

# STUDENT CENTERED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT BEST PRACTICES

PRESENTED BY:  
NYSED'S OFFICE OF EARLY  
LEARNING





# PRESENTERS



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**Office of Early Learning**



# PARTICIPATING DISTRICTS



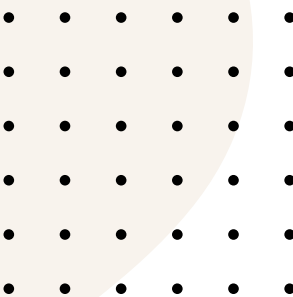
**HANNIBAL**  
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



**Watervliet**  
CITY SCHOOLS



**Duanesburg**  
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT





# THE OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING



ERIK SWEET  
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TANYA AMODIO-KOVACS  
SUPERVISOR



VICKY WOODS  
FISCAL SUPERVISOR

- PROVIDES DIRECTION AND SUPPORT TO INFORM STATEWIDE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS RELATED TO BEST PRACTICES ACROSS PREK TO GRADE 3
- SUPPORTS LEAS IN THE PROVISION OF HIGH QUALITY PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMMING
- PROVIDES GUIDANCE FOR VOLUNTARY REGISTERED NURSERY SCHOOLS AND KINDERGARTENS
- SUPPORTS EARLY LEARNING PROVIDERS, SCHOOL DISTRICTS, AND FAMILIES
- REMAINS CURRENT WITH REVIEW OF RESEARCH TO INFORM POLICIES AND PRACTICES RELATED TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
- MONITORS STATE ADMINISTERED PREKINDERGARTEN



# OBJECTIVES



Bringing learning centers into the classroom

Integrating the theme of study into the learning centers

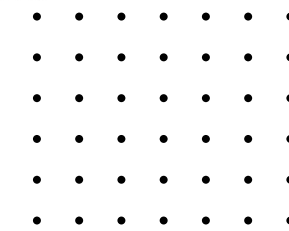
Incorporating student choice during learning centers



# WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

## Well-Designed Classroom Environments:

- Emphasize play -based learning
- Create dynamic learning environments
- Design inviting educational practices



Chandler et al., 1999; Dooley, Wilczenski, & Torem, 2001; Martens, Eckert, Bradley, & Ardoin, 1999





# PREK INSTRUCTION

## Sample Classroom Schedule:

9:00 - 9:15	Arrival
9:15- 9:30	Whole Group
9:30 - 9:40	Music and Movement
9:40 - 9:55	Handwashing and Snack
9:55 - 10:55	Center Time
10:55- 11:25	Small Group
11:25- 11:55	Outdoor / Recess
11:55- 12:35	Handwashing and Lunch
12:35- 12:55	Readaloud
12:55- 1:20	Quiet Activities
1:20- 1:45	Outdoor Choice Time
1:45- 2:00	Whole Group Meeting and departure

