

Learning Centers

Language, Literacy and Social-Emotional Development

Goal: To support workshop participants to design concrete plans for enhancing Learning Centers, especially how to more effectively use Learning Centers to build key social-emotional and literacy skills.

1. What is the current structure and content of your Learning Centers?

Share with a Partner:

- *Do centers happen daily?*
- *How much time do children spend in centers each day?*
- *When does it happen in your schedule?*
- *How do you get to and from centers?*
- *What are the centers that you typically have available?*
- *How independent and engaged are children on a typical day?*
- *Is it organized around specific content or learning themes, or is it free play?*
- *Does it happen smoothly or does it feel chaotic or out of your control?*

2. What do you hope to improve about your Learning Centers? Why did you choose this station?

3. Identify the materials you brought today to make concrete plans to enhance Learning Centers:

Example Materials:

- *Lesson plans*
- *Frameworks*
- *Curriculum*
- *Scope and Sequence documents*
- *Guidance documents, etc.*
- *A children's book or other classroom materials*

4. Identify two specific lessons or themes to focus on today.

5. For each lesson or theme you have selected, generate a detailed plan for Learning Centers. (See worksheet on next page.)

What if you are starting from scratch? Basics for setting-up Learning Centers...

- Learning Centers is not “free play” time; instead it is “structured choice” time.
 - There should be at least 3-4 different centers for children to choose from, but not everything in the room should be available.
- Learning Centers should have a specific learning goal.
 - Children should be practicing something that is related to a learning theme (ie, learning themes might include families, animals, community workers, numbers, shapes, etc.)
- Learning Centers involves the teacher making a plan (in advance) about how children will use materials at each center to do something / create something / practice something specific.

Things to consider when designing Learning Centers:

- What is the skill or knowledge that children are building in the lesson/theme you selected?
- How can centers be used to extend and practice this skill or knowledge?
 - What will children already be introduced to in large group?
 - What will children be able to do independently in small groups or with partners?
 - What kind of modeling or practice will children need before they can start the small group activity?
- What type of centers fit best for this lesson/theme?

Dramatic Play	Reading or Writing	Blocks	Art	Manipulatives /Fine Motor
Math and Science	Water and Sand Table	Social-Emotional	Music	Movement/ Gross Motor