Chapter 9 Class Notes

I. Establishing Needs
   a. Children’s spaces
      i. Program philosophy and the needs of children dictate what will be ordered for the children’s spaces in the center
         1. Many programs provide basic interest areas in each classroom, including:
            a. Art
            b. Music
            c. Blocks
            d. Books
            e. Science
            f. Manipulative
            g. Pretend play
            h. Spaces for math games and writing materials
         2. Provisions also must be made for:
            a. Water and sand play
            b. Carpentry
            c. Cooking
            d. Building
            e. Large-muscle activities
         3. An interest area often addresses more than one content area
      ii. Furniture for working, resting, and eating is needed
         1. Accessories such as clocks, plants, wastebaskets, and curtains are also needed
         2. Low dividers or shelving may be provided to define spaces
         3. Children need spaces to work alone or in small groups
         4. Most preschool groups gather together daily and need a space large enough so that everyone is comfortable
      iii. Children of all ages need outdoor play time
         1. Almost every activity that can be done indoors can be moved outdoors as well
         2. Outdoor play also offers essential opportunities for gross motor activities
         3. Some large equipment may be provided to encourage some of these motor activities, but plenty of space must surround each piece of large equipment with cushioning material
            a. Such equipment must be installed with firm, deep anchors that are below ground level and should be checked regularly for protrusions, splinters, or any other potential hazard
iv. Outdoor area should also provide:
   1. Grass
   2. Trees
   3. Gardening area
   4. Digging area

v. If the director is not familiar with early childhood curriculum and the associated equipment, room arrangement, and scheduling, the center definitely will need an education coordinator who has this knowledge and who is an experienced early childhood teacher
   1. Must also be familiar with programs for infants, toddlers, and school-age children if those groups are to be served
   2. Taking courses in early childhood education curriculum and child development will also enable the director to develop a better understanding of why some materials are important and why others are not supportive of program goals and children’s needs
   3. Curriculum courses also provide information on how and why to integrate curriculum

b. Adult spaces
   i. Adults’ space needs
      1. Adults in the center need space to:
         a. Meet together
         b. Think and plan together
         c. Briefly relax together
         d. Write reports
         e. Converse with parents in privacy
      2. Teachers need access to a telephone for parent contacts and for personal calls when they are on break
         a. Location of the telephone should allow for quiet talks and for privacy
      3. Staff members need:
         a. A few comfortable chairs for lounging during breaks
         b. Refrigerator and microwave for snacks and any other amenities that the center can provide
   ii. Even a very small center requires some office space with a locked file cabinet for records at the very minimum
      1. Desk space for teachers is essential
      2. A resource library and a work table with paper cutter, laminator, and storage for supplies support teachers in their work
   iii. Almost every professional child care center director now relies on a computer for record keeping, billing, correspondence, writing reports, information gathering, and e-mail
1. Many teachers also use computers to maintain professional currency through the use of the Internet
2. Purchasing appropriate software becomes a significant contribution to the smooth running of a center
3. Survey of the Child Care Information Exchange (CCIE) panel of directors by editor Roger Neugebauer led to a list of questions directors should ask before purchasing software:
   a. Does it meet my needs?
   b. Is it easy to use?
   c. Is it flexible?
   d. Is help available?
   e. Is the software guaranteed in writing?
   f. Can you provide references whom I can contact?
   g. Should also check whether updates are provided and at what cost
4. Directors should be assertive about getting answers to these questions before purchasing software
5. In some cases, the vendor will allow you to try out the program before purchasing it
6. Although it is not uncommon to find glitches in computer software, you still should expect the vendor to provide needed support in rectifying the problem
   a. Protecting against computer viruses with special software is essential
iv. Directors of large centers find that a copy machine is a worthwhile investment in terms of the time and money saved in duplicating such items as newsletters, menus, forms and interesting articles to share
   1. These machines are initially expensive, but they pay for themselves over time by saving staff time and enable the center to produce materials of professional quality
v. When the families who are affiliated with your center have access to the Internet, you may want to send information via e-mail
   1. Setting up a listserv with the e-mail addresses of those families who choose to be included makes communication easy and quick
      a. Other ways of reaching those who are not using this technology must be provided
      b. Personal face-to-face communication is still highly desirable whenever possible
      c. Look for ways to communicate in the language that the person receiving the communication is most familiar with
i. Parent or community volunteers may be available to facilitate translation, including through the use of Sign Language

