Teaching to Diversity: Inclusive Environments
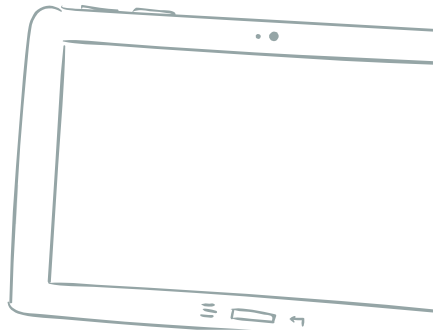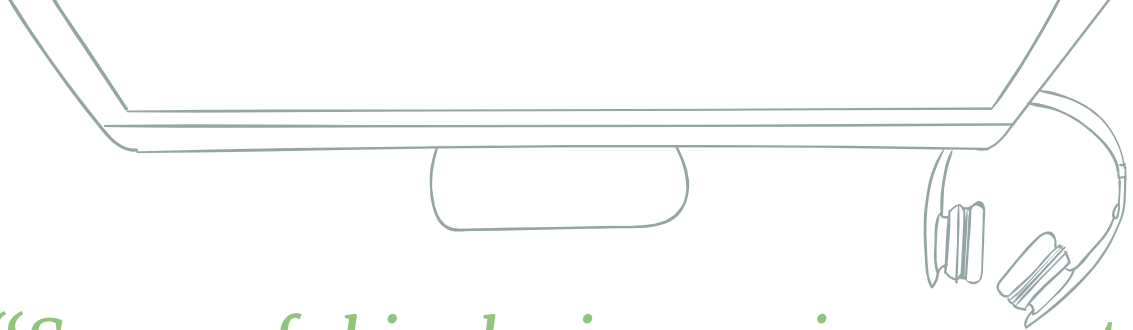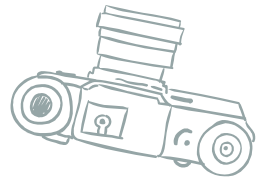
PSSD Student Support Consultants & Advocacy and Behaviour Consultants

Prairie South Schools 210 — Learning together.

"Successful inclusive environments create a climate of cooperation and caring that values the processes of problem solving and learning together." – Anne Marie Richardson–Gibbs and Diane Klein
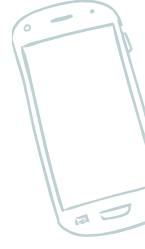
Actualizing a Needs-Based Model

Supporting All Learners

The Ministry of Education, in partnership with stakeholders including school divisions, schools, parents/guardians, inter-ministry groups, students, and human service agencies, encourages the actualization of a needs-based model of identifying and providing supports for students. The intent of this process is to ensure that:

- students are provided with supports in the development and attainment of competencies and independence;
- students have access to appropriate learning opportunities, resources, and supports;
- students are supported through differentiated and responsive instruction; and,
- students are provided with inclusive opportunities to reach their potential.

A number of significant practices that characterize this actualization include:

- creating positive, welcoming and responsive learning environments;
- differentiating instruction;
- nurturing student independence;
- screening and early intervention;
- involving collaborative, interprofessional teams;
- engaging parents, guardians and caregivers; and,
- building partnerships within the community and other agencies.

Physical Environment

The physical environment includes consideration for:
- Arrangement of furniture
- Student and adult placement
- Lighting
- Decorations
- Access to materials

VERY HOT
HOT
WARM
COOL
COLD
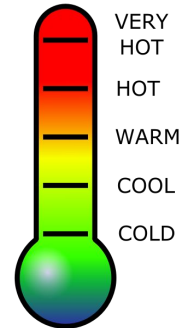
Physical Environment
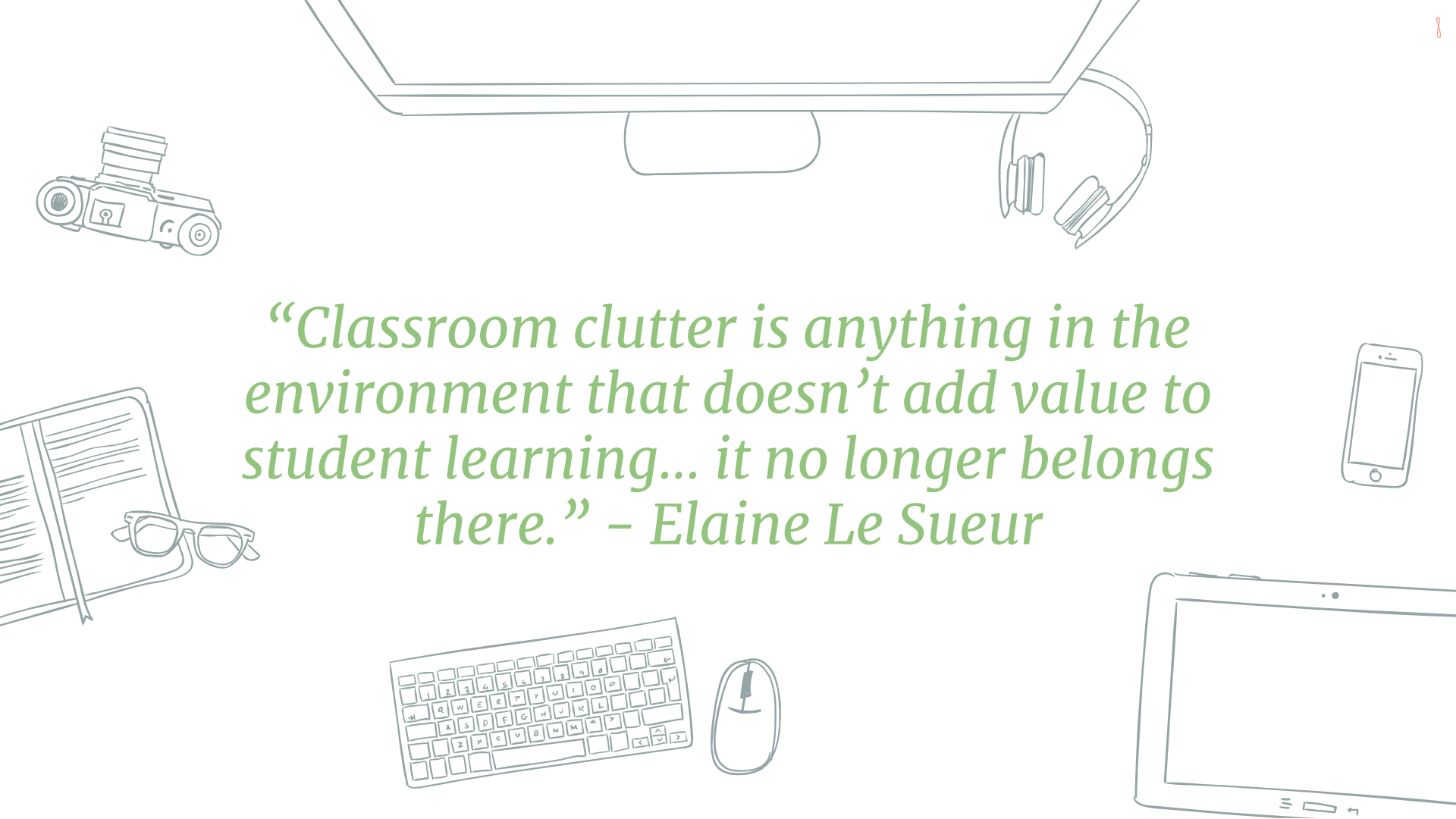
Room arrangements should adhere to a few basic principles:
- Areas for independent, small group, and whole group work.
- Avoid/minimize distractions and high congestion areas.
- Ensure accessibility of materials for all students.
- Ensure clear lines of sight to the teacher, board, etc. for all students.
- Ensure clear lines of sight on all students for the adults.
- Ensure furniture is the appropriate size for the students.
- Reduce visual stimuli - less is more!

Physical Environment: Less is More

"Classroom clutter is anything in the environment that doesn't add value to student learning... it no longer belongs there." – Elaine Le Sueur

