

PLAYING MAKES YOU SMARTER!

By Jean Feldman and Carolyn Kisloski

Learning centers are the most natural way to organize a classroom and encourage children to become active learners. Centers encourage children to make choices, explore at their own level, engage in hands-on discovery, solve problems, work with friends, use language, and be creative. Centers are also an effective way to use classroom materials, time, and space. Above all, learning centers capitalize on PLAY, which is the most meaningful and FUN way for children to learn.

Why use learning centers?

*Hands-on activities in centers provide many pathways to the brain and are engaging for young learners.

*Children can work at their own pace and level.

*Executive function skills of task initiation and task completion are nurtured with centers.

*21st Century Skills are enhanced as children cooperate with others, communicate, problem-solve, and think critically.

*Centers give children the opportunity to develop organizational skills and responsibility.

*Centers can provide children with purposeful practice for automaticity.

*Children take it in and take it in and take it in...and then something comes out! With centers we are laying a foundation by giving children a variety of rich experiences.

IT LOOKS LIKE I'M PLAYING BUT...

Just because children are playing, doesn't mean they are not learning! On the following pages, are some center signs for you to post in your classroom to help parents, administrators, and other visitors recognize all the skills that children are developing. You will also find a letter that you may send home to families explaining the importance of your center activities.





Dear Families,

In our classroom, we embrace the curiosity, enthusiasm, energy, and JOY of young children and let it be the momentum and springboard for developing skills and meeting standards. Play can be just as "rigorous" as a worksheet, but so much more memorable. Here are some of the valuable lessons the children learn as they participate center activities in the classroom.

Sensory Motor It looks like I'm playing, but I'm developing small motor skills, self-regulation, social skills, and math and science concepts about the world. I might use these skills as a landscaper or sculptor one day.

Blocks It looks like I'm playing, but I'm developing motor skills, math concepts (number, size, shape), oral language, social skills, hand-eye coordination, self-control, and my imagination. I may be a builder or architect when I'm grown.

Dramatic Play It looks like I'm playing, but I'm developing social skills, emotional skills, independence, oral language, my imagination, responsibility, and the executive function. I may use these skills as a mother, father, safety officer, or politician one day.

Small Motor It looks like I'm playing, but I'm developing my small muscles, eye-hand coordination, attention span, social skills, and concepts about size, shape, color, and patterns. I might use these skills as a chef or dentist one day.

Art It looks like I'm playing, but I'm developing my creativity, small motor skills, problem solving, sharing, cooperation, independence and responsibility. I may use these skills as an artist, illustrator, or designer one day.

Writing It looks like I'm playing, but I'm developing eye-hand coordination, small motor skills, alphabet knowledge, self-confidence, vocabulary, and an interest in print. I might use these skills one day as a journalist, administrative assistant, or poet.

Math It looks like I'm playing, but I'm developing an interest in math, oral language, social skills, small motor skills, and concepts about quantity, shape, size, pattern. I may use these tools as a computer programmer, accountant, or mathematician in the future.

Science It looks like I'm playing, but I'm developing a curiosity about the world, sensory skills, problem solving, language skills, and experience with the scientific process (observing, predicting, experimenting, recording, reporting). If I'm a doctor, lab technician, pharmacist, or landscaper I will utilize these skills.

Literacy It looks like I'm playing, but I'm developing oral language, alphabet knowledge, print connections, phonological awareness, visual skills, book knowledge, and motivation to read. No matter what I become when I grow up, it will be important to know how to read.

Library It looks like I'm playing, but I'm developing alphabet knowledge, oral language, print knowledge, listening skills, eye-hand coordination, concepts about the world, and the desire to read. Maybe I'll be a publisher, author, or librarian when I grow up.

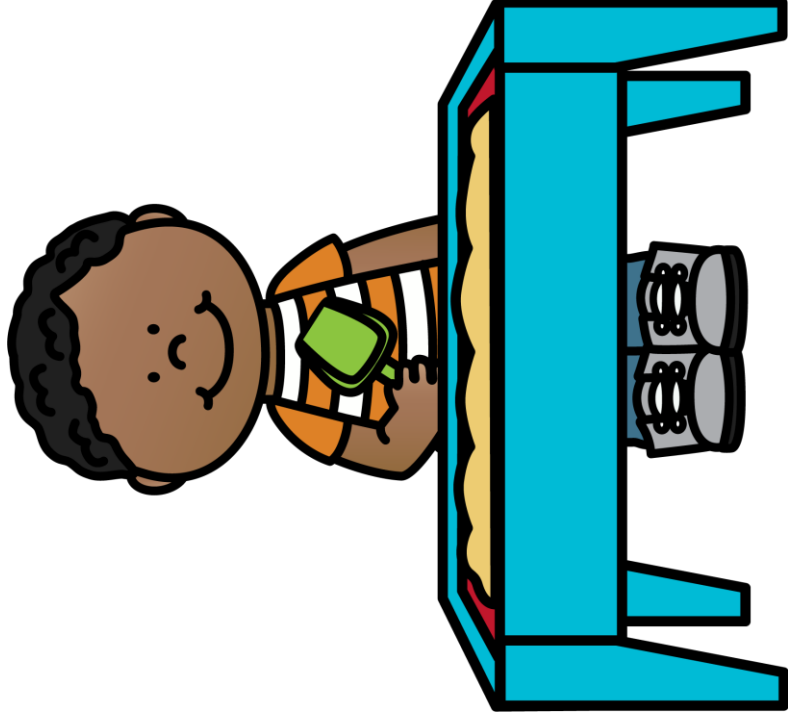
Listening It looks like I'm playing, but I'm learning to listen and follow along as I read books. I'm learning to track print and become familiar with books and language.

Technology It looks like I'm playing, but I'm learning to feel comfortable and confident with technology. I'm discovering how I can use technology for games as well as to learn new things. I might be an information technologist one day.

Thank you for seeing what we see!