2. You may also want to communicate with members of the broader community by creating and maintaining a Web site
   a. Often can also be developed into a successful marketing tool

vi. Staff needs a place for meetings
   1. Classrooms can be used when staff meetings are held after children leave, but it is more comfortable for adults attending meetings to have a space furnished with adult-size chairs and tables
   2. Comfortable furniture should be provided for use by parents and consultants
   3. Bulletin boards and coat racks are convenient accessories for adult spaces
   4. Consider the seating and other furnishings and equipment in terms of adults who may have special needs

vii. Some centers provide a separate lounge for parents and visitors
   1. Should have:
      a. Comfortable seating
      b. Lamps
      c. Tables
      d. Bookshelf for pertinent reading materials
      e. Facilities for coffee or other refreshments
   2. Wall hangings or pictures, plants, a rug or carpet, and curtains all enhance the appearance of the space
   3. Shelf of toys and books for visiting children indicates that the center is sensitive to children’s needs
   4. Goal is to let families know that they are valued and welcomed

c. Service areas
   i. Basic equipment in the bathrooms, kitchen, laundry, and janitor’s closet is usually built in, and is not purchased from the equipment and supplies budget
      1. In a new facility, some appliances may be included in the equipment line
   ii. Consumables for service areas must be furnished
   iii. Appliances must be replaced over time
   iv. Dishes, cutlery, cooking utensils, and serving carts must be provided in centers where lunch is served
   v. In large centers, special appliances such as commercial dishwashers, rug shampooers, heavy-duty automatic washers and dryers, and large refrigerators and freezers are needed
vi. Local board of health may have very specific requirements about the type of kitchen equipment that must be provided

vii. The fire department will usually require alarm systems and may also require a fire suppression system
   1. Battery-operated radio with weather channel is an important tool to help the center prepare for weather emergencies
   2. Flashlights in every classroom are also helpful

viii. First aid supplies must be available in all classrooms, in the office, and in vehicles used to transport children

ix. You may want to install an alarm system which would notify the police in the event of an emergency or a break-in when the center is closed

x. If you have decided to provide child transportation, you will find many companies offering small buses equipped with seat belts and outfitted to accommodate carseats

xi. [When ordering cleaning supplies for your center, keep in mind “child friendly and environmentally friendly” items
   1. Some states now require schools to use environmentally sensitive cleaning products
      a. Reduces exposure of children and staff to dangerous chemicals
   2. Early attempts to regulate emission of formaldehyde used in producing some furniture may become law in some states
   3. Important to find out from vendors of furniture, toys, and other equipment what kind of glue and paint are used
   4. Good idea to check periodically with the US Consumer Product Safety Commission to find whether various products have been recalled

xii. Choose recycled paper and encourage everyone in the center, including children, to recycle
   1. Recyclables include;
      a. Paper
      b. Glass
      c. Plastic
      d. Ink cartridges
   2. Everyone in the center can learn to conserve water and the director can ensure that leaky faucets are repaired quickly

II. Using Selection Criteria
   a. Selection of all equipment should be based on a set of pre-established criteria that you have created as part of your system
   i. Primary consideration is usefulness
      1. Will a specific piece of equipment meet the needs of this center?
ii. Other criteria include:
   1. Versatility
   2. Safety
   3. Suitability
   4. Durability
   5. Ease of maintenance
   6. Attractiveness
   7. User preference

iii. Some equipment for children should encourage and even necessitate cooperative play

iv. All equipment should work the way it is supposed to and should be durable and economical

b. Goals and objectives of a particular center will dictate purchases
   i. As director, you must assume responsibility for keeping current on developments within the early childhood field as well as within the broader population
   ii. Helping staff maintain familiarity with these issues enables them to speak knowledgeably with parents and community members and to offer a curriculum that meets the needs of children
   iii. Feeling pressure from parents and from what some child centers do, you, as director, may begin to question your system’s goals
      1. You must return to your understanding of how children learn
   iv. Many people would agree that when children are going to kindergarten they should be prepared and that the kindergarten system should be prepared for the children
      1. As director, your role is to determine how best to prepare children for kindergarten as well as for their lives in the here and now
      2. You must base this on knowledge of how children develop and how learning occurs rather than on your own opinion

c. Today’s standards-driven educational approaches require that administrators and staff become familiar with standards set forth by state departments of education and national professional organizations
   i. In some cases, working to ensure that all children meet these standards will be mandated
   ii. Directors who have a good grasp of developmentally appropriate curriculum will be able to help teachers work toward the standards within the context of routines, schedules, and plans that meet each child’s needs while supporting children’s acquisition of the content standards
      1. Eliminating play and the related materials and equipment is not an option

d. How will such knowledge relate to purchasing equipment?
i. You must think about how equipment will be used and how it will support children’s interest in learning in all areas.

