



The National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning

# Presentation Script

Zoning: Staffing to Maximize Learning



## Slide 1:

**Hello and thank you for joining us.**

Today we are going to talk about how to organize classroom staff in order to maximize learning for children. This in-service will focus specifically on zoning, a practice commonly used to organize classroom staff.

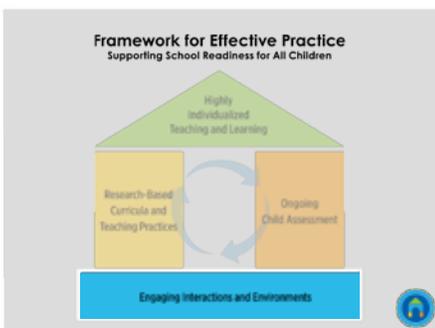
Zoning is a systematic way for a lead teacher to:

1. Maximize child engagement.
2. Organize staff members in the classroom in an efficient manner and establish an organized and effective classroom environment.



## Slide 2:

The National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning's Framework for Effective Everyday Practice supports school readiness for all children. Four components build the house: the foundation represents effective and engaging interactions and environments; the pillars represent research-based curricula and teaching practices and ongoing child assessment; and the roof represents highly individualized teaching and learning. All four components interact with each other and are essential for effective everyday practice for all children.



## Slide 3: House Foundation

Let's look at how zoning fits into this framework. One feature of engaging interactions and environments is a well-organized classroom. Zoning is a practice for teachers to effectively manage staff and staff tasks and create well-organized classrooms. Zoning helps teachers work toward building a strong foundation for learning where every child feels comfortable and ready to learn and teachers feel confident and ready to implement quality teaching practices.

**OBJECTIVES**

- To understand what zoning is
- To learn the different types of zoning
- To understand the benefits of zoning in the classroom

## Slide 4:

We have three objectives for our in-service today.

1. The first is to understand what zoning is.
2. The second is to learn about the different types of zoning and how they can be used in the classroom.
3. The third objective is to highlight the benefits of zoning in the classroom, share some common problems that may occur in an early childhood classroom, such as teacher uncertainty about roles, and give examples of how zoning can help with these problems.

## WHAT IS ZONING?

- Zoning is an effective practice used to help children stay engaged
- Zoning is a tool used to organize classroom staff



## Slide 5:

Zoning is an effective practice used to help children stay engaged with the people and materials in their environment by helping to decrease the amount of time children wait between activities.

Zoning is a tool used to organize staff in the classroom by providing them with specific roles and duties to attend to throughout the day.

During every classroom activity and transition between activities, each teacher is assigned to an area of the classroom and is expected to perform a specific set of duties.

For example, during snack time, one teacher is assigned the task of distributing the snack to the tables before the children are seated; another teacher is assigned to be the first one at the tables to greet the children as they find their seats; and a third teacher (if available) might be assigned the task of remaining at the previous activity to assist in finishing with the clean-up.

In this example, each staff person was aware of their role for the activity and they were able to facilitate active participation of the children.

## WHY USE ZONING?

- Zoning can increase engagement behaviors
- Zoning can increase staff efficiency
- Zoning helps build confidence in preschool staff
- Zoning is flexible and can help make communication between staff members easier

McWhinn, A.A. & Drake, C.M. (2018). Engagement practices in the preschool classroom. Scholastic Teaching Resources.