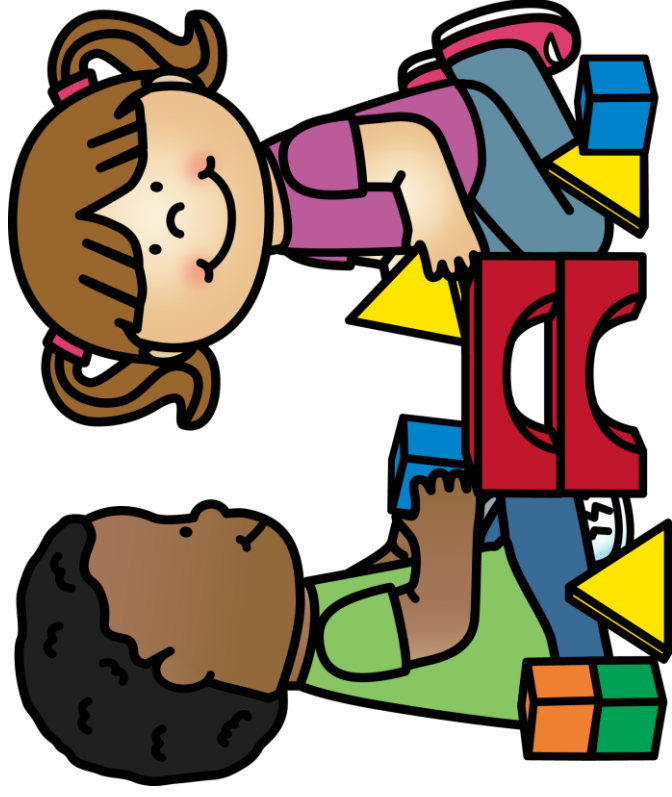


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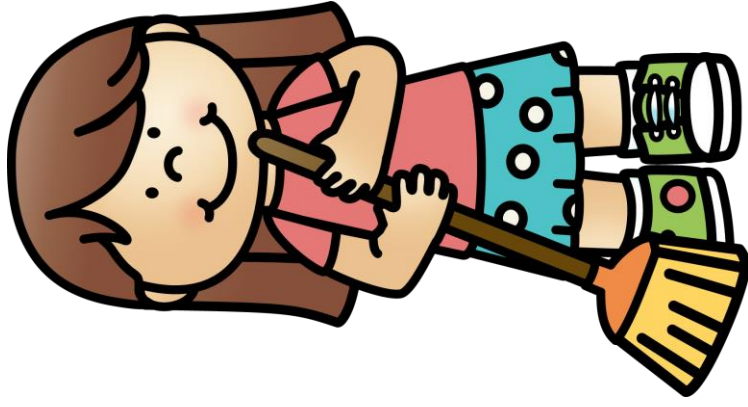
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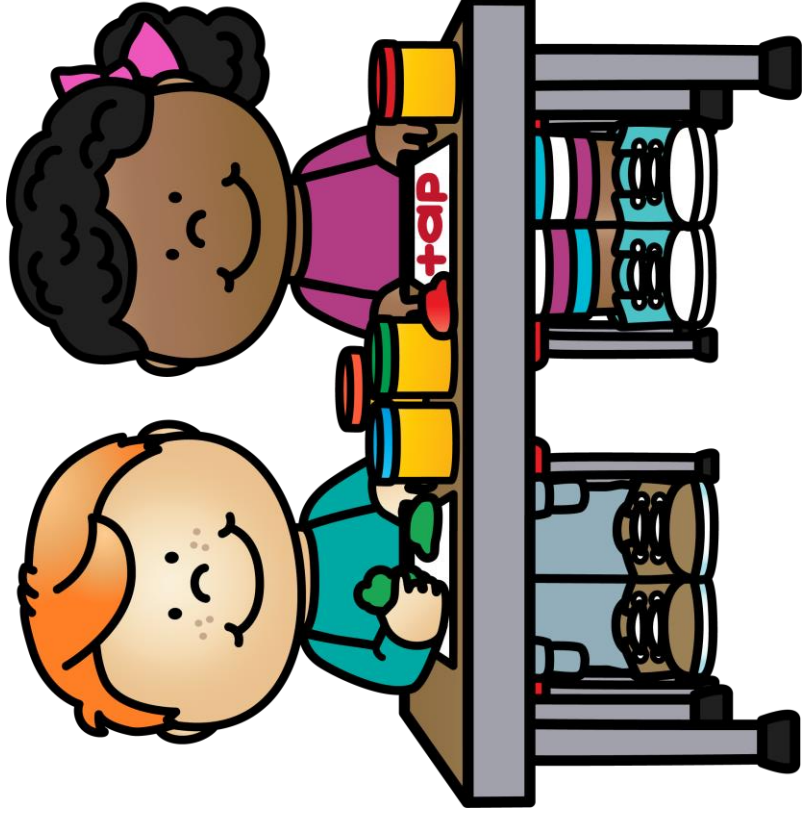
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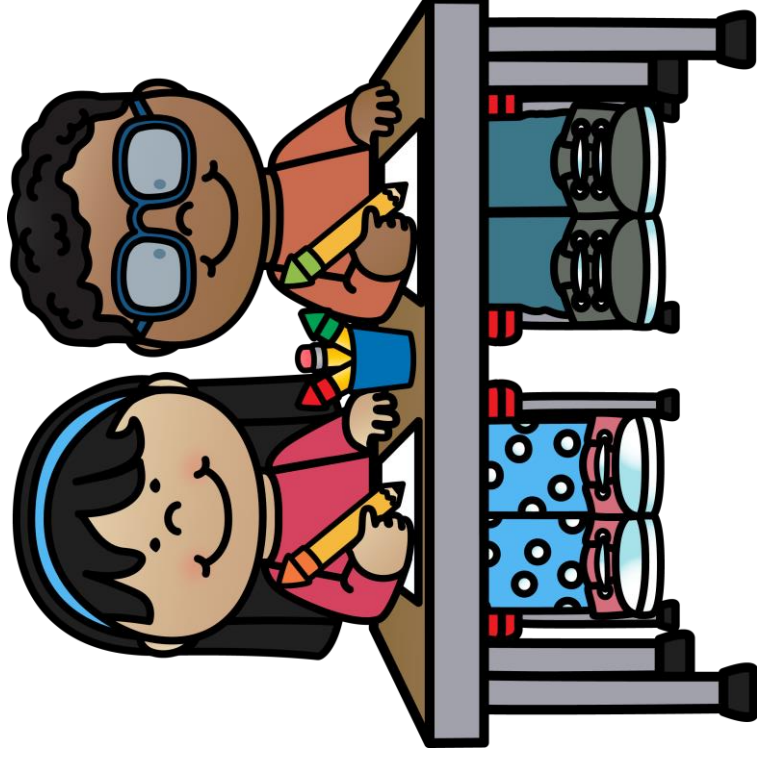
