

# Learning Environments P-6



*“Every student deserves to belong (affirmed, validated, and nurtured), be safe, and feel welcomed in all aspects of their daily experience.”*

—[Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy](#)

*“All students should feel that they belong in an inclusive school—accepted, safe, and valued—so they can best learn and succeed.”*

—[Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy](#)

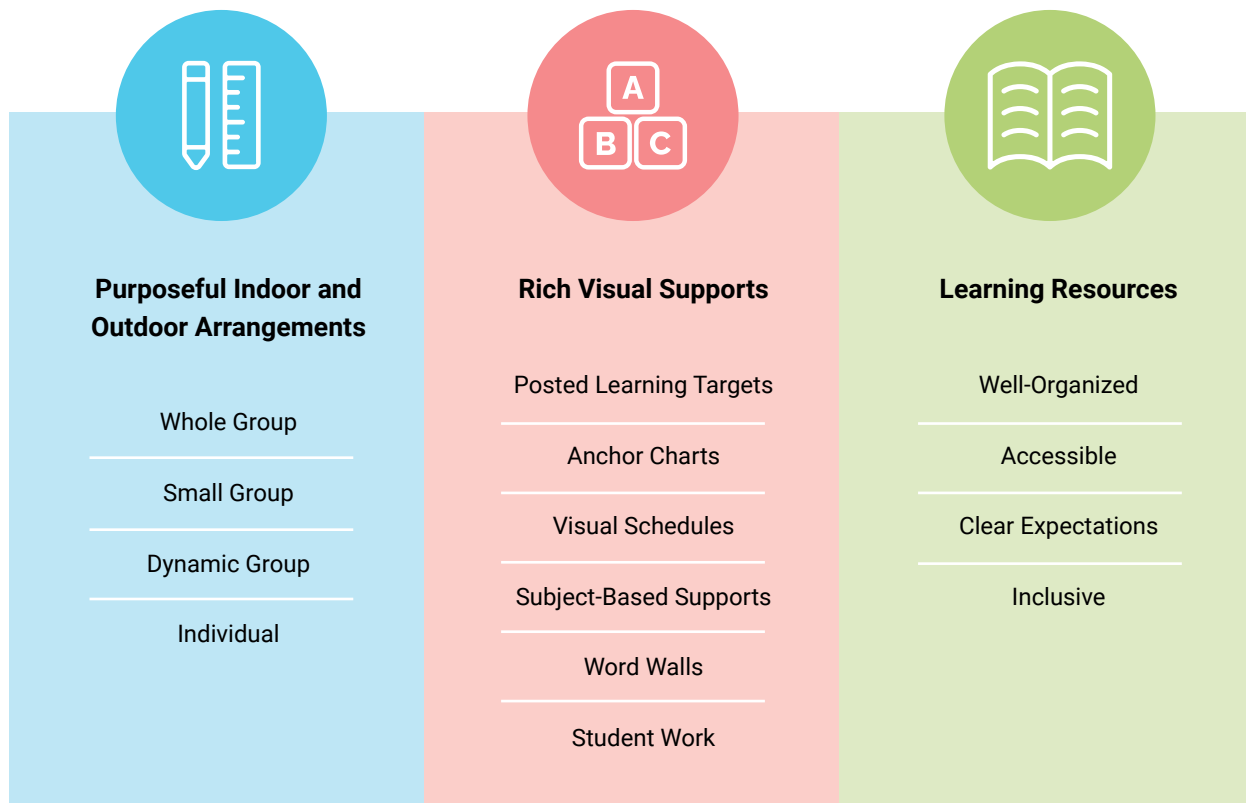
*“Teachers create and maintain safe and secure learning environments that reflect, value, respond to, and promote pride in student diversity, including cultural and linguistic differences.”*

—[Nova Scotia Teaching Standards: Excellence in Teaching and Learning](#)

## What makes an inclusive and engaging learning environment?

Learners are successful when the indoor and outdoor learning environment is

- student-centered throughout the learning process
- structured to support play/inquiry
- dynamic, mobile, and flexible promoting a sense of awe, wonder, and discovery
- exploring Mi'kmaw ways of being and knowing using traditional teachings, values, and language (for further information see [Netukulimk](#) and [Mi'kmaw Ways of Being and Knowing](#))
- drawing upon cultural and linguistic backgrounds and experiences
- representative of diversity
- displaying student work
- affirming, validating, and nurturing
- safe and welcoming to students, staff, families, and community
- organized for collaboration and conversation
- inclusive and relationship-based promoting respect and responsibility for self, others, and the environment
- trauma informed
- structured to support movement
- inspiring and fun with clear and high expectations
- valuing and including learners' voices and choices
- accessible to all learners





# Purposeful Indoor and Outdoor Arrangements

## Whole Group



### What is it?

It is a space that allows for the whole group to meet.