## Slide 6:

### Why do we want to use zoning?

1. One of the most important reasons to use zoning is that it can help increase children's appropriate interactions with classroom materials and their peers. When using zoning, all team members know where they should be and what they should be doing. Children are not left to wait while the adults try to organize their roles. Often when children are waiting for even a short time, they might start to wander around the room, destroy materials, or even act aggressively. A goal of zoning is to prevent these behaviors by eliminating the time a child has to wait for an activity to begin, or to transition to another activity.
2. We also use zoning because when everyone knows where they need to be and who will handle unexpected events, the staff can work much more efficiently as a team. It eliminates staff doubling up on some jobs while other tasks go undone.
3. Some teachers have said that they don't need to do zoning in their classrooms because they only have two staff members and they just know what needs to be done. However we recommend trying to fill in a zoning chart anyway. You'll be surprised when you actually get your activities and tasks down on paper, how helpful it will be. Often times, classrooms with only two teachers are overwhelmed so important jobs may be missed. Creating a zoning chart can help keep teachers on track.
4. Another reason to use zoning in the classroom is that it can help to build confidence in staff members. When zoning is used, each staff member sees that they have a vital role in the running of the classroom. They know which area of the classroom they are responsible for, and any confusion about what they should be doing is gone.
5. Zoning is never meant to feel restricting or something that should be "set in stone". Issues will come up in preschool classrooms that create a need for spontaneous changes or temporary shifts in teacher responsibilities. Being able to move around the classroom when needed is part of being a responsive teacher. However, having a specific zoning schedule in place makes it easier for classroom staff to communicate immediate needs and to then get back on track after unexpected events are over.

## TYPES OF ZONING

- **Zone:** Each staff member is responsible for a separate section or "zone" of the classroom.
- **One-to-One:** Staff members are responsible for staying near or "zoning" with a child who has more significant challenges.



### Slide 7:

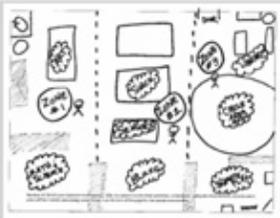
There are two types of zoning that are most commonly used in the preschool classroom.

1. The first type is when teachers are assigned to specific areas and tasks in the classroom and they spread out across the room or outside play area to their assigned areas.
2. In one-on-one zoning, one teacher is responsible for shadowing one student throughout the day, hence the term one-on-one. This situation might be used when a new student joins the class and needs some extra attention to learn the routine, or when a student who has the potential to become aggressive with other students needs a teacher close by.

Some classrooms will use a combination of these zoning types, depending on the immediate needs of the classroom climate.

This presentation focuses on the first type of zoning listed: zone zoning.

## CLASSROOM MAP WITH "ZONING" AREAS



### Slide 8:

In this slide, the teacher assigned to zone 1 is responsible for the art table and the math and science area. The teacher will remain in this general area, and go back and forth between the two learning centers, supporting children's play in the teacher's zone.

Zone 2 has a teacher assigned to the blocks area and the sand and water table. That person's job is to move back and forth between the sensory table and the block area to interact with the children, but also to remain in the teacher's zone.

Zone 3 covers the dramatic play or house area, as well as the library corner. A teacher in this zone will be supporting children in the dramatic play area, while periodically checking in with the children in the library area.

It is important to remember that the teachers are the ones who stay in their zones, while the children are free to explore the entire classroom.

If you don't have three teachers available in your classroom, you can divide your classroom map into 2 zones and zone the activity accordingly. Planning for classroom zoning also encourages the teachers to think about how the physical classroom is arranged. It provides an opportunity for staff to evaluate the balance of activities. For example, dramatic play can be a busy, high need area so it's good to have a more child-independent area such as the library in the same zone.

Often times, classrooms will first experiment with using a zoning plan during their learning center time, but the full benefits of zoning come from using this strategy throughout the entire day during all classroom activities and transitions.

STAFF SCHEDULE			
Activities/Transitions	Staff Person A	Staff Person B	Staff Person C
Arrival	Greet children and parents	Help children put away backpacks	Get tables ready for breakfast
Breakfast	At red table	At blue table	At green table
Transition to outside	Signal transition/blow bubbles	Clean up breakfast tables	Help children to transition
Outside	At big toy	In the field	Clean and Sanitize tables
Transition to classroom	Help children transition to circle time	Signal transition	Help children wash hands
Circle time	Support children at circle	Lead circle	Break
Centers	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3

## Slide 9:

This staff schedule is an example of an assignment chart or matrix used for zoning in the classroom. These charts can be adapted to fit your own classroom needs.