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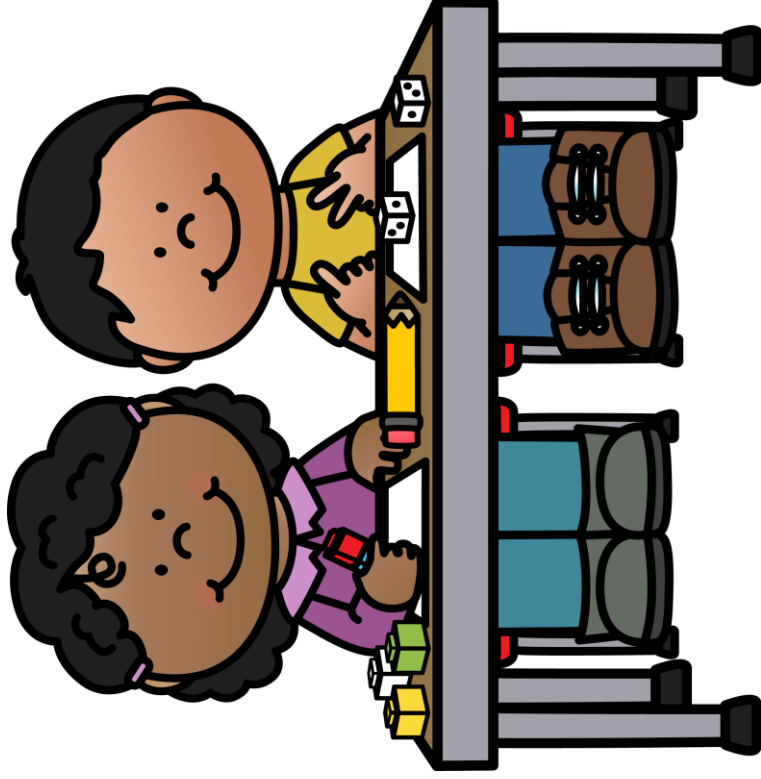
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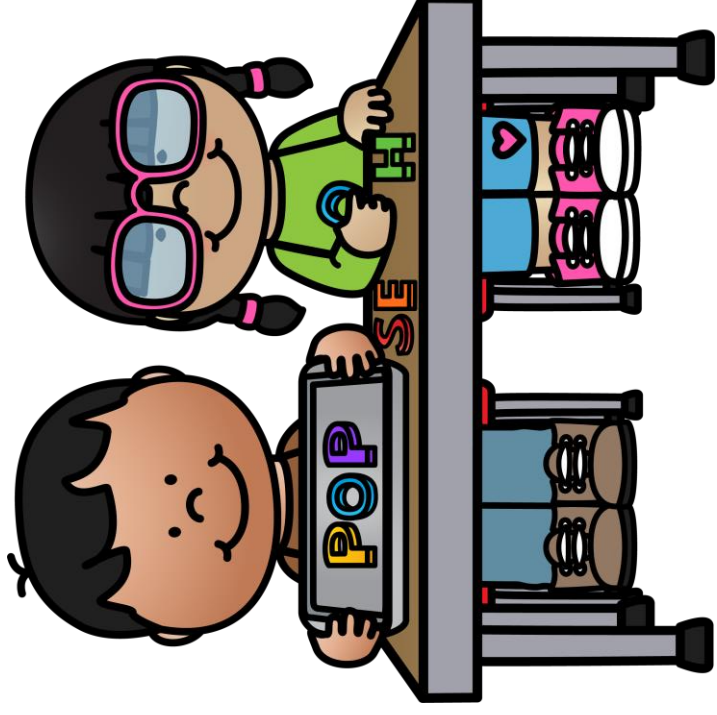
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