

Learning Centers (K-12)
Compiled by
Cindy Strickland
ASCD Faculty
cindy.strickland@gmail.com

A Center (from ASCD handout 69)

A center is often seen as an area of a room that houses specific activities for students to complete when they are assigned to that area. However, the core intent of a center is to provide flexible opportunities for students to practice, reinforce, or extend an important area of learning. Centers can be stationary or portable. They can be required or optional. They can address readiness, interest, and learning profile. They can be teacher guided or student guided. They can allow individual or collaborative work. They can be stored in folders, boxes, manila envelopes, buckets, plastic containers, or in any number of other ways. A key goal of the teacher is to ensure that students are working with tasks and materials they need in order to continue development in an important area of the curriculum. Centers also support student choice, self-monitoring, and movement toward independence.

LEARNING CENTERS

- Learning centers are either areas set up in a classroom for students to visit that are devoted to a particular topic or activity or self contained sets of materials that students can check out and bring to their location.
- Learning centers can support interest, learning profile, and readiness differentiation. You can devise learning centers that focus on specific topics of interest or ways of working. Learning centers can also include more than one level of activity.
- Remember that learning centers are not really differentiated unless a) students only go to those centers that they need or are interested in or b) when students get to a center, there are multiple options for differentiation for readiness, interest, and/or learning profile.

A Good Learning Center (From Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom by Susan Winebrenner)

- Clearly stated directions about how to use the center
- Clearly stated objectives or purposes of the center
- Interesting and inviting displays; enticing questions
- Activities, resources, and materials that appeal to various learning styles
- Instructions about how to choose tasks
- List of possible products
- Examples of what completed projects should look like
- Answer keys, if needed
- Tips about where to go for help
- A description of the rubrics and other evaluation criteria used to grade students' work
- Instructions on how to store work between visits
- Guidelines for student behavior
- Ideas of what to do when students finish ahead of others

Centers should: (From **The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners**; Carol Tomlinson, 1999)

- Focus on important learning goals – KUD
- Contain materials that promote individual students' growth
- Use materials and activities addressing wide range of readiness, interests, and learning profiles
- Include activities that vary from simple to complex, concrete to abstract, structured to open-ended
- Provide clear directions for students
- Offer instructions for what to do upon completion
- Use a record keeping system to monitor productivity and quality
- Include a plan for ongoing assessment of student growth
- Should be adjusted based on such assessment

**Five MUST-HAVES for Differentiated Learning Centers by Pitiya Huu, UVA
Differentiation Class of 2006**

- A clear sense of **direction** is a must in creating anything differentiated; this is achieved by arriving at a defined set of KUDs before even considering the centers.
- An **established routine** – that is practiced consistently – with which students are familiar is necessary for the smooth functioning of learning centers. Students should know where to go, where to file papers, how to move from center to center, how to get assistance, and what to do once they're at the center (instructions should be provided – written and tape recorded – for students who have difficulty reading), without the teacher having to take extra time to explain any of these routines every day.
- A system of **accountability** for students is also vital. If students know that their work is not being assessed, they will quickly learn that they don't need to do it. Also, without a way for the teacher to monitor student's progress, there is inadequate information from which the teacher can make accurate and updated differentiating decisions. This can be achieved from *center checklists* (students tick off as they complete work at each center), *self-assessment* (teaching students to monitor their own work against a rubric will provide a valuable skill for students and help them develop their metacognition), and *folders/portfolios* (where students keep their work for the teacher to assess at any point).
- **Connectivity** to the classroom content is also key. Work that occurs at centers may prepare students for an upcoming topic (by whetting their appetites, or even preliminarily introducing the topic), reinforce a topic/skill, or review a topic/skill. No matter what the purpose of the activity at a center (introduce, reinforce, or review), there must be a connection to what's happening in the classroom – and more importantly, students must see the connection (if not before or during the center work, then most certainly shortly thereafter).
- Finally, **reflection** is equally important in creating an effective center. I mean “reflection” in both senses of the word; the teacher must contemplate on what's working and what's not, in a constant attempt to tailor centers to meet students' needs (i.e., differentiating by learning profile or readiness level). Also, students must see themselves reflected in (at least some of) the centers in the classroom (i.e., differentiating by interest).

Possible Center Activities

Read	Solve	Deduce	Identify
Phone	Start	Theorize	Editorialize
Make	Construct	Rate	Eliminate
Write	Research	Act Out	Chart
Build	Criticize	Advertise	Improve
Find Out	Imagine	Discover	Explain
Hypothesize	Experiment	Refute	Conduct
Design	Develop	Question	Devise
Survey	Invent	Tell	Talk Arrange
Interview	Predict	Convince	Investigate
Shadow	Observe	Study	Use
Visit	Demonstrate	Illustrate	Substitute
Create	Plan	Collect	Adapt
Brainstorm	Measure	Map	Rearrange
Analyze	Graph	Label	Describe
Evaluate	List	Compare	
Match	Combine	Measure	

NOT ALL CENTERS ARE DIFFERENTIATED!!!...TO be differentiated, a center is a) only visited by those whose needs it matches OR b) once students get to the center, there are different activities for them, based on specific needs (interest, learning profile, and/or readiness). If all students visit all the centers and do the exact same things when they get there, the center is not differentiated.

Snapshots from Three Primary Classrooms

Not Differentiated: For a part of each day in Mrs. Jasper's 1st grade class, students rotate among learning centers. Mrs. Jasper has worked hard for several years to provide a variety of learning centers related to several subject areas. All students go to all learning centers because Mrs. Jasper says they feel it's unfair if they don't all do the same thing. Students enjoy the movement and the independence the learning centers provide.

Many times, Isabel breezes through the center work. Just as frequently, Jaime is confused about how to do the work. Mrs. Jasper tries to help Jaime as often as she can, but she doesn't worry so much about Isabel because her skills are well beyond those expected of a 1st grader.

Today, all students in Mrs. Jasper's class will work in a learning center on compound words. From a list of 10 compound words, they will select and illustrate 5. Later, Mrs. Jasper will ask for volunteers to show their illustrations. She will do this until the students share illustrations for all 10 words.

Differentiated: Down the hall, Ms. Cunningham also uses learning centers in her 1st grade classroom. She, too, has invested considerable time in developing interesting centers on a variety of subjects. Ms. Cunningham's centers, however, draw upon some of the principles of differentiated classrooms. Sometimes all students work in a particular learning center if it introduces an idea or skill new to everyone. More often, Ms. Cunningham assigns students to a specific learning center, based on her continually developing sense of their individual readiness.

