The Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence is funded by the Institute of Educational Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education to assist the nation’s diverse students at risk of educational failure to achieve academic excellence. The Center is operated by the University of California, Santa Cruz, through the University of California’s statewide Linguistic Minority Research Project, in collaboration with a number of other institutions nationwide.

The Center is designed to move issues of risk, diversity, and excellence to the forefront of discussions concerning educational research, policy, and practice. Central to its mission, CREDE’s research and development focus on critical issues in the education of linguistic and cultural minority students and students placed at risk by factors of race, poverty, and geographic location. CREDE’s research program is based on a sociocultural framework that is sensitive to diverse cultures and languages, but powerful enough to identify the great commonalities that unite people.

CREDE operates 30 research projects under 6 programmatic strands:

- Research on language learning opportunities highlights exemplary instructional practices and programs.
- Research on professional development explores effective practices for teachers, paraprofessionals, and principals.
- Research on the interaction of family, peers, school, and community examines their influence on the education of students placed at risk.
- Research on instruction in context explores the embedding of teaching and learning in the experiences, knowledge, and values of the students, their families, and communities. The content areas of science and mathematics are emphasized.
- Research on integrated school reform identifies and documents successful initiatives.
- Research on assessment investigates alternative methods for evaluating the academic achievement of language minority students.

Dissemination is a key feature of Center activities. Information on Center research is published in two series of reports. Research Reports describe ongoing research or present the results of completed research projects. They are written primarily for researchers studying various aspects of the education of students at risk of educational failure. Educational Practice Reports discuss research findings and their practical application in classroom settings. They are designed primarily for teachers, administrators, and policy makers responsible for the education of students from diverse backgrounds.
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Designing Effective Activity Centers for Diverse Learners: A Guide for Teachers at All Grade Levels and for All Subject Areas

Editing: Soleste Hilberg
Production, cover & interior design: Nicole Starr

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All inquiries should be addressed to Dissemination Coordinator, CREDE/CAL, 4646 40th Street NW, Washington, DC 20016-1859
Adapted from the “Activity Centers” Handbook, created by Zuni Middle School and CREDE: Georgia Epaloose, R. Soleste Hilberg & Marilyn Feathers.


The authors thank the students of Dr. Chang at San Jose State University for their invaluable feedback during the development and field testing of this guide.
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ACTIVITY CENTERS HANDBOOK

Introduction

This handbook provides guidance for teachers who want to learn to use activity centers in their classrooms. We use the term “activity centers” to specifically identify centers (i.e., learning centers, stations) that incorporate the Standards for Effective Pedagogy, strategies that increase learning opportunities for all students.

Activity centers allow teachers to responsively instruct and assist small groups of students, the most effective grouping for teaching and learning. Organizing a classroom into activity centers is important because such an organization allows the teacher to responsively instruct and assist small groups of students - the most effective classroom organization for teaching and learning. Activity centers also facilitate the development of a classroom community that supports all students’ learning, with each person working together for the success of everyone. Therefore, an important outcome of activity centers is the development of the values necessary for a successful classroom community - fairness, harmony, inclusion, and academic excellence.

Effective teaching is a highly complex process that involves the ability to skillfully perform numerous tasks simultaneously. We do not propose that this guide is inclusive of all those processes and skills. This handbook merely serves to guide teachers interested in organizing their classroom into activity centers; using research-based teaching strategies for effective instruction for diverse learners; and developing a classroom community based on cooperative and supportive working relationships, quality work, and high expectations for everyone’s participation, performance, and learning. The authors of this handbook fully anticipate that the guidelines suggested here will be used flexibly to accommodate teachers’ knowledge and expertise, as well as the students in their classes and the mandates of their districts and states. Our goal is to provide enough information and examples for new teachers to be successful, and to section the topics so that experienced teachers can access the topics they need to make their centers more effective by incorporating CREDE’s research-based pedagogy. We hope that you will make this guide your own by amending and adding to its contents. We also welcome and appreciate your comments, suggestions, and feedback.
What Is an Activity Center?

Many teachers use centers, stations, or learning centers—several different activities occur simultaneously in the classroom. While such a reorganization of the classroom differs considerably from whole-class instruction, this is not sufficient to improve learning. Transforming the nature of teaching is also essential for meaningful learning to occur among the diverse students in today’s classrooms. Activity centers provide the context for a teaching transformation, as well as a means for promoting fairness, harmony, inclusion, and academic excellence.

