Re-Imagining Classroom Tables
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Hello and welcome to early childhood education at continued.com. My name is Jessica Lewis and I'm very happy to welcome you to today's session titled Re-Imagining Classroom Tables. We are very happy to welcome back Sandra Duncan to share her knowledge and expertise with us. Before we get started, let me tell you a bit about her. Sandra Duncan has more than 50 years of experience in the early care and education field including extensive experience in publishing curricula and teacher resources, teaching young children, training early childhood professionals, teaching at the university level, designing professional development programs and working with parents. Sandra taught kindergarten for 10 years, owned 11 early childhood programs, and is the founder and executive director of a school-age program serving 1,700 students at 18 sites in four school systems. She is an adjunct faculty member and dissertation chair for more than 25 doctorate students at the Fischler Graduate School of Education for Nova Southeastern University. She's also the designer of a preschool furniture collection called Sense of Place, which builds upon the belief and the importance of children's environments not only by celebrating the spirit of the place, but by rejoicing in the wonder of childhood. She is the author of several books about inspiring spaces in classroom design, as well as numerous articles for early childhood providers. Read more about Sandra and read the different titles of books she's written on our website. So welcome everyone, we're so glad you're here. Sandra, I'm gonna turn it over to you now.

Well, thank you so much for inviting me back. I'm so pleased and honored to be a part of this presentation called Re-imagining Tables. This is really an invitation to view your classroom tables as more than just a flat surface upon which children eat their breakfast, their lunch or their snack, or perhaps do their art projects, this is an invitation to begin thinking about your classroom tables in an extraordinary way, to begin viewing your classroom tables as important tools for enhancing young children's development. With a little bit of imagination, lots of ingenuity, and perhaps a sprinkling of fairy dust, classroom tables can become places for young children to be, and more importantly, places for young children to become. So let's get started on what this idea is behind re-imagining tables. I think when you maybe saw the title of this presentation, you thought "My goodness, how mundane, how ordinary. "What's Sandra gonna talk about for an hour on tables?" Well before we begin this whole journey on learning more, a little bit more about tables, let's look at the learning outcomes for this presentation in this course. After this course, you will be able to describe how to conduct a table inventory to determine the current table situation in your classroom. You will be able to explain at least one idea for using circular classroom tables as people connections, or people connectors. You will be able to list at least two strategies for using classroom tables as constructing places. You will be able to describe the difference between space and place, and the connection to children's learning. And last, you'll be able to define the term built environment, and give examples of built environments versus non-built environments. For many, the kitchen table is the heartbeat of the home. The kitchen table serves many purposes, at least it did my house when I was growing up. It was a place to gather, it was a place to eat meals or a spot to sit, and while my mom drank her morning coffee and my dad drank
his morning coffee, it was a place where I did homework a lot of the time, it was a place where my mom paid her household bills, and it was just a place to sit and talk sometimes over the events of the day and what happened to my brother and myself during the day at school. A lot of times, the kitchen table is the hub of not only my family, but it’s the hub of many families, and if you look at the picture here, this happens to be my childhood table that when my mom and dad passed away, I took it and brought it to my home and had it refinished and it’s a constant reminder of memories of my childhood and growing up. So let’s think about this for just a minute, maybe you have special childhood memories of a table. So just for a few seconds, close your eyes, and see if you could think about a table that might have been important to you as you were growing up. So you may have thought of different tables, like maybe it was a woodworking table where you learned how to construct things with your grandparent or your dad, or your uncle or aunt. Maybe it was a homework table, like in my case, I did my homework at the kitchen table. Another table might be a sewing table, my mother taught me how to sew and I have fond memories of the table that the sewing machine rested on. There are other kinds of tables, there are so many, when I started to think about this and write this presentation and this course, I started to think about all the different tables and you may have come up with different tables like a picnic table or ping pong table, a pool table, a coffee table, a sofa table, even a communion table or grandma’s table.

