff control the heating & cooling systems in each room?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

**15 Ventilation and Fresh Air Circulation - Air Quality**

Yes No NA

Does the classroom have a source of fresh air?

Is fresh air able to circulate throughout the classroom using windows, ceiling fans, or ventilation systems?

If using a mechanical ventilation system, do the fresh air replacement rates meet recommended standards? See [Guide](#) for rates.

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

**16 Effective Venting of Odors - Air Quality**

Yes No NA

Are all areas of the classroom odor free?

Are there ventilation fans directly over the diapering, toileting & food prep areas?

Do all the ventilation fans vent the air to the outdoors and not back into the facility?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

**17 Mildew, Mold and Moisture Leaks - Air Quality**

Yes No NA

Is the classroom free of stale or musty smells?

Are the following free of leaks: toilets, sinks, ceiling, walls, windows, appliances, etc.?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

## 18 Reduce Toxins in Environment - Air Quality

Yes No NA

- Do the interior and exterior entries have large walk-off mats? See “Guide” for walk-off mat definition.
- Are non-toxic products and microfiber cloths and mops used to clean the classroom?
- Is a high-efficiency vacuum cleaner, with a HEPA filter, used to clean the flooring?
- Have bleach solutions been replaced with approved alternatives?
- Does the classroom have a radon detector?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

## 19 Flooring - Air Quality & Safety

Yes No NA

- Is all the flooring in good condition?
- Is the flooring easy to clean and non-toxic?
- Are the floors are vacuumed and cleaned daily?
- Are the rugs professionally steam-cleaned 2-4 times a year?
- Is the flooring is appropriate for activity taking place in the area? Water resistant flooring under sinks, art and meal areas, etc.

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

## 20 General Safety

Yes No NA

- Do all doors have hinge guards. See Best Practices “Guide” - General Safety for Definition for hinge guards.
- Do all doors have child-height visibility panels? See Best Practices “Guide” - ease of Visual Supervision for Definition for visibility panel.
- Do all walls, furniture, shelving, cabinets, doors, etc. are in good condition and no sharp edges, rips, etc.
- Are all the electrical outlets the tamper-resistant type?
- Does the classroom have sufficient number of outlets to avoid use of extension cords?
- Are there no sharp edges in infant/toddler rooms? Use ½ inch bullnose edges for wall corners, counters, shelving, etc.

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

## 21 Facility Maintenance

Yes No NA

- Does the facility have a preventative maintenance program?
- Are routine inspections conducted monthly to identify potential problems?
- Is the interior painted every 3 years?
- Is the exterior painted every 5-10 years?
- Are the windows operable, have secure screens, and sound weather stripping?
- Are the doors and weather stripping in good condition?
- Is the roof in good condition?
- Are the ceilings and walls in good condition (no water stains, peeling, holes, etc.)?
- Are there no moisture leaks around toilets, sinks, appliances, etc.?
- Are the appliances in good condition and on a replacement schedule?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.