Activity centers integrate the Standards for Effective Pedagogy. Activity centers differ from traditional learning stations or centers in a number of important ways. First and foremost, activity centers are purposefully designed to include the most effective strategies for increasing learning opportunities for all students, the Standards for Effective Pedagogy, presented in the following sections. Second, the fundamental objective of all tasks at activity centers is to promote the use, elaboration, and application of academic concepts to advance student understanding. Third, activity center tasks encourage active participation, collaboration, and opportunities for extended reading, writing and speaking to promote the development of everyday and academic language.

The goal of reorganizing a classroom into activity centers is to allow the teacher to provide the highest quality instruction to a small group of students, while other students work productively, independently, and cooperatively in a variety of interconnected tasks at other activity centers. At scheduled times, students shift to a different center so that eventually all students have the opportunity to complete the tasks at every center, as well as to work with the teacher in a small group!
Almost any great activity can be the foundation for an activity center! Activity centers can be located anywhere in the classroom. They can be as simple as creating a poster, or as sophisticated as a series of technology or science lab activities. Almost any meaningful activity can provide the foundation for an activity center! Students often work in small groups or with partners to generate shared products, and at times it’s also appropriate for students to work independently on skill-based, review or practice-level tasks. They can be for periods as brief as 15 or 20 minutes, or as long as an hour or block period, a week, a month, a quarter or semester, or even for an entire school year. Although activity centers are almost limitless in their form, content, and length, it is important to understand three essential features of activity centers: the two types of centers, the goals and theoretical background, and the Standards for Effective Pedagogy.

There are two basic types of activity centers: (1) the teacher-led instructional conversation (IC) center, and (2) the independent centers collaboratively led by peers. At the IC center the teacher engages in challenging tasks and instructional conversation with three to seven homogeneously-grouped students.

At the independent centers, students work in heterogeneous groupings, independent of teacher assistance, following directions on a task card or instruction sheet. It is important that care is taken to develop a classroom community that supports student self-management, mutual assistance, and cooperation, and that tasks at the independent centers are designed to ensure that all students will be successful independent of the teacher’s assistance. This enables the teacher to provide quality, focused, uninterrupted instruction to students at the IC center.
Goals of Activity Centers

The goals of activity centers are to facilitate:

**FAIRNESS:**
- Increased opportunities for assistance by teachers and peers
- Instruction for all students through conversation and collaboration with the teacher in small, homogeneous groups

**HARMONY:**
- Collaboration on shared products with peers in small, heterogeneous groupings

**INCLUSION:**
- Increased participation by all students

**ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE:**
- Instruction that is relevant and meaningful to students
- Opportunities for students to engage in extended reading, writing and speaking activities using academic language
- Instruction that is cognitively challenging and advances students’ understanding to more complex levels

The teacher interacts with students in meaningful activities, assesses students’ levels of understanding, and provides responsive assistance.

In classrooms organized into activity centers, the teacher’s role is much more than to merely facilitate student work. The teacher participates with students in meaningful activities; assesses students’ levels of understanding by observing, listening, and questioning; and provides assistance that is responsive to students’ developmental levels and advances their understanding.

The teacher’s assistance may be in many forms: modeling processes that students are to perform; providing instructions, explanations, or ‘rules’; segmenting or sequencing tasks; providing feedback to students on their performance; providing rewards or encouragement; and questioning.

Using these goals to guide instructional design will lead to the development of important values such as fairness, harmony, inclusion and academic excellence. Fairness is achieved when all students receive the assistance they need for success. Harmony is evidenced when classrooms support all students’ learning and mutual assistance is valued. Inclusion means that all students have access to and a voice in social and academic opportunities. Academic excellence is achieved by linking content standards to activity center tasks and providing the assistance necessary for each student to achieve his or her full potential.
Theoretical Background

Learning occurs best when novices collaborate and converse with more experienced and more knowledgeable others on a shared task (Vygotsky, 1978). From this perspective, learning is a social process, and knowledge and meaning are constructed in socially created contexts.

Teaching is assisting student performance

Teaching is assisting student performance with the goal of increasing what students can do unassisted by the teacher. Learning may be represented by increased competence and independence (Dalton, 1998; Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 2000; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). According to Gallimore and Tharp (1992), the most effective learning results when (a) collaboration between students and teachers is accompanied by discussion; (b) instructional activities are meaningfully connected to students’ prior experience and knowledge; and (c) instruction is conversational and occurs within the learner’s zone of proximal development (ZPD), defined by Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) as “...the difference between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.”

