

Accessible Design in Classrooms

Why are accessible spaces essential for learning?

When we design learning spaces that invite ALL learners, every child has a greater opportunity to engage and succeed.

Accessible spaces guarantee:

- Safety
- A sense of belonging
- Ease of learning and collaborating



Redesign Your Learning Space



Your Space	Their Space	Our Space
Make time to organize your workstation each day	Develop a system for organizing books and learning tools	Choose 1-2 focus walls to display students' work or anchor charts
Use labeled baskets or bins to contain papers and student work	Teach routines that focus on organization and tidiness	Store learning tools and supplies in labeled or stackable containers
Consider using digital documents to minimize paper	Celebrate students with a "Clean Table Fairy" reward	Designate a place for backpacks, extra chairs, etc.

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Accessible Design Elements: High Zone

Feature	Things to Consider
Lighting sources that promote a calm learning space	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natural light• Additional harsh light from interactive boards
Informational anchor charts near students' eye level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Letter-size charts such as word walls in plastic sleeves near work stations
Displays that add visual interest without overwhelming learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calming colors or patterns that complement the space

Accessible Design Elements: Middle Zone

Feature	Things to Consider
Furniture placement that allows short distances to travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open floor plan• Spaces for students to store mobility devices
Tables with adjusted heights	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Different types of seating (chairs, stools, yoga balls, etc.)
Open seating to ensure collaborative learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students should have access to the entire room--not just a corner

Accessible Design Elements: Low Zone

Feature	Things to Consider
Wide pathways and clear doorways that allow access to all areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designated areas for backpacks and supplies• Space for students to navigate
Labeled materials and learning tools in organized easily-reachable places	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Containers with thick handles• Extra supplies (sharpened pencils, erasers, etc.) in sectioned bins on each workspace
Secured electrical cords, area rugs, and carpets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non-slip rug pads• Binder clips and cord covers

Resources:

- *How to Create Inclusive Classroom Spaces for Students With Physical Disabilities- Five guiding principles to think about:* <https://www.weareteachers.com/inclusive-classroom-spaces/>
- *Designing and Arranging an Inclusive Classroom:* <https://blog.brookespublishing.com/23-tips-for-designing-and-arranging-your-inclusive-classroom/>