So many, many, many thoughts may have come to your mind when you thought about tables. Tables in fact are very important in the classroom, and as we transition from thinking about our memories of, our childhood memories of tables, now I’d like you to think about the classroom tables that are in your specific classroom. Classroom tables are very commonplace and there’s so many of them in our classrooms that we rarely give much thought to these tables. The only thing we really give thought to is do we have enough space to put the tables in that we need to fit all the children during mealtime? That’s basically our common thought when we think about our classroom tables. If you look into classrooms, you see an ocean filled with traditional rectangular-shaped tables like you see in this image. Most of the time in our traditional classrooms, the tables are all the same shape, they’re usually the same color, made out of the same type of wood, and they’re usually rectangular in shape. So think about your own classroom for just a moment and I’d like to see if we could take a little table inventory. And if you don’t have a classroom of your own, think about a traditional classroom as you take this inventory. So just take a pencil and paper and what you’re gonna do is you’re gonna answer either true or false to these questions. So the first question is the majority of tables in your classroom are rectangular shape. Is that true or false? The majority of tables in the classroom are the same size. Is that true or false? The majority of classroom tables are the same color or made from similar material or wood. The majority of classroom tables were purchased from an early childhood catalog. The majority of classroom tables are the same shape. And last, the majority of classroom tables are surrounded by traditional type, child-type chairs. So as you answer this inventory with either true or false as answers to the questions, I want you to try to think about did most of your questions, did most of the answers, were they true or were they...
false? If the majority of your answers were true, I think that you're going to find this presentation interesting and you're going to find this presentation giving you a new perspective on classroom tables. So if your classroom is like most classrooms, traditional classrooms, you probably answered the questions about the shape and the size and the idea that the table was made out of the same type of materials, you probably answered that true if your classroom is like the majority of classrooms that I have been in. The problem with having tables all the same shape, all the same size, made out of the same material is according to Anita Rui Olds who wrote "Child Care Design", and if you are interested in designing your environments, that is an old book, but it’s also what’s considered the core design book of early childhood classrooms. What she says is, "A space equipped "solely with wooden furniture "can appear bland and undistinguished." And we’re gonna find out why that’s important in just a moment. So what she feels is that a space that has similar looking tables, that the classroom becomes, the look becomes institutional, it becomes humdrum, it becomes a little bit boring because there’s no surprise and there’s no novelty in the classroom furniture. And why that’s important is this. "The brain is considerably more receptive "to new and novel ideas." That’s according to Silva from his research in 2006. Novelty and uniqueness, as strange as this might sound to you, novelty and uniqueness is important and a very necessary component in the design of early childhood classrooms.

