

# Layout & Décor

A guide to a calming school environment



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# Indoor Spaces

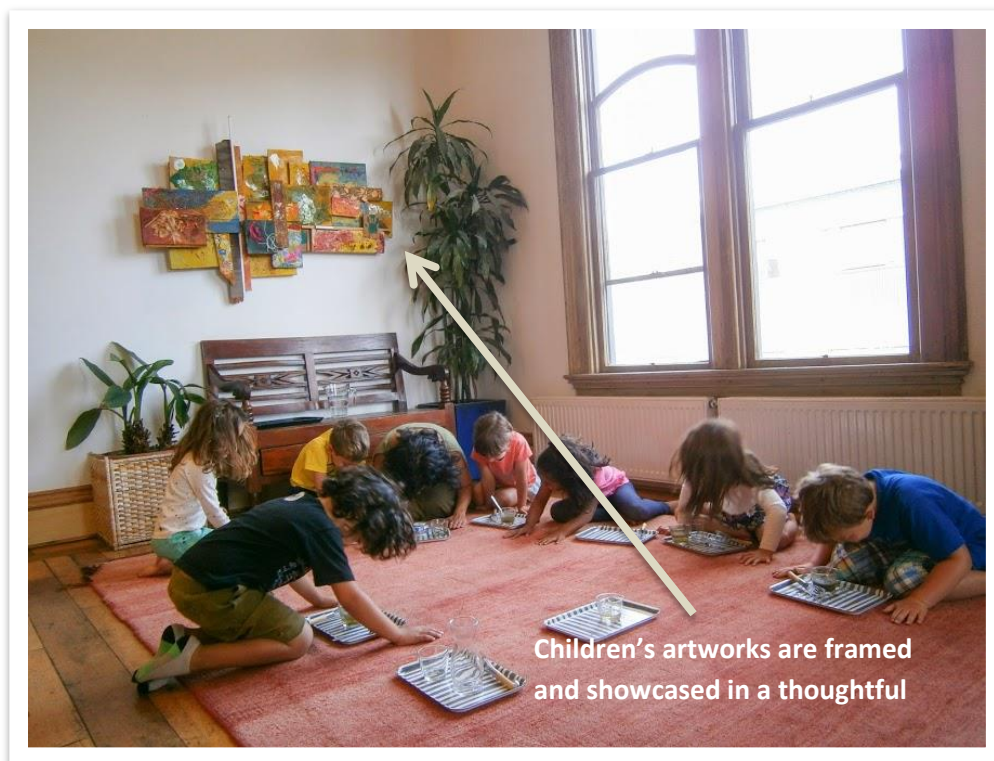
The physical look and feel of the children’s space plays a critical role in the general success of a program and the children’s wellbeing. Calm, soothing spaces that are home-like tend to inspire calm and peaceful children. Spaces that are nurturing and comforting that also support play and hands-on learning, tend to help children focus and thrive in the school environment.

## Things to consider when designing children’s spaces:

### Clutter free spaces:

The more clutter-free the space, the more calming it is. The following elements tend to **over-stimulate** children:

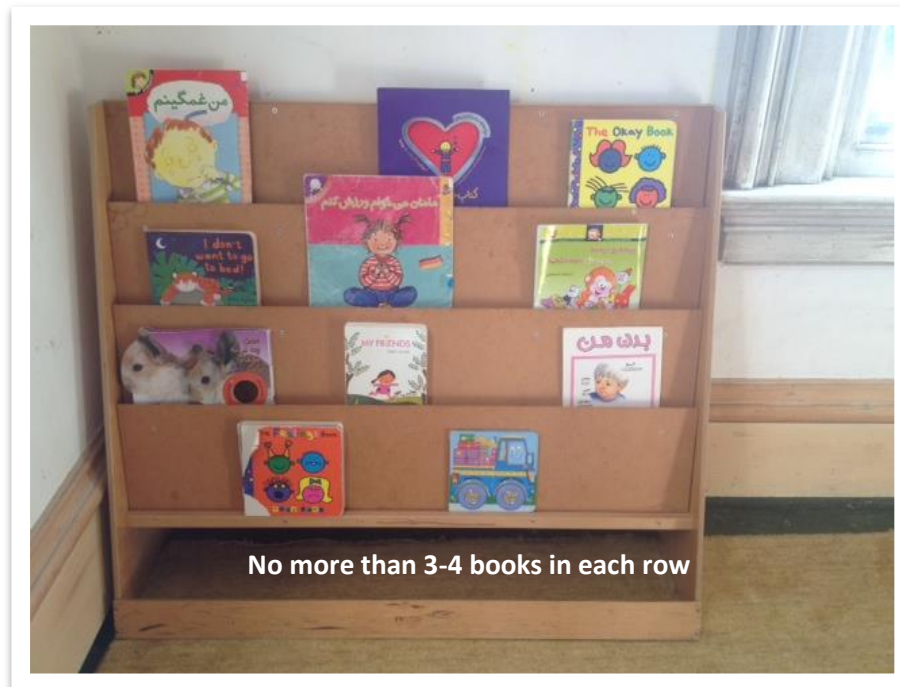
- Too many decorative items and pictures on walls: Minimal and thoughtfully placed items help maintain a space that promotes focus. When displaying children’s artwork, framing and showcasing a select few items – or combining all the children’s work into one framed piece – is ideal.



