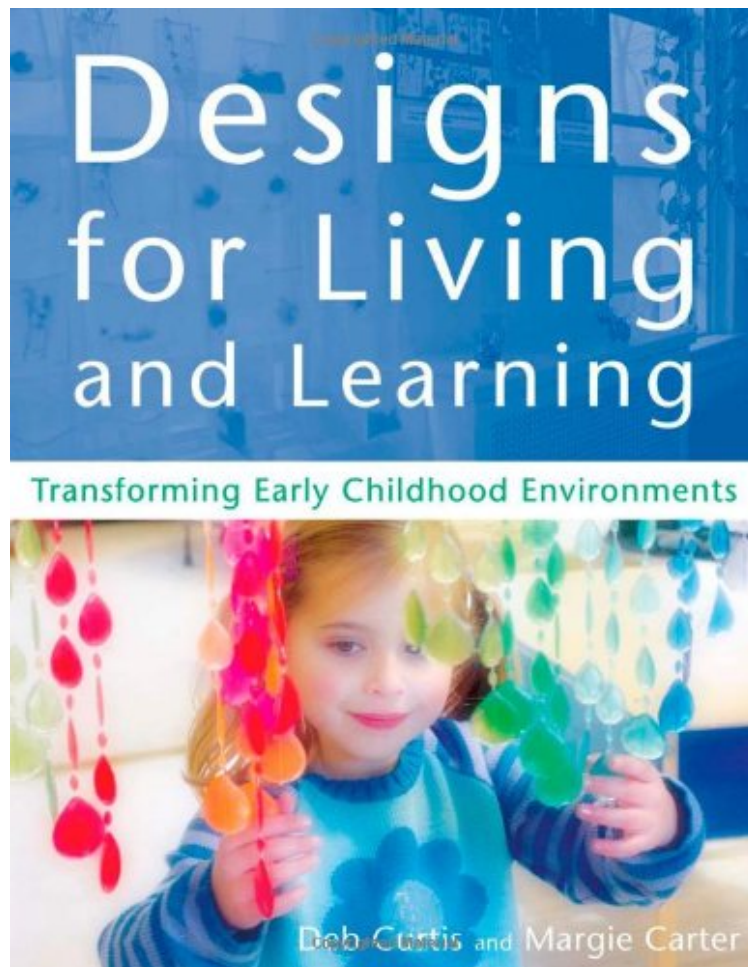


Designs for Living and Learning: Transforming Early Childhood Environments

Deb Curtis, Margie Carter

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Deb Curtis, Margie Carter : Designs for Living and Learning: Transforming Early Childhood Environments before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Designs for Living and Learning: Transforming Early Childhood Environments:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Most referenced book in my library By Funky Mo-Unky 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 potpourri 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. 10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. A beautiful book...By D. G. W. 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 children 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. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Excellent resource...By K. Greenwood 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).

Give children wondrous places to learn and grow! Drawing inspiration from a variety of approaches from Waldorf to Montessori to Reggio to Greenman, Prescott, and Olds 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 Children's Lives*.

About the Author 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.