Research has suggested that our human brain has a tendency to tune out familiar objects, familiar spaces, familiar experiences. A good example of that is when my husband and I were first married over 50 years ago, my husband is fond of grandfather clocks, and he bought this old, old, old grandfather clock, and we placed it right outside of our bedroom on the hallway space right outside of our bedroom, and we went to bed about 10 o’clock, 10:30 or so, and we’re soundly asleep, and all of a sudden at 11 o’clock at night, the grandfather clock, which was very, very old has a very much of a ping-y sound, it went ping, ping, and it just woke us up. And we sat, both of us sat straight up in bed, and it’s like, "What in the world is that? "Oh I get it, it’s the new grandfather clock "that’s out in our hall." It was unfamiliar to us, it was new, it was a novel thing in our household, and that’s the reason why our brain registered it as something unusual that was happening. As time went on, we became completely acclimated to the ping of that clock. We never heard it when it, when it banged all the way through the night, we never heard it. In fact our guests that would come and sleep with us, we’d have to turn Grandfather off because it would wake them up. The story I just told you about is to illustrate that ideas that are novel, new things that are novel, our brain pays attention to. Our brain tuned out, just like our brain tuned out the grandfather clock ping, our brain has a tendency to tune out familiar objects and familiar sounds and spaces and experiences. So according to this research of Silva from 2006, our brains are considerably more receptive to new and novel ideas. And so this idea about bringing in new and novel not only learning materials, but it’s also true for furniture and equipment. So my idea is if you want to stimulate children’s brains through novelty, begin by infusing tables that are unique to the classroom, not those humdrum rectangular-shaped, all of the same size, all of the
same shape, all of the same material. And does this mean though that you have to go out and buy new tables? Absolutely not. It doesn’t mean that you have to go out and invest in round tables or oval tables, it doesn’t mean that at all, what it means is that why couldn’t you start thinking about now that you understand the importance of novel ideas and novel objects and novel furniture and equipment in your classroom, why don’t you perhaps bring in a sofa table that you found at a garage sale or in your basement, or your parent’s basement? Perhaps you could bring in a little coffee table or an accent table, or an end table that you found at Goodwill, or an estate sale or at a resale shop or your neighbor’s basement. Perhaps you can start bringing in these atypical tables into your classroom, and oh, by the way, the smaller, the better, because our classroom is always full of stuff, and you might be able to replace a novel table for a current table that you have in your classroom, but if you can’t do that, then at least find small, tiny tables. And once your eye becomes, and your mindset becomes open to looking for things like this, it’s truly amazing what you can find out and what you can find. So that’s the idea about new and novel. So this presentation is going to give you three invitations, but before I introduce these three invitations, I wanted to also emphasize the idea of authenticity. We all know that psychologist and child development expert Jean Piaget, his research illustrated how children learn about and understand their world through active engagement of physical properties, and he especially honed in on this whole idea about authentic or real life objects. And that’s another reason why if we strive to introduce at least one new, novel, unique table that’s authentic, we have notched up our classroom design another level because now we’re aligning our furniture and our classroom design in the selection of our furniture with such experts as Piaget. Authentic furniture can also add to the space’s spirit because it just sends children an invitation to interact with authentic materials and the form of furniture. It also sends you an invitation to step away from the early childhood catalog for just a moment and design a space that speaks to you and your children in a unique and personal way. Authentic furniture really invites you to embrace and appreciate the joy found even in the smallest details of these amazing tables. So here are your three invitations. The three invitations that I’m going to present to you today are the invitation of socializing, the invitation of constructing, and the invitation of place-making. You’re probably wondering, "What in the world Sandra? "I get the first two images because I can see the tables, "but I don’t get the third one." And that actually is an old lampshade that’s hung up with those little plastic, I’m not quite sure, toys that you can hook together and it’s an empty lampshade that children have glued pictures of themselves onto the lampshade, and the lampshade is actually hanging over a table, so that’s where the table comes in in terms of place-making. So let’s look at the first invitation of tables with socializing with young children. We all know that socialization and social emotional development of young children is an important responsibility that we have as early childhood educators. What we might not be aware of is that we can promote social emotional development through our furniture. We can promote the idea of collaboration, the idea of conversation, the idea of connecting, we can promote that through our furniture in our furniture design. It’s widely accepted that we all react whether consciously or unconsciously to our surrounding environments.
We know that we act quite differently at a football game than we act in a place of worship. Our behavior, the way we interact, what we do, what we say, what we don't say, how we move, how we don't move, it's all determined whether consciously or unconsciously by what surrounds us. The sights, smells, the sounds, the temperatures, the overstimulation versus the under-stimulation, all of that dramatically impacts how we act and react in an environment. The same thing happens for children, of course. All of these things dramatically impact children's behavior, their moods, their physical development, and their cognitive development. More importantly however, we are starting to learn that research is beginning to tell us that in order to develop positive relationships with others, the early childhood environment must meet basic needs of young children. Those basic needs of course include safety, they include security, they include sense of comfort, they include a feeling of love, but now we're starting to understand that they might also include the idea of socialization. So I have a few invitations of socialization to talk to you a little bit about to just sort of pick your brain, not pick your brain, but just sort of fill your brain with some ideas about how our furniture can promote socialization with young children. I came across quite some time ago now some research done by a professor either in Australia or New Zealand or someplace like that but about how benches promote collaboration. And what the professor did is she brought three children to a long rectangular table, much like this farm table, and she brought them in and had them sit in three separate chairs, just a regular classroom chair.