Whole Group



Small Group



Center Time





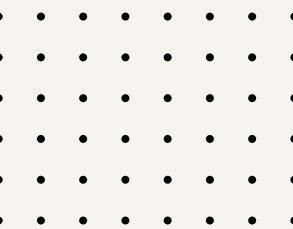
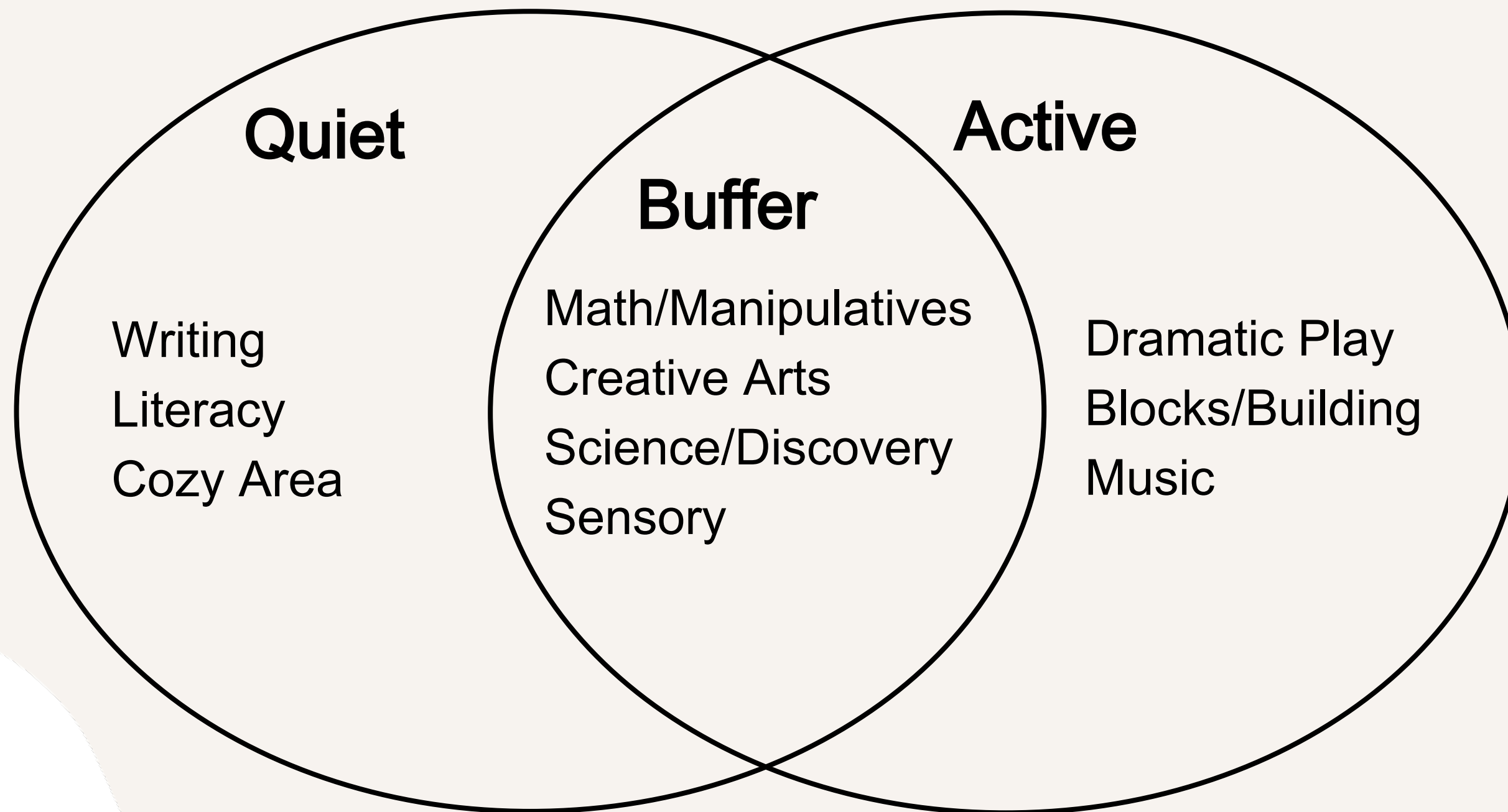
# WHAT CENTERS SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN A PREK CLASSROOM?

- ☑ Blocks and Building
- ☑ Dramatic Play
- ☑ Literacy
- ☑ Creative Arts
- ☑ Math and Manipulatives
- ☑ Sensory
- ☑ Science and Discovery
- ☑ Writing
- ☑ Music
- ☑ Cozy Corner