Programmatic Environment

Programmatic Environment

The programmatic environment includes consideration for:
- **Organization and schedules**
- **Materials/resources**
- **Instruction**
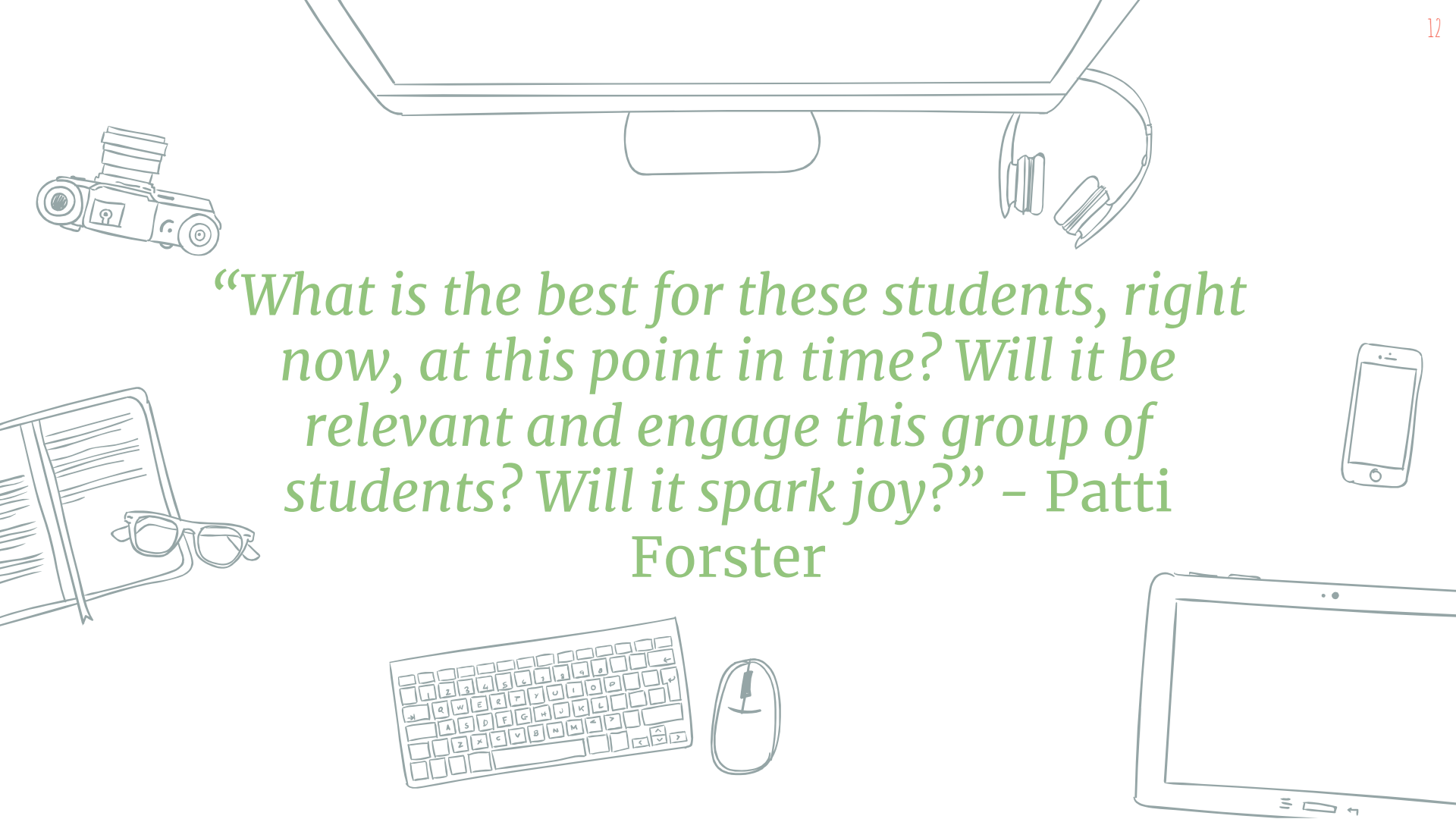
Programmatic Environment

The programmatic environment should adhere to a few basic principles:
- Consider how materials should be stored and labeled.
- Ensure materials are prepared for that day/lesson.
- Let visuals do the talking - visual schedules, timers, FIRST/THEN, item labels, etc.
- Maintain high, yet reasonable, expectations for student learning and behaviour. Co-create expectations with students and revisit often.
- Timetable preferred activities before or after non-preferred activities.
- Schedule in mindful moments and brain breaks.
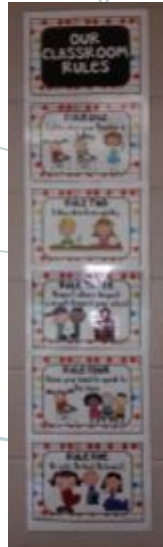
"What is the best for these students, right now, at this point in time? Will it be relevant and engage this group of students? Will it spark joy?" – Patti Forster