So here the three children were sitting in the three chairs, playing with some manipulatives that she gave them, and she watched and she observed and I believe she recorded them. And what she found was when the children were sitting in the three separate individual chairs that they didn't do much talking with each other, they didn't lean over and whisper or share, they didn't do much at all except for just sort of individually play with their toys in front of them. And then she called the middle child out, which was so interesting, she called the middle child out, called the child away, and then continued to observe the two children on the outer edges, the two outer chairs, and what happened was pretty much nothing. They continued to play by themselves, almost in solitary play, they continued not to interact with each other, not to share, not to do anything except for play with their manipulatives that were in front of them. And then she called the middle child out, which was so interesting, she called the middle child out, called the child away, and then continued to observe the two children on the outer edges, the two outer chairs, and what happened was pretty much nothing. They continued to play by themselves, almost in solitary play, they continued not to interact with each other, not to share, not to do anything except for play with their manipulatives that were in front of them. So then she took the three same children and she put them on a bench, and she, same materials, and she watched and she observed what happened. Immediately, the children started talking to each other, they started scooching a little bit closer to each other, they started sharing, they started collaborating, they started building things together. Then as she did in the first situation, she called the middle child out, and you can imagine by now what happened. The two children on the outer edge scooched in together, and they began collaborating and talking even more. So what her study showed was that benches can promote collaboration. So think about your own classroom right now, is there a bench in it, or do you have individual chairs for children to sit on? So you might want to think about adding a bench to your classroom. That could possibly promote socialization. And sort of a sidebar on this whole idea about socialization and benches versus chairs, I would like to recommend or like to suggest
that you think about the chairs that are in your classroom. If the majority of your chairs are just the regular type individual seats of the wooden or the plastic chair, you might want to consider adding a variety of places for children to sit, a variety, perhaps a beanbag, perhaps an ottoman, perhaps a bench, perhaps if you don't have a rocking chair, perhaps a stool. These are all different places, give children a variety of choices of where they're going to sit and what they're going to sit on. So that's the first idea I have for you is that benches promote collaboration. I did some research on islands, I know this sounds really strange, but what, I did some research on where families eat. And I interviewed some families as they came in to pick up their children on a Friday evening and I asked them, "So where are you going to eat tonight?" And after they got over the shock of a perfect stranger asking them where they were gonna eat, they answered, and the answers that they gave me were quite different than what I expected. I expected that they were gonna say, "Oh, we're gonna eat at the dining room table "or at the kitchen table." A lot of them said, "We're gonna eat out." A lot of them said, "We're gonna have a pizza "and we're gonna eat in front of the television." A lot of them though said, "We're gonna eat at the kitchen island," which I thought was so interesting, and it took me into the 21st century of understanding children and where children eat in their home. And so what I'm suggesting is could you include an island in your home living center?

Now maybe you can't afford a fancy-dancy sense of place island like shown in this picture, but you could afford to maybe go out and find a sofa table, cut the legs down to the height of children and find some stools at Target and make your own island, but the important thing is could we, could we create a table which is an island, an island which is a table, and could it be more relevant for the children that are in our care everyday? Could we somehow create an island out of a cardboard box, a sofa table, something that makes our home living center relevant to where children appear to eat their meals when they're home? The last invitation about socialization is this idea about oval or circle tables and how they promote conversations. A lady named, a professor named Juliet Zhu, Z-H-U, if you want to look at her research found that people at round tables are more engaged. She found that, she thought that the reason why they're more engaged is that they're in closer proximity to each other and they have easy eye contact. When you're at a rectangular table, if you're sitting in the middle of that rectangular table, you don't have very good eye contact to the person that's sitting at the end of the table on either side, you have to actually turn your head quite a bit in order to be able to have eye contact with them. You're also not in close proximity if you're sitting in the middle of the table to the people that are on the end table. A gentleman named Brian Gunia, G-U-N-I-A, also maintained that the choice of seating with adults with circular tables or circular arrangement of chairs promotes exchange, better exchange, better communication, and better feedback. I also came across a master thesis of a student named Zena Alaswad, A-L-A-S-W-A-D, and it was published in 2013, and while she didn’t particularly zero in on circular and round oval tables, she found that the spatial arrangement of furniture promoted socialization, and she especially found that in what she called intimate spaces. So you might want to take a look at her research, and it was very well-written, and I think you could come away
with some ideas about how our spatial, the way we arrange our spatial furniture and the spaces, the seating and the circular spaces, it all promotes this socialization by facilitating an exchange of feedback, exchange of talk, exchange of communication. And you will be able to find if you're interested in any of this stuff, you'll be able to find a ton of research in a journal called Journal of Learning Spaces, so that might be an interesting contact for you. There was some research recently searched by a gentleman called Parsons, and from 2018, it's called Learning the Ropes: The Influence of Round Table Classroom Design on Socialization. It wasn't at the preschool level, but it's still extremely interesting and can be applicable to our level. So the next invitation is the invitation of constructing. And what I mean by the invitation of constructing, I'm gonna hone in on the idea of using classroom tables or a table surface for a couple of thoughts. The first thought that I have is why don't we incorporate a table as a construction platform? In this particular classroom, you can see that the construction platform is in the block corner. One of the reasons why a construction platform or a construction table is very, very beneficial to children is because many, many times, we have children construct, and then, "Okay boys and girls, it's time to clean up," and so what happens is this beautiful construction goes away. Now maybe you use the the wonderful trick of taking pictures of the children's construction and then posting them, perhaps putting them in a three-ring binder so that children can recreate their construction, that's a great idea, but what I have found is that the construction, the recreation of their construction never seems to be as intense or as rich or as spontaneous as it was the first time.