- “Busy” patterns: Curtains, pillows, fabrics and rugs that are visually over stimulating can unconsciously create unrest and disruption in the classroom. Over time, the children become accustomed to it thereby

raising their threshold for visual stimulation. This can cause a child to seek out stimulation when in a visually quiet environment, as their baseline is higher than that of a child that is accustomed to a calmer, more harmonious space. If a child isn't able to find the stimulation s/he seeks, s/he is likely to create it, thereby being overactive, unable to focus, and disruptive.

- Cluttered bookcases: Organizing books by size on a shelf and minimizing preschool books (facing out) to no more than 3-4 per shelf, can help create an uncluttered environment. ( see below)



### The effect of Colors:

Colors effect children's mood so attention must be put in to choosing the right colors for décor.

**Red** is the most emotionally intense color. Being the longest wavelength, red is a powerful color. Although not technically the most visible, it has the property of appearing to be nearer than it is and therefore it grabs our attention first. Its effect is physical; it stimulates us and raises the pulse rate, giving the impression that time is passing faster than it is. Red is strong, and very basic. Red has been shown to raise blood pressure, speed respiration and heart rate. Red raises a room's energy level so it is best if it used minimally perhaps only as an ascent color.

**Yellow** is the most difficult color for the eye to take in, so it can be overpowering if overused. The yellow wavelength is relatively long and essentially stimulating. In this case the stimulus is emotional; therefore yellow is the strongest color, psychologically. The right yellow will lift our spirits and our self-esteem; it is the color of confidence and optimism. Too much of it, or the wrong tone in relation to the other tones in a color scheme, can cause self-esteem to plummet, giving rise to fear and anxiety. Although yellow is a cheery color, it is not a good choice to use in main color schemes when it comes to designing a room. Studies show that people are more likely to lose their temper in a yellow interior. Babies also seem to cry more in a yellow room. In large amounts, this color tends to create feelings of frustration and anger in people.

**Blue** is a peaceful color that causes the body to produce calming chemicals. Blue is the color of the mind and is essentially soothing; it affects us mentally, rather than the physical reaction we have to red. Strong blues will stimulate clear thought and lighter, soft blues will calm the mind and aid concentration. Consequently it is serene and mentally calming. It is the color of clear communication.

**Green** is the easiest color on the eye and symbolizes nature and promotes a serene and calming environment. Green strikes the eye in such a way as to require no adjustment whatever and is, therefore, restful. Being in the center of the spectrum, it is the color of balance - a more important concept than many people realize. When the world about us contains plenty of green, this indicates the presence of water, and little danger of famine, so we are reassured by green, on a primitive level. Negatively, it can indicate stagnation and, incorrectly used, will be perceived as being too bland.

**White** is bright and can create a sense of space or add highlights. White is also described as cold, bland, and sterile. Rooms painted completely white can seem spacious, but empty and unfriendly. Hospitals and hospital workers use white to create a sense of sterility.

**Orange** calls to mind feelings of excitement, enthusiasm, and warmth. Orange is often used to draw attention, such as in traffic signs and advertising. Since it is a combination of red and yellow, orange is stimulating and reaction to it is a combination of the physical and the emotional. It focuses our minds on issues of physical comfort - food, warmth, shelter etc. - and sensuality. It is a 'fun' color. Negatively, it might focus on the exact opposite - deprivation. This is particularly likely when warm orange is used with black.

**Grey:** Pure grey is the only color that has no direct psychological properties. It is, however, quite suppressive. A virtual absence of color is depressing and when the world turns grey we are instinctively conditioned to draw in and prepare for hibernation. Unless the precise tone is right, grey has a dampening effect on other colors used with it. Heavy use of grey usually indicates a lack of confidence and fear of exposure.

**Pink:** Being a tint of red, pink also affects us physically, but it soothes, rather than stimulates. Pink is a powerful color, psychologically. It represents the feminine principle, and survival of the species; it is nurturing and physically soothing. Too much pink is physically draining and can be somewhat emasculating.<sup>1</sup>

Decorating with Primary colors can be overwhelming. Rooms which are decorated with colors similar to those found in nature exude more calming and comforting feelings.



<sup>1</sup> For more info go to the sources:  
[www.freshome.com](http://www.freshome.com)  
<http://www.colour-affects.co.uk/psychological-properties-of-colours>

## Plants and Flowers

Integrating flowers and plants into décor brings the outdoors inside. Plants help to reduce stress, purify the air and even reduce noise.



### Materials used:

Environment is not just about the décor but also the materials that are used

- a. Toys made of natural materials (wood, wool, silks, for example) not only help maintain a neutral and soothing environment, but they also help children develop their imagination with open-ended creative play while helping to increase their core strength (wood is heavier than plastic).
- b. A better alternative to plastic dishware is stainless steel, glass, Corelle, or ceramic.
- c. Wood is a very good element to use for furniture.



Natural fiber rugs can help create cozy corners for children to play together or alone.



**It is best to frame  
the children's art  
before displaying it  
on the walls**