Based on these ideas, Tharp et al., (2000) formulated five pedagogy standards for teaching and learning. The first standard, Joint Productive Activity, involves teachers and students working together on a common product or goal with opportunities to converse about their work. The second standard, Language and Literacy Development, involves developing competence in the language and literacy of instruction, as well as the academic disciplines, throughout all instructional activities. The third standard, Contextualization, situates new academic content in contexts familiar to students to connect it to prior knowledge or experience from home, school, or community. The fourth standard, Challenging Activities, engages students in complex tasks requiring the application or use of content knowledge to achieve an academic goal. The fifth standard, Instructional Conversation, is to teach primarily through a planned, goal-directed conversation between the teacher and a small group of students.
Research Evidence

A study recently conducted at one of CREDE’s Research and Demonstration Schools documents the relationship between teachers’ use of the Five Standards and student achievement and provides support for their effectiveness with diverse students.

Students in classrooms using the Five Standards and activity centers showed greater achievement gains.

The school, serving predominantly low-income Latino ELLs, ranked in the second decile of California schools in 2001. For both studies, student achievement gains were estimated from standardized test scores (SAT-9) from two consecutive years.

Using cluster analysis of teacher’s use of the Five Standards and classroom organization, four clusters were generated representing the possible combinations of pedagogy (high vs. low use of the standards) and organization (whole class vs. activity centers).

Analyses found that students in grades 3 to 5 whose teachers used the Five Standards to a high degree and organized their classrooms into activity centers showed significantly greater achievement gains on all SAT-9 tests than students whose teachers did not. In fact, students whose teachers had transformed both pedagogy and organization were the only group to evidence achievement gains; students in all other groups evidenced declines in achievement from the prior year.

Pedagogy, Organization, and Student Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tr>
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<td>-1</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class organization, high Standards use</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Center organization, low Standards use</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Center organization, high Standards use</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Five Standards and Activity Centers

Designing activity centers that increase learning opportunities is accomplished by strategically implementing the Standards for Effective Pedagogy. They become even more important in classrooms with learners from a variety of cultural, ethnic and language backgrounds. In this section we discuss each standard and illustrate its critical features with classroom examples.

JPA

Joint Productive Activity
Facilitate learning through joint productive activity among teacher and students

Joint Productive Activities allow the teacher to provide sufficient support to ensure the success of all learners, while encouraging active participation by students with varying levels of skill and knowledge.

The first standard, Joint Productive Activity (JPA), is collaboration on a shared product or goal. Collaboration between the teacher and a small group of students, or between peers, encourages active participation, interaction, the exchange of information, and sharing of views, problem solving and thinking strategies. More important, joint productive activities allow the teacher, other adult, or more capable peers to provide sufficient assistance and support to ensure the success of all participants, while encouraging active participation by students with varying levels of skill and knowledge.

At the core of every activity center is a “product.” Examples of products are research reports, diagrams, or solutions to problems. Products may be tangible, such as a worksheet, an essay, or a lab report; or intangible, such as the understanding of a concept, the comprehension of a story, or a change in beliefs or attitude resulting from a discussion or lecture.

An apt metaphor for JPA is volleyball. In playing volleyball, all team members, with varying roles and responsibilities, actively participate throughout the entire match. JPAs are not as effective when played as a relay-type event. In JPAs, participants’ moves are coordinated and interactive. Also, as with volleyball, though players have different strengths and skills to contribute, all have opportunities to play a variety of positions, or roles, in the game.

Ms. V’s classroom provides an example of a JPA. Students collaborate with the teacher at one activity center to produce a bulletin board display on the unit theme of “good citizenship.” There is a great deal of cutting, taping, rearranging, and ongoing discussion about what might go on the board, why some things might be more appropriate than others, and how to best convey the main ideas or concepts. The tangible product of this JPA is the bulletin board, and an intangible product is a shared understanding of good citizenship.
The second standard, **Language and Literacy Development (LLD)**, is a primary objective of activity centers and can best be accomplished by providing activities that are rich in language use. Language is best learned through purposeful conversation in authentic contexts. Teachers can promote language and literacy development by creating tasks that generate learners’ use of everyday and academic language. Language is the fundamental tool used for students’ cognitive development. At activity centers, students engage in dialogue with peers and the teacher, and use everyday and academic language in extended speaking, reading, and writing activities.

We compare this standard to sports equipment. Language can be thought of as the equipment needed for learning. Just as learning to use sports equipment is critical for effective participation in any sport, students must learn to use language in appropriate contexts. For example, playing Ping-Pong requires knowing how to use a paddle, which is quite different than the way one would use a racket for tennis. Students must be shown the way language is used in a given context, such as mathematics or science, following the specific rules of that context, just as a player must be shown how to use a paddle in Ping-Pong or a racket in tennis.