# CENTER LOCATION



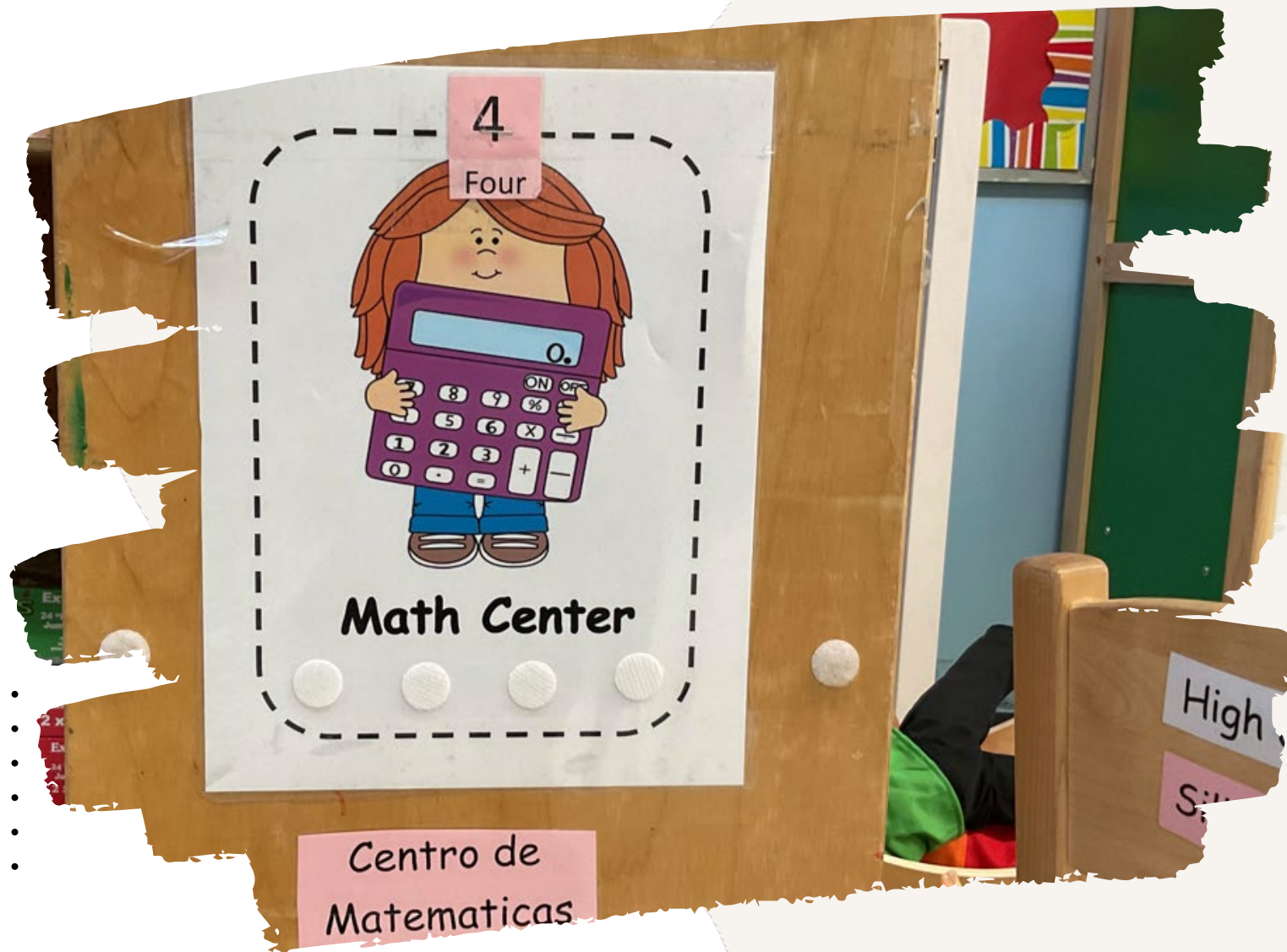


# CLASSROOM EXAMPLE





# LABELS



Centers



Materials



# INTEGRATING LITERACY MATERIALS



Reading



Writing

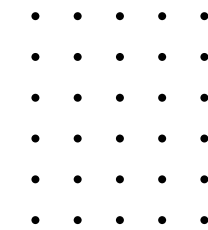




# BASIC MATERIALS

## Writing Center

- ☑ Table and chairs
- ☑ Alphabet chart/strip
- ☑ Writing instruments
- ☑ Variety of paper
- ☑ Word wall
- ☑ Scissors
- ☑ Glue
- ☑ Staplers







