

Suggestions for Effective Learning Centers

- **Provide materials and activities to address children’s needs.**

Assure that a sufficient number of materials are available in each center.

Organize materials to help children transition from one center to the next, especially as more centers are added.

- **Link centers to books, themes or topics, reading and writing instruction, and children’s interests.**

Include appropriate reading and writing materials in each learning center.

Display theme-related informational books, children’s literature, props, and other materials at each learning center. Include puppets, stuffed animals, building blocks, story props, books, and writing materials to promote peer interaction.

For example, when studying animals or pets, recreate a veterinarian’s office and include stuffed animals, notepads for prescriptions, a stethoscope, and animal books.

For each center, model reading and writing activities. Children retell, reenact, and write about topics, books, or stories.

Reflect children’s cultures and communities to encourage them to make connections. In classrooms with English language learners, enhance centers with cultural materials that reflect individual children’s heritages, including books, games, and children’s magazines.

- **Change activities to reflect new themes, content area subjects, and reading and writing instruction.**

Build background knowledge and vocabulary.

When first introducing new materials, model appropriate dialogue and interactions for completing center activities.

To encourage the use of new vocabulary and information, display content area vocabulary words on charts.

Change activities according to children’s abilities, needs, and interests.

Activities do not have to be changed every week.

- **Build in time to observe, monitor, and interact with children as they work in centers.**

Scaffold learning for children in each center.

Help children get started if they are having difficulty working independently or working with others.

Record children’s language use and progress based on center activities and interactions.

Adapted from Morrow, L. M., Strickland, D. S., & Woo, D. G. (1998). *Literacy instruction in half- and whole-day kindergarten: Research to practice*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association; Chicago: National Reading Conference; Quintero, E. (1998). Developmentally appropriate practice: Rethinking the preschool curriculum with Latino families. In M. L. Gonzales, A. Huerta-Macias, & J. V. Tinajero (Eds.), *Educating Latino students: A guide to successful practice* (pp. 63–85). Lancaster, PA: Technomic.