



Guiding Young Children's Behavior

Segment 2: Arranging the Classroom

TRANSCRIPT for Objective 2

Designing a classroom getaway space

This video has captions. You can turn them on by clicking the captions icon at the bottom of the video.

Host: An area you might want to consider adding to your room is something we call a getaway space. Imagine that you are asked to spend eight or more hours each day without a break, with 15 active, laughing, playful adults. Over time this type of environment might become overwhelming. As adults, we can leave and find a quiet place. Children also need a space in the classroom where they can get away, even if it's just for a few minutes.

Dr. Jeffrey Trawick-Smith, Eastern Connecticut State University: Research shows that all children, but particularly children with special needs, will engage in more positive behavior in a classroom if they are able to get away now and then, and be on their own. So there needs to be some kind of private space in every classroom for children to escape active classroom life. Now I need to point out we're not talking here about the time out area. We're talking about a pleasant, cozy comfortable space—a soft space, maybe with some pillows, maybe some stuffed animals, a few books to look at, you know, a cozy space for children to get away. And then, caregivers can watch, and when they see that children are showing signs of stress, when they see that children are becoming a little bit aggressive, when they see children are growing tired, maybe at the end of the day, they can invite them to take a break in these warm, comfortable spaces. One researcher found that the most soothing kind of getaway space to create is one where children really do feel completely alone, where they feel like they're really separated from the rest of the class, but where there's a space that allows them to peek out into the rest of the classroom, so that they can kind of stay in touch with what everybody in the classroom is doing.

Host: Let's visit a classroom to see how two getaway spaces are used to support children's behavior.

Kate McHugh, Preschool Teacher: I wanted to find a space that was away from, kind of, the workings of the room and that just seemed like a natural, quiet place in the classroom.

Narrator: In teacher Kate McHugh's classroom, getaway spaces encourage children's positive behavior.

Kate McHugh: Can be very nurturing in there, and loving, and it's safe. I think that's why children crave those spaces—because they're a safe place to play and work on different concepts and ideas and not feel like they're at risk.

Narrator: The strategy has been particularly effective for Alex, a child with special needs.

Kate McHugh: Alex loves books. So his favorite thing to do is sit and read. Alex has a lot of sensory needs and he's very easily overwhelmed. That is a place for him to decompress. A lot of times if his behavior escalates, we will go over to the book center with him, because that does seem to have a calming and soothing effect on him.

Narrator: The teacher created a second getaway space using curtains.

Kate McHugh: It is a nice space for them to go and get some attention from a teacher one on one.

Host: In that classroom, Kate found two areas to use for getaway spaces. The spaces were warm and provided the children with a place to get away from the classroom hubbub. Kate also makes sure that the getaway spaces remain a positive place for children. Children choose to use the space, but Kate never uses them as a place for timeout.

Host: Now we want you to think about using a getaway space in your classroom. What space do you currently have for children to get away from noisy, active classroom life? Where could you add a getaway space and what materials would you need?

Activity 2C: Getaway Spaces

What space do you currently have for children to get away from classroom activity? Where could you add a getaway space? What additional materials would you need to add a getaway space.

Did you consider ...?

Some examples of getaway spaces include

- A large cardboard box filled with pillows and a window for peeking out.
- A small book area partitioned off from the rest of the classroom and filled with pillows and stuffed animals.
- The upper level of a loft filled with pillows and books.
- A small tent created with a blanket thrown over a small table.
- A small triangular area in the corner of a classroom divided from the rest of the class by a sheet hanging from the ceiling.