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Introduction

Teachers understand and strive to accommodate the fact that their students have different learning styles and ability levels among the various curriculum areas. One way teachers can provide students with the opportunity to work at their own pace in a manner most appropriate to their personal learning style is to establish classroom learning centres. Learning centres maximise flexibility in the classroom, which in turn helps minimise disruption.

Even though all students must learn the same skills, learning centres provide opportunities for students to work at their own paces and ability levels, without the accompanying boredom often experienced by the advanced learner or the frustration felt by the learner who needs more time and practice. Learning for everyone becomes what learning is intended to be—exciting and motivating.

Students may spend as much or as little time as they need to acquire knowledge or master a skill without feeling rushed, bored, or inadequate. The ability of students to move from centre to centre helps ensure that they internalise learning in the best way for them individually rather than having to adapt to a presentation geared for the ‘average’ student.

With the use of learning centres, classrooms become less teacher-directed and more student-centred. As students’ personal power grows, they are motivated to experiment with acquiring knowledge and understanding in the ways most natural and interesting for them. The real-life skills that are naturally acquired through the use of centres—things such as time management, cooperation, responsibility, and flexibility—are precisely the skills that every student will need as he or she moves ever closer to becoming part of the adult world.

What does a learning centre-based classroom look like? What will you need for each centre? How can you teach students to use the centres easily and effectively? What is the best way to assess learning? How to Manage Learning Centres in the Classroom is a comprehensive guide that answers those questions and more. In it you will find unique and innovative suggestions, diagrams, and tools that show you exactly how you can establish, organise, and effectively use learning centres in Grades P–6. Within the framework provided, you can easily modify the techniques and suggestions for your particular classroom and class’s needs.

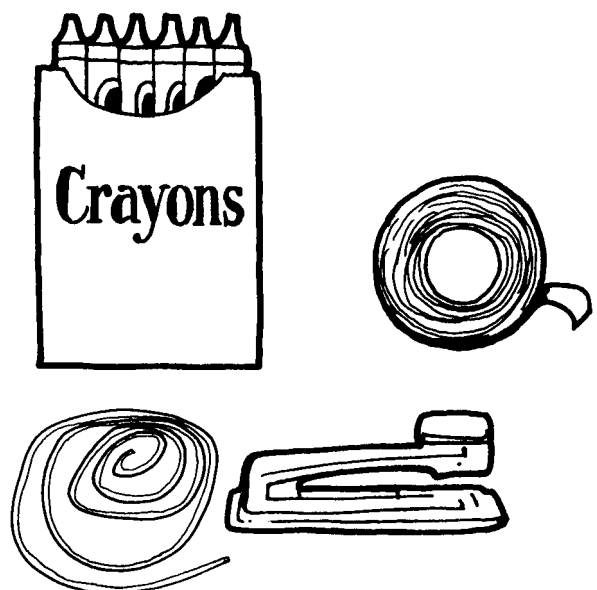
This book is designed to help teachers and students make the most of their shared school experience and to further their common goal of ensuring that each student realise his or her potential for learning and growing. Discover for yourself how the use of centres can enhance your teaching and your students’ learning every day.

Learning Centres Management Model

This model for centres management is designed to reinforce all areas of the curriculum and to help students internalise learning at their own levels. Additionally, it offers opportunities to challenge each student in a nonthreatening environment. You may wish to gather these materials to have on hand as you follow the management model presented. Or you may wish to read the whole book to see which suggestions work best for you. Either way, the materials and forms you need are page-referenced throughout in the appropriate places to make it easy for you to assemble what you need for your centres-based classroom.

Materials:

- tubs about 25cm x 30cm x 15cm
- approximately 70 clothespins
- self-adhesive Velcro® 3.75cm x 7.5cm
- posterboard
- supplies baskets about 15cm x 15cm
- student sets of pencils, crayons, scissors and glue
- paint
- paintbrush
- laminating machine
- locator and tub cards
- pocket folders (approximately 6 each of red, orange, yellow, green and blue)
- wool or string
- stapler
- drawing pins or tape
- glue
- bell, buzzer or alarm
- cassette or compact disc player
- nature sounds or other peaceful music
- clean-up music
- Centres Groups chart
- Centres Contracts

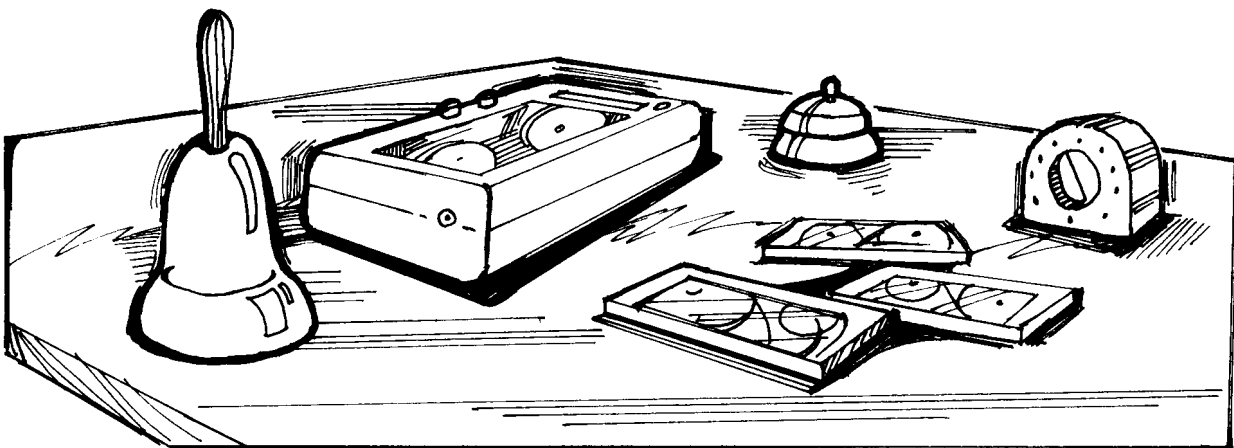


Getting Organised

The sooner you implement your learning centre plan the smoother your classroom will begin to run. What appears unimaginable when you consider the large picture seems manageable when you consider each step in order and understand how it fits into the overall setup and functioning of your classroom. You need to know what to do and what your classroom will look like before students come to the first day of school. The first four weeks of the Centres program will focus on training students in how to effectively use the centres, their folders and contracts, and their time. Use this management model as a guideline for creating your own plan.

Preplanning for the Students

1. Assign each student a number that will be his or hers for the school year. You may wish to use the same numbers as the list in your roll book (alphabetically) or assign numbers randomly. Be sure to make a permanent record of the numbers and keep it handy.
2. Colour code the days of the week: Monday = red, Tuesday = orange, Wednesday = yellow, Thursday = green, Friday = blue. You may wish to create a Centres notice board upon which you can make and display a chart showing the day/colour code as well as other information specific to using learning centres.
3. Divide the class into five groups. Assign each student a group and each group a contract start day (Monday to Friday).
4. Reproduce a Centres Groups chart (page 8). Write the students' names and numbers in the appropriate column for their contract start day. Display the chart on your Centres notice board.
5. To create a relaxing, yet stimulating environment during Centres time, gather a selection of background music such as nature tapes to play.
6. Choose a sound, such as a bell or buzzer, as a warning to the class that Centres time is almost over and that they have two minutes to finish their centre activities.



7. Select another piece of music, about three minutes long, that will signal clean-up time. Two minutes after sounding the warning, play this selection as a cue for students to have the room cleaned up and be seated at their own desks by the time the music ends.