# HANNIBAL CSD PANEL MEMBERS



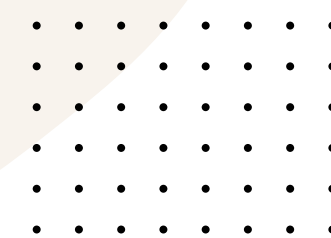
Mary Jo Griffiths  
UPK Teacher



Kim Przychodzen  
UPK Teacher



Chloe Weaver  
UPK Teacher

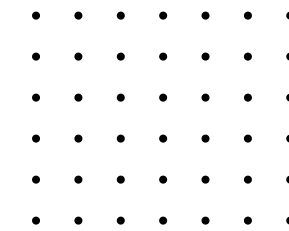




# HANNIBAL CSD



Last Year





# HANNIBAL CSD



This Year



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Library - Reading/Puzzles



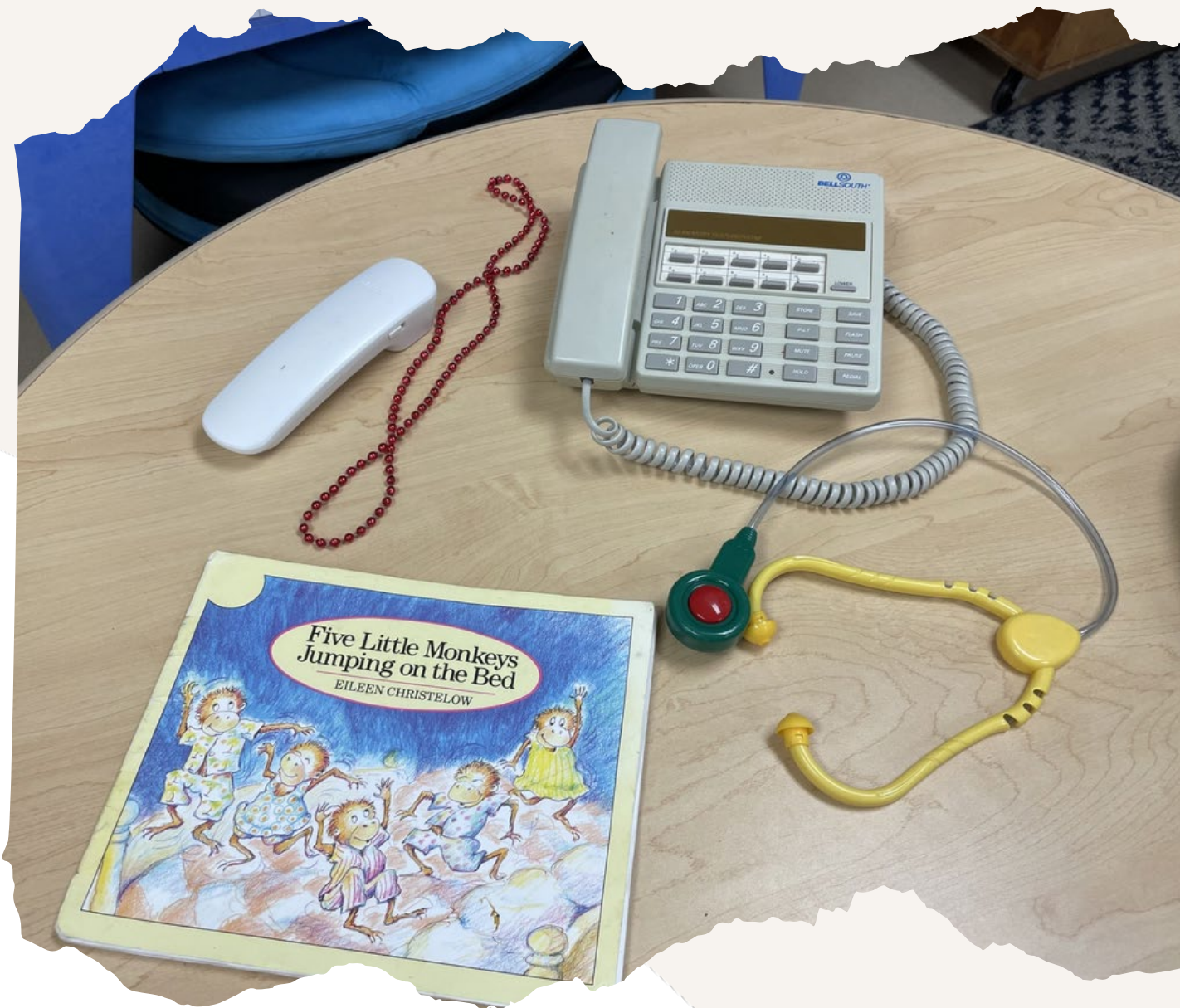
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## Sensory Center