Today, her students will also work at a learning center on compound words. Student's names are listed at the center; one of four colors is beside each name. Each student works with the folder that matches the color beside his or her name. For example, Sam has the color red next to his name. Using the materials in the red folder, Sam must decide the correct order of pairs of words to make familiar compound words. He also will make a poster that illustrates each simple word and the new compound word they form. Using materials in the blue folder, Jenna will look around the classroom and in books to find examples of compound words. She will write them out and illustrate them in a booklet. Using materials in the purple folder, Tjuana will write a poem or a story that uses compound words she generates and that make the story or poem interesting. She then can illustrate the compound words to make the story or poem interesting to look at as well as read. In the green folder, Dillon will find a story the teacher has written. It contains correct and incorrect compound words. Dillon will be a word detective, looking for "villains" and "good-guys" among the compound words. He will create a chart to list the good guys (correct compound words) and the villains (incorrect compound words) in the story. He will illustrate the good guys and list the villains as they are in the story, and then write them correctly.

Tomorrow during circle time, all students may share what they did with their compound words. As students listen, they are encouraged to say the thing they like best about each presenter's work. Ms. Cunningham also will call on a few students who may be reticent to volunteer, asking them if they'd be willing to share what they did at the center (Tomlinson, 1999, pp.3-4).

Differentiated: Mr. Morgan uses math learning centers as one way of differentiating math instruction for his 1st graders. During the day today, all his students will go to the math center to work on addition. Students know whether to work from the tiger, giraffe, zebra, or kangaroo folders by looking at a chart with each name under one of the four animal pictures. Students may get directions for their work by reading task cards in their folders or listening to a cassette tape, also marked with the animal picture. One folder contains a counting task. Another, directions to work with manipulatives, and then complete number sentences calling for one-digit addition. Another directs students to complete one-digit addition number sentences without manipulatives and then some two-digit number sentences with manipulatives. A final folder has students complete two-digit number sentences without manipulatives. All students check their answers with cassette tapes or a designated "expert of the day" who is "on duty" while they are at the center. In a few days, Mr. Morgan will reassess student placement in groups based on current skill levels and he will also scramble the readiness level of the groups working with each animal folder.

More Sample Differentiated Centers (Students are assigned to appropriate level task) Dictionary Work

ABC book center by Carol Ann Tomlinson

When students visit the literacy center this month, they will

- independently practice letters and sounds as well as writing skills
- receive consistent feedback and coaching on their work from teacher and peers
- create alphabet books for classmates and other students in their school at an appropriate level of readiness in their reading and writing skills

Product options:

1. ABC book of pictures and words on topic of choice
Example: Topic: things in my house: T/Table
2. ABC book of pictures, words, and names on topic of choice
Example: Topic: Animals: J/Jeremy's jaguar
3. ABC book of pictures, words, and facts about topic of choice
Example: Topic: Pets: D/Dog: Dogs sleep a lot more than people.
4. ABC book of pictures, words, names, and descriptors about a topic of choice
Example: Topic: Funny things: B/Brad's Big Bongos
5. ABC books of pictures, words, and questions for reader about a topic of choice
Example: Topic: Toys: B/Bicycle: Bicycles always have two wheels. How many students in your class ride bicycles?
6. ABC book of words and alliterative sentences about a topic of choice
Example: Topic: Things that grow:
T/Trees: Tall trees tower over tadpoles, tables, and teachers
7. ABC book with complex pictures and rhymes about a topic of choice
Example: B: Shadow box picture with a box, a boxer (dog), a banana, and a brain
Rhyme: Box and boxer start with B
But only one would sleep with me
Brain and banana start the same
But only one can remember my name

This lesson from **What are the Other Kids Doing...while you Teach Small Groups** by Donna Marriot provides a simple and easy way to differentiate a center. You could have different colored boxes or folders that indicate different levels. As students get comfortable with simple dictionaries, move them to more complex ones.

Digging through the Dictionary

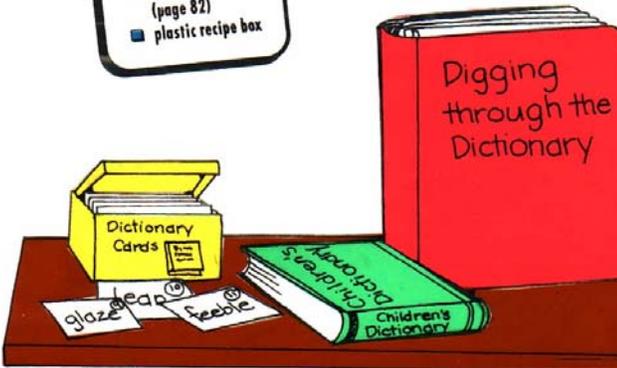
Learning Objective
Gaining familiarity with the function, structure, and use of dictionaries

Materials

- dictionary
- index cards
- markers
- self-pacing chart (page 83)
- hole punch
- three-ring binder
- recording form (page 82)
- plastic recipe box

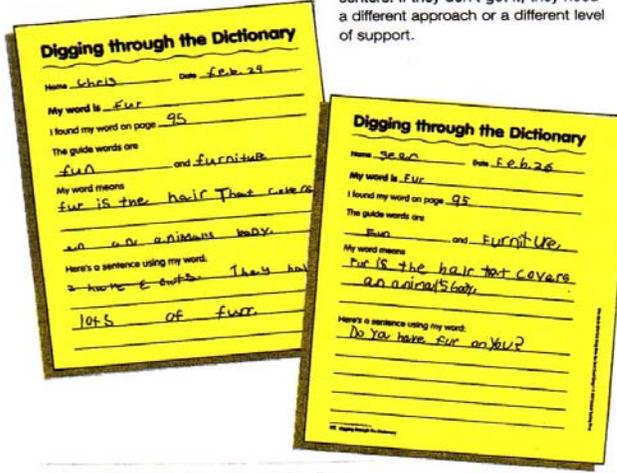
Presentation and Storage

You will need at least one good, age-appropriate dictionary. Make about 40 numbered and laminated word cards appropriate for a variety of reading abilities. Place in a three-ring binder a copy the self-pacing chart for each student. Store the cards and recording forms in plastic recipe box and keep them next your dictionary. Clearly label the box and binder with the activity title and a picture



Process
Students select a card, locate the word in the dictionary, and follow the directions on the recording form. When they have completed the recording form, have students record the date on the corresponding word-card number on the self-pacing chart so that they don't repeat work. Have students place completed recording forms in the Done Tray.

Helpful Hints
The self-pacing chart is an easy reference for you and your students. You can see at a glance who's doing what by checking the binder. Although you will have made many cards for this center, do not expect children to do them all. Once a student has internalized a skill, he or she needs to be nudged toward different and more challenging experiences, applications, and contexts. Once students "get it," they need to move on to other centers. If they don't get it, they need a different approach or a different level of support.



What are the Other Kids Doing...while you teach small groups
Donna Marriot • Creative Teaching Press, Inc. • 1997

Digging through the Dictionary

Kindergarten Math Center: Counting

Task 1: Find a way to count & show how many people are in our class today. How did you get your answer?

Task 2: Find a way to show how many people are in our class. How many are absent today? How many are here today? How do you know?