In this example, the left hand column lists some activities and transitions for the day. It is important to be as detailed as possible in listing activities and transitions so that everyone knows exactly what they should be doing during each activity of the day.

The top row lists each staff person. The remaining cells on the chart are filled with information about what each classroom team member should be doing during every activity and transition in the day.

### HOW TO USE ZONING IN THE CLASSROOM

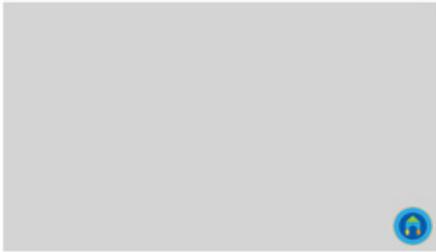
- Break down each activity into various duties
- Specify the teacher roles, zones and responsibilities at the beginning of the week
- Make sure everyone understands their roles and zones
- Post a chart in a visible location in the classroom

## Slide 10:

How do we use zoning in the classroom?

1. First develop an organizational chart such as the one we have created for this presentation and list each activity and transition that happens throughout the day.
2. Then think about all the tasks that need to happen in order to keep the classroom running smoothly. You can begin listing which teachers will be responsible for which jobs during each activity. This can be a lengthy process if you have a full day program, but it is well worth the effort when the chart is complete. You'll know who is responsible for which duties and in which part of the room they should be throughout the whole day. When working on the chart, remember to include the transitions between activities and outside play time, as these are important parts of the day in which teachers should know what their zones and responsibilities are. Using the staff schedule or zoning chart is also a great way to check that materials are prepared and in good working order before the beginning of the day or each activity.
3. After you have created your chart, review it at the start of each week, and make sure that everyone understands their roles and knows their zones. Your zoning chart may stay the same from week to week. Some classrooms have staff members that rotate in and out so you may need to pull someone from one zone and put them in another one temporarily. Be sure to check in with new staff members or staff members who have less experience to ensure they feel comfortable with their zones and their responsibilities.
4. Also, post the chart in a highly visible location so that everyone can see it throughout the day. Another option is to give each teacher a copy of the zoning chart to keep in their pocket for quick reference. There is a lot to remember throughout the day, so be flexible with your teachers if they forget where they need to be. Just keep talking about it before, during, and after school, and it will eventually become a habit.

## VIDEO EXAMPLE



### Slide 11:

Let's watch teachers prepare for the day. In this classroom, the teachers spend 15 minutes at the beginning of each day clarifying the roles and expectations for the teachers, volunteers and children. Notice how the materials for the activities are prepared ahead of time and that the teachers make plans for changes that may be necessary. Additionally, note how this group of teachers has chosen to keep personal zoning charts for reference throughout the day.

## TIPS FOR ZONING

- **Position** your body so you can see your whole zone
- **Scan** your zone and the classroom or outside area often
- Practice **talking** to the other teacher or teachers in the classroom as children move between areas

### Slide 12:

Here are some tips to keep in mind when you are zoning:

1. Think about how your body is positioned. For example, when in a zone, avoid having your back to the majority of children. Try to put yourself at child level, but with your back to a wall or the edge of your outside space, if possible. This allows for you to always be able to see the majority of your zoned space.
2. Having your body positioned well allows you to scan your zone and the classroom and outside space often. This means that while you are interacting with one group of children, you will be able to lift your eyes quickly to ensure that the other children in your zone are also engaged in an activity. Scanning allows you to monitor problem areas and to act quickly and proactively before problems arise.
3. Body positioning and scanning lead to open and easy communication among teachers in your classrooms. As a child leaves your zone, you can communicate with the other staff members to let them know that someone is joining their area.
4. For example, a teacher playing with a group of 3 children looks up and sees Trevor walk over to the block area and says to the other teacher, "Yolanda, Trevor is coming to play in the block area".

This allows Yolanda to know that there is a new child for her to keep an eye on and also lets the children know that the teachers are aware of their actions.

