



Zone Defense Scheduling

In basketball, the term zone defense is when players are responsible for an area of the court rather than a specific player on the other team. Zone Defense Scheduling (ZDS) in early childhood educational settings is a method for organizing the staff in classrooms (LeLaurin & Risley, 1972; McWilliam, 2002). Staff are assigned specific roles or tasks during times of the day and the children move between the teachers rather than teachers following specific children around the classroom. The primary goal of the ZDS is to decrease the rate of child nonengagement by having at least one adult directly observing and interacting with the children at all times. Organizing adults using the ZDS can make transitions between activities easier for children, increase opportunities for instruction (Casey & McWilliam, 2005), and potentially decrease behavior challenges (Sainato, 1983).

In a ZDS, one adult is assigned to work directly with the children (child-focused) and one adult is assigned to taking care of the extra classroom tasks such as toileting, phone calls, greeting parents and other visitors, and organizing the next activity or area (the set-up role). In this arrangement, the adult working with the children is not distracted by phone calls and such and can remain focused on interacting with the children and monitoring levels of engagement. The set-up and child-focused assignments then alternate throughout the entire day.

ZDS – Additional Tips

- Be careful not to schedule quiet activities immediately after an active activity.
- Flexibility is essential when implementing a ZDS. ZDS is a method for scheduling adults and children should be allowed to set the pace of activities.

During transitions from one activity to another, the adult leading the activity or focusing on the children stays with the previous activity while the staff assigned to the miscellaneous tasks moves to the area of the upcoming activity. Thus, staff are present in both the old and new activities or areas helping to ensure that children stay active

and needless waiting is reduced. Children at the old activity can transition at individual paces and the children at the new activity can become immediately engaged when they do not have to wait for the other children (Casey & McWilliam, 2005).



ZDS – Additional Tips

- When a child needs one-on-one attention, the preferred method of scheduling is to have one adult responsible for the entire group while the other is responsible for the child and having these two rotate (it is assumed in this situation that at least 3 adults are in the classroom)
- Does not have to be 15 minute increments in scheduling, use what works best for you

Setting up a ZDS requires two steps. First, the classroom schedule should be divided into 15 to 20 minute blocks of time (refer to sample schedules pgs. 82-83). Child activities and teacher break times are included. Child activities are scheduled for one or more blocks of time (two or more blocks may be scheduled for activities such as free play or center activities to allow children enough time to follow through with play schemes). In the second step, staff are assigned to alternating set-up or child-focused roles for each of the child activities (may be one or more blocks of time). For instance, in a classroom with two staff, Person A begins the day in a child-focused role (arrival) while Person B is in the set-up role. In the next block, Person A moves to the set-up role after all the children have transitioned to circle and Person B facilitates circle (child-focused role; Two person schedule - pg. 82). When there are three staff in the classroom, two staff are assigned to the child-focused role across the blocks of time (Three-person schedule – pg. 83) (Casey & McWilliam, 2005).

Example 2-person zone defense schedule

Time	Person A	Person B
8:00 – 8:15	Arrival	Set Up
8:15 – 8:30	Set Up	Story
8:30 – 8:45	Free Play	Set Up
8:45 – 9:00	Set Up	Circle
9:00 – 9:15	Table Toys	Set Up
9:15 – 9:30	Set Up	Centers
9:30 – 9:45	Set Up	Centers
9:45 – 10:00	Snack	Set Up
10:00 – 10:15	Set Up	Outside
10:15 – 10:30	Set Up	Outside
10:30 – 10:45	Set Up	Outside
10:45 – 11:00	Music	Set Up
11:00 – 11:15	Set Up	Art
11:15 – 11:30	Free Play	Set Up
11:30 – 11:45	Set Up	Lunch
11:45 – 12:00	Set Up	Lunch
12:00 – 12:15	Nap	Set Up
12:15 – 12:30	Nap	Set Up
12:30 – 12:45	Teacher Break	Nap
12:45 – 1:00	Teacher Break	Nap
1:00 – 1:15	Nap	Teacher Break
1:15 – 1:30	Nap	Teacher Break
1:30 – 1:45	Nap	Set Up
1:45 – 2:00	Nap	Set Up
2:00 – 2:15	Nap	Set Up
2:15 – 2:30	Set Up	Snack
2:30 – 2:45	Centers	Set Up
2:45 – 3:00	Centers	Set Up
3:00 – 3:15	Set Up	Story
3:15 – 3:30	Table Toys	Set Up
3:30 – 3:45	Set Up	Free Play
3:45 – 4:00	Set Up	Free Play
4:00 – 4:15	Outside	Set Up
4:15 – 4:30	Outside	Set Up
4:30 – 4:45	Outside	Set Up
4:45 – 5:00	Outside	Set Up

Example 3-person zone defense schedule

Time	Person A	Person B	Person C
8:00 – 8:15	Arrival	Set Up	Arrival
8:15 – 8:30	Story	Story	Set Up
8:30 – 8:45	Set Up	Free Play	Free Play
8:45 – 9:00	Circle	Set Up	Circle
9:00 – 9:15	Table Toys	Table Toys	Set Up
9:15 – 9:30	Set Up	Centers	Centers
9:30 – 9:45	Set Up	Centers	Centers
9:45 – 10:00	Snack	Set Up	Snack
10:00 – 10:15	Outside	Outside	Set Up
10:15 – 10:30	Outside	Outside	Set Up
10:30 – 10:45	Outside	Outside	Set Up
10:45 – 11:00	Set Up	Music	Music
11:00 – 11:15	Art	Set Up	Art
11:15 – 11:30	Free Play	Free Play	Set Up
11:30 – 11:45	Set Up	Lunch	Lunch
11:45 – 12:00	Set Up	Lunch	Lunch
12:00 – 12:15	Nap	Set Up	Nap
12:15 – 12:30	Nap	Set Up	Nap
12:30 – 12:45	Teacher Break	Nap	Set Up
12:45 – 1:00	Teacher Break	Nap	Set Up
1:00 – 1:15	Set Up	Teacher Break	Nap
1:15 – 1:30	Set Up	Teacher Break	Nap
1:30 – 1:45	Nap	Set Up	Teacher Break
1:45 – 2:00	Nap	Set Up	Teacher Break
2:00 – 2:15	Nap	Nap	Set Up
2:15 – 2:30	Set Up	Snack	Snack
2:30 – 2:45	Centers	Set Up	Centers
2:45 – 3:00	Centers	Set Up	Centers
3:00 – 3:15	Story	Story	Set Up
3:15 – 3:30	Set Up	Table Toys	Table Toys
3:30 – 3:45	Free Play	Set Up	Free Play
3:45 – 4:00	Free Play	Set Up	Free Play
4:00 – 4:15	Outside	Outside	Set Up
4:15 – 4:30	Outside	Outside	Set Up
4:30 – 4:45	Outside	Outside	Set Up
4:45 – 5:00	Outside	Outside	Set Up