So what I'd like to recommend for tables is to, if you have the room, is to find some sort of, something that you can, a table top that you can use as a construction platform. In this case, it's a pallet that the teachers have made into a construction platform. A pallet on legs is really nice because you can put extra baskets underneath the pallet and those baskets can be filled with objects and interesting materials that match the theme of what the children are constructing. What's also beneficial about construction platforms is children don't take their building down, they leave it there and walk away and walk back and it's the same as it was. The construction becomes richer, more intense, the conversations become a lot more varied, a lot more beautiful when children are allowed to construct and continue their construction and they don't have to break it down, they can come back to it as much as they want. So if you don't have room for a construction table like this you could possibly find a smaller table, a very small table, but at the very least, see if you can find some sort of a construction platform where children's construction can remain and they can come back to it and it's their choice as to when it comes apart, it's their choice as to how long it stays there, and you'll see that the construction becomes a lot more complicated and just a lot more oomph to their construction when they're not required to tear it apart every single time it's time for the classroom to move on to something else. This is another example of a construction platform, it's one of my favorites, and it is, we used to call this a tree cookie but we now call it a tree cake. The teacher found a tree that had been blown over and the men were coming and cutting it apart and breaking it down and carrying it away, and she asked if she could have a tree cookie. It took several men to
get the huge, they cut it especially for her, it took several men to get it into her vehicle, and then when she got it back to the center, they shellacked it, they sanded it a bit, they shellacked it and they added the table legs to it. It makes a beautiful construction platform for children. In this case, the dollhouse was put on the platform, but that doesn’t mean it can’t be used for something else another day. And this construction platform, it was just a table, a round table that the legs were taken off. This construction platform was the teacher went to a resale shop or a Goodwill, and found this side table for the living room and made it into a construction platform. What’s so fun about it is that on the other side of the table are doors and the blocks go in the doors or whatever the children are constructing with, they’re actually in little baskets or just in there for storage. So this particular table makes not only a great construction platform, but it makes a great storage area for the blocks or for the loose parts. This construction table is made out of a piano bench. By the way, most of these pictures that you have just seen came from wonderful centers in Ohio, and I’m very grateful to Chris Burkholder and Melissa Hennigan for helping me find these wonderful pictures and images from their center, I appreciate it so much, thank you.

So this construction bench was made out of a piano bench, and the top of the piano lid, the lid of the piano, it hinges, you can see it in the image, and they actually put angle braces, you can see them right down in the corner, so the piano top, the piano bench top will not flop down and injure children. You could also, if you had permission, you could also screw the piano bench top to the wall. There’s a non-breakable acrylic mirror there and this becomes this wonderful construction area that is filled with delightful loose parts, objects for children to explore. A great table. Whoops. This table was made out of a door, you can see the hinges kind of there on the edge, and this is a curiosity construction. You might want to use a table right near the entryway of your classroom if you have room for a curiosity table and curiosity construction if you do have the room, always putting natural objects near the entry of the door is always a great place to put those types of objects because they demand attention, and they demand children to come over and explore them. But this table was made out of a door with legs that they found at the hardware store. This construction table was, you can’t see it but it’s just a, it’s a coffee table that they made into a clay table. Notice the little round stools. But one of the things I want to say about clay tables is consider having a clay table, and it’s always open. It’s not something where, it’s not something where you bring the clay out, you bring the Play-Doh out, and they’re in little tiny containers and children play with the Play-Doh, and then when it’s time to clean up, they have to stuff all that Play-Doh back into the little clay jars and away it goes, put back on the teacher’s shelf, or even put back on an art shelf. In a clay table, the clay is always present, the clay is always available for children, just like in your block corner, just like in your art area, just like in your manipulatives, it’s always available for children. So why shouldn’t clay always be available, real clay always be available for children? And in this particular center, they put real clay into plastic, big plastic jars with lids, and they’re in little round balls and so children can get the clay out, but you can always refresh the clay with a little bit of water, so try to think about, "Where is there a place in my classroom "that I can have this unique table "and it’s just a clay table "and it’s just
a place for children to play with clay?" Okay, so the last invitation is the invitation for
tables of place-making. In order to understand this invitation, we have to understand
the difference between space and place. When I was writing one of, I think it was the
"Rethinking the Classroom Landscape" book I decided to really delve into this idea
about space and place. I decided to figure out in my own head anyway if there was a
difference between space and place, or is it just nomenclature, is it just words? Or is
there a real difference between what we call a space and what we call a place? And if
there is a difference, why would that be important?