Mrs. W’s 6th grade social studies classroom provides an example of this standard. Her classroom consists primarily of limited English proficient students. Mrs. W facilitates a small group activity and discussion at one activity center. The task is to generate a list of improvements students would like to make in their own community; discover the underlying problem; classify the problem as social, health, economic, environmental, or political; generate possible solutions to the problem; and, finally, compare these local problems to those they are learning about in a country they’re studying. During the activity, the teacher facilitates students’ language expression by encouraging them to speak in complete sentences, rephrasing to model precise language, and questioning to elicit extended student contributions to the conversation.
The third standard, Contextualization (CTX), guides teachers in linking concepts and instruction to students’ prior knowledge or experience from home, school, or community. Contextualization is connecting, linking, or bridging what children learn in school to real life contexts. Connections between the formal concepts of the classroom and everyday concepts makes the new information more relevant and meaningful, provides authentic contexts for applying personal knowledge to classroom learning, and improves attention, motivation, and learning.

Contextualization is similar to building a solid foundation for a house. Contextualized instruction provides a solid foundation on which to build new knowledge.

An example of Contextualization comes from a unit taught on a New Mexico reservation. Picking pinion nuts as a food source has been a part of this pueblo community’s way of life for hundreds of years. The entire middle school took a field trip to the mountains to harvest pinions. The students were taught how to shake the trees and sift through the ground for nuts. For the next several weeks all classroom activities across all subjects were tied directly to the field trip. The nuts were weighed and bagged in science; price per pound calculations and projections of profits were the focus of mathematics; and narratives were written in language arts classes.
CHALLENGING ACTIVITIES
TEACH COMPLEX THINKING, CHALLENGING STUDENTS TOWARD COGNITIVE COMPLEXITY

The fourth standard, **Challenging Activities (CA)**, promotes complex instructional tasks to teach course content and higher order thinking skills. It is extremely important to note, however, that all activity center tasks are designed to ensure student success – challenge refers to the level of cognitive complexity required to perform the task, not level of difficulty! Challenging Activities are those in which students generate new knowledge by using information to perform complex tasks that require various forms of elaboration such as analysis, synthesis or evaluation. Challenging Activities include (a) high expectations for student performance on a challenging task; (b) assessment by teacher, peer, or self; and (c) assistance through modeling, explaining, interacting, and feedback. Bloom’s Taxonomy is useful in designing Challenging Activities because it describes levels of cognitive function, from a lower level of learning rote knowledge; to comprehension, application, and analysis; and to the highest levels of synthesis and evaluation.

A challenging activity is similar to an advanced organizer in that it provides an overview of the main concepts, presenting the whole picture as a basis for understanding the parts, and provides students with clues as to what is important to attend to throughout the learning activities.

An example of a challenging activity center was observed in Mr. Y’s classroom in a middle school in the Northwest. Students had previously written persuasive speeches, using criteria from a writing rubric that included an opening statement, conjunctions, and supporting examples (high expectations). Students then formed small groups and took turns reading their speeches. Each student asked group members for feedback on each of the criteria stated in the writing rubric: is it included? Is it sufficient? Is it clear (assessment)? Because the task was so well designed, and students were enthusiastic about the topics they’d chosen for their speeches, this activity was characterized by enthusiastic dialogue between students. Learning was evident as students engaged in critical analysis of one another’s speeches and provided suggestions for their improvement (assistance and feedback).
The fifth standard, **Instructional Conversation (IC)**, provides the context for teachers and students to work closely together in a small group discussion that has a clear academic goal. In an IC, the teacher listens carefully to assess students’ levels of understanding; assists learning by restating, praising, encouraging, and questioning about views, judgments, rationales or experience; and weaves instructional content with students’ prior knowledge. All students have the opportunity to participate, and student talk occurs at higher rates than teacher talk. ICs must occur in a small-group setting to effectively assess and assist learning within participants’ zones of proximal development, and to provide sufficient opportunity for all students to participate.

Our favorite metaphor for IC is weaving. IC is a process in which the teacher systematically weaves together (a) students’ prior knowledge, (b) meaningful examples or events to which students can relate, (c) and academic content.

