

Parents Ask Us About...

LEARNING CENTERS

Learning centers are an integral part of high quality programs for young children. Child development research supports the understanding that young children learn best through direct interaction with their environment and with other children. School for Little Children embraces this philosophy as a basis for the physical arrangement of classrooms and for the large block of time devoted to center activities in the daily schedule.

Learning centers are carefully planned to include a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and materials which provide opportunities for children to experiment, discover, solve problems, learn new skills, understand new concepts, and play. Volumes have been written about the importance of play as one of the young child's primary sources of learning. Dr. Joe Frost, nationally known child development expert from the University of Texas, describes play as "the child's primary vehicle for and indicator of their mental growth" and also supports the role of play in "children's physical, emotional, and social development."

All School for Little Children classrooms contain basic learning centers. Some classrooms have separate centers for the sensory table, woodworking, or water play. From time to time other centers (such as music, cooking, or drama) are added. The activities and materials available in the centers vary according to the age and developmental need of the children in the class. Below is a list of the basic centers and the skills and practices they encourage.

BLOCK

- Basic Math concepts: spatial relationships, balance, classifying, estimating, counting
- Creativity
- Self-Expression
- Small muscle development
- Social skills appropriate to group behavior
- Problem solving

LITERACY

- Prereading Skills: recognition of symbols, left-to-right orientation, sequencing of a story
- Language Skills: language stimulation, sequencing of a story, vocabulary, oral storytelling, acting out stories
- Small muscle development
- Effective communication in one-to-one and small group situations
- Dictation of ideas and feelings as they are recorded

WATER PLAY

- Basic Science Concepts: sink, float, pouring, measuring, solutions, flow
- Basic Math Concepts: measuring, volume, more than, less than
- Emotional Development: relaxation, relief of tension

LIBRARY

- Select books for individual needs and interests
- Follow simple story lines in stories read aloud
- Listen to literary selections for personal enjoyment
- Distinguish between real and make-believe
- Acquire the meaning of vocabulary words

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HOME LIVING

- Prewriting and Prereading Skills: creation of props, planning the play, communication with others, expression of ideas, hearing ideas of others
- Emotional Development: exploration of feelings, exploration of social roles, opportunity for problem solving and conflict resolution, taking another person's point of view
- Practice of self-help skills

ART

- Prereading Skills: visual discrimination of color, shape, texture
- Prewriting Skills: small muscle development, eye-hand coordination
- Self-Expression: through non-verbal media such as paints, collage materials, clay and other dough
- Creativity and decision making

OUTDOOR PLAY

- Language Skills
- Social Skills: sharing, negotiating, creating and following rules, taking turns
- Motor Development: develop and refine large muscle skills
- Develop body and spatial awareness

MANIPULATIVE/READINESS

- Develop eye-hand coordination and small muscles
- Learn a variety of readiness skills: sorting, comparing, counting, identifying patterns, sequencing, predicting, classifying
- Make decisions and choices

SCIENCE

- Use senses to gain information about the environment
- Observe systems, cycles, interactions and diversity in the environment
- Make predictions
- Develop curiosity about the natural world

This list is by no means comprehensive. Parents who are interested in knowing more about learning centers are encouraged to check in the school office for books and articles with more information