e. It is the director’s responsibility to use a systemic approach, blending facility, equipment, staff, families, and finances to accomplish the mission related to children’s care, growth, and development.

f. Equipping a center is costly, and when mistakes are made, replacements are doubly costly.

i. You should plan your purchases carefully by:
   1. Assessing your needs
   2. Developing criteria for equipment selection
   3. Relating needed and desired items to your budget

g. Many equipment suppliers will be happy to provide sample equipment and supplies lists.

i. Even more valuable is the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) publication listing suggested purchases for various age groups from infants through school age.

ii. These comprehensive lists are not intended as mandatory purchases but as guides to be adjusted and supplemented, based on the needs of particular children, staff, and families.

iii. As new materials become available, they can be considered, based on their appropriateness for the children who will use them.

h. Developmental needs.

i. Developmental levels, capabilities, and the age range of the children enrolled influence what will be purchased.
   1. Parents may be asked to furnish some necessary items and to take responsibility for their infant’s laundry.

ii. When center bathrooms have adult-size toilets and sinks, children will need step stools to be able to use the equipment independently.
   1. Preferably, the center will have installed child-size, toilets and sinks at the appropriate height.

iii. Toddlers also need toys that provide opportunities for filling and dumping, big toys that can be carried during early walking stages, and lots of duplicates so that sharing will not be necessary.
   1. Toddler rooms are arranged in interest centers, but since many toddlers like to practice walking and carrying items in each hand, materials are often found in a variety of places.

   2. Preschoolers can understand that everything in their classroom has its own place and they usually learn quickly to return things to their specified location.

   3. Many creative preschoolers find new uses for classroom items.
iv. Preschool children need equipment and materials in all of the interest areas
   1. Some of these will be specifically designed for children, while many others will be materials found to be of interest to children and teachers such as items from nature, maps, books and posters depicting and identifying birds, flowers, cars or dinosaurs
   2. Adult musical instruments often appeal to children, especially if they are permitted to both listen and try their hand at bowing or strumming
   3. Opportunities to prepare and eat most kinds of food provide chances to learn about:
      a. Nutrition
      b. Food from other cultures
      c. Heat and cold
      d. Textures
      e. Comparisons
      f. Contrasts
      g. Using tools and appliances safely
      h. Math
      i. Literacy
      j. Social studies
      k. Science
      l. Arts
      m. Turn taking
      n. Preferences
      o. Sharing good times with friends

v. School-aged children in after-school care programs need games and crafts that are far too complex and frustrating for younger children
   1. Also need:
      a. Well-lighted working areas for homework
      b. Larger furniture in which they can sit and work comfortably
      c. Equipment for active, semi-organized sports and games
      d. Place to store and eat snacks
      e. Area where they can be away from the group for a while when they need time to relax alone

vi. Programs for school-age children should enable them to participate as fully as possible in activities that other children their age enjoy

vii. Children with special needs may require modified equipment or equipment that has been specifically designed to meet a particular need
1. Equipment should enable the child to do as much as possible independently

i. Usefulness
   i. Measured first by how well it meets the developmental needs of the children in the program, and second by whether the equipment can be put to multiple uses by those children
   ii. When a piece of equipment meets both these criteria, a director may be able to convince a potential funder to support a request for funding

j. Versatility
   i. A piece of equipment that can be used in several ways is a bonus, both financially and in terms of enriching the learning environment for children
      1. Saves space and money and gives children the opportunity to use their imaginations in creating different functions for one object
      2. Many pieces of equipment may be shared by two or more classes for the same or different purposes, eliminating the purchase of duplicate materials and freeing up money for other purchases
   ii. Some equipment can be used both indoors and outdoors
      1. Economical and provides a wider variety of learning experiences for children
      2. Easels, water tables, and a work bench are a few items that may be moved outside if the building and play area have been planned to facilitate such indoor-outdoor movement
         a. When that planning has not occurred, teachers will not be able to leave the children in order to make several trips to carry equipment, and the children will not have access to those items

