



DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENTIFIC OUTLOOK IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN THROUGH CENTERS

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INTRODUCTION

The term "centers" can mean a few different things, but they're all about the same general concept. Centers are activities located in specific areas around the classroom. Often, each specific area is also referred to as a center. The time period on the preschool schedule for these activities is also often called centers. Children work in small groups during center time, and they can also work independently. Depending on your preference, some center activities can be done with the teacher, while others are completed with peers or individually. Centers can be done at one time during the school day, with a variety of center topics available. Centers can also be split up into different parts of the day. For example, literacy centers might be held in the mornings, with art centers after lunch. The decision is based on teacher preference and class schedule.

MAIN PART

Why is it Important to Have Centers in Preschool and Kindergarten Classrooms? There are so very many reasons to have centers in early childhood classrooms!

Preschool Centers Help Kids Grow Socially

To begin with, center time allows children to **grow in their social skills**. They navigate interactions with their peers during this time, and it is happening almost constantly. Here are just some of the ways centers help children socially:

- Kids need to find a way to join in on play that's already established at one center.
- They need to negotiate the guidelines to what they'll be doing in the center.
- One child may want some time to herself at a center, and she needs to express that to her friends.
- Children constantly work on who is using what material at any given time, and if they're willing to share that with some friends.
- When it's time to clean up, the kids need to divvy up who will be responsible for what task.
- A child might be struggling with a task he very much wants to do. He can ask a friend for help,

a friend could offer to help, or some combination thereof.

Centers in Preschool Help Kids Become More Self-Aware

In addition to the social aspect of centers, children are **learning a lot about themselves** at this time. They're practicing and exploring many important concepts in a safe environment. Here are some:

Time Management

Time management is one big part of centers. If your centers last an hour, and a child knows she wants to go to the math center AND the science center that day . . . well, she needs to figure out how to accomplish that.

Self-Regulation

An amazing amount of **self-regulation** is practiced during center time. There is always some friction when children are sharing an area and materials. There's a back-and-forth that the kids need to navigate, and sometimes that can be frustrating. So the kids have to keep an eye on how they're talking to their peers, keeping their hands to themselves, and even regulating their own emotions throughout center time.

Their Own Interests

Kids can take the time to **explore what they're interested in**. Since each center should be stocked with different kinds of materials, the children can determine what they like and don't like. Maybe one child loves painting, while another is a big fan of clay. Both can get the chance to express their own interests in the same art center.

Take a Look at Some Centers in Preschool & Kindergarten

These are just the general centers to have around the classroom. The specific activities would change based on your theme or project, the time of year, your students' needs, etc.

Reading Center

A cozy spot set up in the classroom, with a variety of books available for the children to read. Books related to the theme, class-made books, big books, interactive writing charts, and pocket chart poems are just some of the things that can be included in the reading center.



Writing Center

A place where students can practice the various stages of writing. Sometimes this center is "free writing", with the kiddos deciding what to do. Other times, the activity is teacher-directed.

Some ideas include making words with letter tiles, writing in journals, writing in sand, and book-making.

Dramatic Play Center

A center just for pretend play, some of my kids referred to it as the home center.

"Kitchen appliances", a table, and chairs set the backdrop for this center.

Some ideas for the home center are acting out favorite stories, running a flower shop, selling produce in a roadside stand, and caring for patients in the ER.

Building Center

Having a large spot set-aside for building and creating is an important part of early childhood classrooms. Building can include blocks, racetracks and cars, Lego (although sometimes people keep these in the math or fine motor area), and so many other creative building supplies.

The children can have free reign to build whatever they wish, or they can build within certain guidelines. Sometimes I like to give a suggestion to the kids, then let them go.

Art and Crafts Center

The purpose of this center in preschool is to let the kids explore their creativity.

For this center, you might put out art materials the kiddos can use with minimal supervision. Or some days you might introduce a new art technique or material that requires an adult to hang out for most of center time.

Students might paint self-portraits, make play dough, or paint with corn cobs. Children might see what happens when they mix different paint colors, or maybe they want to experiment with mixed-media art or sculpture.

Sensory Center

The sensory center in preschool helps kids focus in on (you guessed it!) their senses.

This center might hold water, rice, shaving cream, beads, straws, dyed corn in a rainbow of colors, and so much more.

Ideally, the materials would be rotated so that different senses are explored throughout the year.

Science Center

The science center in preschool helps the children learn to investigate the world around them. I love stocking this center with magnifying glasses, tweezers, and kid-sized safety goggles.

Depending on what your class is learning, you might have pumpkins to dissect, rocks, shells, insects to observe, or snake skins in the center

ABC Center

This center allows children to explore letters — how letters look, how they compare to each other, how they combine to form words.

If you have a teacher easel with a magnetic white board, that's perfect for this little center. Sometimes I have the children sort magnetic letters, match uppercase to lowercase letters, make words, write words, work with word families, etc.

Math Center

Kiddos use this center in preschool to learn more about shapes, colors, numbers, quantities, and such.

Some ideas for this center include playing dice games, sorting jelly beans, matching numeral cards to quantities of items, sorting items, etc

Puzzles & Games Center

It's always fun for the kiddos to work on puzzles or play games together. Fun, cooperative play!

I don't always have a center set aside just for puzzles and games. It really depends on the size of the classroom and my center time goals.

CONCLUSION

Setting up **centers** in **preschool** and **kindergarten** classrooms can be a pretty daunting task. Especially if it's your first time doing so (although it's no small feat for veteran teachers, either).

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