Interpersonal Environment
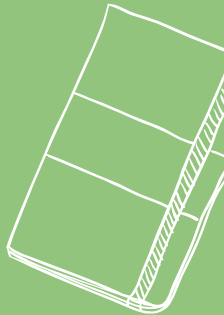
Interpersonal Environment

The interpersonal environment includes consideration for:
- Approaches
- Attitudes
- Beliefs
- Communication
- Demeanor
- Proximity
- Tone
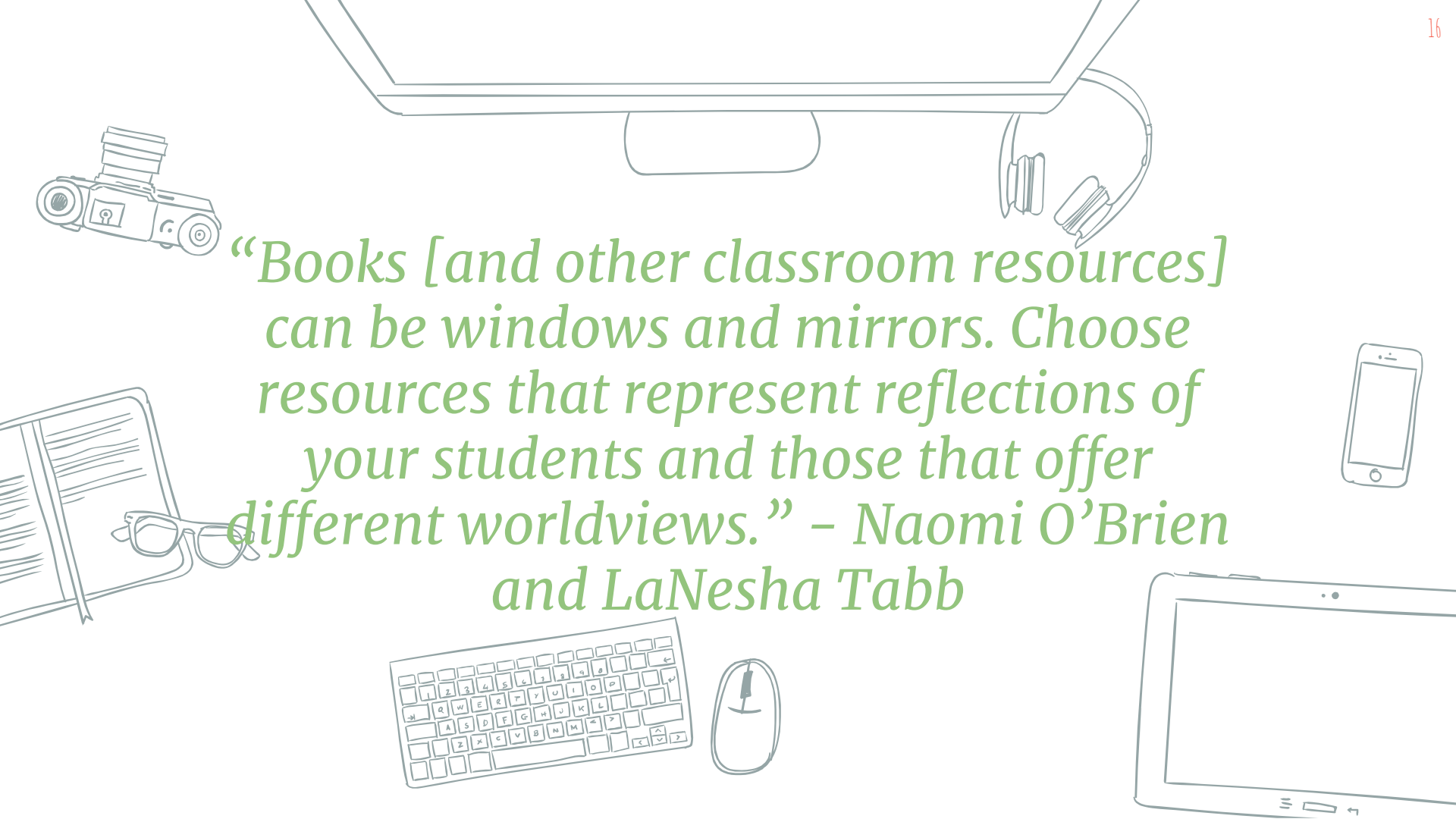
Interpersonal Environment

The interpersonal environment should adhere to a few basic principles:
- Appropriate choices (ex. Forced Choice).
- Celebrating student success.
- Greetings and farewells at the doorway each day.
- Know each student by name, need, and strength!
- Model a calm voice, demeanor, and regulation strategies.
- Provide high levels of specific praise.
- Represent the students in their classroom (ex. photos, books, and toys with diversity in mind).
- Student placement and groupings that foster communication and belonging.