Task 3: Find a way to show how many boys are in our class today. How many boys are absent today? How many girls are here today? How many girls are absent today? Prove you are right.

Science Center Kindergarten: Scientists Classify by Patterns

Task 1: Classify leaves

- By size
- By color

Task 2: Classify leaves

- By shape
- Create a category

Task 3: Find 3 ways each leaf could be classified (other than color)

From *Applying Differentiation Strategies K-2; Shell Education 2007*

Circle = below grade; square = on grade; triangle= above grade

Questioning—Hermit Crab Centers

Student Reproducibles

Descriptions of the Centers

Language of the Discipline Center ●

Find out what these words mean. Then, draw a picture of each one on a different note card.

sea anemones	coral	algae	debris
sea urchins	sponges	barnacles	electric eels

Details Center ●

What is life like on the ocean floor? Write what it looks like to Hermit Crab.

Rules Center ●

How are all oceans the same? Make a list of how they are the same.

Descriptions of the Centers (cont.)

Patterns Center

This story told what happened to Hermit Crab during one year. What will happen to Hermit Crab next year? Create a skit that shows your answer.

Trends Center

Hermit Crab's friends helped him. How do the animals in the ocean help each other? Make a web that shows your answer.

Unanswered Questions Center

This book does not answer every question. What questions do you have about living in the ocean? Write at least two of your questions.

Descriptions of the Centers (cont.)

Big Ideas Center

How are we like Hermit Crab? Make a short puppet show about this.

Ethics Center

What can we do to make the ocean a good place for animals to live? Create a skit that shows your answer.

Over Time Center

What will life be like for Hermit Crab next year? Draw a picture showing what you think.

Descriptions of the Centers (cont.)

Points of View Center ▲

How do you think the other animals felt about Hermit Crab? Tell the story from their point of view.

Interdisciplinary Center ▲

How does the ocean affect us? Make a list of at least five ways.

Stations/Interest Centers
Sample Lesson 1

Interest Center Planning Guide—Know Your State

Unit: Know Your State

Center 1—Story Center

Materials: writing supplies

Task: Choose one symbol from your state. Find out how the symbol got its name. Write a creative story about it.

Center 2—Design Center

Materials: art supplies including markers and large paper or poster board

Task: Find out how your state got its name. Create a poster that tells others the information you found. Draw your poster.

Center 3—Performance Center

Materials: costumes, props

Task: Find out about one strange symbol from your state. Create a one-person skit that tells what you learned. You can write about or draw the costumes and/or props you will need.

Interest Center Planning Guide—Know Your State *(cont.)*

Unit: Know Your State *(cont.)*

Center 4—Reflection Center

Materials: writing and drawing materials

Task: Find three symbols from your state that you do not like. Use the chart to draw pictures to change these symbols to something you like better.

Center 5—Test Center

Materials: writing instruments and paper

Task: Find one symbol from your state. Think of another symbol that could be used instead. Ask five people which symbol they would vote for. Record the votes and the results.

Center 6—Reasoning Center

Materials: art supplies and paper cut to the size of bumper stickers

Task: Choose two state symbols that you would like to change. Find out about them. Create a car bumper sticker that shows your change to each symbol. Sketch your ideas.

Interest Center Planning Guide—Add and Subtract

Unit: Addition and Subtraction Review

Center 1—Story Center

Materials: markers, pencils, construction paper booklets with 6–10 pages for students to write their stories, books like *The Hershey's Kisses Addition Book* by Jerry Pallotta, *The Hershey's Kisses Subtraction Book* by Jerry Pallotta, *Little Number Stories Addition* by Rozanne Williams, and *Little Number Stories Subtraction* by Rozanne Williams

Task: Read about addition and subtraction in one of the books at the center. Then, write your own book about adding and subtracting.

Center 2—Design Center

Materials: circles cut from white construction paper, markers, confetti pieces, glue

Task: Design and decorate cupcakes with each circle representing one cupcake. Each cupcake should have a different colored frosting. You can decorate the top of the cupcakes with confetti. Then, write addition and subtraction story problems using these cupcakes.

Center 3—Performance Center

Materials: large sheets of paper, pointing stick, markers

Task: Use large sheets of paper and prepare addition and subtraction lessons to teach the rest of the class. You can use the pointing stick to show things in your lesson. You must present your lesson to at least two other students and your teacher.

Interest Center Planning Guide—Add and Subtract (cont.)

Unit: Addition and Subtraction Review (cont.)

Center 4—Reflection Center

Materials: journals

Task: Write in a journal about addition and subtraction. You can write stories that include addition or subtraction, or descriptions of how you use addition and subtraction every day. Give at least two examples.

Center 5—Test Center

Materials: dice, paper, pencils, calculators

Task: Roll the dice two times and make addition and subtraction problems using the results of your rolls. Write the problems on paper and find the solutions to your own problems. Then, use a calculator to check your work.

Center 6—Reasoning Center

Materials: paper to use as order forms

Task: Fill out order forms to order pizzas for your classmates using the two scenarios below. Then, write your own pizza problem and solve it.

A large pizza has 10 slices. Ruby wants 2 pieces. Mykaela wants 3 pieces. How many pieces will be left over?

Ms. Lee's class needs 4 pizzas to feed everyone. Ms. Chavez's class needs 3 pizzas to feed everyone. How many pizzas will they need to order if they place their orders together?

Name _____

Stamping Center Task Sheet

Directions: Complete the activity that your teacher assigns you.



Square: Choose a stamp. Press it onto this paper. Then, on the lines, write a sentence that tells about the stamp.



Circle: Choose a stamp. Press it onto this sheet of paper. Then on the lines, write a name for the stamp.



Triangle: Choose at least five stamps. Press the stamps onto the top of a separate sheet of paper. Then, below your stamps, write a story using these stamps.

Show your work below.

Name _____

Magnets Center Task Sheet

Directions: Complete the activity that your teacher assigns you.



Triangle: Choose as many magnet words as you like. Write a story using all the magnet words.



Square: Choose four magnet words. Write a sentence using each magnet word.



Circle: Choose four spelling words from your weekly list. Use magnet letters to spell those words. Write the words on the lines below.

Show your work below.

Name _____

Sweet Words Center Task Sheet

Directions: Complete the activity that your teacher assigns you.

Candy-Wrapper Word List

Almond Joy, Baby Ruth, Fifth Avenue, Air Heads, Big Hunk, Butterfinger, Crunch, Payday, Rocky Road, Shockers, Snickers, Runts, Starburst, Sugar Babies, Take Five, Whatchamacallit, Whoppers, Zero



Circle: Choose one candy-wrapper word from the list. Write its name in the box below. Then, write a sentence using that word.



Square: Choose three candy-wrapper words from the list. Write them in the box below. Below the words, write a sentence using all three words.



Triangle: Choose at least four candy-wrapper words. On another sheet of paper, write a story using all four words at least one time each.

Name _____

Picture Center Task Sheet

Directions: Complete the activity that your teacher assigns you.