In Ms. Zs’ middle school language arts class, she engages a small group of students in an Instructional Conversation with the goal of developing their understanding of how authors use language to communicate atmosphere and setting. Ms. Z elicits students’ personal experiences of settings similar to the one portrayed in the text, asks students to provide evidence from their experience to support their statements, and assists understanding by organizing students’ ideas on a concept web.
IMPLEMENTING ACTIVITY CENTERS

✓ Phasing in Activity Centers
✓ The Instructional Frame
✓ Phase I
✓ Phase II
✓ Phase III
✓ Phase IV
✓ Phase V
✓ Guidelines for Designing a Successful Instructional Unit Using Activity Centers
✓ Guidelines for Designing a Successful Activity Center
✓ Additional Features of Activity Centers
Phasing In Activity Centers

Because of the complex organization required to implement activity centers successfully, it's very important that teachers allow themselves, and their students, time to phase in the skills they'll need.

There are five phases for transforming a classroom from whole-class, teacher-centered instruction to activity center instruction.

We present a suggested framework for phasing in activity centers, and realize that teachers who already use centers in their classrooms will draw from their own experience as they work through the phases. We provide checklists for each of the phases, a possible classroom layout, and a sample lesson. Our goal is to provide enough information for new teachers to be successful, as well as information on the Standards for Effective Pedagogy to enrich the centers of both novice and experienced teachers.

We begin this section by describing and discussing the importance of openings and closures, followed by descriptions of five phases for transforming a classroom from whole-class, teacher-centered instruction to activity center instruction, which is characterized by increased quality and quantity of student participation in complex tasks. Students work in a variety of roles and in multiple grouping formats such as affinity, language, diversity, ability, gender, interest, and ability, both homogeneous, at the IC center, and heterogeneous, at the independent centers.

In the initial phases, I through III, activities are connected by a common theme, and the tasks are primarily review, practice, format familiarization, reteaching, and success or community building experiences. The design of activities in all phases focuses on increased student participation, interaction, and success.
The Instructional Frame

Framing each instructional activity between an opening and a closure is an effective routine for developing, modeling, and practicing the community values necessary for activity center instruction. The goals of openings and closures are to facilitate cooperative working relationships; encourage quality work by students, both independently and jointly with peers and the teacher; and promote high expectations for everyone’s participation, performance, and learning.

All classroom activities should consistently be framed by an opening and a closure.

All classroom activities should consistently begin with an opening in which the upcoming activity is introduced and students are prepped with all information necessary for successful participation; and end with a closure to discuss and problem solve the experience. Openings and closures may also include announcements, and the generation, modeling or review of community rules and the cooperation and respect that will characterize the community. Successful openings and closures are typically brief.

SAMPLE TIMELINE FOR PHASE I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00 - 8:10am</td>
<td>Opening - Discuss what will occur, Build community, Reinforce class rules and community values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:10 - 8:30am</td>
<td>Large Group Activity - Teacher teaches whole class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 - 8:50am</td>
<td>Follow-Up Activity - Teacher floats, Students work individually or collaboratively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:50 - 9:00am</td>
<td>Closure - Talk about the experience, Highlight successes, Solve problems jointly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Phase I

In Phase I, 2-10 days, the classroom community works to establish the routine of beginning each instructional activity with an opening, and ending with a closure to introduce and model behavioral expectations and community values, and to discuss and problem solve the activity.

The teacher floats to assist, and students work individually, with partners, or in small groups.

Phase I: During Phase I, instruction occurs in a whole-class setting following the opening. During the instructional activities, between the opening and closure, the teacher floats to assist while students work individually, with partners, or in small groups.

In addition to providing assistance, the teacher interacts with students to get to know them and to assess skill levels, talents, capacities for various group roles, and to determine student affinities. Activities are connected by a common theme (e.g., community, friendship or summer vacation), encourage collaboration and interaction, and also include some peer JPAs. It’s very important that all students are successful in all Phase I tasks.

An example of a Phase I lesson was observed in a 4th grade class of mostly English language learners. On the third day of the year, the teacher opened the lesson by reviewing the classroom rules he and the students had generated the previous day. He then presented the upcoming instructional activity. Students would work with a partner to produce a Venn diagram (overlapping circles to show similarities and differences) titled ‘Old Friends and New Friends’, and then were to describe what they might do with old and new friends to make them feel valued. Students would then individually write paragraphs about an experience that they’d had when a friend had made them feel important, special, or valued. While students worked, the teacher floated to converse and assist, informally assessing oral and written language development, and establishing rapport. During the closure, the class discussed how well they’d worked in relation to the classroom rules, and decided they would add an additional rule for working quietly so others could work productively.
Phase I (cont.)

**SAMPLE CLASSROOM LAYOUT FOR PHASE I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brainstorm Classroom functions:</th>
<th>In your groups list:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- noise levels</td>
<td>- Rules for getting along and getting quality work done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- bathroom breaks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- make up work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- speaking out &amp; raising hands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- proper free time use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ALL GROUPS ARE HOMOGENEOUS**

* All students perform the same task
Phase I (cont.)

