

# Coaching Corner

Simple tips to guide you towards improving communication, creating engaging learning environments, and meeting best practices.

Welcoming and nurturing environments communicate high value and regard for all children, families, and staff from the moment one walks in the door.

What does your entryway say about your environment? What do you want it to say? Walk into your center as if you were a parent or family member entering for the first time. Ask yourself some of these questions as you stop and ponder the space.



- Is the entry area full of cluttered bulletin boards with compliance-laden postings? Or are children's artwork and special projects displayed in an organized and pleasing way?
- What do you notice that demonstrates joy for learning and the value of the child? Does the type of work displayed help demonstrate the learning that is going on? (It may include quotes of what children said, photos of a proud moment or the process of a long term project, a recent K-W-L chart informing families of what children are interested in learning, etc.)
- Are all children's works included no matter what result was achieved?
- What types of sounds can you hear? How do people greet you, greet one another, or greet children?
- What sounds do you hear? The sounds of busy children happily exploring and discovering? Or do you hear the sound of teachers' voices loudly shouting directives?
- Would I like to spend six to eight hours in this environment or does it feel overwhelming as you step in?

If you find that in all cases the fun, respect, and value of children and their families is being communicated, then it is a very welcoming and nurturing place.

Here are a couple easy strategies you may consider adding to your sign-in area to add more welcoming and nurturing touches.

**Strategy:** Make sign-in areas places to ease transitions for children and families.

Knowing that families often have stressful mornings before they even get to you, consider ways to ease drop-off and pick-up times with a transition area that includes more than a sign-in sheet.

- A reassuring or inspiring quote for the day, periodic fresh flowers, muffins or snacks to take along in the car are all examples of things that offer a message of caring. Children can be involved in making these items to leave at the sign-in area, a great way to strengthen their connections with their families as well.
- A soft, relaxing chair, small collection of books, a soft light, and area rug can transform the area outside the door to your classroom into a special good-bye story place that eases the separation and helps create a relaxing entry into the classroom. You will be amazed at how this simple touch can ease the hectic morning transition for some of the children (or the parents!).