Circle: Choose a picture from the stack. Glue it on your paper. Record four words that tell about that picture.



Triangle: Choose three pictures from the stack. Glue them on another sheet of paper. Write a story about these three pictures.



Square: Choose two pictures from the stack. Glue them on another sheet of paper. Circle the things that are alike in the pictures with a black marker. Circle the things that are different in the pictures with a red marker.

Show your work below.

Management

- Use an anchor activity center to manage students who finish early, get stuck, or don't need to visit any of the stations that day.
- Build time in at the Teaching Station for you to circulate.
- Spend time modeling the expectations you have for how students should behave and the types of tasks they will encounter at each station.
- Collaborate with your colleagues to develop tasks for review, practice, enrichment, and acceleration.
- Think big, start small, and go for the easy win.

THE FOLLOWING PAGES PROVIDE EXAMPLES OF CLASSROOMS IN WHICH A NUMBER OF CENTERS HAVE BEEN SET UP.

Here are some questions to think about as you study the examples: (ASCD handout 68)

1. How would you describe centers? What are their general purposes? Key elements?
2. How are the sample activities alike in intent and structure? How are they different in intent and structure?
3. What do you see as essential steps in making sure students are successful with centers? List them, and beside each step note its purpose.
4. What is the link between pre-assessment and center-based activities?

IF YOU ARE READY TO DESIGN A CENTER ON YOUR OWN, SKIP TO PAGE 28 (bottom)

ASCD VIDEO HANDOUT 70

The following differentiated centers examples are from two classes featured in the Learning Centers videotape. The teachers describe their centers and share a few of the assignment sheets in use when their classes were videotaped.

Ms. Field's 4th Grade Class - developed by Debbie Field, 4th grade teacher at New Castle Elementary School, Virginia Beach, Virginia. Used with permission.

Background

Centers work is scheduled during the same time as guided reading instruction. This gives me the opportunity to work with small groups of students while the other students work independently around the class room. Currently, we are studying historical fiction, and our guided reading groups read different novels selected on the basis of students' varied readiness levels. During each of the four rotations, one group of students works with me on guided reading, one group works on a follow-up activity to the guided reading instruction. and two groups work in centers. Between rotations, I check in with students who are working in the centers and on the follow-up activity group and monitor their progress, answer questions, and so on.

All students are assigned to tasks in all the centers, although they choose which centers they are going to work in each day and the sequence in which they will be completed during the week. No more than four students can work in a center at one time. Because students select which centers they're going to work in each day, they aren't always working with the same people.

The work that students do at the centers is tightly aligned to specific learning standards. Some of the centers are differentiated and some are not. Five centers in my classroom currently focus on several areas of the curriculum. They include Math Mania, Creative Cubing, Don't Forget Your Hats, We've Been Framed, and Writing.

See Sample Student Center Folder below:

Name _____ Month _____				Guided-Reading Schedule			
Learning Centers							
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Center Activity	Self-Assessment	Teacher Assessment	<i>Lily's Crossing Guided Reading</i>	<i>Lily's Crossing Follow-Up Activity</i>	<i>Lily's Crossing Center Time</i>	<i>Lily's Crossing Center Time</i>
	Creative Cubing Center			<i>Mieko and the Fifth Treasure Center Time</i>	<i>Mieko and the Fifth Treasure Guided Reading</i>	<i>Mieko and the Fifth Treasure Follow-Up Activity</i>	<i>Mieko and the Fifth Treasure Center Time</i>
	We've Been Framed			<i>Journey to Topaz Center Time</i>	<i>Journey to Topaz Center Time</i>	<i>Journey to Topaz Guided Reading</i>	<i>Journey to Topaz Follow-Up Activity</i>
	Creative Writing Center			<i>Number the Stars Follow-Up Activity</i>	<i>Number the Stars Center Time</i>	<i>Number the Stars Center Time</i>	<i>Number the Stars Guided Reading</i>
	Don't Forget Your Hat!						
	Math Center						
Additional activities:							

The Math Mania Center is a skills-oriented center that is differentiated on the basis of student readiness. Using math reassessment results and present performance levels, students are assigned to groups that are identified by color. The yellow group is working on sharpening basic multiplication facts, and the blue group is working on using different strategies for two-digit by two-digit multiplication. Students who have mastered those multiplication strategies are in the red group working on solving complex math story problems. Ongoing assessment in math class, teacher observation using anecdotal notes and checklists, and performance of written math center tasks will indicate when a student is able to “graduate” to the next level.

<p>Math Mania Get ready, Math Maniacs! It's time to sharpen your skills, have fun with new math concepts, and stretch your brains to the limits! Look on your center charts for your activity of the week.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yellow Group: Complete task in the yellow folder. • Blue Group: Complete task in the blue folder. • Red Group: Complete task in the red folder. <p>Work with your center partner(s), and remember to stay on task and work at a reasonable noise level. Above all, have a great time while you learn!</p>	<p>Math Center Yellow Group Directions: Complete the following tasks in this order.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Play Multiplication Baseball with a partner. Sign off on each other's playing board and put in folder. 2. Play Multiplication Top-It. Write a short note to your partner evaluating his or her performance during the game. Be specific about strengths and weaknesses. 3. Fill out Multiplication Search and Find and put in folder.
<p>Math Center Blue Group Directions: Complete the following tasks in this order.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Play three games of Multiplication Wrestling with a partner. Show all work on loose-leaf paper. 2. Complete the same problems from Multiplication Wrestling using either the lattice method or partial-products method. If answers don't match, fix your errors. 3. Create a multiplication word problem and switch with your partner. Solve. <p>Put all tasks in your center folder.</p>	<p>Math Center Red Group Directions: Complete the following tasks in this order.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Solve Exemplar. Show ALL work and make sure you use details, details, details! You MUST explain your answer fully. 2. Assess your work with the rubric. 3. Create an Exemplar word problem and switch with your partner. Solve. Switch back and assess your partner. Put all tasks in your center folder.

The Creative Cubing Center is a flexible center that can be used for different areas of the curriculum. Many of the students are now working on tasks related to our current geography unit in which we have studied all of the regions of the United States. The cubing center tasks focus on ensuring that students understand the five themes of geography. Each student can select the region they would like to use to complete the cubing tasks. This choice allows the students to work on a region of personal interest to them. Students who have completed the geography cubing tasks can choose to do a cube with tasks related to their word master word or their guided reading novel.

Students will

KNOW: The five themes of geography

UNDERSTAND: that geography influences how people live

DO: use the Depth and Complexity strategy from Kaplan to promote higher-level thinking

Direction to Students: Roll your cube and follow the directions given. You DO NOT get to reroll , unless you have already completed that task. You are to complete at least three of the six tasks. Please be sure to follow directions. Use details and precise words. Attach activities together with a paper clip and keep in the pocket of your center folder.

