GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

ENVIRONMENTS

CD202

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General Course Description

"Creative play is an opportunity for children to manipulate their environment to achieve their own ends and to sense the fact that the world around them can be changed and not taken as given."

Robin Moore
Planning For Play   p. 76

The children's environments module is a process-oriented, experimental component of the Early Childhood Development Department second year program. It is divided into two parts:

Community Research Lab: Through analysis of a child's experience in a broad range of man-built environments, students will develop an understanding of social attitudes towards children and family which environmental conventions reflect.

Specific Space Design Lab: The children's environments module will provide the opportunity to explore and develop process-oriented spaces and equipment for young children. It will also focus on the relationship between environmental design of spaces for children and program planning.

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COMPETENCIES

Community Research Lab: 1

Students will develop an awareness of elements which affect the range
and quality of children's experience in housing, public, educational
and institutional environments.

2

Students will develop an understanding of issues in planning public,
domestic and institutional man-built environments which affect
children's lives.

Specific Space Design Lab: 3

Students will be able to define elements which affect the quality of a
young child's environment in educational and caregiving settings.

4

Students will know resources within the community which can provide
basic materials used in the construction/implementation of process-
oriented environments for children.

5

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the environmental needs
of young children through the design, implementation and evaluation
of one physical component of a specific space for children.

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Community Research Lab: 1

Students will develop an awareness of elements which affect the range
and quality of children's experience in housing, public, educational
and institutional environments.

Learning Tasks:

Based on readings and discussion students will consider the following
study questions:

1. What influences define the quality of our children's environments?

2. What is a quality environment?

3. Explore the range and scale of environments relevant to children's
   lives. Write a description of a child's weekly "home range" or orbit.
   Describe where the child goes and his or her experience in the
   environment--note the extent to which the child/families needs are
   accommodated.

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2

Students will develop an understanding of issues in planning public,
domestic and institutional man-built environments which affect
children's lives.

Learning Tasks:

1. Through a broad range of readings/films, etc. students will become
   familiar with many approaches to the design of spaces for children
   and families around the world i.e. Urban children's farms

                                            Community children's gardens
                                            Adventure playgrounds/play parks

2. Students will explore their own community and examine both the
   process of planning and the existing quality of environments relevant
   to a child's daily experience.

   To do this students will divide into three study groups to observe,
   describe and evaluate a child's experience in the following settings:

   Group A   Medical environments such as: -a doctor's waiting room
                                                -a medical lab
                                                -a Public Health Unit
                                              -a hospital in patient area/ a
                                                hospital waiting room

   Group B   Housing environments such as: -two significantly different
                                                (in design) multiple family
                                              dwellings
                                              -a single family home
                                              -urban experience/rural experience

   Group C   Public places such as: -the mall
                                   -McDonalds
                                   -the bank
                                   -a public playground, etc.

3. Each study group will compile a written report to be orally presented in
   class. The report will analyze and evaluate the positive elements in each
   setting as well, generate a series of recommendations making suggestions
   for improvement which would enhance the quality of environment which
   children/families experience in the community.

4. The class will identify common concerns in the group reports presented
   and make general recommendations regarding the planning of public spaces,
   housing, and medical facilities in their community. To be presented in
   written form.

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Specific Space Design Lab: 3

Students will be able to define elements which affect the quality of a
young child's environment in educational and caregiving settings.

Learning Tasks:

1. Through group discussion and research develop a set of design criteria
   for a physical environment for children (In this case the specific
   focus will be the student operated children's program.)
   Consider such topics as: lighting, noise level, texture/softness,
   use of wall and ceiling space, aesthetics, privacy, designed flexibility
   of the space and loose components which children themselves affect.

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4

Students will know resources within the community which can provide
basic materials used in the construction/implementation of process-
oriented environments for children.

Learning Tasks:

1. Each student will find one source for a donated material which can
   be adapted for use as a basic element in an environment designed for
   children.

2. Students will collect the material and outline its potential use within
   the environment. Students will compile a group booklet on "where to
   get things for free" in their community.

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Students will demonstrate an understanding of the environmental needs of young children through the design, implementation and evaluation of one physical component of a specific space for children.

Learning Tasks:

1. Choose an area for exploration from the following:

   Extend conventional use of wall and ceiling space i.e. explore the use of light/shadow, color, form.

   Design the textural soft/hard component of the environment.

   Design a flexible system for definition of space and working surfaces for children.

   Design of flexible, movable parts which encourage a child's definition of space.

2. Develop and implement your design.

3. Access your designed component according to previously developed design criteria.