### Why is it important?

It allows teachers to

- explicitly teach
- make learner observations
- provide feedback
- build meaningful relationships with learners
- gather evidence of student learning
- identify next steps for instruction
- model thinking processes and engagement in the learning
- connect and act as guardians to the natural environment

It allows learners to

- learn new skills and concepts
- talk to connect with others and deepen understanding
- reflect and share learning
- build relationships and promote well being of self and peers
- inquire and ask questions
- practise skills and engage in learning
- connect and act as guardians to the natural environment

## Small Group



### What is it?

It is a space that allows learners and the teacher to meet in a small group. During this time, other learners are working in groups, with partners, or independently practising previously taught concepts and skills in authentic ways.



### Why is it important?

It allows teachers to

- explicitly teach based on individual learner's strengths and needs
- closely observe learning
- provide immediate feedback
- gather evidence of student learning
- identify next steps for instruction
- share the learning environment with colleagues who support learners

It allows learners to

- receive differentiated instruction
- engage in re-teaching of concepts
- talk and reflect in a smaller group
- have additional time to practise skills
- take risks within a smaller group
- learn from each other
- feel valued by their peers



# Purposeful Indoor and Outdoor Arrangements

## Dynamic Group



### What is it?

A variety of spaces and flexible seating options where learners can collaborate.



### Why is it important?

It allows teachers to

- create spaces for learners to collaborate
- circulate among groups of learners providing feedback and further instruction
- observe learner collaboration in various group interactions
- foster opportunities for learners to be responsible for their decisions and choices

It allows learners to

- collaborate, share their thinking, and engage in critical reflection
- experience different spaces in the learning environment
- work cooperatively and resolve conflicts
- move with flexibility
- share diverse ideas, cultures, and voices

## Individual



### What is it?

These are spaces where learners work independently and allow the teacher to provide individual instruction and/or intervention.



### Why is it important?

It allows teachers to

- confer and focus instruction on personalized learning goals to build on what the learner knows and has under control
- connect to a student's personal experiences, needs, and interests
- provide specific feedback and instruction
- enable learners to meet their learning needs (quiet work space, space to move, etc.)
- gather evidence of student learning

It allows learners to

- independently practise and develop skills
- engage in self-reflection
- connect content to their own experiences, needs, and interests
- practise self-regulation
- focus on personal learning
- receive one-on-one instruction
- work toward specific learning goals
- demonstrate their learning

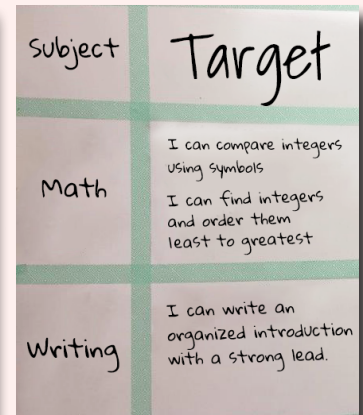
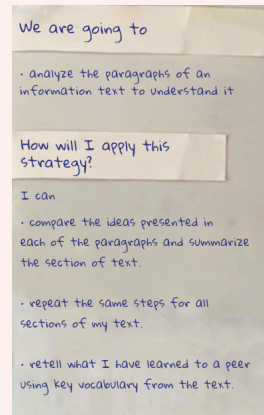


## Posted Learning Targets

Learning targets are a clear statement of the learning goal(s). They are often presented as "I can ..." statements.

Posted learning targets

- are co-constructed with learners
- are presented in learner-friendly language
- encompass one lesson or a series of lessons
- align with the instructional focus and connect to the curricula
- can be easily differentiated
- can be used as a learner self-assessment tool

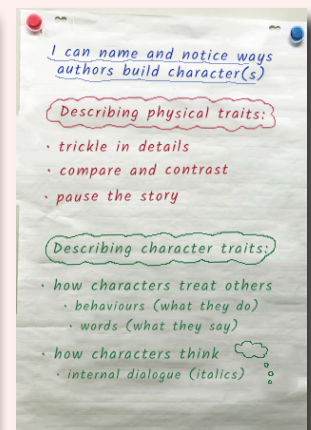
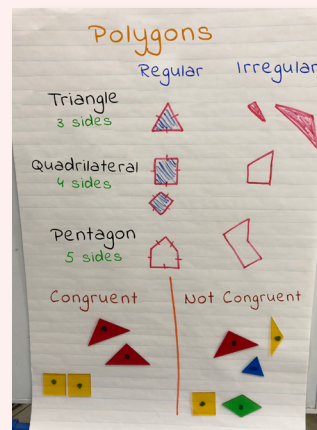


## Anchor Charts

Anchor charts are tools that are used and posted to support instruction.

