



Introduction to Learning Centers

Helping Hands Tip Sheet



Did you know?

All children in group settings will benefit from having the choices available in learning centers.

Wait, there's more:

Once children are familiar and comfortable with learning centers, they should be available during hours of operation.

Important to remember:

- Well thought out centers offer opportunities for children to make appropriate choices;
- When children choose activities, they are more likely to remain engaged and focused on the activity for a longer period of time, presenting an opportunity for more learning;
- When children are spending large blocks of time in centers, the classroom can operate much smoother, giving staff more time to engage with children.

How can you incorporate learning centers in your program?

1. Determine the types and number of centers based on the size of your group and the dimensions of your space.
2. Designate each area clearly within the room, make sure you have enough space for the activity (i.e. blocks may need extra space).
3. Arrange the spaces so children can reach the materials and can replace them with ease.
4. If you have not had centers before, start slowly. Create one or two centers and allow children to explore the materials and space for several days before adding additional spaces. If a particular center is very popular, consider making 2 centers the same for a while (i.e. the kitchen area).
5. Change your daily schedule so children have blocks of time to engage in center play.
6. If children are not visiting a center, it may be time to make it more inviting.

An example of a learning center:

Blocks: An open area with a firm but quiet surface to build on (area rug); low shelves with many types of blocks; small baskets with supplemental items such as vehicles, people, animals; books about buildings; a small basket with a small clipboard and some blank paper and pencils so older children can either plan a structure, or sketch the structure they have created.

Remember to start slowly. Place a few materials out for children's use. Every few days or so, add a few more materials. As children's skills and interest increase, add more challenging materials such as different kinds of blocks and props such as small vehicles or animals.