Primary tasks to accomplish during Phase I

Establish community goals, classroom management, and routine openings and closings for each activity

♦ Co-develop with students the community values needed for a cooperative classroom that supports the learning of all students

♦ Implement a classroom management plan that ensures the classroom environment is conducive to quality work and that establishes high expectations for everyone’s participation, performance, and learning

♦ Establish the routine openings and closures prior to and following each activity to:
  - discuss and model behavioral expectations
  - establish and reinforce community values
  - introduce, discuss and problem solve the instructional activities
  - praise students for their positive behaviors and contributions to the classroom community

♦ Ensure that ALL students are successful in ALL tasks

♦ Include some peer JPAs - students work with partners or in triads on a shared product - with the teacher floating to assist and encouraging collaboration, mutual assistance, and interaction

♦ The teacher interacts with students to learn about their affinities, skill levels, talents, capacities for various group roles, as well to learn about their lives and interests
Checklist for Phase I

Use this checklist to assess your readiness to proceed to Phase II

Teachers should exercise consistency to maintain and reinforce behavioral expectations

Roles and Responsibilities
- Teacher consistently begins activities with an opening and ends with a closure to establish, maintain and reinforce behavioral expectations and community values, and for introducing and problem solving activities
- Teacher encourages student interaction and mutual assistance
- Teacher praises students often for appropriate participation
- Teacher monitors students while they work
- Students interact positively over tasks, providing mutual assistance
- Students succeed in collaborative activities to generate shared products (JPA)
- Students perform tasks with high rates of success
- Students complete tasks within an allotted time
- Students know how to use extra time

Tasks/Activities
- Tasks emphasize skill review, re-teaching, format and material introduction, and everyday problem solving organized around an “early content theme”

Grouping
- Students complete tasks in a variety of groupings: individually, in pairs or triads, or in small groups

Routing
- Students transition smoothly between openings, instructional tasks, and closures

Assessment
- Teacher observes students to assess language, social, and academic skill level
Phase II

In Phase II, 2-10 days, the teacher assists one section of the class while the other(s) practice working independently.

**Phase II:** Students work on two to five different activities (as opposed to ‘activity centers’ that are semi-permanent stations) that occur simultaneously. The teacher assists one section of the class with one of the activities while the other(s) practice working independently on tasks connected by a common theme and leveled to ensure that all students will experience success without the teacher’s assistance. Routing patterns and transitions between simultaneous activities are practiced, and behavioral expectations are reinforced in the openings and closures, with an emphasis on praising students for self-management, community participation, and peer assistance.

During Phase II, the teacher interacts with students to assess language, social and academic skill levels, and collects baseline samples of students’ work products. Activities include peer collaboration on shared products (JPA), opportunities for extended discussion and writing (LLD), and are meaningfully connected to students’ lives (CTX). Students perform tasks successfully, within the allotted time, and know how to use extra time productively.

An example of a Phase II lesson was observed in a 7th grade mathematics class of mostly American Indian students. The teacher introduced the upcoming three instructional activities that would occur simultaneously. Students were seated in 6 groups of clustered desks. Two of the clusters would work on fraction review problems from the textbook, self-correcting them when done, and were encouraged to compare answers and assist one another as they worked. In two other clusters, students would work with a partner to write the teacher a letter to explain all they know about operations with fractions, and what they liked and disliked about working with fractions. Students working on these first two activities were to do their work without attempting to enlist the teacher’s assistance. The final two clusters would order fractions on a number line with the assistance of the teacher. After 15 minutes, students would rotate to the next activity in round robin fashion. This lesson concluded with a whole class discussion on how well students worked in this organization, and how they might do better next time.
Phase II (cont.)

SAMPLE CLASSROOM LAYOUT FOR PHASE II

ALL GROUPS ARE HOMOGENEOUS
Phase II (cont.)

