Zoning: Staffing to Maximize Learning

Narrator: Hello, and welcome to this short presentation on Zoning: Staffing to Maximize Learning. The National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning uses the house framework to organize our thinking about effective practices to support school readiness for all children. In this presentation, you'll learn about a foundational practice that we call "zoning." It will help you achieve a well–organized classroom.

Zoning is a practice used to organize the classroom staff by providing them with specific roles and duties throughout the day. During every classroom activity and during the transitions between activities, each adult in the classroom is assigned to an area of the classroom and has a set of responsibilities to fulfill.

Here is a map of a classroom that shows what zoning might look like. In this classroom, there are three adults: a teacher and two assistants. During the classroom's free choice or learning center time, each adult is assigned to an area or a zone. One adult is assigned to Zone 1, the art area and the math and science table. This teacher remains in this general area, and helps support children as they participate in art, math, and science activities. Another adult is assigned to Zone 2, the block area and the sand and water table. And a third adult is assigned to Zone 3, the dramatic play area and the library corner.

This is just one example. Of course, the zones will change based on the number of available adults and the layout of your classroom. But notice that the adults remain in their zone and interact with children and guide their learning. When teachers plan how to use zoning in their classrooms, it can be helpful to use a chart – such as this – to help keep track of who is doing what.

In this chart, the left–hand column lists the schedule of activities for the day. The top row will contain the names of the teachers, assistants, and volunteers. Then in the cells of the chart, you'll see that each staff member has an assignment. This chart helps the classroom team organize their whole day. Look at the first row. It's arrival time. Each staff person has planned responsibilities. Person A greets the parents and children; Person B helps the children put away their backpacks and their coats; and Person C organizes and gets ready for breakfast. Then in the following row, at breakfast time, each staff person is assigned to a breakfast table. The chart continues with designated roles and responsibilities. In the bottom row, we see that it's learning center or free play time, and each teacher is assigned to a zone or area of the classroom.

There are a number of benefits to using zoning. Here are a few. Zoning means that teachers are available to interact with children and the children can be more engaged in learning activities. Zoning also increases staff efficiency because everyone knows where they need to be. Zoning helps to increase confidence in staff members; they know what's expected of them. They can see that they have an important role in the classroom. And, zoning frees up time so that staff members can communicate more easily with each other and with the children.

To learn more about Staffing to Maximize Learning, see the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning's additional resources on zoning.