



Images say more than words - a step-by-step plan

SOURCE: Expertisecentrum Kinderopvang (Expertise Centre Childcare), 2023

You can use this tool to discuss one or more corners in the group with pedagogical employees. Using photos and actually being in that play corner, the pedagogical employees discuss that corner with each other: what do they see and experience? The conversation leads to concrete ideas for improvements to the play area in question.

FOR WHOM

Pedagogical coaches, pedagogical employees and managers

OBJECTIVE

The objective is to encourage pedagogical employees to consciously consider the layout of the (play) area.

WHAT

The purpose of this tool is to enable pedagogical employees to empathise with the experiences of the children in different spaces in the area. The tool consists of four steps.

1. The first step is to take (or have someone take) photos of one or more corners of the group.
2. These photos are then examined closely from the relevant corner. The pedagogical employees discuss the photos they took: what do they see and experience? By actually sitting in the corner, they experience the angle for themselves.
3. In the third step, you seek out depth and encourage the pedagogical employee(s) to consider the possibilities within the corner.
4. In the final step, you use questions to uncover the tips and tops in order to identify which adjustments can have an immediate effect on the group. Each step has one or more variants that you can use to further expand the working method.

→ With what corner do you start?

It is probably most effective to do one corner at a time, but you can do several corners at once. As a coach or pedagogical employee(s), you decide which corner(s) to start with. You can choose a corner where children do not often play, the materials are not appealing or are not ready for play. Or, conversely, a corner that you are satisfied with, so that you can learn from this for the other corners.

→ STEP 1

Preparation

(a.) Take photos of different corners of the group or ask pedagogical employees to take photos.

(b.) Collect photos of corners of other locations or search online for photos for inspiration. These photos will later provide ideas and examples of how a corner can be arranged.

To get as complete a picture as possible, it may be wise to take photos from different perspectives. Here are some suggestions for the perspectives from which you could take photos:

- **Top view:** Take a photo from a higher vantage point to survey the entire play area.
- **Adult height:** Take a photo from the point of view of an adult to see what the corner looks like from that perspective.
- **Child height:** Take a photo from the height of a child to understand what children see and experience.

- **Close to the ground:** Take photos from a low vantage point, close to the ground, to capture the details at that level.
- **Far away with different corners:** Take photos from a distance at different angles to visualise the relationships between objects and the overall layout.
- **Near toys:** Take close-up photos of specific toys or items in the corner to better observe their characteristics and details.

Potential variation in step 1:

- First take a photo of the corner when everything has been tidied up, and then take a photo of it when it has been made ready for play, for example, the beginnings of a train track.

→ STEP 2

Start with images

Then it is time to sit together in the corner that has already been selected. Invite the pedagogical employee(s) to join you in the corner. Then in the corner, take the photos of the area and this corner.

Now it is time to discuss the photos and to explore how the children experience it. First, pick one photo and discuss what stands out: how do you feel and experience the corner?

Potential variation in step 2:

- Instead of using all the photos, you can also choose photos from specific perspectives. For example, by discussing one or more photos taken from the height of a child.
- Also present photos of other locations. This strengthens the mutual connection and shows how others are tackling it.

→ STEP 3

Continuation of the conversation

You have already started the conversation; you have laid the foundation by empathising with the child. Now you can ask follow-up questions to get the pedagogical employee(s) thinking about the possibilities within the corner.

- Are you being prompted to play? Do you feel like playing? Can you find everything you need to play?
- How is the material presented?
- What would you need as a child to be able to play?
- Is the corner arranged for its intended purpose? Construction corner, fantasy corner, rest corner, etc.

Potential variation in step 3:

- Use a case study by asking the employee(s) to empathise with a specific child. Sketch what that child is “looking for” in that corner. Let the pedagogical employee(s) act as if they were this child.

Example (out-of-school care):

- Imagine a child who needs peace and quiet. This child does not want any children around them at the moment and therefore goes to the reading corner. There the child settles down comfortably and feels like reading something.
- Then ask the pedagogical employees to do this and ask them how they experience the corner, what the bench or other type of seat is like, whether there is a book that would appeal to this child, etc.
- Then continue by saying, “Now imagine that there are 10 other children around you and a pedagogical employee is engaged in an activity. How would this child experience this corner, is there enough peace and quiet? Can the child find what they were looking for?”
- Use these types of cases to also realise that a space can be pleasant, but that the presence of other children or adults can lead to a completely different experience.

→ STEP 4

Processing

Then it is time for a summary, action points and concrete tips and tops about the corner. There are two ways to discuss this. You can do this by using the questions below or the tip and top cards in the appendix. For the cards, you use the same questions, but you can hand them out to each pedagogical employee so that everyone can write down their own answers.

Possible questions for **tops**:

1. What triggers you and encourages you to play?
2. What do you like about how the material is presented?
3. Is the corner arranged for its intended purpose? How can you tell?
4. What do you want to keep in your group?

Possible questions for **tips**:

1. How else could you be encouraged to engage in play? What do you need?
2. Are there children in your group who you think may find certain things in the corner difficult? What? And what can you adjust to meet their needs?
3. What is the best way to add things to your group?

APPENDIX

Tip and top cards "Images say more than words"

Discussion points for photo 1:
TIP:
TOP:
Discussion points for photo 2:
TIP:
TOP:
Discussion points for photo 3:
TIP:
TOP: