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## A SAFE PLACE TO RETREAT

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# A SAFE PLACE TO RETREAT

Brianna Saltenberger

*Brianna Saltenberger is currently completing her second year as a public school preschool teacher. She is a certified special education teacher who serves both regular and special education students which are 3 to 4 years of age.*

## Research:

The purpose of a Retreat Center is to provide students with a place to calm down when they are upset or simply a place to get away from the stimulation of the rest of the classroom. “Solitary retreats provide children the opportunity to think and dream, engage in uninterrupted concentration, regain control of emotions, and unwind after intense periods of interaction (Bullard, 2017, p. 107).” When needed, teachers may even guide students through a calming process to help them deescalate in order to join their peers. “Since children have little control over leaving an environment to seek solitude, it is crucial that adults develop areas within the classroom where solitude can be found (Bullard, 2017, p. 108).” It is important that students learn how to cope with their frustrations and learn how to deescalate on their own early on in education so that they will have those skills as they go through their educational career. Research suggests that having places to retreat or to get away from all of the stimulation leads to better cognitive development in young children (Moore, 2002).

## Center Introduction:

Lincoln Elementary adopted the curriculum Conscious Discipline this year through the Preschool Development Grant. The purpose of Conscious Discipline is to support students’ social-emotional development. One way to support my students’ social-emotional needs is to provide them with a safe-place. I developed a safe-place with the help of Conscious Discipline, but at first it wasn’t a very welcoming place. During my fall semester at The University of Montana I took a class called Meeting Standards through Play Based Environments. One of my requirements for this class was to create a learning center or enhance a center that was already established. I chose to take my safe-place and make it into a Retreat Center for students to calm down or to simply get away from the over stimulation of the other centers.

I wanted to make this center comfortable for my students, provide students with quiet activities and make available a variety of materials to help support my students’ social-emotional needs. I supplied the center with a tent, a couch, a privacy cube, a felt board, books, sensory puzzles, sensory bottles, fidget toys, family photos and calming materials provided through Conscious Discipline. This Retreat Center has been a great addition to my classroom and my students utilize it throughout the day and not just during center time. My students are allowed to use this space whenever they need a break from the rest of the class when things become too

stressful. This center has helped all of my students, but has especially helped those who struggle emotionally and need a space to retreat to.

## Photos:

*This picture shows my safe-place before getting my Conscious Discipline materials and developing my Retreat Center.*



*This picture shows my Retreat Center after it was developed.*



The following images are pictures of materials that I added to my Retreat Center.

*Sensory Puzzles*



*Calming Bottles*





*Fidget Toys*



*Plants and Water Fountain*



*I Choose Board (Conscious Discipline)*



*Story Felt Board*



***Large pillow with baby dolls (Conscious Discipline)***



***Retreat Tent***





*Shelf with Books & Quiet Activities*



*"I Calm Posters" Interactive (Conscious Discipline)*





*Solitary Cube*



## References:

Bailey, B. A. (2015). *Conscious Discipline- Building Resilient Classrooms*. Oviedo, FL: Loving Guidance.

Bullard, J. (2017). *Creating Environments for Learning: Birth to Age Eight* (Third Ed.). New Jersey: Pearson.

Moore, G.T. (2002). Designed environments for young children: Empirical findings and implications for planning and design. Retrieved from <http://www.arch.usyd.edu.au/documents/staff/garymoore/111.pdf>