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## Dramatic Play



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## Creative Arts - Writing



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## Science and Math



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## Blocks and Building



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## Impact of Changes

- ☑ Classroom is organized into designated spaces
- ☑ Increased student engagement and opportunities to build social skills
- ☑ More time to work with students on individualized needs





# HANNIBAL CSD

## Challenges and Surprises

- ☑ We had initial concern over our ability to meet the needs of all students in this new format
- ☑ We discovered students are able to manage themselves and their learning





# WHAT ARE THE ADULTS DOING?

- Joining the children in centers
- Asking questions
- Encouraging curiosity
- Promoting collaborative play and problem solving
- Modeling
- Helping children engage with materials





# LANGUAGE SKILLS

- ☑ Be a good role model
- ☑ Read to them
- ☑ Talk together
- ☑ Sing with them
- ☑ Encourage pretend play
- ☑ Explore rhymes
- ☑ Create a language -rich environment
- ☑ Play describing, guessing and turn - taking games

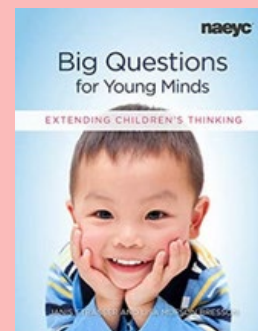




# QUESTION / STATEMENT CARDS

## Blocks and Building

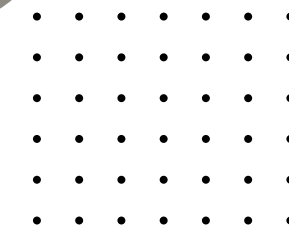
- Tell me about your structure.
- What will the people do in your building?
- What would happen if you added more blocks? Took blocks away? Changed the shape of a block?





# THEME

- Encourages a love of learning
  - Supports different learning needs
    - Makes learning meaningful
      - Makes deeper connections
        - Builds on prior knowledge
          - Incorporates real-world experiences







# WATERVLIET CSD PANEL MEMBERS



**Simone Mettler**  
**UPK Teacher**



**Char'lee Frament**  
**Boys and Girls Club**  
**UPK Director Watervliet CSD**



# WATERVLIET CSD



Before



After



# WATERVLIET CSD

## Introducing Themes

- Clearly defined centers/areas
- Hands - on Activities
- Interactive Learning
- Tactile Materials
- Cross curricular integration
- Visual Displays





# WATERVLIET CSD

## Incorporating Themes

- Fosters critical thinking
- Promotes focused learning
- Encourages creativity
- Sparks curiosity
- Enhances participation
- Prompts deeper engagement

