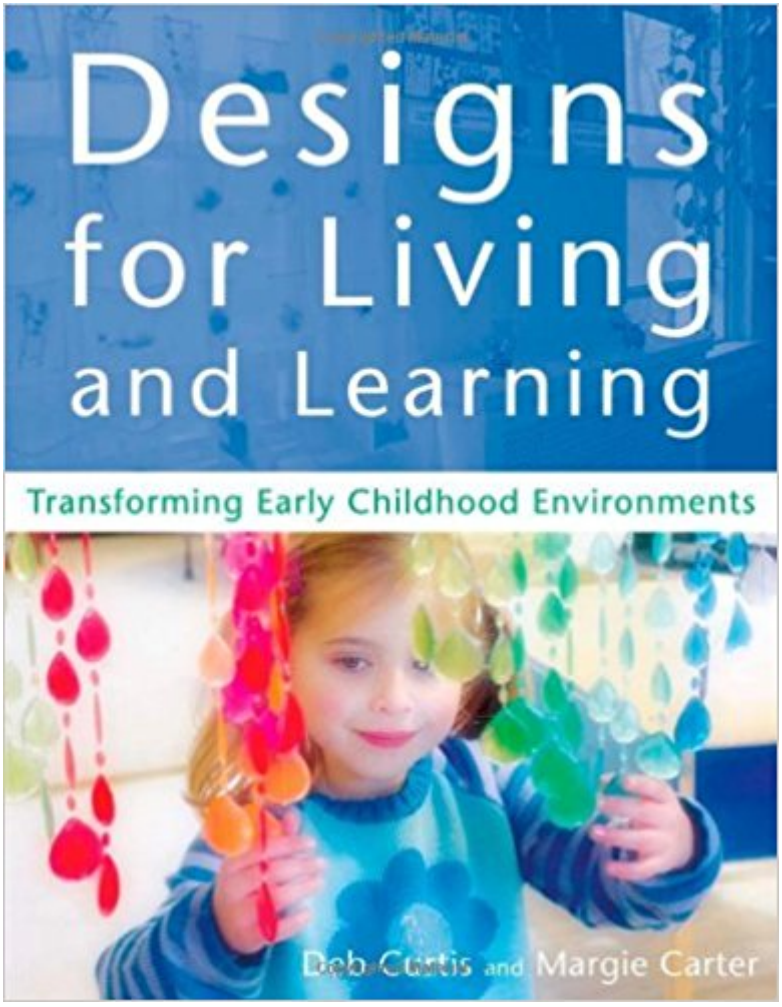
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Designs For Living And Learning: Transforming Early Childhood Environments



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Synopsis

Give children wondrous places to learn and grow! Drawing inspiration from a variety of approachesÃ¢â ¬â •from Waldorf to Montessori to Reggio to Greenman, Prescott, and OldsÃ¢â ¬â •the authors outline hundreds of ways to create healthy and inviting physical, social, and emotional environments for children in child care. Full-color photographs of actual early childhood programs demonstrate that the spaces children learn and grow in can be comfortable for children, teachers, and parents alike.Margie Carter serves on the adjunct faculty at Pacific Oaks College Northwest, Seattle, Washington. Deb Curtis works as a child care teacher at the Burlington Little School in Seattle. Their other books include The Art of Awareness, The Visionary Director, Training Teachers, Spreading the News, and Reflecting ChildrenÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Lives.

Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages
Publisher: Redleaf Press; First edition (May 1, 2003)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 1929610297
ISBN-13: 978-1929610297
Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 0.5 x 11 inches
Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds
Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 68 customer reviews
Best Sellers Rank: #79,983 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #152 inÃ Â Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Home Improvement & Design > Decorating & Design > Interior Decorating #173 inÃ Â Books > Arts & Photography > Decorative Arts & Design > Decorative Arts #354 inÃ Â Books > Education & Teaching > Schools & Teaching > Early Childhood Education

Customer Reviews

For more than 30 years, Margie Carter has worked in the early childhood field including positions as a preschool teacher, child care director, and college instructor. She and Deb Curtis have coauthored seven books, including Designs for Living and Learning. They speak to and consult with child care organizations across the U.S., Canada, and Australia.

This book is my bible for creating any environment for children (home or otherwise). I am a full time preschool teacher who also does counseling and play therapy on the side and I use this book in both professions regularly. The approach of this book is full of ideas that are not only stimulating