## VIDEO EXAMPLE



### Slide 13:

In this video watch the teacher and note that her body is positioned with her back to a wall so her eyes see out to the classroom. She is able to look up and see what children in the other areas of the classroom are doing. Additionally, notice how she smiles at another teacher. This is a nice non-verbal way of communicating with the adults in the classroom to let them know that you are all seeing the same things happen in the classroom. Using these strategies while remaining in her zone, enable the teacher to be aware of how the classroom is working and to spot any problem areas which may need her attention.



**Slide 14:**

Let's talk about problems that commonly occur in preschool classrooms. One problem is when teachers "clump". That is, the teachers are in the same area of the classroom rather than spread out amongst the children in the room. When "clumping" occurs, teachers may not be able to adequately monitor all of the children and learning time may not be maximized.



**Slide 15:**

Let's take another look at our classroom zoning map. As you can see, teachers have been each assigned a specific area or "zone" to monitor. They will each remain in their general area, keep their body positioned so they can see all that is happening in their zone and communicate with other staff members as needed.

At times a teacher may need to leave a zone in order to handle a specific situation or issue. In this case, the teacher can ask the other staff person to watch their zone or switch areas.

For example, if the teacher in zone #1 wanted to help some children resolve a conflict, she may say to the teacher in Zone #3, "Can you switch areas with me so I can help Maya and Johnny with a problem?"

This kind of communication between staff ensures that "clumping" doesn't happen as well as ensures that all children are being watched and attended to at all times.

**STAFF SCHEDULE**

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Circle time	Support children at circle	Lead circle	Break
Centers	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3

**Slide 16:**

Another problem that we often hear is "We never know who should be doing what. Who should be cleaning up? Who should be setting up? Who is available to take kids to the bathroom?" When this happens, a teacher can come to the end of the day and realize that tasks needed to keep the classroom running were never completed. Teachers in this situation can end up feeling confused and disorganized.

Consider the staff schedule chart again. When teachers take the time to fill out a zoning chart and an assignment matrix everyone has clear expectations about their zones and responsibilities. When the staff is unclear about what to do, a zoning chart and assignment matrix helps reorient the staff. Using zoning can help staff feel calmer, more organized and more efficient.

## REVIEW

- Zoning helps to encourage child engagement and maximize learning time
- Zoning is an easy way to organize and utilize staff members
- Zoning takes the guess work out of classroom duties
- Zoning can build staff confidence and create more of a “we’re all in this together” kind of feel 

## Slide 17:

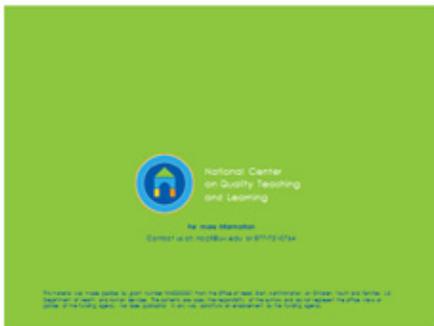
Let's review the main points of our session today:

1. When teachers know where they should be, they are more prepared to teach kids and help them engage in their environment, thus eliminating child wait time which can lead to undesirable behaviors.
2. Zoning is an easy way to organize and utilize staff members. A classroom chart posted in a visible spot on the wall helps teachers know what their duties are throughout the day.
3. Zoning takes the guess work out of classroom responsibilities. The question of “Who is doing what?” doesn't exist anymore.
4. Zoning helps support the lead teacher as well as build confidence in all staff members. When assistant teachers feel that they are in charge of a specific area, and that they are a vital part of helping a classroom run well they may feel more confident. In addition, the ongoing communication between adults in the classroom fosters a feeling of collaboration and of “being in this together”.

## Slide 18:

This presentation gave you some basic strategies for maximizing learning for children by using zoning.

Thank you for joining us and please visit our website for more resources to support effective instructional practices in the classroom.



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**For more information**

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