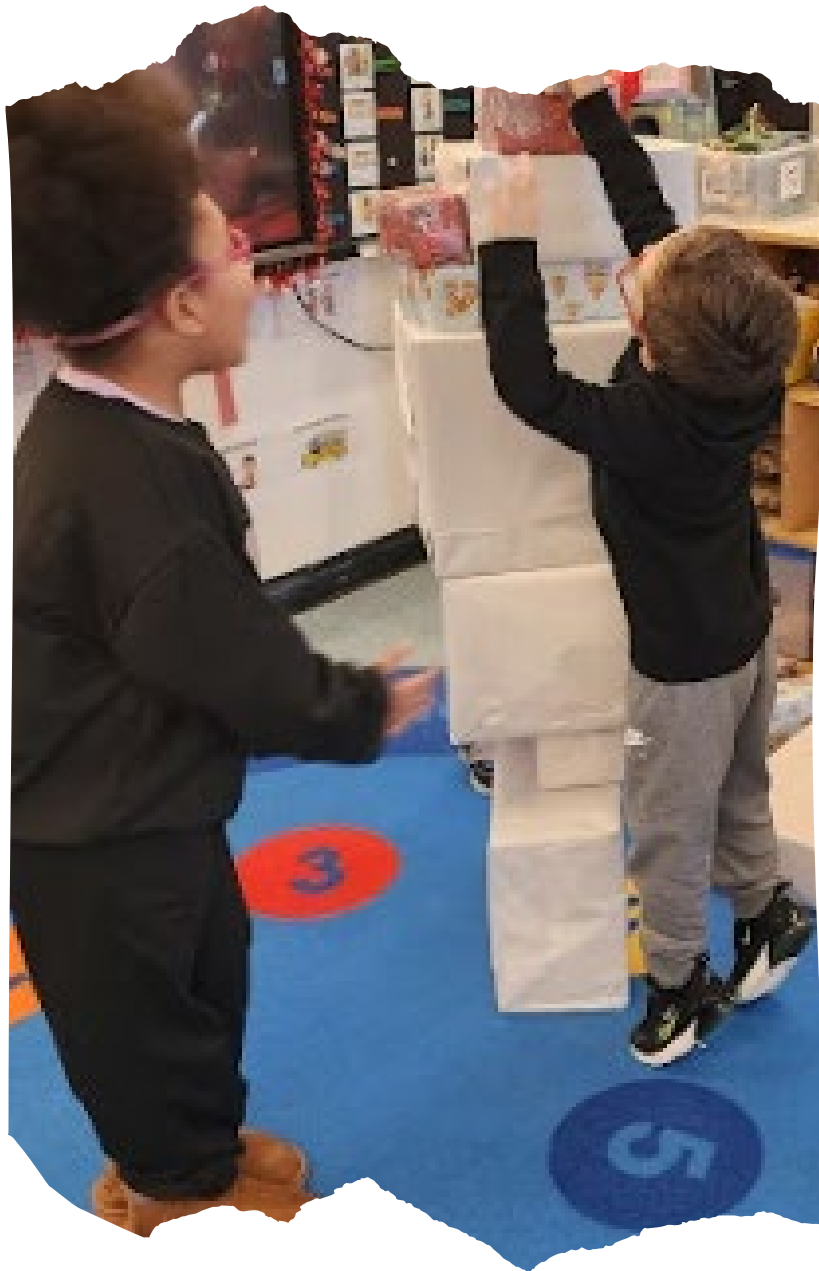




# WATERVLIET CSD

## The journey to theme-based learning & surprises along the way

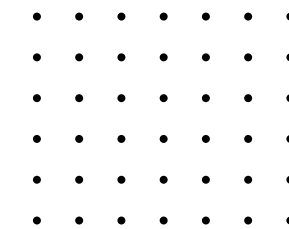
- Planning & Prep
- Implementation
- Feedback





