

MODULE 2 • IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Learning Spaces Acting as a *Third Teacher*

A read-through implementation plan for teachers: how to transform your learning environment into an active partner in learning, alongside the child and the teacher. Work through it as you would a lesson plan, one pathway and one small area at a time.

AGE GROUP	DURATION	FOCUS
Early Years to Upper Primary	Embed over a half-term	The environment as the third teacher

1 Read	2 Observe	3 Listen	4 Try	5 CM Tips
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CENTRAL IDEA

Designed with intention, and cared for collectively by children and adults alike, the learning space becomes an active partner in learning, alongside the student and the teacher.

"I care for you, you care for me, we care for each other."

— J. Da Silva

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINE

Use the **Stop, Pause, Reflect** approach. Start with one shelf, one corner or one table, not the whole room. This is not about handing children a finished space; it is about leaving room and time to design it together, while keeping the resources ready and the classroom prepared to receive eager learners. Remember to have fun.

01 • WHY THIS MATTERS

The environment is the third teacher

The theory and intended outcomes that underpin this plan

THE RATIONALE

Today's educators recognise the classroom as a 'third teacher', a concept inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach: the environment plays a crucial role in learning, alongside the student and the teacher (Gandini, 1993). A room of natural materials, thoughtfully grouped, crafts calm and order, and when a space is orderly and inviting it positively influences children's ability to focus and process information (Fisher, Godwin & Seltman, 2014). Adhering to 'less is more' significantly enhances the atmosphere. When adults present materials with care, children mirror that care, because adults are seen as role models (Bandura, 1977).

CULTIVATING COLLECTIVE OWNERSHIP

A classroom has many owners. Embracing shared accountability turns the space into a place of democracy and belonging (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). It is both exhilarating and, admittedly, a bit daunting, an invitation to step out of our comfort zones, not just for our own growth but to expand what is possible for the children.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- A calm, uncluttered, accessible space where children can see, reach, choose and return resources independently.
- Children who take shared ownership: they care for materials and restore areas for the next child.
- A visible sense of belonging, with children's identities reflected in the space.
- Emotional safety: children can show how they feel, verbally or non-verbally, whatever their language proficiency.
- Tidy-up guided by warm, non-verbal cues rather than correction.
- Positively framed promises the class co-created and signed.

"To leave the world in a better state than we found it in."

— Nelson Mandela

02 · THE TEACHING SEQUENCE

Read, Observe, Listen

Build understanding before you rearrange a single shelf

1 · READ: BUILD THE UNDERSTANDING

- The environment, designed with intention, guides, inspires and teaches.
- Collective ownership: shared accountability makes a place of democracy and belonging.
- Adults model care; the state of your own desk speaks louder than tidy-up time.
- Less is more: purposeful, natural, open-ended materials, not abundance, spark creativity and calm.

2 · OBSERVE: NOTICE THE INTENTION

Slow looking before interpretation. Notice:

- Intentional provocations: open-ended invitations that do not limit thinking.
- Emotional literacy: "How safe do I feel when learning here?" A safe place to check in, verbally or non-verbally.
- Shared spaces: every member entrusted to keep them cared for.
- Whether children's identities and a "return me to my spot" photograph are present.

3 · LISTEN: A CLASSROOM WITH MANY OWNERS

- Multiple ownership is exhilarating and a bit daunting: an invitation to step out of comfort zones.
- When children voice ideas and see them realised, they learn the impact of their contributions.
- It expands the opportunities for children to push beyond their boundaries of learning.
- Mutual care underpins it all: "I care for you, you care for me, we care for each other."

TEACHER MOVE FOR THIS STAGE

Before changing anything, take a slow, objective walk through your room and one before-photograph. Question every item: does it genuinely serve the learning, or is it filling space and adding visual noise? Record what feels inviting, hidden, crowded or unclear for children.

03 • TRY: THE REDESIGN SEQUENCE

Set up a self-regulating, collectively-owned space

This week's challenge: bring 'less is more' and visibility to one area

- 1 **Stop, choose one small area.** Take a before photograph of one shelf, corner or table.
- 2 **How cluttered is my classroom?** Question every item; keep only what has a clear purpose.
- 3 **Audit every resource.** Remove duplicates, broken and unrelated items. Check children can see, reach, choose, use and return each one.
- 4 **Less is more, present with care.** Matching natural baskets, open shelving, fewer colours, clear labels. Present materials as an invitation, not storage.
- 5 **Photograph and entrust.** Photograph the finished area as a visual agreement, and involve children so they see their identities reflected and share accountability.
- 6 **Manage clean-up without words.** Point to the reminder photograph with eye contact and a warm smile; relocate stray items calmly, without verbalising that they were not returned correctly, and acknowledge children who help restore order.