k. Safety
   i. Top priority
   ii. All equipment used by the children must be of nontoxic material and must not have sharp or pointed edges
   iii. Safety is maintained by staff members who make a point of being constantly alert to the condition and the arrangement of the equipment that is placed in the learning environment
   iv. Every classroom should be checked for safety hazards daily and throughout the day
      1. Items used in infant/toddler rooms must not have small pieces that could be dislodged, such as the eyes of stuffed animals or small beads on a wire on a board counting book
      2. Even some three-year-olds are still mouthing small items
   v. A safety issue may be inadvertently overlooked
1. Three areas to which staff must give special attention are:
   a. Fall zones
      i. Under climbers and swings
   b. Entrapment
      i. Possibility of a child getting a body part trapped in a piece of equipment
   c. Protrusions
      i. Sharp corners on furniture or screw heads extended from a flat surface may injure a child

vi. US Consumer Product Safety Commission provides voluntary standards for children’s playgrounds, as well as up-to-date safety alerts at their website
   1. Selection of appropriate equipment and close supervision on the playground are major factors in preventing injuries
   2. Nonetheless, the active play, motor skill development, confidence building, and enjoyment that children experience should not be denied

vii. U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission study found that two-thirds of the child care centers participating had at least one potential safety hazard
   1. Included the use of clothing with drawstrings at the neck (38 percent of settings), lack of safe playground surfacing (24 percent), and cribs with soft bedding (19 percent)

viii. Realizing that lead paint has been banned for consumer use for many years, directors may not be aware of the lead hazard lurking in playground equipment
   1. Commercial users still coat products with paint containing lead
   2. Products from other countries, especially toys, should be checked for lead paint
      a. Children need consume only small quantities on a regular basis to create a harmful lead level

ix. Paying attention to recalls is essential

I. Suitability
   i. Some equipment must be provided in several sizes to meet the needs of each user
   ii. Stereotypes
      1. Equipment must be chosen with the understanding that it may be used equally by all children
      2. Staff members who plan curricula in a stereotyped way will need special guidance on this point so that boys are not relegated to playing with blocks and trucks and girls are not always expected to dress dolls and play quiet table games
3. People with special needs should be depicted in books, puzzles, and classroom displays, and they should be shown participating in a variety of activities.

4. Classroom materials should reflect many cultures and depict a variety of roles being chosen by members of various cultures and of both genders.

5. Books, music, foods, and posters should be carefully selected to avoid any stereotyping and to depict the culturally pluralistic society in which the children live.
   a. This principle applies even when the center serves only children from one racial or ethnic group.

iii. Special needs
1. Using a concept referred to as Universal Design, teachers work to include everyone as they plan.
   a. Does not mean that everyone does the same thing the same way at the same time, but that every child can participate in a meaningful way in understanding the activity, in implementing it, and in demonstrating what he is learning.
   b. Often, consulting a special educator facilitates this type of planning.

2. In determining the suitability of equipment, you must consider children with special needs.
   a. Consider purchasing tables with adjustable heights.
   b. If children are crawling in body casts or leg braces, they need comfortable floor surfaces.
   c. Wheeled equipment such as a sturdy wagon or a special buggy with seat belts will make it possible for all children to enjoy tours around the center neighborhood with the rest of the class.

3. Some children may need an augmentative communication system so they can interact with staff and children.
   a. Children with hearing loss may need ample visual cues such as pictures attached to storage areas so that they can tell where equipment belongs, even though they cannot hear the teacher’s directions.
   b. Children with visual impairments may need some toys that vary in terms of weight, texture, and sound.
   c. When children who do not have disabilities use these same materials, they may develop greater insights into the experience of children with disabilities.
4. Director will need to know, in general, what the lifestyles of the families are and what the learning styles and interests of individual children are when purchasing equipment
   a. Children must be provided with enough ordinary, simple equipment so that they need not be bombarded nine hours a day with novelty
   b. Balance of the familiar with the novel creates a learning environment that is neither over-stimulating nor boring
5. Some directors purchase packaged kits or curricula for their centers, particularly when the staff members have had little early childhood educational background
   a. Essential that the materials be appropriate since they may be used with the belief that because they were included in a curriculum package, they must be good
   b. Director has a major responsibility for ensuring that the components meet the needs of children and teachers
      i. Often, similar materials can be purchased separately at lower cost
   c. Director must also provide training to insure that teachers are using a curriculum plan to meet the needs of children rather than following page-by-page or randomly
      i. Not every component must be implemented
         ii. Such a pre-planned curriculum can be viewed as a framework rather than a mandate
         iii. It is the director’s responsibility to determine who prepared the curriculum and what premises about teaching and learning are supported through its use