Anchor charts are

- regularly co-constructed with learners, not purchased or laminated
- created during a lesson to capture the most important targeted concepts and skills
- used as a reference to highlight: expected routines and ways of working together, goals for student learning, modelled examples, steps in a procedure or process in visual and/or print, etc.
- used to support instruction and prompt learning
- revisited over the year as needed

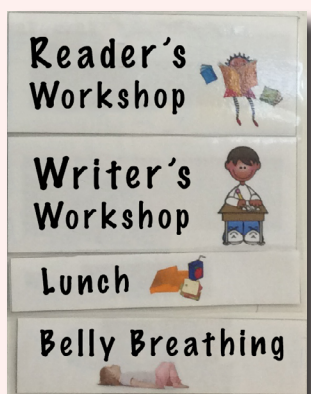
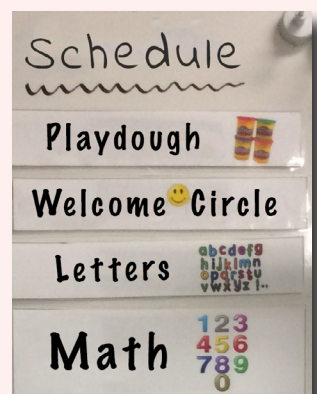


## Visual Schedules

Visual schedules are a visual representation of the daily plan using words and pictures.

Visual schedules are used to

- establish routines
- provide structure to the day
- support learner transitions
- keep learners and the teacher focused
- promote independence
- support time management

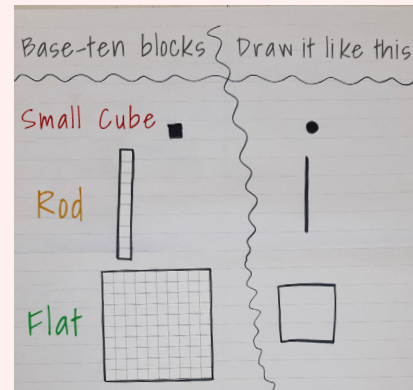


## Subject-Based Supports

Subject-based supports are charts, diagrams, tables, and pictures.

Subject-based supports

- are used to support learner understanding in a particular subject area
- can be arranged by topic
- should be accessible for learner interaction
- may include purchased number lines, hundreds charts, maps, etc.

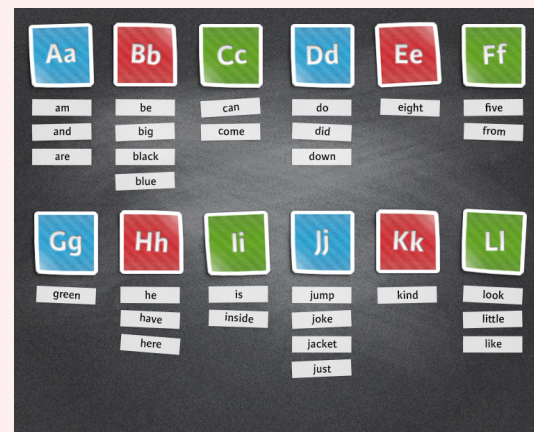


## Word Walls

Word walls are interactive, organized displays of high-frequency words / content vocabulary that are created with learners over the course of the school year.

Word walls are

- started in September with new words added per week, within the context of a lesson, according to the learners' needs
- organized alphabetically or by subject area
- inclusive of words from the learner's linguistic identity
- viewed as a fluid resource; words are added and removed in response to student learning
- used as a learner support that is accessible at any time



## Student Work

Student work is a purposeful display of various types of student learning.