So I interviewed a lot of people, I interviewed college students, I had focus groups, I
talked to college professors, I talked to directors and teachers, I talked to a lot of
people and just asking them the general question is there a difference between space
and place, and if there is, why is it important? And so what I learned from this little
action research, very informal, not anything formal at all was yes indeed, there is a
difference between space and place. I found out that most people thought about
space as just the walls, the doors, the windows, the ceilings. Space is where there's
little social interaction, there's probably no emotional connection, and there's minimal
importance. So when I think about a space, you might want to think about the space
that you occupy when you go to check out your groceries, right? You stand there in
line, there's little conversation, you don't talk with the person in front of you usually, or
the person behind you, there's little social social interaction with the person that
checks you out, usually they say, "Hi, how are you?" And you usually say, "Fine," and
you go on. When you leave that space and go out to your car and put your groceries in
your trunk or your backseat, you usually don't think about that space anymore, it
becomes non-existent to you because there is no emotional connection, and it was of
little importance to you, except for getting your groceries and getting out of the grocery
store and getting home with your groceries. So on the other hand, if you start to think
about children's spaces as places, I found in my little mini research was that places are
where emotional relationships are fostered, significant connections are made, personal
interactions happen, there's a connection to the community, they're sharing and
making up stories and that is a very important one, as you're gonna see in just a few
minutes, there's positive memories, and there's this idea of experiencing deeply.

So according to Alan Gussow, "Place is a piece of the environment "that has been
claimed by feelings. "We are homesick for places. "And the catalyst that converts any
physical location "into a place is the process of experiencing deeply." So I visited
recently, I had the wonderful opportunity to view and experience place at its very, very
best. Remember I said that place is, is a place where you share and make experiences
and stories and you experience deeply. Well at Fern Top Nature Preschool, which I
visited right before I went to the National Conference in Nashville, Fern Top is in
Nashville, Tennessee, I viewed this idea of place at its very, very best. You see, this is
what happens. At Fern Top, there is place called the Magic Gate. This Magic Gate is
the entryway, and this is a nature preschool at its best, this gate is the entryway into
the forest. This gate is where all the children gather to go into the forest, to different,

continued
want you to see that, well, you can’t see very well or very good on the right side, but on the left side, you can see the children could easily bypass this Magic Gate, they can walk around it, they don’t have to go through the Magic Gate to get into their forest. You can also see, I think the owl’s name was Woody, I may be wrong about that, but you also see there’s a, on the left-hand side, there’s a bell. So what happens in this wonderful place at its best is that the children, when they’re going into the forest, they first gather at the Magic Gate, and they all take turns gathering at the Magic Gate, and here’s a little fellow going through the Magic Gate, and they go one by one through this Magic Gate. And as they go one by one through this Magic Gate, they ring the bell, and then say, "Hello forest, hello unicorn, hello grasshoppers." They welcome and say hello to the forest and the wonderful journey that’s beyond them that they’re going to experience. They say hello to the forest as they pass through this Magic Gate. When they come back through the Magic Gate, I’m going to show you a little video of what happens when they come back through the magic gate. They actually say goodbye.

- [Claire] It’s okay, go ahead and take your turn.

- [Child] Bye, meadow.

- [Claire] Actually, you can have your turn. Do you want a turn, honey? No, okay. Bye, unicorn.

- [Claire] Bye, unicorn. Mr. Phil fixed it. Okay, friends.