m. Ease of maintenance
   i. Sinks, toilets, and drinking fountains that must be cleaned daily and table tops that must be washed several times each day should be extremely simple to clean
      1. Surfaces should be smooth and all areas easy to reach
      2. Small pieces that are hard to clean around may cause problems and harbor dirt and germs
      3. Equipment parts that are cleaned separately, such as feeding table trays, should be easy to remove and replace
ii. A clean, well-maintained environment is important for all children and staff, but it may be critical for children and staff who have allergies or asthma
   1. May be helpful to have curtains, drapes, and carpeting cleaned frequently or they may have to be eliminated

iii. Outdoor equipment that must be repainted frequently should be designed so that it can be sanded and painted easily

iv. Places that are difficult to reach are a nuisance, and surfaces that catch and hold rain increase the need for maintenance

v. Equipment that will rust or rot easily should not be purchased for outdoor use

n. Aesthetics
   i. Child care center equipment should be well designed and aesthetically attractive
      1. One of the best ways to help children acquire an appreciation of beauty is to surround them with it
      2. An attractive environment also carries the subtle message that children, families, and staff who enter the setting are much appreciated and that great care is taken to make their environment beautiful

ii. A material that is aesthetically appealing need not be expensive
   1. Often is the ability of the director or teacher to find beauty in nature that provides the most attractive places for children

iii. Be aware of the wide variety of art forms and styles developed by each culture
   1. Displaying these introduces children and families to beauty that they may not have had the opportunity to experience and provides an interesting and appropriate way to begin discussions and explorations of other cultures

iv. When equipment is made for the classroom, it should be prepared with special attention to its visual appeal
   1. Preparing beautiful materials takes a little longer and may require initial costs that are somewhat higher, but the product is worth the investment
   2. One of the director’s roles is to help staff and children value quality rather than quantity and to appreciate and care for the beauty in the objects around them

o. User preference
   i. The classroom is a place in which the teacher can express her personality
      1. By including some items that represent her interests, she communicates to children and families that she has preferences just as they do
ii. Reasonable to expect that sometimes, teacher preference determines the type of equipment ordered
   1. As long as teacher preferences do not mitigate against appropriate classroom practice, they are legitimate and should be honored if at all possible

iii. When budgeting constraints or other equipment needs make it impossible to fill all teachers' requests, the director must notify teachers that their preferences are under consideration and that plans are being made to fill all requests as soon as possible
   1. Each teacher’s preference deserves careful consideration because each teacher will ultimately set the stage for learning through the use of the center’s equipment
   2. Of course, the director will have to intervene if a teacher chooses to order inappropriate items such as toys and games with very small pieces for toddlers or flash cards for preschoolers

III. Working Within A Budget
   a. As you bring together information about purchases to be made, various components of your program’s systems come into play
      i. You are addressing finances, staff and equipment simultaneously and you will follow the policies and procedures established around the center’s equipment
      ii. With that perspective in mind, you will be ready to relate the choices which you and staff have made, the needs of the children, and a component of the budget
   b. Major considerations when working with an equipment budget are durability and economy
      i. When more durable items are purchased, the center is not faced with the problem of replacement so often, and considerable shipping costs are saved, particularly with large pieces of equipment
      ii. Price and durability are not always perfectly correlated
         1. When used at a center, the standard equipment that is used at home will be in the repair shop far sooner and more frequently than will the sturdier, more expensive equipment that is designed for school use
         2. Keep this fact in mind when well-meaning board members want to donate items their children have outgrown instead of including sufficient dollars in the equipment budget
   c. In child care center kitchens, many adults (and occasionally children) use the equipment
      i. This heavy usage (and perhaps misuse), coupled with lack of care, may lead to the need for earlier replacement
ii. Important to provide heavy-duty kitchen equipment because equipment made for home use will require costly service calls when it is subjected to the hard use it inevitably will get in a center

iii. A prepaid maintenance agreement may be a cost-effective way to manage equipment repairs
    1. Checking the total cost of the maintenance agreement against the record of repairs typically needed over time for a particular type of equipment is a smart practice

iv. Instructions on how to use equipment may be posted on each item, and a short in-service session may be helpful
d. In setting up a new center, the director can expect to spend $10,000 to $30,000 per classroom on equipment
   i. Variance is due to the number of children in each classroom and the quality of the items purchased
   ii. A typical budget for manipulatives (puzzles, table toys, and small blocks) for a center of about 75 children is about $4,000, assuming that the items are centrally stored so that teachers can share them
       1. To reduce this cost, directors often search for free materials and supplies
           a. However, the director then may have to pick up the items or enlist a volunteer for this service
           b. Recognize that free items are not necessarily worthwhile and expensive items are not always better