CUBE SIDES	1. Location Using a blank map of the United States, label the states and capitals of the current region of study.	2. Place Create a postage stamp and postcard from one of the states in the current region of study. (It might have on it a physical feature, person, or landmark that the state is noted for)
	3. Human-Environment Interaction Wants and Needs: Make a list of the things you would want from the region of study to have a good life. Put a star by the things you NEED.	4. Movement Create a vanity license plate for a trucker that describes his cargo or that tells about a driver's profession from a state in the region of study.
	5. Region Time Zones: What time zones are present in this region of study? Write two math story problems using time zone differences. Supply the answers for me.	6. Combine a strategy from Depth and one from Complexity. Quickwrite about the region of study. Depth: Language, Details, Patterns, Trends, Unanswered Questions . Rules, Ethics, Big Ideas Complexity: Over Time, POV, Interdisciplinary

The Don't Forget Your Hat Center is designed around Edward deBono's 6 hats thinking framework. This center is tied with the guided reading/ small group instruction. Although students respond to the same set of questions about their novels, they are reading different historical fiction novels assigned on the basis of their current reading readiness.

KNOW: The meaning of the following terms as they apply to literature: setting, events, language

UNDERSTAND: that authors make critical choices about language, setting, events, and information

DO: Identify major events and supporting details; compare the use of fact and fantasy in historical fiction with other forms of literature

Directions to Students: Use the major topic from your guided-reading book and think about it the DeBono way:

- White Hat: What happened? Give important facts
- Red Hat: How did the characters feel about what's going on?
- Yellow Hat: Any positive outcomes?
- Black Hat: Any bad things about what happened?
- Green Hat: Any new ideas or creative thoughts? What would change if what happened...didn't happen?
- Blue Hat: Summarize the topic.

Take a graphic organizer from the folder and fill it out. (See your center checklist for your topic.) Use specific details. An example is provided for you in MY folder.

Because this time we are reading historical fiction novels, please focus on the setting. Remember, setting includes TIME and PLACE.

Put your completed sheet in your center folder.

Name _____ Month _____

Learning Centers

	Center Activity	Self-Assessment	Teacher Assessment
	Creative Cubing Center		
	We've Been Framed		
	Creative Writing Center		
	Don't Forget Your Hat!		
	Math Center		
	Additional activities:		
	Independent project if done early:		

Mrs. Rowland's 2nd Grade Class

Background

My classroom has nine centers that students work at while I work with small groups in guided-reading instruction. Five of the centers are skills centers and four are interest centers. Students in a guided-reading group do not work in the same centers together. I use a pocket chart and clothespins with students' names and move the clothespins daily. As students arrive in the morning, they check the chart to know where they are to go during centers time. If a clothespin indicates interest center, then the student gets to choose which interest center to go to that day. For the skills centers, I assign the students to a specific center.

Each skill center has a direction sheet that identifies all the center tasks. The tasks are numbered and sequenced from simple to complex. Each student is assigned a task number to start on (e.g., #1, #6, #3) depending on his or her present level of readiness. The starting task number is written on each child's personal direction sheet. There is a folder for each numbered task that contains instructions and any work sheets, graphic organizers, or other papers required to do the task. These task folders are kept in numerical order in a basket at the center.

Students have a work folder at every center that contains their personal direction sheet and all the work they do at the center. These folders are kept at the back of the basket. As they complete a task, they mark it off on their direction sheets and place the completed work in the folder.

The five skill centers are based around our units and state learning standards:

- **Turtle and Shell Center:** A multidisciplinary center that supports our science unit on nature as well as reading and math skills
- **Writing Center:** Offers a variety of writing prompts and story starters for students.
- **Leaf Center:** Reinforces skill in language arts, math, and science with current tasks focusing on graphing, subtraction facts to 18, rhyming words, adding three addends to 18, riddles, story problems, identification of different types of leaves, reading a poem about leaves and identifying rhyming words, comprehension, writing complete sentences, and dictionary skills.
- **Problem Solver Center:** Provides various logic problems for students to complete. The center allows students to increase skills in following directions, thinking, and working with partners.
- **Map Center:** Reinforces map skills, including direction (e.g., N, SW), compass rose, map reading, identifying continents, and creating a map.

Map Center

Every child will have a direction sheet for the Map Center. This center relates to our standard on maps, directions, map key, continents, oceans, mountain ranges, and rivers.

1. **Colored Balloons:** Read the directions carefully and color your balloons neatly. (This activity has balloons in various locations – students color balloons a particular color on the basis of their location: first, second, highest, middle, and so on. This works on direction, position, and following the direction.)

2. Animal Parade: Put your finger on the first animal that is mentioned and move to the second animal. Here are the animal names that will help you complete the activity: dog, horse, cow, pig, fish, snake, sheep, hen, and duck. (An example of one of the questions is, "Start with the fish and move south one picture. You are at the picture of the _____.")
3. Language of the Directions: These words will help you complete the activity: north, south, east, west, northeast, southeast, northwest, southwest. (This activity gives the student letters – NE, S, and so on – and the student writes what they stand for.)
4. Colored Arrows: Use the compass rose to help you, and be sure to color the arrows neatly. Make sure you use the correct color. (This activity is full of arrows going in different directions. Students follow the directions to color each arrow correctly. This begins to get harder because students have to know the compass rose.)
5. The Classroom Map Reading: The words that you need are in the directions. Be sure to spell the words correctly. (The students are given a map of the classroom, and they must answer questions about the map. For example, "The teacher's desk is in the _____ corner of the classroom.")
6. Gem Fever: Put your finger on the first gem, then move your finger to the second item to determine your direction. Did you complete the bonus box on the sheet of paper? (This activity is a map of mine. The students have to use directions to get to various locations. For example, "Matt is in the mine. In which direction must he go to get from the diamond to the rubies? From the rubies to the diamonds?")
7. Geography Game: Play the Geography Game with a partner in your group. (This is a game in which the students have to use all of their map skills to complete the game correctly.)
8. Crystal County: Look carefully at the map key. Color each symbol in the map key. Then color the symbols on the map to match the map key. This will help you answer the questions in this activity. (This activity has increased to nine items in the map key. Students are to answer questions about the map using the key.)
9. Comparing the Continents: Be sure to use the pictures of the continents and their locations to help you. (This activity consists of a picture of the seven continents with questions. For example, "List the continents in order from the smallest to the largest. " "What two continents are larger than North America ? " "What three continents are smaller than South America? ")
10. Rhea's Country, India: Use the map key to help you complete the activity. (This activity includes a map of India and two paragraphs describing the life of Rhea, who lives in India. The map, which is a harder map for children to relate to, has a map key and (" true-or-false questions relating to the map. For example, "The Indian Ocean is north of India. " "The Bay of Bengal is east of India. ")
11. Map Attack and the Parts of the United States: Follow the directions on the Map Attack, and color the states of the United States. (A map of the United States is given to students- it is not labeled. Students put a brown "r" on Texas, color California red. Circle Florida in green. Students can use various materials to help them identify the states.)
12. Create a City Park or Island Fantasy Map: I will help you get started with this activity if needed- see me. (Students are given a directional sheet that instructs them to create their own map with the given directions. For example, "Draw a large island on a sheet of paper. Draw a recreation area in the west. In the north, draw your favorite restaurant. On the south, draw the place where you will stay. Draw the thing you'd enjoy visiting the most in the center. " At the end, students write a story

about their day on the island, telling what they did, the children they met, and how they felt about their visit.)