**PRIMARY TASKS TO ACCOMPLISH DURING PHASE II**

**ALLOW STUDENTS TO WORK SUCCESSFULLY AND INDEPENDENTLY**

♦ Give students opportunities to work successfully, independent of teacher assistance by first introducing 2, then 4, simultaneous tasks, with the teacher assisting one section of the class while the other(s) work independently

♦ Rotates intact groups of students, round robin, to accomplish the different, simultaneous tasks

♦ Practice routing patterns between simultaneous activities

♦ Use openings and closures to reinforce behavioral expectation, performance standards, and community values; to praise students for self-management, community participation, and peer assistance; and to establish protocols for using extra time productively

♦ Design activities that include peer collaboration on shared products (JPA), opportunities for extended dialogue and writing (LLD), and are meaningfully connected to students’ lives (CTX)
Checklist for Phase II

Use this checklist to assess your readiness to proceed to Phase III

New to Phase II:

Roles and Responsibilities
♦ Teacher consistently begins activities with an opening and ends with a closure to establish, maintain and reinforce behavioral expectations and community values, and for introducing and problem solving activities
♦ Teacher encourages student interaction and mutual assistance
♦ Teacher praises students often for appropriate participation
♦ Teacher monitors students while they work
♦ Students interact positively over tasks, providing mutual assistance
♦ Students succeed in collaborative activities to generate shared products (JPA)
♦ Students perform tasks with high rates of success
♦ Students complete independent tasks within allotted time and know how to use extra time
♦ Students work without teacher assistance on independent tasks

Tasks/Activities
♦ Tasks emphasize skill review, re-teaching, format and material introduction, and problem solving organized around a relevant theme

Grouping
♦ Students complete tasks in a variety of groupings: individually, in pairs or triads, or in small groups

Routing
♦ Students transition smoothly between openings, instructional tasks, and closures

Assessment
♦ Teacher observes students to assess language, social, and academic skill levels
Phase III

In Phase III, 2-10 days, each student has opportunities to work with all other students in the class.

The teacher routes students through activities in various patterns

Phase III: In addition to having students work on different tasks occurring simultaneously, some with the teachers assistance and some independent of teacher assistance, the teacher routes students through the activities in various patterns so that each student has the opportunity to work with every other student in the classroom.

In addition to practicing routing patterns, a system for managing paperwork is established in this phase. One way to accomplish both of these goals is to provide students with a folder for their work that includes a cover sheet with the order in which they are to complete the activities. Sample routing patterns may be found in Teaching Transformed: Achieving Excellence, Fairness, Inclusion and Harmony, by Tharp, Estrada, Dalton and Yamauchi (2000).

During this phase, the teacher focuses on providing students with feedback on their progress and continues to reinforce positive behaviors in the openings and closures. Students become adept at moving from one activity to another, less than a minute, and effectively participate in the maintenance of supplies and classroom systems for storing and retrieving their work.

An example of the Phase III lesson was observed in a high school social studies classroom. When students entered class, they picked up their work folder with information on the week’s tasks and the unique order in which they were to complete them (each task would be completed with various groupings of students). Each day this week students would complete two of ten tasks, all related to the topic of “International Views on the US Conflict with Iraq,” including journal entries, newspaper, magazine and internet searches, letter writing to representatives, joint construction of maps depicting nations supportive of or opposed to war, among others. Two of the activities were designed to include the teacher as a full participant, and in the others students were to work independent of teacher assistance. The class began with an overview of the activities and an explanation of the routing patterns, and concluded with a brief discussion on how well the activities were working and how they might be improved.
Phase III (cont.)

SAMPLE CLASSROOM LAYOUT FOR PHASE III

Predictions
What will happen?
- Denise is going to go to the woods to get help
- Ian will talk to Denise because he’s scared to be alone

ALL GROUPS ARE HETEROGENEOUS
Phase III (cont.)

Primary tasks to accomplish during Phase III

Group students in a variety of ways, allowing them to work with all other students

- Group students in a variety of ways, both heterogeneously and homogeneously, by affinity, language, diversity, ability, or gender so students have opportunities to work with all other students

- Use the openings and closures to encourage students to
  - move from one activity to another efficiently, in less than a minute
  - participate in the maintenance of supplies and classroom systems for storing and retrieving work products

- Teachers provide students with feedback on their progress
Checklist for Phase III

Use this checklist to assess your readiness to proceed to Phase IV

New to Phase III:

Roles and Responsibilities

♦ Teacher consistently begins activities with an opening and ends with a closure to establish, maintain and reinforce behavioral expectations and community values, and for introducing and problem solving activities
♦ Teacher encourages student interaction and mutual assistance
♦ Teacher praises students often for appropriate participation
♦ Teacher monitors students while they work
♦ Students interact positively over tasks, providing mutual assistance
♦ Students succeed in collaborative activities to generate shared products (JPA)
♦ Students perform tasks with high rates of success
♦ Students complete independent tasks within the allotted time and know how to use extra time
♦ Students work without teacher assistance on tasks
♦ Students use and maintain classroom systems for storing, retrieving, and circulating work products

Tasks/Activities

♦ Tasks emphasize skill review, re-teaching, format and material introduction, and problem solving organized around a relevant theme

Grouping

♦ Students function appropriately in mixed groups
♦ Each student works in a variety of groupings with every other student
♦ Each student has worked with every other student in the class

Routing

♦ Students move from one activity to another within a minute

Assessment

♦ Teacher observes students to assess language, social, and academic skill levels
♦ Teacher informs students often and specifically about their progress
Phase IV

In Phase IV, 2-10 days, attention shifts from logistics, behavioral expectations and community building, to academic content.