"Books [and other classroom resources] can be windows and mirrors. Choose resources that represent reflections of your students and those that offer different worldviews." – Naomi O'Brien and LaNesha Tabb

Inclusive Environment Checklists
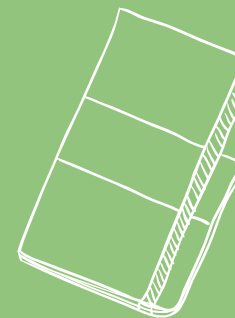
Inclusive Environment Checklists

Resource: Learner-Friendly Environment Survey

Order

	1	2	3	4	5
Good lighting (natural, soft)					
Comfortable and inviting (temperature, furniture)					
Everything has its own place					
Expectations/norms/targets posted					

Cleanliness

	1	2	3	4	5
Clutter-free					
Smells nice					
Clean floor/carpets					
Clean desks/furniture					

Signs of Life

	1	2	3	4	5
Colorful walls/posters/photos					
Student work displays					
Print-rich environment					
Personality of students/teacher reflected					
Plants/flowers/class pets					
Class library					

Layout/Accessibility

	1	2	3	4	5
Easy to move around					
Students can easily access books, materials, supplies					
Easy-to-do teamwork					
Age-appropriate furniture/materials					

This survey was developed in partnership with educators from Hazelwood and Riverview Garden School Districts.

ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY

Rate each feature using the following scale:
1 = inconsistent or unpredictable..... 5 = consistent and predictable

Physical Space: Is physical space organized to allow access to instructional materials?	
• Work centers are easily identified and corresponds with instruction	1 2 3 4 5
• Traffic flow minimizes physical contact between peers and maximizes teacher's mobility	1 2 3 4 5

Attention: Does the teacher gain the attention of the students prior to instruction?	
• A consistent and clear attention signal is used across instructional contexts	1 2 3 4 5
• Uses a variety of techniques to gain, maintain, and regain student attention to task.	1 2 3 4 5

Time: Does the teacher initiate instructional cues and materials to gain, maintain, and regain student attention?	
• Materials are prepared and ready to go.	1 2 3 4 5
• Pre-corrects are given prior to transitions.	1 2 3 4 5
• Common intrusions are anticipated and handled with a consistent procedure. Unexpected intrusions are minimized with an emphasis on returning to instruction.	1 2 3 4 5
• Students engaged at high rates during individual work	1 2 3 4 5
• Down-time (including transitions) is minimal	1 2 3 4 5

Behavior Management: Does the teacher have universal systems of PBS in place?	
• Rules are posted	1 2 3 4 5
• Rules are referred to at appropriate times	1 2 3 4 5
• Students receive verbal praise for following rules	1 2 3 4 5
• Corrections are made by restating the rule/expectation and stating the appropriate replacement behavior.	1 2 3 4 5
• Continuum of consequences for encouraging expected behaviors	1 2 3 4 5
• Continuum of consequences for discouraging expected behaviors	1 2 3 4 5
• Maintains a 4:1 ratio of positive to negative statements	1 2 3 4 5

Routines: Does the teacher have procedures and routines that are clear and consistently followed?	
• Start of class	1 2 3 4 5
• Working in groups	1 2 3 4 5
• Working independently	1 2 3 4 5
• Special events (movies, assemblies, snacks, parties)	1 2 3 4 5
• Obtaining materials and supplies	1 2 3 4 5
• Using equipment (e.g. computer, tape players)	1 2 3 4 5
• Managing homework and other assignments	1 2 3 4 5
• Personal belongings (e.g. coats, hats)	1 2 3 4 5
• Entering/exiting classroom (e.g. using restroom/drinking fountain, going to library, moving around room	1 2 3 4 5

Curriculum and Content: Does the teacher implement effective instruction strategies?	
• Assignments can be completed within allotted time period	1 2 3 4 5
• Content presented at student level resulting in high rates of engagement	1 2 3 4 5
• Frequently checks student learning for understanding	1 2 3 4 5
• Instructional focus builds on student's current and past skills	1 2 3 4 5
• Gives clear set-up and directions for task completion	1 2 3 4 5

Based on the observation, summarize strengths and weaknesses of universal support implementation in the classroom.