# STUDENT CHOICE

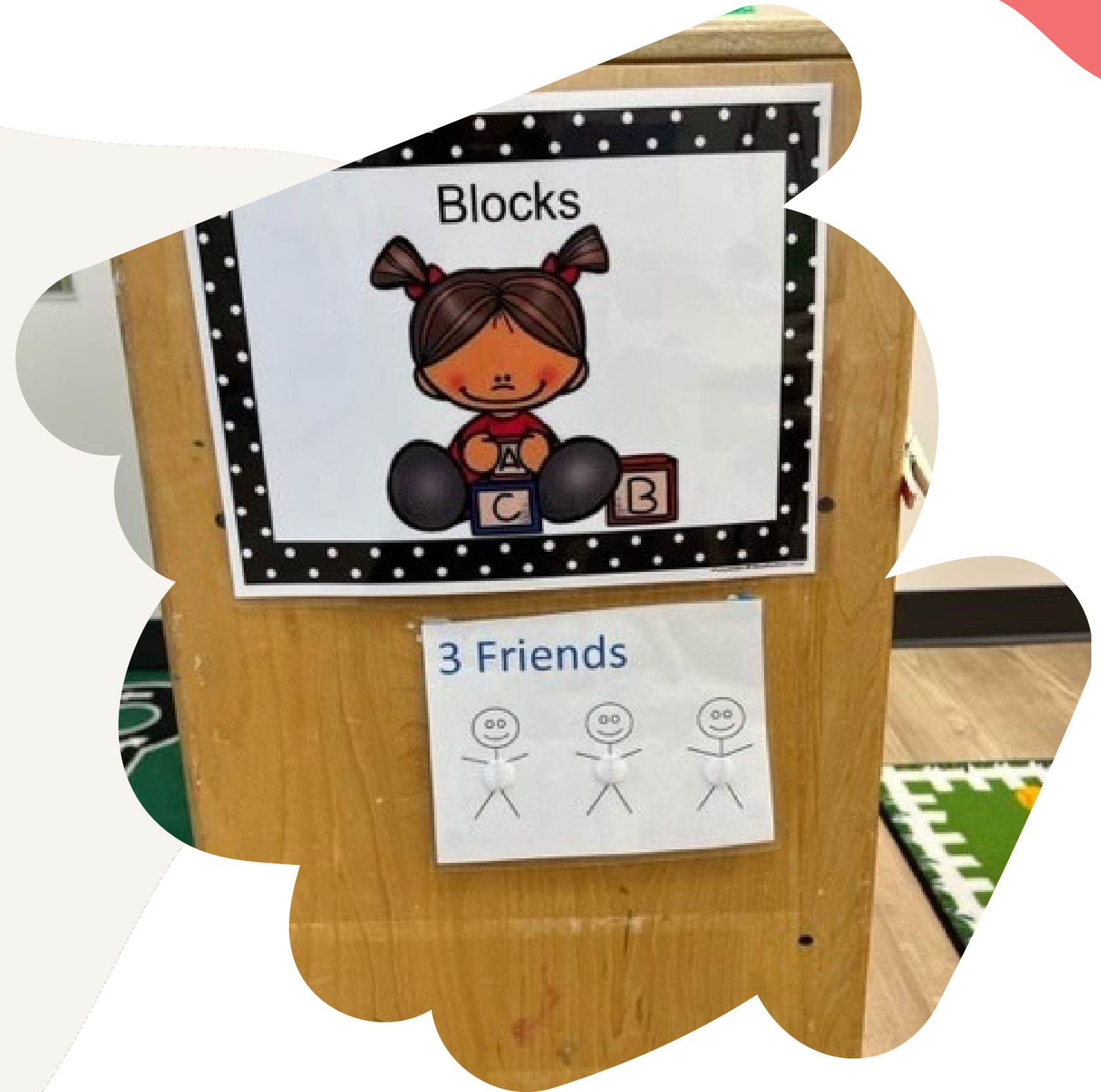
- ☑ Engagement
- ☑ Empowerment
- ☑ Practice in decision making
- ☑ Explore their academic identity
- ☑ Connect their learning to interests





# CENTER MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

- ☑ Increases student independence
- ☑ Gives students choice
- ☑ Provides ownership
- ☑ Allows for decision making







# DUANESBURG CSD PANEL MEMBERS



Alicia Donohue  
UPK Teacher



Ashley Venturiello  
UPK Teacher



# DUANESBURG CSD

## Introducing Student Choice Centers

- ✓ CENTER CHART WITH PICTURES
- ✓ SCAFFOLDING CENTER ROTATIONS TO STUDENT CHOICE
- ✓ SURPRISING OUTCOMES





## Incorporating Student Choice

- ✓ OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDEPENDENCE
- ✓ THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY OF PROBLEM SOLVING (WITH 4 YEAR OLDS)





DUANESBURG CSD

# The Teachers' Role

☑ ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

☑ LESS STRESS  
PREP





# Conclusion

- ☑ Is my PreK classroom set up into learning centers?
- ☑ Did I integrate the theme into all of my learning centers?
- ☑ Do the students have choice?
- ☑ Do I have a management system?





