

A Framework for Designing Learning Environments to Promote Creativity

C³

CHILD
DIRECTED

Research shows: When children initiate learning, they engage more deeply and create connections between the material and their previous knowledge and experiences.
How to apply it: Providing time for children to take ownership of their learning and make decisions promotes creative exploration and the development of higher level thinking skills.

R

RISK
FRIENDLY

Research shows: When children understand that their effort matters more than any single outcome, they seek out challenging new experiences, and show resilience.
How to apply it: Praising children's effort ("You worked hard") rather than their inherent ability ("You're so smart") helps them develop a learning mindset and encourages them to take risks and express their creativity without fear of failure.

E

EMOTIONALLY
ATTUNED

Research Shows: Positive emotions such as joy and interest are correlated with creative thought patterns and decreased stress, which aids the transfer of information into long term memory.
How to apply it: Showing children both verbal and nonverbal support creates feelings of safety and acceptance, which promote confidence and creative thought.

A

ACTIVE

Research Shows: Physical activity strengthens memory and performance because it engages different parts of the brain and provides a break before refocusing.
How to apply it: Creating short, structured breaks for children to be physically active helps direct more oxygen to their brains, which enhances concentration and perseverance.

T

TIME
FLEXIBLE

Research shows: When children are fully immersed in an activity and have entered a state of flow, they learn in a deep and joyful way by imagining and testing new ideas.
How to apply it: Leaving time for children to complete tasks and games at their own pace allows them to experience learning in an ongoing, internally motivated way while their brains form new connections.

E

EXPLORATORY

Research shows: Open-ended questions and prompts support the development of divergent thinking (exploring many possible solutions), a critical component of creativity.
How to apply it: Asking questions like "Why do you think that happened?" and using statements like "Tell me more" encourage children to engage deeply with a subject and form multiple conclusions, rather than being limited only to finding the right answer.