- [Sandra] So as they said goodbye to their place, and they went back through the Magic Gate, it was, it gave me goosebumps, it just gave me goosebumps because the reality is that that teacher, Claire, and that director has created a wonderful, beautiful place for children to be, and I would maintain that 20 years from now, these little children will remember going through that Magic Gate, welcoming the forest, saying goodbye to the unicorns. I know that those children will have that sense of place, that Magic Gate for their lifetime. And that’s what we’re trying to create for children, and as small as it might seem, as small as it might seem, we can do our little part by creating invitations of place-making with our tables. We can create tables that even though this table is a rectangle, look what’s on top of the table, some beautiful flowers, some objects of beauty, look what’s hanging over the table, something that is beautiful, it’s uncommon, it’s a new element, it’s novel, even though the table isn’t novel. Maybe we can’t afford a round table, maybe we can’t find a unique table at a garage sale, but we can do something with our rectangle tables, we can make them unique, we can make them novel, we can make them a place maker. Look at this place maker, easily created with a light table at an angle with a floor lamp behind it with some, a beautiful flower tucked in there so the children don’t get caught in the corner, knock over the lamp, but isn’t this a beautiful place for children to be? It’s a place-making place. Or how about these wonderful table cloths that were found at yard sales or at Goodwill? Make your tables into places where children will remember. This wonderful table, beautiful, round circular table with the lace tablecloth, and the napkins and the napkin holders, or even
this long shelving unit, TV table, whatever this was she made this into a beautiful place for children to have their books. Or this table that's been set with uncommon elements. Or even this wonderful table that was set at Thanksgiving time with, again, notice the silverware, notice the placemats, notice the fake turkey, notice the wonderful pine bough, notice everything about this table, it's in a home living area, it's a place, this table is a place for children to be and to experience. Here's another table, look at the tree cookies, look at the child-made clay cups, it's a place for children to be, the teachers have made it into a place, a place-making table. This table was created by children, it's a door, they put dried flowers in, a gentleman that was an expert in epoxy came and showed the children, children didn't deal with the epoxy but they showed the children, and now it's a beautiful clay table made from children. It's an uncommon place element. So final thought very quickly, why does all this matter? This all matters because our children are in built environments an enormous part of the time. Built environments are man-made structures, they're features, they're facilities, they are things where people live, work and play, but they are built environments. And look at this, how much time do we spend in built environments? According to this study done in 2001, we spend 86.9% of our time in built environments. And by the way, vehicles are built environments. One in four Americans spend the entire day in a built environment without going outside. Our children, the national average hour per week that children spend in non-parental care, IE, child care facilities, built environments, is 30.6 hours. My goodness, that is a ton of time. So that's why it's important for us to attend to something as minor as a table. Space empowers, it tells us how to act, how to react, what to do, what not to do, it tells us how we personally experience our space. It influences us. Our built environments, there's this wonderful book, Goldhagen wrote it, if you're interested in anything like this, space influences us. If nothing else today, I hope you understand how much space influences our children and how they act and how they react, especially with tables. Space speaks to us, it speaks to our emotions. That's the most important thing I want you to walk away from today is space speaks to our emotions, even, even for the commonplace little tiny classroom table. Thank you very much for joining me. I hope to be with you again another time. Thank you.

- [Jessica] All right, thank you so much Sandra, this was wonderful. I love hearing all the ideas and seeing these amazing pictures that you've got. I loved the idea of benches and using the piano bench with the mirror inside. Great, great ideas for people, and I know a lot of teachers like to go to garage sales and things like that, so this is great for them to get some new ideas. I did want to jump back, I’m gonna go back to the built environment slide and ask if you could talk just a little bit more about that as we do have a couple questions on the exam about that and that is one of the learning outcomes, and it was a new term for me. So could you talk just another minute about built environments and what some examples of those are?

- [Sandra] Sure. The definition of built environments, I put the citation down there in the corner, built environments are man-made structures, they're features, they're facilities, they're viewed collectively as an environment in which people live, work and play. And
so if you look, if you're in, look up from your computer right now, and if you're nearby, you could walk out your door, wherever you're at, at home or in your classroom or wherever you're at, just look around, almost every single thing you see around you is built; Restaurants, stores that you shop in, the schools that children go to, the offices, the bars, the restaurants, they say in here in this slide, even vehicles, cars, buses, trains, airplanes, they are are considered a built environment because they're built by man. So anything that is built by man is considered a built environment, and as I mentioned before in this small study, it was 9,196 people, but they found that 86.9% of their time spent indoors, which means built environment, they spent that much time a built environment. Versus an outdoor environment, which is like a path through the woods, a path that animals have made through the woods, versus swimming in a lake, versus walking on the beach, those are all non-built environments. Non-built environments are environments untouched by human hands.

- [Jessica] That's a very good explanation, thank you, I appreciate that, and I know that that's something that our members are gonna enjoy learning about as well. As I said, thank you so much, we loved seeing all the wonderful ideas of everything you've got. I'm just gonna jump here quickly and make sure everybody knows we do have the references, including a couple books that Sandra has written, as well as some of the other things that she’s mentioned throughout the course. I want to thank you again, Sandra, we appreciate it. Thanks to everyone out there for watching. We hope you have a great day.