

There are literally thousands of possible adaptations. Think of the adaptations in *CARA's Kit* as a starting point. This tool provides you with two resources you may use when finding adaptations. These are:

- **General adaptations.** These adaptations may be implemented throughout the classroom on a regular basis (see below).
- **Adaptations specific to classroom learning area .** Adaptations are provided for the following learning areas: language and literacy; arts and creative expression; science and nature; water and sand; math and manipulatives; dramatic play; block play; music; and active learning and movement. In each case, the adaptations are presented as a mini-poster you can hang in the particular classroom area.

In both resources, adaptations are organized according to CARA's Adaptation Continuum, from least intrusive to most intrusive.

## **Adaptations to the Environment**

### ***General Adaptations***

- Attach cloth or heavy elastic bands to puzzle pieces or other small toys to make them easier to manipulate.
- Arrange the room so that there are interesting things at eye level for all children to see and touch.
- Arrange space so that children using wheelchairs or crutches can navigate in and out of the space as well as turn around in the space.
- Position shelves, tables, and chairs at comfortable levels. Make sure children's feet are touching the floor or foot rests. Adjust tables for chair heights.
- Make sure equipment and fixtures are sturdy and can hold the weight of a child.
- Ensure that the sound level is adequate for children with hearing impairments and that there are quiet areas in the room.
- Make toys and materials accessible to the children.
- State classroom rules positively. Post them in pictorial form or another form that is understandable to the children.
- Place toys and materials in easy-to-manipulate containers. Put labels or pictures on the shelves to designate where toys are to be located.

## **Adaptations for Activities and Routines**

- Choose the activity or modify an activity so that it best meets all children's abilities.
- Limit the number of children doing an activity at one time.
- Add movement to an activity that might otherwise not be interesting to the children.
- Shorten, lengthen, or compartmentalize an activity.

## **Adaptations for Materials**

- Use non-skid rug material to keep toys steady on a flat surface.
- Use Velcro to help stabilize materials (e.g., place on blocks to make sticky, place on the palm of a glove or mitten for easier grasping, etc.).
- Glue small spools or blocks to puzzle pieces and toys that are hard to pick up.
- Use a felt board or tray to help children with visual or spatial boundary challenges.
- Punch a pencil or paint brush through a Styrofoam ball to make it easier to hold.

## **Adaptations for Requirements or Instruction**

- Ensure the children have predictable routines.
- Pretend the children are engaging in a purposeful way (e.g., give them something they say they want even if you don't believe that is what they really want).
- Encourage the children to prolong interactions with peers and/or toys.
- Provide models and reward models for complex play and exploration.
- Play often, be playful, and provide children with affection.
- Let the children initiate interactions. Wait for the children to initiate.
- Take turns with children.
- Follow the children's lead.
- Imitate the children.
- Repeat the children's phrases (e.g., word for word, or add a word or a phrase).

## **Provide Assistance**

- Pair children together.
- Provide physical guidance (e.g., assist children with hand-over-hand support).
- Sit with children and provide verbal prompts.



# LANGUAGE AND LITERACY LEARNING AREA

## *Adaptations*



### **Adapt Environment**

- Make sure children have enough space to look at books without being too close to the other children.
- Define the space with carpet squares, bean bags, soft chairs, etc.
- Enhance the mood by using draped curtains to lower the ceiling and/or add lamps or assorted lighting fixtures.
- Post picture reminders to place books back in their correct storage location.
- Use baskets or bins on the floor to hold books.

### **Adapt Activity or Routine**

- Create a class talk book by including pictures, objects, or photos of daily activities in a photo album. Allow children with limited speech to talk about their day by pointing to the album page.

### **Adapt Materials**

- Use unusual items to draw attention to the area (e.g., puppets, a tent, etc.).
- Include a variety of books about children with disabilities in the library area.
- Provide the children with “tearable” books like magazines or catalogs.
- Make laminated, two-sided, single-page books using pictures, magazine clippings, or children’s drawings.

### **Adapt Requirements or Instruction**

- Make available books on tape and ear phones. Color code the play and stop buttons for easy use.
- Include books that use sign language.

### **Provide Assistance**

- Have a “librarian for the day/week” who is in charge of collecting the books when it is time to clean up.
- Have book buddies choose books together and read to each other during library time.



# ARTS AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION LEARNING AREA

## *Adaptations*



### **Adapt Environment**

- Adjust the height of the tables and chairs so children's feet touch the floor and the table top sits at the level of the children's stomach.
- Tape drawing paper to the artwork table/area if more stability is needed.
- Use tape or paperclips to attach paper to the easel.

