Is Your Facility Acoustically Friendly or Unfriendly?

Check which acoustically unfriendly features you can find in your setting:

- ☐ Hard, flat, high ceilings – they provide an ideal (and unwelcome) surface for sounds to reflect
- ☐ Walls made of concrete block, brick, drywall and wood paneling – these are highly reflective and allow sounds to "bounce" around the room
- ☐ A hard surfaced floor (wood, concrete, tile) reflects unwanted noise
- ☐ Doors left open/ajar – noise generated from activities in adjacent areas can "spill over" into the room
- ☐ Inferior doors – those that have a hollow core, grates or do not fit well into the frame
- ☐ Easily movable furniture which scrapes the floor
- ☐ Hard, reflective surfaces on table tops
- ☐ Noise from heating and ventilation system (noisy blower or loose/vibrating parts)
- ☐ Overhead fans in use
- ☐ Audible hum from fluorescent lights
- ☐ Windows open or old windows with loose frames and thin panes – a poor barrier between the outdoors and interior rooms
- ☐ Windows without coverings or hard blinds/shades contribute to reverberation (echo)
- ☐ One large room with limited dividers, "functional" furniture such as shelving, between activity areas
- ☐ "Traffic" noise as people enter and exit the area
- ☐ Noise from rooms above (in multiple story building), e.g. movement and scraping chairs

Some better alternatives:

- Ceilings are most effectively treated by installing suspended acoustic tile
- Use of wall treatments such as fabric panels, cork board and textured artwork, e.g. tapestry and child constructed projects from carpeting, cloth or textured paper, all "creatively" improve acoustics by absorbing sound
- Increase use of area carpets or moveable tiles on floor surface
- Placement of Hushhups or Flexifelts on chair legs on uncarpeted areas
- Close doors to prevent noise generated from activities in adjacent areas from entering the space
- Ensure doors have solid cores fit well into the frame
- Preventative maintenance program to ensure quiet heating and ventilation system; turn off noisy system during group activities
- Avoid use of overhead or floor fans during group activities
- Regular replacement of light ballasts to avoid audible "hum"
- Consider replacement of windows with double panes
- Consider window treatments, e.g. draperies or blinds with textured material
- Keep windows closed during group activities (provided ventilation is adequate)
- Use of functional furniture such as mobile bulletin boards, bookshelves, cabinets, clothing racks, padded tablecloths on large tables, and room dividers all alter the reflective qualities of smooth surfaces and decrease echo
- Consider use of "break out" rooms for organized activities involving active communication with children (away from main drop in area)

Kim Schmidt (2010)