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Introduction

Learning centres are a wonderful way to encourage independent learning, add creative reinforcement to more structured lessons, and allow students to work at a comfortable pace. Learning centres may be an integral part of a unit of study or a reward for having completed the day's assignments. Learning centres make it possible for teachers to be in more than one place at a time. Teachers are able to work with groups of students while sending individual students or pairs to learning centres. This book will supplement your good ideas with a potpourri of additional ideas which can be placed in the various learning centres.

What Is a Learning Centre?

A learning centre is an area in a classroom where one or more children can participate in activities designed for enrichment and review of current learning and for reinforcement of the skills being taught. A learning centre coordinated with the curriculum enhances skills and learning.

A centre can consist of games, activities, manipulatives, or reading materials. A listening centre with special equipment such as a tape recorder with headphones, a computer, calculator, or typewriter may constitute a centre. As new topics are introduced or areas of special interest develop, new centres may be created. Rather than serve as primary instruction, a learning centre supports what is taught in the classroom. A centre provides an alternative to the traditional concept of seatwork. It allows the student an opportunity to independently practise skills and assume responsibility for learning, while freeing the teacher to work with small groups or individual students.

Why Should I Use a Learning Centre?

Children learn best when they are actively involved in learning. Manipulating maths materials, writing and publishing their own stories, creating plays, exploring the world through maps and globes, or reviewing new vocabulary words are just a few of the learning centre activities that provide students with hands-on involvement. Centres accommodate different learning styles which, in turn, give students an opportunity to become more creatively involved in their own education.

Learning centres also help students learn how to work independently. As students want to find the answers for themselves, they become more responsible for completing tasks, checking them, and cleaning up. As patterns for using the centres are established, organisational skills develop.

The nature of the learning centre gives students freedom to learn on their own. They begin to think more critically and solve problems. Specific activities may require higher levels of thinking, as well as providing an environment that is conducive to this kind of learning.

Learning Centres for Intermediate Classrooms provides a sampling of a variety of learning centre activities that are ready to use with little or no preparation. The activities will supplement classroom studies in the areas of English, Maths, Science, Study of Society and Environment, Technology, and for a fun way to reinforce all subjects, Games and Puzzles.

Introduction *(cont.)*

How Do I Set Up a Learning Centre?

The organisation and setup of learning centres are keys to developing a successful program in your classroom. Where and how you place your centres is important, remembering that they must be useable within your classroom. They may be set up on walls, in corners, behind partitions, on tables, on desks, or even in storage bins. Some centres may require an arrangement of equipment and materials where there is a water source, electrical outlet, or a special light. Wall space around a room is often a good place to set up learning centres. With such an arrangement, students are spread out around a room, so crowding doesn't take place. Flexibility is your most important asset in setting up centres.

How Do I Use a Learning Centre?

Your first job is to introduce the learning centre to your students. Let them know what the centres are for and how to use and take care of them, including cleaning up. This should be repeated every time new centres are introduced. Plan to spend some time at the beginning of each month explaining the proper procedures to follow at the centres. It may be helpful to post procedures and rules near each centre. Some general rules include the following:

1. Use only one centre at a time.
2. Put finished activities away before leaving.
3. Keep voices at an appropriate level.
4. Be careful with materials and equipment.
5. When finished, quietly return to your seat.



Create a Zoo

You will be working with the mayor to design a zoo. The following instructions are for zoo design. Zookeepers must adhere to them in order to satisfy the mayor. You will need to make many sketches, to make sure that you are following instructions. When you are sure that your plan will work, use a sheet of butcher paper to create your zoo. You may cut out the animals on the next page and paste them into place on your zoo design or use the pictures to help you draw your own animals.

Mayor: “It is important to make the zoo pleasing to visitors. Please include the following in your zoo design”.

- plenty of trees for shade and clean air
- a picnic area for visitors to snack or eat lunch
- fountains, ponds, or streams for the visitors and animals
- a scenic footpath that allows visitors to see every animal in the zoo

Mayor: “The animals in the zoo are very important to the community. Their health, safety, and welfare must be considered in zoo design. Please follow the instructions listed below.”

- Zebras, antelopes, and ostriches must have a large, sunny area in which to graze and run around.
- Giraffes must not be too close to trees; they may eat the leaves and spoil their appetites for dinner.
- Hippos, elephants, crocodiles, and flamingos require access to water every day.
- Rodents cannot be located near the elephants; the mice might start a stampede.
- Keep monkeys away from hyenas, or the hyenas will laugh themselves silly.
- Separate the lions, tigers, and bears because they will fight if too close.
- Rhinos need to be located away from the walls, or else they will ram holes in them.
- Be sure to place anteaters near the picnic area to keep the ant populations low.
- All monkeys, bears, and gorillas need to be far from the picnic area.
- Camels need sunny fields in which to walk about.
- Keep flamingos and ostriches far from crocodiles.
- The reptile building cannot be near the bird cage; a snake might escape and eat the bird eggs.
- Make the footpath close to the zebra area so that visitors may pet the animals.
- Give hyenas lots of shade under which to rest.

Native Australian Animals

Australia Day, January 26

When the English first came to Australia in 1788, they were greeted by many unusual animals. See if you can identify the following animals. Clues and a word bank are given to help you.

WORD BANK			
koala	dingo	cuscus	wombat
emu	kangaroo	platypus	wallaby

1. _ _ _ _ _ u _ _ an egg-laying mammal
2. _ _ n _ _ _ a wild dog
3. _ _ _ _ a flightless bird
4. _ _ _ _ a _ _ _ _ a leaping marsupial
5. _ _ _ l _ _ tree dweller who eats only eucalyptus leaves
6. _ _ _ b _ _ _ a burrowing marsupial
7. _ _ l _ _ _ _ _ a small kangaroo
8. _ _ _ c _ _ _ a tree-dwelling mammal with a long tail and tiny eyes



Animal Families and Groups

Fill in the missing information on the chart about animal families and groups.

Animal	Male	Female	Young	Group
fox	dog	_____	_____	skulk
_____	rooster	hen	_____	_____
lion	_____	lioness	_____	pride
cattle	bull	_____	calf	_____
whale	_____	cow	calf	_____
seal	bull	_____	pup	_____
ostrich	cock	hen	_____	flock
sheep	_____	ewe	_____	herd
goose	gander	_____	gosling	gaggle
kangaroo	_____	doe	_____	_____
hog	_____	sow	_____	herd
_____	billy	nanny	kid	herd