### **Adapt Activity or Routine**

- Select open-ended, free-expression activities.
- Line a box lid with art paper, place marbles dipped in paint in the lid, and tip the lid to make the marbles paint the paper.

### **Adapt Materials**

- Experiment with using other materials that may be easier to grasp (e.g., raw potatoes, sponges, squeeze paints, drinking straws to blow paint around on paper, spin art with a switch adaptation) in painting projects.
- Make paint brush handles easier to grasp (e.g., lengthen or shorten, built up with pipe insulation, attach to the hand using a Velcro strap, attach to a glove with Velcro on the palm, etc.).
- Tie markers or brushes to the table or easel.

### **Adapt Requirements or Instruction**

- Allow children to stand at the table rather than sit.
- Break down the activity so that children can complete one step per day.
- Allow extra time to complete the activity.

### **Provide Assistance**

- Pair children or have an adult complete tasks together with the child (e.g., one to stabilize while the other completes the task; one to mix the paint while the other paints; one to cut the clay while the other molds it; one to put glue on the feather while the other pastes it on the object; etc.).



# SCIENCE AND NATURE LEARNING AREA

## *Adaptations*



### **Adapt Environment**

- Place materials at varying levels (e.g., floor, table, shelves, windowsills, etc.).
- Provide ample table top space for children to experiment and spread out materials.
- Use task lighting (e.g., lamps, flashlights, etc.) so children can inspect materials under direct light.

### **Adapt Activity or Routine**

- Show pictures of items you have hidden in other areas of the room and ask children to find them.
- Introduce new materials at group meeting time.
- Allow children to practice using new equipment (e.g., microscopes, tongs, etc.).


### **Adapt Materials**

- Use high contrast materials or place light color materials on a dark surface, or visa versa.
- Supply easy-to-grasp tools (e.g., scoops, tongs, magnifiers, etc.). Build up handles if necessary.
- Place novel items in the area on a regular basis.

### **Adapt Requirements or Instruction**

- Set up two- to four-step projects for children to complete.
- Provide a time for children to present the results of their project to other children.
- Allow children more time to complete a project by using a sign that says “project in progress, please do not disturb.”

### **Provide Assistance**

- Pair children together to complete a project.
  - Provide children with pictures of how to use materials and/or how to complete projects.
- 



# WATER AND SAND LEARNING AREA

## *Adaptations*



### **Adapt Environment**

- Raise the table so that wheelchairs can fit under it.
- Make sure all adaptations to tables are stable.
- Use small bins or buckets filled with sand and water if tables cannot be adapted.
- Use a plastic pool to hold sand and water.

### **Adapt Activity or Routine**

- Use a variety of textures other than sand and water (e.g., dried beans, rice, shaving cream, gelatin, mud, etc.).
- Introduce materials during instructional time (e.g., group meeting/circle).

### **Adapt Materials**

- Make sure the toys in the sand and water table fit a range of abilities.
- Have a range of simple to complex pouring, sifting, and squeezing toys.

### **Adapt Requirements or Instruction**

- Limit the number of children allowed to play in this area to two or three at one time.

### **Provide Assistance**

- Ask children to repeat what you have said to them or to demonstrate what it is you are asking them to do.
- Guide children to engage in activities with a buddy.



# MATH AND MANIPULATIVES LEARNING AREA

## *Adaptations*



### **Adapt Environment**

- Adjust the height of the tables and chairs so that children's feet touch the floor and the table top sits at the level of their stomach.
- Place the toy in shallow tray to help keep all pieces together and define the play area.

### **Adapt Activity or Routine**

- Do the activity on a vertical or slanted surface.

### **Adapt Materials**

- Use adaptive scissors that can be used hand over hand or operated by squeezing.
- Help children grasp toys (e.g., build up handles with sponges, hair curlers, or pipe insulation; attach the handle to the hand with the use of a Velcro strap; etc.).
- Use puzzles with knobs or handles—or adapt with knobs from the hardware store.
- Stabilize toys (e.g., use Velcro, double-backed tape, or a C-clamp to hold the toy in place).

### **Adapt Requirements or Instruction**

- Make up a new song to the rhythm of a familiar song (e.g., *Row Row Row Your Boat*) to help remind children to use both hands together.
- Allow children to finish an activity later in the day. Use a “please do not disturb” sign on unfinished activities.
- Have children stand rather than sit to do the activity.

### **Provide Assistance**

- Pair children to complete tasks together.
- Have one child stabilize while the other completes the task.



# DRAMATIC PLAY LEARNING AREA

## *Adaptations*



### **Adapt Environment**

- Include safe equipment related to disabilities in the dress-up area (e.g., glasses, canes, braces, hearing aids, a wheelchair, etc.).

### **Adapt Activity or Routine**

- Conduct a disability awareness day event and invite other classes to visit.
- Set up the learning area to be a hospital, a doctor's office, etc.

### **Adapt Materials**

- Provide a variety of materials that represent multiple role models.
- Ensure that clothing has a variety of fasteners—some easy, others more difficult.
- Include dolls with disabilities in the area.
- Include books with examples of people with disabilities in various roles and occupations.

### **Adapt Requirements or Instruction**

- Allow children to take the dramatic play materials outside (have baskets or crates for easy transport).
- Allow children to wear dramatic clothes throughout the day.

### **Provide Assistance**

- Provide assistance to children when they are putting on and taking off dramatic play attire.
- Ask children to tell you what they are imagining and help them expand their ideas.





# BLOCK PLAY LEARNING AREA

## *Adaptations*



### **Adapt Environment**

- Provide ample space for block play, particularly for children who use a walker, stander, or wheelchair.
- Set up boundaries so block building is not interfered with by other active play.
- Provide a variety of surface heights for block building.
- Provide bolsters or wedges for children to be able to “lay” on the floor and build.

### **Adapt Activity or Routine**

- Use blocks for counting; comparing sizes, shapes, weights; learning about leverage and force; experimenting with gravity; etc.



### **Adapt Materials**

- Provide children with disposable cameras or take digital photographs of their work. Display the photos.
- Provide children with blueprints, building magazines, and architectural supplies (compass; rulers; calculators; graph paper) for drawing and designing buildings.
- Provide a wide array of block materials and accessories (big, small, familiar and odd shaped, heavy and light, hollow and solid) to help children explore the science of building.

### **Adapt Requirements or Instruction**

- Allow children to stop and return to their work in progress. Use a sign to inform other children not to touch.
- Provide children with additional time to complete the project.
- Limit the number of children allowed to play in this area to two or three at one time.

### **Provide Assistance**

- Pair or group children of varying abilities together for block play.
  - Sit with children to find a picture of something they would like to replicate, then position the picture so they can use it as a model.
- 
- 



# MUSIC LEARNING AREA

## *Adaptations*



### **Adapt Environment**

- Make musical instruments and sheet music available in a variety of learning areas.
- Play a variation of music types, styles, and genre during various activities and routines throughout the day.

### **Adapt Activity or Routine**

- Have children make their own musical instrument during art or manipulative play to help entice them to explore other instruments and to take responsibility for instrument care.
- Combine music and movement so children can “feel” the music.

### **Adapt Materials**

- Include a wide variety of musical instruments—some that require minimal physical or cognitive skill (e.g., egg shakers or bells) and others that require higher level skills (e.g., flutes or keyboards).
- Provide ear muffs to muffle the sound for children who become overwhelmed by noise.

### **Adapt Requirements or Instruction**

- Allow children to use musical instruments and accessories such as sheet music or music stands during various activities.
- Imitate the child and play “call and response.”

### **Provide Assistance**

- Provide hand-over-hand guidance to help children play instruments.



# ACTIVE LEARNING AND MOVEMENT AREA

## *Adaptations*



### **Adapt Environment**

- Have a variety of activity areas available that range from low energy requirements (e.g., rolling down a hill or swinging) to high energy requirements (e.g., climbing or running).
- Make sure equipment can be used for different purposes (e.g., things to slide down but also to hide under; things to climb on or to experiment with; etc.).
- Create pathways that are accessible and wide enough for walkers and wheelchairs as well as strollers and rider toys.
- Make sure that the ground cover is easy to move on (e.g., no bumps, divots, or soft materials).
- Designate areas for things that move (e.g., separate the rider toys from open play space for ball play).

### **Adapt Activity or Routine**

- Use the learning area multiple times a day.
- Minimize sedentary activities as much as possible.
- Set up challenges for children of varying abilities (e.g., use treasure hunts, games like “Simon Says,” and obstacle courses).

### **Adapt Materials**

- Provide a variety of sand, rider toys, wagons, loose parts, and other active play materials.
- Provide opportunities to drink water during active learning.

### **Adapt Requirements or Instruction**

- Provide non-active materials (e.g., dress up clothing, construction materials, drawing materials, etc.) so children have options other than movement play.

### **Provide Assistance**

- Guide children through movement activities and provide guidance in using equipment.