IV. Ordering Equipment
   a. Equipment requisition
      i. Directors usually develop an equipment request procedure
         1. Staff members notify the director, in writing, of the type of equipment that is needed or desired, providing additional information such as the rationale to support the need, a possible vendor, and an estimated purchase price
         2. Some centers use purchase order or requisition forms, which are nothing more than request forms that can be sent to vendors with a duplicate retained for center records
         3. Even though this request procedure is formal and perhaps cumbersome, it puts the purchase of equipment on a businesslike basis and gives each staff member an equal opportunity to bid for the equipment dollars in the budget
      ii. In corporate systems, requisitions are processed through a central purchasing agent and shipments are made directly to the center from the manufacturer
1. Central office handles all the orders and saves money through collective, quantity buying and careful selection of suppliers.

2. This approach cuts costs but limits the options for those staff members selecting equipment.

iii. Public school programs usually have specific purchasing procedures to follow, requisitioning their supplies through the principal or through a supervisor responsible for the preschool or after-school programs.

1. If a non-school organization is implementing the program within a school building, that group may have wisely negotiated an agreement that will allow them to provide and own their own equipment.
   a. Program director will then be able to maintain the philosophy that the center espouses and that, presumably, was a major factor in having been selected to provide an early childhood program.
   b. Should the school system no longer have room for the center or prefer to run their own program, the organization maintains its equipment.

iv. In centers where directors are fully responsible for receiving staff requests and placing orders, they check requests against the established selection criteria and the budget allowance before completing order forms.

1. All order forms should include:
   a. Quantity
   b. Price
   c. Catalog order number (if available)
   d. Name or description of each item

2. When making final decisions on purchases, make certain that careful consideration is given to possible savings through bulk buying.
   a. Economies realized through bulk buying are practical only if adequate storage space is available for the unused materials.

v. Equipment costs also can be reduced in nonprofit centers by applying for tax-exempt status.

1. When orders are sent to suppliers, the center will not be charged sales tax if the order includes the center’s tax-exempt number.

vi. Some centers have provisions for teachers to purchase specified dollar amounts without permission and within a given time period.

1. The practice of giving teachers some petty cash to spend for classroom materials gives them some freedom to provide for special program needs and, more important,
communicates trust in their ability to make appropriate choices for their children

b. Purchase time line
   i. Equipment purchasing occurs in three different time frames:
      1. Start-up
      2. Supplementary
      3. Replacement
   ii. Phase 1
      1. First, there must be a major start-up equipment purchase when a center is opened so that all the basic aspects of the program can function with appropriate equipment
         a. Obviously is the most expensive of the three phases, but extensive purchases at this point are absolutely essential because it is unfair to children and staff to operate a program without basic equipment
         b. To save money, some secondhand, borrowed, or homemade equipment can be used, keeping in mind the criteria described earlier
         c. There is no formula that can tell a director exactly what must be provided, but the staff will need equipment of the type, quantity, and quality that will allow them to focus on the children and their needs instead of on the equipment or the lack thereof
            i. Children in a classroom with inappropriate or inadequate equipment will be quite likely to engage in inappropriate behavior as they seek to create something interesting to do
      2. Providing enough appropriate storage is also essential
         a. In the classroom, teachers need storage for supplies that they will use later in the day or week
         b. Major classroom storage space should be available to the children so that they can independently choose and put away materials
         c. Crowded shelves and cluttered spaces make it difficult for children to find the materials they are interested in using
         d. Children are also more likely to leave materials strewn about the classroom when it is not clear where they belong
   iii. Phase 2
      1. Supplementary phase
      2. Provides for additional equipment purchases throughout each year
a. When supplementary equipment purchases are spaced throughout a program year, both children and staff members enjoy greater variety and a change of pace

b. Teachers can adjust equipment requests to meet the needs of particular children such as a child with special needs who enrolls midyear and requires a chair with particular supports, a prone board, or a walker