I do an interest survey with my students at the beginning of the year. The results of the survey determine the focus of the interest centers. By the end of the year at least one of every child's identified interests will have been in a center. These centers allow students to explore topics more deeply while refining specific skills tied to our learning standards. The interest centers that are currently available are not only student-identified interests but have been timed to coincide with our current unit on nature. They include

- **Shark Center:** Activities at this center support students' research and writing skills, including reading nonfiction books to learn about various types of sharks and answering questions about them, distinguishing between fact and fiction, comparing shark eyes and human eyes, and writing a persuasive paragraph about sharks.
- **Bat Center:** Activities at this center support reading, math, and writing skills, including reading a fiction book on bats; predicting and writing about the beginning, middle, and end of the story; doing two-digit subtraction without regrouping; researching facts; completing a crossword puzzle using bat facts; creating a poem; writing a story; and writing a letter to a friend telling why bats are important.
- **Spider Center:** Activities at this center support math, research, and reading skills, including geoboard and pattern block tasks; reading books about various types of spiders; and several comprehension, inference, and prediction activities.
- **Shark Center:** My hook for this interest center is a large poster of a shark showing those beautiful teeth. (It seems that every child is interested in the ocean life.) Each activity assignment below is written on a shark shape that is stapled around the poster.

Shark Center

1. Make your shark hat and wear it while you work in the shark center.
2. Find out what a baby shark is called. Get a shark shape and write your answer on the shark. The shark shape is found in folder 2. Don't forget to use the books on the center table to help you.
3. Sharks have gills. Get a sheet of story paper. Draw pictures of the gills. Explain how the gills work. Don't forget to use the books on the center table to help you.
4. Get one large shark shape and five smaller shark shapes. On the large shark, write the word "shark". Write the name of a different type of shark on each smaller shark. On the back of each shark, write a fact about the shark listed on the front. Create a mobile of your sharks. Materials that you need are located in folder 4.
5. Complete the activity Fishy Facts and Sizing up Sharks.
(This activity deals with identifying facts and opinions about sharks and making a bar graph about the lengths of various sharks.)
6. Pretend you have discovered a new kind of shark. Get a sheet of story paper. Draw your new shark. Write a paragraph to describe your shark. Be sure to include length, color, and other characteristics.
7. Get a sheet of paper. List five good things about sharks. Be sure to use the books at your center to help you.
8. Compare a shark's eye and a human's eye. Draw a picture of a shark's eye and a human's eye. Label your pictures and explain how the eyes are different or alike.

9. Use some of the materials that are available and write five facts about sharks. Put these facts on index cards – one fact on each card.
10. Pretend you are a shark. You do not like the bad feelings people have about you. Write a paragraph and give reasons for your bad behavior. Try to convince us that you are not such a “bad guy.”

Mr. Janoskie’s 5Th GRADE

Background

Mr. Janoskie teaches a 5th grade class with 28 students who bring to school with them a wide range of learning needs. One of many ways he systematically attends to those needs is with the use of centers. He has established three centers in his room that remain in place throughout the year. The contents of the centers and how they are used vary over time. The three centers are called Word Works, Math Factory, and Learning Place. While there are spaces in the room set up for the three centers, the teacher makes sure most of the work is portable by storing tasks in plastic bins, envelopes, and other containers. Often there is more than one copy of a particular task. The containers are labeled for easy student retrieval. Students can take the containers to their desks to work with tasks when they are not specifically assigned to the center. Word Works and Math Factory enable Mr. Janoskie to help students grow with requirements of tests and standards. Learning Place enables him to tap student interests and connect students' lives with the curriculum.

Expectations for how students should work at the centers are posted at each center. They also mirror the general classroom expectations for behavior, productivity, and support for one another. Charts posted beside each center designate students who are assigned to a center on a given day as well as specific tasks each student should complete at the center. Students turn in completed work in stack trays located in each center. They keep in-progress work in personal work folders housed in a plastic crate at each center.

Word Works

Students go to the Word Works Center for a variety of reasons. Some students go for work with spelling or vocabulary to help them gain proficiency with basic skills in these areas. Among students who often work at this center to "gain speed" with spelling and vocabulary are two students learning English as a second language, one student with developmental delays, and two students with diagnosed learning disabilities. Sometimes these students work with tasks in place of vocabulary or spelling assigned to peers. Sometimes their WordWorks tasks are in addition to other spelling and vocabulary. Sometimes Word Works serves as an anchor activity students can turn to when they complete assigned tasks. Sometimes Word Works Tasks become homework in lieu of homework assignments that are inappropriate for these students.

- Some students complete advanced vocabulary at Word Works. These students are working well beyond grade level in both spelling and vocabulary. While the students can make A's with the "standard" spelling and vocabulary assignments, they are not being challenged and are not learning to persevere with their work. At Word Works, these students work with Greek and Latin root words and derivatives, words from science, words from mythology, words English has borrowed from other cultures, history of word development in English, and so on. Mr. Janoskie also assigns other students to do portions of the advanced tasks as appropriate. For example, three of his students who have vocabulary skills at or slightly above grade level really enjoy science. He ensures that they have the chance to work with the "words from science" activities at Word Works. All students can complete the activities as anchor options.

- Word Works also provides a great vehicle for helping students who need additional time to learn vocabulary or spelling and students who experience extended absences. To that end, there are tasks at Word Works that require students to practice current spelling and vocabulary skills. Mr. Janoskie assigns these tasks to students who need extended practice to master these skills, to students who do not get consistent support in practicing spelling and vocabulary at home, and students who missed class study and practice due to absence. All students know they can work with the weekly practice materials as anchor options if they'd like.

Sample Activities from Word Works:

Advanced Vocabulary Task

Students find an index card file box with postcards from about 25 countries. All are countries the students have studied or will study through their history or literature programs. There are also cards and markers with which the students will make flash cards. In addition, there is a box with dictionaries, sample Web sites, and some books on word origins.

Task Card

In the file box, you'll find greetings from around the world. Not only do Americans travel to these countries, but over time, we import words from the countries that become a part of our language here in the United States. Your job is to

- Select 10 postcards that represent countries of interest to you.
- List the names of the countries in your vocabulary notebook.
- Use the resource materials in the book box to help you find at least two words that we have "borrowed" from each of the countries you selected.
- Make sure the words are interesting ones that are likely to be useful to many of us in our daily lives.
- Create a flash card for each word. Put the borrowed word on the front of the card. On the back of the card, put the country of origin, a clear definition of the word, and a sentence that uses the word in a way that makes its definition clearer. You may add an illustration to the front of the card if you'd like.
- Your card set will be used by many other students this year and in years to come, so make sure it's accurate and user-friendly.
- Your card set is due on Friday, January 23.

