

PRESCHOOL LEARNING CENTERS

Audrey writes,

Hello! I am writing to you from United Arab Emirates. I want to congratulate you for such a fabulous and informative website. I have to set up a classroom for 25 children ages 3 to 4 years old. I have a helper and a teacher assistant. I would appreciate it if you could give me some information on how to set up learning centers and how to plan the schedule.

Jean replies,

When I taught preschool, I had one large room that was broken up into 4 areas or learning centers.

The Art Area – was stocked with art supplies, a large low table, paint easels and a dry rack for drying paintings. We also used this area for messy science projects. Our art table had a removable lid with a water table underneath. Eight children could sit at this table.

The Table Game Area – we had a low table, that would accommodate 4-6 children. In this area, we kept our table games and books. We also had a rug on the floor.

The Block / Group Area – this was a large area, where everyone could come for circle time, singing or dancing. We had a large rug on the floor and shelves along the wall for block storage.

The House Keeping Area – this room had small table that could seat 4 - 5, play kitchen furniture and dress-up clothes.

At the beginning of our session, I would let children go to whatever area they wish to start for free play. Then they were divided up into small groups, with each group going to a different area for about 15-20 minutes. With the plan I have mapped out, you would need another helper so that an adult could be present in each area when children are present.

The adults would stay in the area, they had been assigned for the day while the children would rotate to a different area every 20 minutes.

After two rotations, the children would all come to the block area for circle time. Here is where you would present learning experiences, involving movement, exercises, songs, puppets, felt board stories, picture book stories, show and tell, dramatic play, etc.

After circle time, the children would go to their next area. The adult in each area would have a small planned table game that the children would play, helping to teach a specific concept. (Children could be

grouped by learning needs.) After the activity, the children would stay together as a group and have a snack.

The children that were in the block area at this time, would spread out a blanket and have their game and snack on the floor. After snack, the children would go outside for Outdoor play. (A great time for developing coordination and discovering nature.) This time also allowed a helper to say inside and clean up the snack things.

After outdoor time, the children would come in and go to their last center.

At the end of the day, the children would end up in the Block Area, for more songs and stories until their parents came to pick them up. Usually, a helper would be in charge of the children at this end time, so that I could be available to greet and talk with parents and make sure that the children went home with everything they came with.

It has been so long ago, but I think my preschool was 2:30 hours long, 4 days a week. I taught in a parent coop. through our local community college.

You will notice that most of the day, children were not seated at tables. Most of their activities involved moving about or sitting on the floor.

I am not going to tell you how to plan your curriculum, I do not believe in set curriculums. I feel that each situation is different and each teacher must decide what to bring to her classroom each day for the children to discover and enjoy. Teachers should plan a curriculum that meets the individual needs of her children, her parents and her school.

The website Preschool Express is designed to give teachers all kinds of appropriate activities but you have to decide yourself when to use them.

Good luck with your program. I hope this has helped.

Jean Warren, Preschool Express