Student work

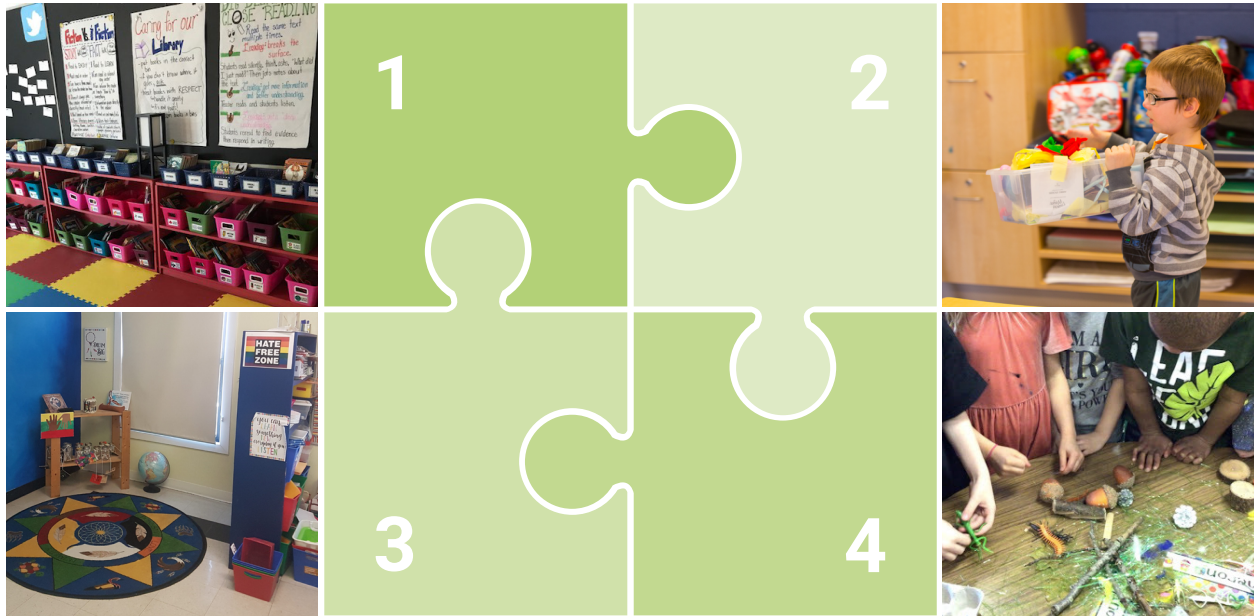
- values and celebrates learners and learning
- provides an opportunity for students to share and to learn from each other
- can be used as samples and exemplars
- contributes to the creation of a safe and inclusive community





Learning resources are the tools students use on a regular basis to develop their understanding of concepts being taught. Careful consideration must be given to how these resources are stored so they are well-organized, accessible, inclusive, and student-centered as well as being easy for students to self-select, use, and keep organized.

## Four Key Components for Effective Use of Indoor and Outdoor Learning Resources



### 1 Well-Organized

- libraries (labelled and categorized by author, genre, theme, etc.)
- manipulatives and reading/writing materials (labelled containers)
- resources (showcasing diversity and current material to foster learner interest)
- multiple spaces (displaying books and resources to promote frequent access)

### 2 Clear Expectations

- models and practices daily routines for using and returning resources
- practices proper and safe use of materials

### 3 Accessible

- uses visible locations
- creates easy access for all

### 4 Inclusive

- provides varied choice for all learners
- reflects learners' interest
- displays multiple perspectives
- offers texts to support a variety of reading behaviours/reading levels on the same theme/focus
- balances the use of technology and text
- provides assistive technology
- reflects learners' diversity

## For Further Information

**Chumak-Horbatsch, R. (2019):** *Using Linguistically Appropriate Practice: A Guide for Teaching in Multilingual Classrooms* (NSSBB# 1004147)

**Daly, Lisa, Miriam Beloglovsky, and Jenna Daly (2014):** *Loose Parts: Inspiring Play in Young Children* (NSSBB# 1005020)

**Diller, Debbie (2008):** *Spaces and Places: Designing Classrooms for Literacy* (NSSBB# 19065)

**Fountas, I. C., and G. S. Pinnell (2017):** *Literacy Continuum, Expanded Edition: A Tool for Assessment, Planning, and Teaching* (NSSBB# 1003228)

**Fountas, I. C., and G. S. Pinnell (2019):** *Guided Reading Responsive Teaching Across the Grades* (NSSBB# 1003080)

**Frey, Nancy, Dominique Smith, and Douglas Fisher (2018):** "Integrating SEL into Everyday Instruction (Quick Reference Guide)" [Pamphlet] (NSSBB# 1003880)

**Frey, Nancy, Douglas Fisher, and Dominique Smith (2019):** *All Learning is Social and Emotional: Helping Students Develop Essential Skills for the Classroom and Beyond* (NSSBB# 1004041)

**Hammond, Zaretta (2015) :** *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students* (NSSBB# 1003077)

**Heard, Georgia, and Jennifer McDonough (2008):** *A Place for Wonder* (NSSBB# 1000214)

**Hollie, Sharroky (2018):** *Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning: Classroom Practices for Student Success* (NSSBB# 1003278)

**Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2020):** *Netukulimk (In Progress Document)* ([https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resource-files/Netukulimk\\_ENG.pdf](https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resource-files/Netukulimk_ENG.pdf))

**Sprenger, Marilee (2020):** *Social-Emotional Learning and the Brain: Strategies to Help Your Students Thrive* (NSSBB# 1004765)