c. Although outside funding may be available for some of these larger items for an individual child’s use, teachers still need to consider books with large print, puzzles with large knobs, or writing tools that have been adapted for easier handling

iv. Phase 3

1. Replacement phase
2. Helps maintain a constant supply of equipment that is in good repair and allows for adjustments in available equipment and materials as program needs change or as new items come on the market
3. Budget also should include enough money for emergency replacements
   a. Although careful usage, combined with a fund for maintenance, minimizes the need for emergency replacements, unexpected breakage or loss is sure to occur
   b. When a copier repair is too costly, it is sometimes more economical to buy or lease a new model than to repair the old one
   c. As for buying a maintenance plan, consider what the warranty covers and for how long before paying for a plan

c. Sources of equipment
   i. Much of the equipment for early childhood education centers is purchased from catalogs
      1. If the dealers are reliable, this arrangement is satisfactory
         a. Wise to check with other directors, professional organizations, or the Better Business Bureau to determine the suitability of making purchases from a particular company
      2. Advantages
         a. Wide variety of merchandise that is available
         b. Lower costs by bypassing the retailer
      3. Disadvantages
         a. Shipping costs may be charged
b. Return of unsatisfactory merchandise may be cumbersome

4. Helpful to have a supply of catalogs available to the staff
   ii. When placing a large order, request a discount
      1. Another opportunity for price reduction is prompt payment
         a. Vendors who establish a relationship with your center are more likely to inform you of upcoming special prices
         b. Many companies charge about 30 percent of the cost of items that have been returned unless, of course, they arrived damaged. In addition, the center pays the return shipping
         c. Impulse buying is irresponsible when you are in charge of purchasing equipment

iii. Equipment purchased from local retail outlets can be seen and tried out, which has obvious advantages
   1. Most retail outlets cater to home users and carry a limited stock of classroom equipment
   2. If a local outlet has access to a manufacturer of school equipment, it may be possible to order from a catalog through a local retailer

iv. A buying co-op is another equipment source that is worth investigating because group buying can be very economical.
   1. Co-op group buys in quantity at a wholesale price and sells items to co-op members at just enough above cost to pay the co-op operating expenses

v. Exhibit areas at state or national early childhood conferences provide great opportunities to view a huge range of products for early childhood classrooms and to talk with the vendors
   1. Keep in mind that their goal is to sell their products, but a careful shopper can garner a wealth of information and sometimes a special price
   2. Particularly at the end of the exhibit hours, vendors would just as soon give you a discount as ship materials back to their home base
   3. Remember also that conference sponsors rarely endorse products being displayed
      a. Conferees are responsible for using their own good judgment since what is available is not always appropriate for early childhood education

vi. Toy libraries are popular equipment sources in some areas
   1. Center director or teacher may borrow anything from a puzzle to a complete set of housekeeping equipment, just as one borrows library books
2. Sometimes, a group of center directors finds it worthwhile to help establish a toy library for their mutual benefit, and it is especially helpful to have toy-lending programs that furnish materials for special-needs children.

3. Occasionally, toy-lending or toy-sharing systems are set up by community organizations to make equipment available to centers and parents.

vii. Secondhand shops, discount stores, antique shops, and garage or yard sales frequently are excellent sources of equipment or raw materials for pieces needed by the center.

1. When such discoveries need to be put into finished, usable, and attractive form, it sometimes is possible to enlist the help of the parent group, a high-school vocational class, or a senior citizens’ organization whose members enjoy repairing and painting.

2. In some regions, high-school woodworking, metal working classes, or Junior Achievement groups make new equipment and sell it to centers at reasonable prices.

viii. Soliciting the help of parents, teachers, board members, or residents of the community in equipment-making parties.

1. Enhances the feeling of community in the center’s program.

2. Child care center staff members often take advantage of the children’s nap time to make classroom materials.

3. Encouraging staff members to make some materials is important because few centers have unlimited resources, and commercial equipment cannot always be suitably adapted to meet individual children’s needs.

ix. Gifts of equipment are usually welcome but their suitability must be measured against the same criteria employed for equipment purchases.

1. Gifts such as a toy gun in a center where pretend gun play is discouraged or the gift of an animal that induces allergic reactions in some children must be refused graciously.

V. Managing Equipment

a. Checking and inventorying equipment.

i. When equipment is received, it must be checked against the order to ascertain whether or not it corresponds with the order in terms of quantity, size, color, and so forth.