and engaging in an educational and intellectual sense, but extremely enriching from a mental health standpoint. Children are growing up in a very plastic and digital world and while it is important to introduce and allow them to be a part of that world, what we're doing as a culture is verging more on shallow novelty overload (based on the selfish and lazy needs of adults). This book brings the idea of designing environments back to focusing on curiosity and naturalism which gives children more of a sense of intellectual control and freedom through creation and peace. I know for some of you I'm starting to sound like a peace loving hippie art teacher, but I assure you when I eat granola, it's usually the unhealthy kind I buy at Walmart (I'm also a dude if that makes a difference). But I care about children, and their mental well being, which is why I strongly recommend this book for any teacher, mental health practitioner, or parent.Personally I think teachers have gone over board by controlling the environments in their classrooms too much. Centers are a good example of this. I think the centers need to be there, but the boundaries need to be permeable. The kids should be able to take the blocks to the dress up area, the book center, the art center...any area they please really because you never know what they may be able to create. For example I used a few of the ideas from this book in my class and I'd put rocks, cut sticks, fabric with different textures, stone tiles, and some potpouri in appropriate centers around the room. In the middle of play time I realized one girl had begun passing out different objects to just about every child in the room. Every child this little girl went to was involved in their own play activity, yet they all said "thank you" when she handed them a rock or random piece of a stick. I watched this go on for about 10 minutes dreading the task that this clean up time was going to entail when all of a sudden the little girl said "Ok everyone, come to the carpet" and they all picked up their random trinkets and sat down on the carpet where she handed them all a piece of fabric. They all placed their 5-6 objects on the fabric and looked through them one at a time, sharing them with one another with so much excitement. It took me awhile but I eventually realized that what they were playing was "birthday party." The little trinkets were the little goodie bags that kids get at their friends parties. This was a group of 20 4 year olds all playing one game, all sharing and cooperating, not to mention originally multi-tasking, and they were doing it with rocks and sticks. It was a fascinating example of the type of creative initiative that children have that we adults lack because of our need for control (only certain toys here, only four per center, timed center times, etc..). I'm positive those children learned more in the 20 minute birthday party they put on than in any similar circle I organized all year.I've had several play scheme's play out like this over the years in both my classroom and in play therapy that don't occur when all of the toys and environment are plastic and punched out from a store bought display. There's something about creating with creation that is different than creating with Playskool (no

offense to them, I love their toys). When kids see environments made out of things that they see elsewhere in the world it expands the learning environment beyond the classroom and makes otherwise passive children active constructors of their world. When they see adults creating their environment out of familiar items it makes them feel like they can do the same. It makes them feel connected and we undervalue that aspect of child development. This is what this book is about, and it's a one of a kind resource.This book is full of pointed advice, great suggestions, and wonderful pictures of different ideas and environments. Some reviews I've read have complained that the ideas are not feasible or don't have explanations as to why you'd put them in a classroom. To those questions I'd say you fear giving up control of your classroom to the children. Let them figure out why the ideas are important, and if the ideas aren't feasible adapt them so they are. This isn't a book full of punch out bulletin board activities. It's a book of open ended ideas designed to encourage a more open minded approach to teaching and environment. The environment should be a second teacher in the room, and if you design the environment for the children with their perspective in mind you're empowering them to use the environment to be their own teachers and in turn be more internally motivated and passionate learners.

I wish there had been more information connecting the pictures of the designs to the reasons behind them. Information about how the different decorating ideas connected to different learning styles or programs--Reggio Emilia, Montessori, special programs for Gifted, Autistic or behaviorally challenged/emotionally handicapped chilren would have been helpful.A review of any available research on whether or not certain design schemes led to increased learning, decreased behavioral problems, more parental involvement would also have been nice. As it stands, this book is mainly a collection of lovely pictures, ideas, and anecdotal reports from fellow teachers that can inspire you to create a beautiful and comfortable environment for your students.A caveat--many of the designs are lovely--hanging umbrellas from the ceiling, building indoor gazebos, hanging strings of lights, mirrored shelves and tables, etc.--but would never fly, at least in my state, with the fire marshall and early childhood safety inspectors. The book suggests that inspectors can be swayed by a good talking to about the importance of your indoor gazebo to your students' development, but this is not usually the case. I am not permitted, for example, to have paper or wood sticking out more than an inch from the wall, or use any extension cords, or hang anything from the ceiling, and I have a feeling other teachers might run into the same problems. Take the inspiration and run with it, but do so cautiously.

This is a great book. Well-written text and beautiful pictures that make the case for a thoughtful classroom environment. I especially enjoyed the suggestions for getting families involved in the classroom. This would be a great resource for teachers who want to get away from overly "themey" environments and instead create beautiful classroom settings that invite participation and support learning. There are suggestions at the end of each chapter that are helpful and encouraging. This is a book you can read straight through, or pick up and put down at your convenience.This is a "must read" for any early childhood teacher (or any teacher for that matter).

As a director of a fairly new child development center, I am always looking for new ideas to make our center as comfortable for the children as possible. This book has some wonderful ideas that don’t require a lot of money, which is nice because we are always short. It suggests using things you find at yard sales and thrift shops.The advice given does, however require lots of upkeep and adult supervision. It recommends lots of things, such as using lots of natural items in the sensory area like tree bark and rocks and giving the children more freedom to make a mess and explore to their hearts content. This makes it harder on the teachers because there is more clean up and it takes a lot of encouragement on my part to implement these changes, but it is worth it in the end.When the children are happier and have plenty to keep them busy, the teacher’s jobs become easier.,

Although I loved the pictures in the book- I am very shocked that they are using pictures from the Children1st school in Durham NC. This school is a home Nursery School near Duke and you are NOT aloud to go visit the school during the week . Only on a Saturday with ut any children!! I went to the see this school in person and thought that the school was not very clean . There are much better schools in Durham to go see like Our Children PlayHouse or The Old Farm School in Chapel Hill.

I really loved the colorful pictures in this book and I would suggest all teachers of preschool and head start centers and child care providers purchase this book as it has great ideas for making activities and environrments welcoming and fun for children.

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