MERGING NATURE & NURTURE

Less is more. Thoughtful furniture, shelving and presentation turn the room into a space that fosters calmness and confidence.

Visibility. When the teacher is visible from any corner, children feel safe and use quieter voices. Present most-used resources openly in wooden boxes with a small reminder photograph: a non-verbal strategy that is effective and reliable.

REMEMBER

A beautiful learning space is not decoration. It is pedagogy made visible. Start small, keep it practical, and let the environment teach. Photograph the process and observe how children respond before you redesign another area.

04 · COMPASSIONATELY CONSEQUENT MANAGEMENT

Using gentle non-verbal cues during tidy-up time

A quiet, respectful routine for building collective ownership and responsibility

- 1 **Point to the visual reminder.** Make eye contact with the child(ren) not tidying up, and point to the photograph as a reminder of what the area should look like.
- 2 **Use warm non-verbal communication.** A warm smile and a soft pointing gesture motivate children to restore the area as shown.
- 3 **Use a silent whole-class cue.** For carelessly returned items, calmly place the container in the centre of the communal rug without verbal correction.
- 4 **Build collective awareness.** The silent cue draws attention to misplaced items and helps the class notice the value of caring for shared resources.
- 5 **Acknowledge responsibility.** Acknowledge the student(s) who notice, even if they did not cause it, and thank them for helping care for the classroom.
- 6 **Invite collaborative repair.** Encourage them to kindly invite the peers who last used the materials to help put things right.

PROMISES AND AGREEMENTS, NOT RULES

Frame every agreement positively, focused on the yeses not the no's: instead of "no running", say "walk, please". Have the class draw up a treaty, design their own images and sign it, followed by you. This creates collective buy-in and a management reference point, with your Learner Profile curriculum revolving around the agreements.

Early years

- "Walking feet inside."
- "Inside voices."
- "Gentle hands, kind words."
- "Things back in their spot."

Middle primary

- "We look after shared materials."
- "We include everyone."
- "We catch each other being great."
- "STOP, BLINK, THINK, respond."

Upper primary

- "We take responsibility for our space."
- "We resolve things respectfully."
- "We leave spaces better than we found them."

05 • EMBEDDING THE PRACTICE

Evidence, reflection and inclusion

Reflection is part of the practice, not an activity added at the end

EVIDENCE TO LOOK FOR

- Children returning materials to their spot independently.
- Calmer voices and movement in redesigned areas.
- Children noticing and restoring shared spaces unprompted.
- Language of care, ownership and belonging.

REFLECT (STOP. PAUSE. REFLECT.)

- Is the state of my own desk representative of the values I ask of the children?
- Which items and areas could I entrust to the children?
- What one small step could I take this week towards sharing ownership?

INCLUSION & DIFFERENTIATION

- Consider every learner, not only the majority.
- Provide a quiet retreat away from busy communal areas.
- Offer an emotional check-in for verbal and non-verbal expression, whatever a child's language.

RESEARCH & PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES

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06 • ONE-SPACE REDESIGN PLANNER

Quick reference & planning worksheet

Tear-off summary. Photograph the process and observe children before redesigning another area.

THE SIX MOVES, AT A GLANCE

- **Stop:** choose one small area, take a before photo.
- **Pause:** how cluttered is my classroom? Keep only what serves the learning.
- **Reflect:** audit resources; can children see, reach, use and return them?
- **Redesign:** less is more; present with care and visibility.
- **Entrust:** photograph the area and share collective ownership.
- **Manage:** guide tidy-up without words; co-create promises, not rules.

PLAN THE REDESIGN

SELECTED AREA shelf, corner, table, reading nook

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CURRENT CONCERN clutter, colour noise, hidden, unclear

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INTENTION the behaviour this space should invite

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KEEP / REMOVE

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Before

What does the space communicate now?

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During

What changed, moved, reduced or softened?

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After one week

Are children using it more independently and returning materials?

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Remember to have fun.

The goal is an environment children want to care for, use and return to.