

Week 3: My Ideal Classroom Assignment

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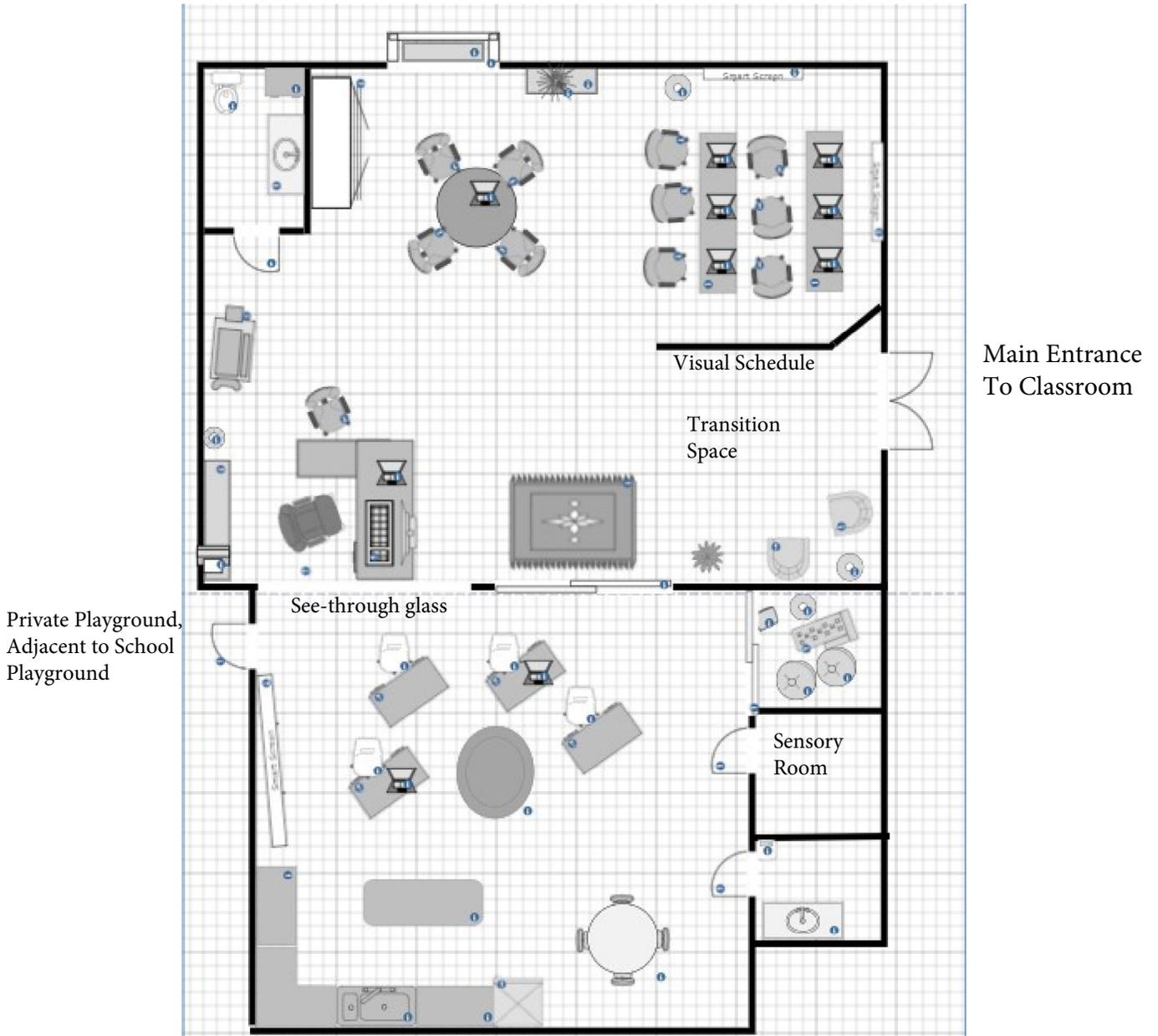
University of Massachusetts Global

EDUU 676-OL1: Autism Spectrum Disorders: Programming and Strategies I

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Part I: My Ideal Classroom Graphic



Part II: Written Rationale

Mcallister and Maguire (2012) point out that “one of the many difficulties for people with autistic spectrum disorder can be simply to feel at ease in their own environment.” I began my ideal classroom with where I would feel comfortable working as a teacher with ASD. I find that I spend a considerable amount of time planning and working on IEPs at home when if I had a comfortable environment in which to work at school, I might spend more time there. At a minimum my work day would be more productive.

I positioned my teacher desk at the back of the room where I could see all student and paraprofessional work areas. On my Ideal Classroom Graphic, my desk is shown at the center left. Looking directly ahead I can see the main entrance to the classroom. Looking slightly to the left I can see two long tables with three student work stations at each. From their desks students can see mounted Smart Boards where I can make presentations. This flexible space can be reconfigured for meetings by putting the two long tables together and the chairs around the perimeter. A comfortable padded bench within a window box creates a nook where a student might relax and enjoy a peaceful view of the outside.

Also, in this space is a round table with four chairs for group work, or support from myself or a paraprofessional, a copy machine and restroom, and an entrance way with two comfortable chairs where visitors or new students can be welcomed. Visual schedules are important for learners with ASD and these can be posted at the entranceway or on the opposite side of the entry wall (Kasari, et al., 2021). There will be storage space and bookcases where students will have personal space to store their supplies and jackets.

Next, from my desk I can look to my right through a large glass partition into a second flexible space with a kitchen, student desks and work tables, a sensory room, a comfortable



reading room and another bathroom. Another Smart Board is provided, as well as an exit to a private playground for our class which is adjacent to the main school playground. Kasari, et al., mentions the importance of access to typical peers at recess (2021). Irish found that teachers of learners with ASD appreciated “access to shared hygiene facilities and a secure outdoor area” (2022).

I envision this second learning space as more for my younger students, but believe it would also be attractive for older students who were interested in the culinary arts, or who needed a sensory break either in the sensory room or just the reading room. There is also plenty of space here to build a loft area for climbing and other nooks where students might find comfort. “[I]n the classroom, educators need to build positive niches for students with special needs that provide synergistic ecological components within which they can achieve and succeed” (Armstrong, 2018). This space, including the sensory room, provides a collaborative space to work with an occupational therapist to determine the individualized sensory needs of children with ASD as “sensory processing differences are unique and affect ... [the learner’s] ...day-to-day function in the classroom in different ways” (Dyonia, et al., 2022).

Much thought will be given to textures, carpeting, and acoustics. Finally, my ideal classroom would have it’s own temperature and lighting controls, with separate controls for different learning zones, each which can be adjusted to meet the sensory needs of learners (Irish, 2022).

References

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