## Reflection and Resource Tool for Creating Student Centered Learning Environments in Prekindergarten



# Reflection and Resource Tool



# Reflection and Resource Tool

- Learning Theme Examples
- Classroom Reflection Charts
- Center Material Check lists
- Daily Schedule Analysis

Below is an example of an age-appropriate thematic web created by the teaching team using the plan above for a three-year-old classroom. It can be modified for a four-year-old classroom.

**Dramatic Play:**

- Create different modes of transportation based on students' interest and experiences
- Make a refrigerator box into a train, a boat, a subway, or an airplane
- Transform the kitchen area into an airport or subway station

**Sensory:**

- Set up a car wash station in the water table, complete with toy cars, sponges, soap, brushes/toothbrushes and towels
- Add construction materials to sensory bins such as loose gravel, dirt, small stones

**Math and Manipulatives:**

- Set up a sorting game-land, sea and air themes - car/truck wheels, two

**Creative Arts:**

- Dip the different vehicles in paint and have the children drive them around a piece of paper, compare the size of the wheels
- Paint and decorate a cardboard vehicle
- Provide sponges and paint for children to create cloud like paintings.

**Transportation**

### Center Checklist

#### Writing Center

- ☐ A table and chairs to accommodate at least two children
- ☐ Materials for making simple books including a stapler or paper fasteners
- ☐ Variety of writing implements to include markers, crayons, colored pencils, elementary pencils, and regular pencils (considerations for three and younger fours: chunky writing utensils, safety scissors, finger-paint)
- ☐ Word strips with a picture and a word that coincide with the current or previous themes bound together for children to use as a sample
- ☐ Word wall depicting topic/theme-base words; common words and rare words with illustrations or depictions
- ☐ Clipboards with paper and pencils attached or white boards with dry erase markers and an eraser so children can take the clipboards to write around the room
- ☐ Upper/lower-case alphabet stamps and ink pads, alphabet charts
- ☐ Variety of sizes of paper to include lined and unlined paper, letter tiles or magnetic letters for sorting

Goal(s):

Materials Needed:

### Balancing the Daily Schedule

The daily schedule and activities designed should encourage children to be self-assured and independent through a balanced schedule. There should be both, teacher-directed (teacher plans, initiates and directs the activity) and student-directed (able to choose their activity, materials, based on their interests and are free to make their own discoveries) learning activities. Recommended best practice is to have one-third of the daily schedule be child-student-directed. Use the chart below to determine how much of the day is teacher-directed versus student-directed.

My Daily Schedule	Type of Learning Activity	Time Allotted
	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher-Directed <input type="checkbox"/> Student-Directed	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher-Directed <input type="checkbox"/> Student-Directed	
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	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher-Directed <input type="checkbox"/> Student-Directed	

### Example Center Planning Page

Week 1	Week 2
<p><b>Question:</b> What kinds of transportation do I use and why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• signs</li><li>• maps of different types</li><li>• neighborhood pictures</li></ul>	<p><b>Weekly Focus question:</b> How are various modes of transportation similar and different?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• add trains, boats, motorcycles, airplanes</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• strings, cubes, linking chains to measure with</li><li>• premade chart long / short</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• cut outs of semi trucks with different number of dots on each</li><li>• cut out of wheels to put on the trucks</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• large cardboard box to create bus/car/train car</li><li>• chairs for seats</li><li>• steering wheel</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• continue with week 1 set up (unless children are not interested)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• shape cut outs</li><li>• pictures of different vehicles</li><li>• use shapes to create vehicles</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• matchbox cars</li><li>• paint</li><li>• box with sides</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• fiction books about transportation</li><li>• non-fiction books about transportation</li><li>• word wall to add new words</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• create a graph</li><li>• cut outs of different types of vehicles</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• different types of paper</li><li>• picture directions on how to make a paper airplane</li><li>• runway</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Legos</li><li>• cubes</li><li>• tub of water</li><li>• make boats and see if they float</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• soapy water</li><li>• cars, trucks</li><li>• toothbrushes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• water</li><li>• blue water beads</li><li>• boats</li></ul>



# THANK YOU



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