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ii. Classroom Environment Checklist

A teacher who provides a highly structured, well-organized classroom environment is likely to:

- ☐ have a clear image of what the classroom should look like when it is functioning smoothly (share this image with the students);

- ☐ establish and display classroom rules that have been developed with input from students;

- ☐ post a daily schedule;

- ☐ provide clear simple instructions for learning tasks and transitions between tasks;

- ☐ provide a lesson outline to help students see the "big picture" and to track progress through the various learning steps;

- ☐ provide advance organizers (many students benefit when this information is presented to them using a graphic organizer, with the information offered in both a visual and a text form);

- ☐ ensure that the students know the learning outcomes, as well as the material considered critical to developing a deeper understanding of the course;

- ☐ provide alternative learning activities with the same content and learning goals, but at different instructional levels for students with different needs;

- ☐ plan opportunities for students to take short breaks or to make "shifts" during learning activities, without creating a negative effect on the lesson flow;

- ☐ encourage students to use a consistent heading format in note taking to identify the subject, date, unit, and so on;

- ☐ encourage students to keep their desks clear except for current work materials;

- ☐ ensure that handouts for students are uncluttered and well organized;

- ☐ use a consistent approach to post and keep track of homework and assignments (this may be an assignment notebook, a school calendar, or an assignment sheet that follows a consistent format);

- ☐ allow sufficient time, prior to the end of class, for students to record their homework and assignments, to check for clarification if needed, and to receive a detailed response before the class ends;

- ☐ establish class routines with which students may become familiar and in which they can participate without a great deal of explanation; and

- ☐ provide students with a written overview of course and unit plans.

Figure 1. Steps to Changing the Classroom Environment

Observe
- What types of disruptive behaviors occur in your classroom?
- When are the most disruptive behaviors occurring? Time of day? Under which type of circumstances?
- How are different areas of your classroom utilized? Do the tasks completed in the areas change throughout the day? (Sometimes the library area is for reading but during math it is for group activities.)
- Where is disruptive behavior occurring?
- Are students able to work at desks without distractions? Are students able to work in group areas without distractions from the surrounding environment?

Modify
- Provide areas of personal space (Hood-Smith & Leffingwell, 1983; Visser, 2001).
- Decrease or change placement of stimulating visuals.
- Clear pathways between students and high trafficked areas (Visser, 2001; Weinstein, 1979).
- Make a clear distinction between individual versus group activity areas.
- Rearrange teacher's desk (Proshansky & Wolfe, 1974; Zifferblatt, 1972).
- Place barriers and/or partitions in the classroom (Evans & Lovell, 1979; Gump, 1974; Proshansky & Wolfe, 1974).
- Address acoustic quality in the classroom by eliminating objects that produce background noise.
- Modify classroom climate by adjusting lighting, air flow, temperature.
- Organize areas by adding shelves, labels, or cubbies (Evans & Lovell, 1979; Weinstein, 1979).
- Rearrange student seating (e.g., coed dyads, rows) facing away from visual distractions such as doorways and windows.
- Alter the room to ensure a clear line of sight.

Follow-Up
- Are you using the modifications correctly?
- Are you using the modifications consistently?
- Are the modifications being used how they were intended to be used?
- Do any modifications need rearranging, changing, or removal?
- Do you need to implement additional modifications?

★ Visual from *Changing Behaviours by Changing the Classroom Environment* (2010) by Guardino, C. A. and Fullerton, E. in the Journal of *Teaching Exceptional Children*

Reflection

What environmental aspects are contributing to learning in your classroom?

What environmental aspects are taking away from learning in your classroom?

What is one change you can make to improve the physical environment in your class?

What is one change you can make to improve the programmatic environment in your class?

What is one change you can make to improve the interpersonal environment in your class?

Take action! Complete an inclusive environment checklist for yourself.

CREDITS

★ For more information, please see the Diversity Series and the Behaviour Learning Cycle on Connect.

★ *The Adaptive Dimension for Saskatchewan K-12 Students (2017)* by the Ministry of Education

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http://msgorhamsabcs.ca/kids-who-read-succeed-everything-literacy/classroom-library/;
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Thanks!

Any questions?

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