Vocabulary Practice Task

Students find laminated lists of the week's 20 vocabulary words. There are also file card boxes with two sets of 20 index cards. One set is blue and has a vocabulary word printed on one side. The other set is yellow and has a definition printed on one side and an illustration that represents the word on the other. (For example, the card that has a definition of "antique" on one side has a picture of an old vase on a pedestal on the other side). There are also small pieces of poster paper and markers. Directions are tape-recorded if students need to hear them. Written directions say:

Task Card

Your job is to work with this week's vocabulary words so you are comfortable with their spelling and meaning.

First, look at the list of this week's words. Go down the list word by word and do a silent lip-sync read of each word and a good definition for it. Be sure your lips are moving as you do this.

Then, check your vocabulary notebook to see which definitions you got right and which you missed.

As you see a word and definition that wasn't quite right in your lip sync, write the word and definition in your vocabulary notebook again.

Now, with a partner or alone (your choice), play one or two games of memory with the colored index cards. Words should face up on the blue cards. Pictures should face up on the yellow cards.

If there are words you or your partner get hung up on, make a Wanted Word poster giving other students an idea of how to remember the word better. The idea can be a silly sentence, a rhyme, picture, or another way to help people recall the word better.

You will have two turns at Word Works before our vocabulary test on Friday.

Math Factory

Math Factory works much like Word Works in that it allows students to work on past math skills they have not mastered, to work on more advanced applications of mathematical concepts they are studying, or to practice work they have missed when absent. Math Factory also consistently provides practice on current math concepts for all students who have not yet demonstrated mastery of those concepts.

In his daily math instruction, Mr. Janoskie typically guides some whole-class work and discussion on concepts and skills the class is studying. Early in a unit, he is likely to have everyone in the class take part in these whole group sessions. As he gathers assessment data that lets him know who has mastered particular concepts and skills, he is likely to begin sending those students to Math Factory during the whole-class sessions. He then checks in with those student' as the rest of the class begins to do individual or small group follow-up to the whole group instruction.

Because math is so essential to the achievement of all his students, Mr. Janoskie sometimes assigns students who struggle with math to the Math Factory in lieu of tasks he deems less essential. Even though he wishes everyone had time to do all tasks in all subjects, he makes choices in favor of those areas that become gatekeepers to student success. Math is one of those areas, and when students are behind in math, he uses Math Factory as a way to buy extra time and focus on development of these key skills and understandings.

At least once a week, Mr. Janoskie assigns each student to Math Factory to do a quick practice exercise with the ideas and skills the class is studying and then to complete a quick assessment task he uses to monitor student understanding. He tends to assign the more proficient math students to the weekly exercise earlier in the week and to assign students who need more guidance in math later in the week so they have greater exposure to the teacher and small-group work prior to the assessment.

Learning Place

This center is a favorite of everyone in the class. Here, Mr. Janoskie works to help students extend current interests and develop additional interests. The Learning Place, at various times, contains tasks on all subjects and on noncurricular interests of the teacher and students as well.

Students may, for example, watch part of a video on a topic the class is studying in science. They may read about people behind the science or history they are learning . They learn about how people use math in their work and hobbies. They may use the Internet to answer questions the class has raised in discussions. Sometimes artifacts and materials relate to a hobby or special interest of one or more students-or the teacher.

In this center, generally two highlighted tasks are displayed at any one time. In addition, highlighted tasks from the past three weeks are typically stored in labeled plastic tubs so that students can take them to their desks (or even check them out over a weekend) when they'd like.

Sometimes Mr. Janoskie assigns students to a Learning Place task. Often, they are free to sign up for designated times at the Learning Place. Some Learning Place tasks work best for one student at a time, but many are designed to allow several students to work together at the center at one time.

High School History Centers (ASCD HANDOUT 72)

Ms. Larsen uses "stations" in her high school history classroom. Unlike centers, which sometimes tend to be more permanently situated in a particular area of a classroom, her stations come and go as needed. Most often, she forms stations simply by clustering desks into the four corners of the classroom. She varies the ways she uses stations but often thinks in terms of the four corners representing review, reading, making connections, and instruction. She most typically assigns students to two stations and asks them to select one other, all to be completed in two class periods. Also, she most often uses the stations near the end of a unit of study as a way to help students consolidate their knowledge, understanding, and skill.

Students generally work for about 20-22 minutes at one station on day one and then move to a second station when the teacher signals it is time to do so. Thus, students complete two stations on day one of a two-day station cycle. On day two, students work at one station for about 25 minutes. The teacher then calls the class back together, collects work, answers questions, and conducts a whole-class discussion and review. This allows the teacher and students to get clarification on fuzzy areas and bring closure to the review.

Students understand that the station days help them prepare for major tests and projects-and ultimately the state's standards-based test. They are expected to work quietly and complete necessary tasks. The teacher monitors student focus and checks off completed work. Those things result in daily grades for each of the two days. Students come to understand that the real effect of careful station work is greater understanding of the material and greater success with the end-of-unit assessment and standards test.

Review

Here students will find worksheets, questions for review, key vocabulary lists or similar materials that call on them to practice key information important to the unit of study and to success on state standards tests. Directions for students are printed directly on the assigned work. On a given day, everyone who goes to the review station will complete the same work. Typically, Ms. Larsen does not assign students to this station when she has evidence that they have mastered the knowledge, understanding, and skill central to the unit.

Reading

Here Ms. Larsen uses color-coded tasks (typically two, sometimes three) to help students become more critical readers. She might ask students to record the organization of a chapter, to complete a written "think-aloud" or "close read" to demonstrate what they are thinking as they read a key segment of text or supplementary material, to interpret political cartoons and compare the cartoons with text materials, and so on. It is her general intent to provide structure for learning to grapple with text material for students who find it more difficult to read nonfiction material and to push more able readers to look at ideas from multiple perspectives, find potential contradictions in texts, and complete other more abstract and open tasks. On the first of two station days, students receive an index card or small slip of paper with the two stations they are required to complete and a reminder to select a third station. There is a colored stripe at the top of the card or paper. At the reading station, a student completes the color-coded task that matches the color of the stripe on the paper. Typically, the distinctions in tasks address student reading readiness.

Making Connections

Ms. Larsen uses this station to ensure that students look for patterns in history and think about what they are studying through a conceptual lens. At this station, students will generally work with a common question. (For example: Find and explain relationships between scarcity and conflict in the unit we are studying and in at least one other time period. Explain how the relationships are similar and different.) However, students may select from a variety of resources, time periods, modes of expression, and so on to make and express the connections. This allows attention to readiness, interest, and learning profile, depending on options and student choices. There are often familiar graphic organizers at the station to guide the work of students who need that structure.

