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Learning Stations for the PreSchool Classroom

A Working Definition

In order to provide you with a clear and concise idea of how Learning Stations can work in your preschool classroom, let's begin with a working definition.

Learning Stations are separate areas set aside in the classroom specifically designed for small group interactive learning. Each station is equipped with teacher developed learning materials and activities which are designed to teach or reinforce a specific skill or concept. The teacher designed materials and activities can be of various formats, including, but not limited to, work mats, games, manipulatives, and/or worksheets.

The number of stations set up in your classroom, at any given time, should be limited to three or perhaps four. (This will allow movement in your classroom to run smoothly.) Children are placed in small groups, numbering four or five, which rotate from station to station, as each activity is completed.

The Learning Stations can be either literature or theme based, but should be "related" in some way to provide added continuity to the overall activity. Centering your stations around children's literature, or more specifically, around a particular children's book, works especially well.

The teacher will serve as the planner and facilitator of the Learning Stations. After initially providing the children with directions for each activity, the teacher should try to provide only a minimal amount of support, allowing the children to successfully complete the activities at each station.

Modifications

Depending on your classroom environment, you may need to slightly alter or modify the above working situation to meet your specific needs. This may include changing the number of children per group or number of stations being presented. This can generally be done easily, while still preserving the overall benefits.

Benefits of Adding Learning Stations to Your Preschool Classroom

Once you have implemented Learning Stations into your classroom and have things "up and running", you will find that the benefits to both teacher and children are numerous, vast and far-reaching. You will most likely experience benefits you hadn't even anticipated! Below is a list of some of the benefits you can expect.

- Learning Stations provide the teacher the opportunity to work with small groups of children, thus enhancing the interpersonal relationships between teacher and children. This enables the teacher to assess and identify strengths and difficulties that may exist.
- The verbal interaction that takes place within the small group environment can serve

- to help the teacher better assess vocabulary skills.
- Learning Stations can encompass many domains of learning. In addition, they allow the teacher to introduce or focus on specific skills or concepts in a concrete, documented way. They lend themselves especially well to “skill-building”.
  - Because Learning Stations are equipped with teacher developed materials, it is a cost effective way to enhance and enrich your classroom environment.
  - Learning Stations provide children the opportunity for success, thus helping children gain confidence and build self-esteem.
  - Learning Stations allow children to work independently and in small groups.
  - They allow children the opportunity to take the initiative to complete tasks and help children develop time management skills.
  - Learning Stations help children develop problem-solving skills.
  - Learning Stations help build peer cooperation and peer support.
  - They reinforce “classroom skills”, such as taking turns, etc.
  - Learning Stations make learning and teaching FUN!!

### Getting Started

Once you have assessed your classroom situation, and established how Learning Stations will best work in your particular environment, it’s time to get started! A good beginning point is identifying and compiling a list of developmentally appropriate concepts and skills you wish to teach or focus on. If you have decided to center your stations around children’s literature, you will want to compile a list of children’s books that lend themselves to “station” activities. You will then need to “tie things together” and tap into your creativity and brainstorm appropriate activities which will accomplish your skill or concept goal. (You may want to browse through preschool magazines for inspiration and ideas!) Once you have decided on some particular activities and materials, you will need to “make and create”! Remember to include various formats, such as work mats, games and worksheets.

### Managerial Tips

The following managerial tips will provide you with information and guidelines to help things run smoothly when implementing Learning Stations in your classroom.

- You may want to establish a particular day of the week as “Learning Station Day”.
- If at all possible, set up stations prior to children entering the classroom.
- Try to arrange stations so that things “flow” and children can move easily from station to station.
- If at all possible, have activities at each station take approximately the same amount of time to complete.
- Try to keep things in the same general spot each week. This provides the children with a predictable format.
- Prior to starting, give complete and concise directions on each activity. It is often beneficial to model or demonstrate activities.
- If teaching a new skill, you may want to “pre-teach” the skill, using concrete examples.
- Choose activities which are developmentally appropriate and offer the children success. “Know” your children and adapt accordingly.
- Vary the activities presented at “stations” from week to week.
- Vary your materials. Incorporate board games, flannel board games, etc. Make them attractive to children. Where applicable, laminate materials for durability.
- Use discretion when breaking children into small groups.
- Offer frequent positive reinforcement throughout the Learning Station activities. Offer

additional instruction and support as needed.

-Learning Station Day is a great day to utilize volunteers. You could always use assistance and an “extra set of hands”.

-If possible, you may want to send home a parent letter, sharing information concerning the Learning Stations of the day, skills focused on, etc.

-Keep things organized and stored properly. You may want to keep a file on all stations and activities.

-Most important, have FUN. I hope you find Learning Stations in your classroom to be a rewarding and positive experience for all involved!