1. Also is important to make certain that only the items actually received are listed on both the order and the packing slip and that prices are correct.
   a. If discrepancies are found, the vendor must be notified immediately.
b. Wise to keep original packing materials in case any equipment needs to be returned

ii. Most center directors keep a record of at least the major items purchased, and some directors keep a running account of all small items and consumables as well
   1. An inventory of purchases can be recorded as items are unpacked by listing each item on the computer or a file card, noting the description, supplier, price, date of purchase, and location in which the item is to be used
      a. Some directors mark equipment with the name of the center, with an inventory number, or with an identifying number so that if a center owns four identical computers, each is individually identifiable
      b. In public schools, the usual practice is to put the room number on each piece of equipment
   2. The labeling practice is helpful when pieces are sent out for repair, when school buildings are cleaned during vacation periods, or when items are stolen
      a. Valuable equipment should be insured
      b. When equipment is added or removed from the center, the inventory must be updated

iii. An accurate record of equipment will always be available when the inventory is updated regularly
   1. A backup disk of the inventory should be kept in a safe place so that losses can be reported accurately in the event of fire or theft
   2. An ongoing, updated inventory minimizes the work of taking an annual inventory (usually necessary for insurance purposes) for annual reporting to the board or the sponsoring or funding agency or for reporting to a corporate central office that must have an accurate annual inventory to determine the assets of the corporation
   3. Updated inventories also give directors a clear picture of what is available in the center and help pinpoint center areas or types of equipment that are incurring heavy damage
      a. This information is useful in determining how much and when to reorder and in making decisions about changing vendors or brands of equipment ordered. Information about persistent damage in certain areas should lead to a careful examination of the storage and maintenance system

iv. After the equipment is checked in and inventoried, the director must notify the staff that the new equipment is available for use
b. Maintaining and storing equipment
   i. As soon as equipment is placed in the center, the job of maintenance begins
      1. In the very act of placing equipment, maintenance decisions are made
   ii. Equipment used by the children must be checked daily and removed if it is in need of repair, even if immediate replacement is impossible
      1. Children need attractive, usable equipment and should not be subjected to the frustration of trying to make sense out of broken or incomplete classroom materials
      2. Puzzles with missing pieces, tricycles with broken pedals, or books with torn or defaced pages should not be left in the classroom
   iii. Storage of equipment also is directly related to its maintenance
      1. Easy to return equipment after it has been used when each piece has a specific, clearly delineated storage space
      2. The space, whether in a storage room or on a classroom shelf, must be large enough so that the object does not have to be jammed into place and perhaps damaged.
      3. The space must be accessible to staff members (and in many cases, to children) to ensure that it will be used for storage purposes
      4. Each center must work out a method for storing certain equipment and supplies that are used daily and must remain in the classroom.
      5. Other supplies should be designated for return to a central area
      6. Storage also must be provided for items such as tricycles that are used daily but must be protected from weather and theft
      7. Additional storage is needed for items that are purchased in quantity for long-range use such as paper towels and paint
   iv. When a large number of people have access to the central supply storage areas, there is some tendency for each person to assume that someone else will maintain order and cleanliness in the area
      1. Many of the users feel little or no responsibility for maintaining the area
      2. Other staff members become irritated when they try to find what they need and have to cope with a messy storage area
      a. These frustrations lead to conflict and a breakdown in positive staff relationships
3. Sometimes, this problem can be avoided by assigning each teacher the responsibility for maintaining a specific storage area such as for art materials, outdoor equipment, or books and records for a given length of time
   a. In other centers, periodic work sessions are scheduled to involve the entire staff in cleaning and straightening central storage areas
   b. Some centers institute a system for checking equipment in and out of the storage room that is similar to the practice conducted in a library
   c. In a large center, putting the checkout list on a computer may be helpful, but in most centers, posting a clipboard with a checkout sheet is more likely to be convenient for teachers
   d. A few centers keep all the equipment in classrooms on shelves available to the children or in closed cabinets available to the teacher, but this practice is expensive because it requires so much duplication
   v. No matter how equipment is stored, its placement should be neat and easy to find so that children and teachers alike will be encouraged to maintain some degree of order in their attractive environment
   1. Director’s job is to establish and follow routines that lead to the easy accessibility of all equipment to everyone
      a. Routines make putting things away far less burdensome for both teachers and children

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