Instruction

In this station, the teacher uses the opportunity to teach or conduct small-group discussions with just a few students. She announces on each of the two days what the topic will be for the instruction station so that students with a choice to make will know whether they want to participate in that station. The teacher generally teaches or conducts a discussion for about 10 to 12 minutes and gives students a brief question or writing assignment to complete prior to leaving the station.

While students are writing, she moves among the other stations to answer questions before repeating the 10- to 12-minute instruction for students who come to the instruction station during the second half of the class. The topic at the instruction station most often differs on the two station days to allow focus on students' differing needs in her class.

Working Guidelines

Stations are designed to make sure you are better prepared to succeed on your unit assessment as well as on the state standards test. To make sure everyone benefits from station work, please

Complete the work at the stations assigned to you.

Make your choice of a third station one that stretches you. Do your best thinking and work at each station.

Carefully read and follow directions at the stations.

If you need to talk with someone, do it in a way that respects the needs of others to concentrate.

Make sure the station and materials there are ready for the next group when you leave the station.

The teacher will do a quick check of your work. Then you should keep your work to help you study.

BASEBALL INTEREST CENTER

What's in my center?

Video and DVDS

The national Pastime: A history of Major league Baseball
2000 Subway series
Rookie of the Year

Music

The Baseball ballads
Baseball songs, Sports heroes

Artifacts

Baseball cards
Uniform, glove, baseballs
Model of stadium

Print Materials

Sports Illustrated
Baseball digest
On the Mound with Greg Maddox (Matt Christopher books on baseball, can also be found on tape)

TASK CARD 1

Baseball uniforms have evolved throughout the years. Using Graphic Organizer#1 to compare and contrast baseball uniforms of 2004 to those of the 1920s. Refer to *Baseball Uniforms of the 20th Century* in the center.

TASK CARD 2

Give both positive and negative opinions of modern and old fashioned uniforms. Based on the trend over the past 20 years, design a new and updated baseball uniform for your favorite team.

Be a baseball statistician

www.sports.yahoo

www.baseball.com

www.baseballamerica.com.today

Baseball is a competitive sport in which statistical information is crucial to comparing team and player status. Track the scores of two rival teams over a one week period using the New York Times or the following internet sites: Create graphs to represent the data

China Center:

Watch this video clip of the Chinese Beijing Opera looking at the performers and their actions, some characters are good, others are not. When finished, pick a friend you know well and can describe in detail their traits and behaviors. Using the silk pieces, clay masks, and paints provided, create your own Beijing Opera Character using the traditional colors that represent your friend. You will find support materials describing which colors represent which characters, and a wide variety of costumes.

POETRY STATION

Teacher Models

- How to read a poem fluently
- How to read with good expression
- How to find rhyming words
- How to determine the pattern of a poem

Differentiating at the Station

- By poem complexity or task complexity (color coded)
- With personalized practice needs (e.g., handwriting, sequencing, particular sounds, etc.)
- By interest (using bins or boxes for various topics)
- By learning profile (work alone/with a partner, act vs. write vs. draw, listen vs. read, etc.)

Teacher monitoring

- Observe at the station for particular skills
- Look at poetry notebooks
- Have students perform for class
- Listen to student-made tapes
- Use student poems/examples to teach

What Students Can Do at the Station

- Read a Poem
 - From a chart, sentence strips, card, or books
- Buddy Read a Poem
 - Use matching cards (color) to find and read a poem together
- Find Special Words in a Poem
 - Can find vocabulary words, particular sounds, rhyming words, words I know, words I don't know
- Use a Rhyming Dictionary
 - Find rhyming words that go with words in the poem
- Illustrate a Poem
 - Students illustrate photocopied poems
- Fill in the Blanks
 - Students complete words using markers on laminated poems
- Build a Poem
 - Use sentence strips to reconstruct a poem; check against original
- Change a Poem
 - Students use sticky notes to substitute words in a poem
- Copy a Poem
 - For handwriting practice and language pleasure, copy into poetry notebook

Listen to Poems

From teacher made or commercial tapes

Record a Poem

Student tape records a poem to take home or for others in the class

Compare Two Poems

Using a Venn Diagram

Memorize and Perform a Poem

Practice a poem at the Station and share it with the class when memorized

Use Quiet Rhythm Instruments to Read

Tap out the rhythm pattern in the poem

Act Out a Poem

Select a story poem and act it out alone or with a friend

Write a Poem

Create a poem about a topic of interest, perhaps mimicking another poem, write or use magnetic words

Steps to Center Development

- Choose the topic
- Web possibilities
- Select ideas most interesting for your purposes
- Collect artifacts and authentic materials for display
- Develop task cards
- Think of display ideas
- Choose locations
- Teach students how to use the center

Elements of a Task Card

- Entry point . Get kids excited about the center through a question or interesting fact. You need to provide some background information that will lead inspire them to explore the topics.
- Direct them to something in the center where they can begin their inquiry.
- Exit Point: Provide a challenge and some ideas for a product as a means to address the challenge.
- Attractive? Does it have drawing power?
- Are the materials authentic and varied?
- Are materials and tasks connected?
- Do tasks invite differentiation?
- Do I have an implementation plan?

Preparing to Develop a Center (From ASCD HANDOUT 67/69)

Use the grid below to jot notes that can guide your thinking about a center-based activity you can use in your classroom to address varied learner needs. You may want to develop a skill-based center, an interest center, a teacher-guided center, and so on. Further, the center may be one that all or most students attend with varied assignments or a center designed just for selected students.

Subject and Topic Focus and Nature of the Center
General Learning Goals--As a result of the activity, students should (complete as relevant) KNOW: UNDERSTAND: BE ABLE TO:
Range and Description of Learner Needs in Your Class to Be Addressed by This Center
Factors and Elements You'll Need to Consider in Developing the Activity (related to time, students, space, materials, and so on)
Activities and Materials Already Available as a Starting Point for Developing the Center

Remember that there is a great deal of flexibility in the ways different teachers use this approach for different purposes and in different formats. Below is a planning guide you may want to complete.

Planning Guide
Topic or Skill Focus for the Center
Likely Duration of the Center Activity
Who Will Work at the Center (All students? Some students? Teacher choice? Student choice?)
How Students Will Get Directions (task cards , tape recorder, peer guide, teacher explanation, and so on)
Working Guidelines for Students (how students record what they do at the center; where they put their work when they finish; how they are expected to behave; guidelines for collaboration, if any; what they do if they need help ; how they clean up; what they do when they finish; and so on)
How Students Will Be Aware of the Guidelines (poster, handout, general classroom rules, and so on)
Introducing the Center to Students
Assigning Students to the Center and to Specific Tasks at the Center
Criteria for Grading Center Work (How will students know if they are working effectively?)
Monitoring Student Work and Progress