The teacher systematically increases the number of activity centers to five or more.

**Phase IV:** Initially, one activity center is created as a permanent structure in the classroom, with an established location and all necessary resources. At the activity center, students work independently of teacher assistance, following instructions on a task card. During this phase, the teacher systematically increases the number of activity centers to five or more.

Activity centers and routing patterns are stable for a period of time, and attention shifts from logistics, behavioral expectations and community building to academic content. The teachers continue to ensure that all students are successful, and that all instructional activities are introduced in an opening, and problem-solved in a closure, also using these times for reinforcing classroom values.

During Phase 4, the teacher focuses on teaching content material using a conversational approach, engaging students in sustained dialogue. The focus of instructional activities shifts from review and content themes to more complex thinking activities such as analysis and problem solving. Students increase their participation with activity center logistics, tasks, and community functions.

A Phase IV lesson was observed in a fifth grade language arts classroom in an urban school with students from diverse ethnic, cultural and language backgrounds. The teacher had established activity centers for reading, comprehension/reflection journals, vocabulary, research, and writing. At all centers, tasks were differentiated so that all students worked at the appropriate level of challenge. While students followed directions on task cards, the teacher floated to engage students at the writing and research centers in dialogue about their work, and to assist them with their tasks. Students at other centers were to work independent of teacher assistance. On this day, the tasks at the research and vocabulary centers engaged students in generating shared products. As usual, the activity center work was preceded by an opening and ended with a closure. On this day, the closure was focused more on the nature of the work, though the teacher made a point of thanking students for working well together.
Phase IV (cont.)

Sample Classroom Layout for Phase IV

Today: Activity Centers

AC 1
AC 3
Reading
AC 2
Vocab
AC 4
Journals
AC 5
Poster
AC 6
SGA*

All groups are heterogeneous

* Student Generated Activity
Phase IV (cont.)

**Primary Tasks to Accomplish during Phase IV**

**Activity Centers Become Permanent Structures in the Classroom**

- Phase in activity centers as permanent structures in the classroom – initially just one, then gradually increasing the number of activity centers to 5 or more - students work independently of teacher assistance, following instructions on a task card

- Use a conversational approach to engage students in sustained dialogue, floating to the various center
Checklist for Phase IV

Use this checklist to assess your readiness to proceed to Phase V

**New to Phase IV:**

**Use multiple activity centers where tasks relate to instructional goals, and differ according to individual needs**

**Teacher routes mixed groups of students systematically through activity centers**

**Teacher uses current student assessment to design future instructional tasks**

**Roles and Responsibilities**

- Teacher consistently begins activities with an opening and ends with a closure to establish, maintain and reinforce behavioral expectations and community values, and for introducing and problem solving activities
- Teacher encourages student interaction and mutual assistance
- Teacher praises students often for appropriate participation.
- Teacher monitors students while they work
- Students interact positively over tasks, providing mutual assistance
- Students succeed in collaborative activities to generate shared products (JPA)
- Students perform tasks with high rates of success
- Students complete independent tasks within the allotted time and know how to use extra time
- Students work without teacher assistance on tasks
- Students use and maintain classroom systems for storing, retrieving, and circulating work products

**Tasks/Activities**

- Multiple activity centers are functioning
- Tasks relate to instructional goals
- Tasks differ according to individual students’ needs

**Grouping**

- Students function appropriately in mixed groups.
- Each student works has opportunities to work with every other student
- Each student has worked with every other student in the class

**Routing**

- Students move from one activity center to another within a minute.
- Teacher routes mixed groups of students systematically through activity centers

**Assessment**

- Teacher informs students often about their progress
- Teacher assesses student work products and uses assessment results to guide the design of future instructional task
**Phase V**

*In Phase V, students continue to work in heterogeneous groupings at independent activity centers, and now also work in homogeneous groups at the IC center, where the teacher engages students in instructional conversation.*

The teacher prepares questions that promote dialogue and thoughtfulness, and builds understanding

**Phase V:** While students continue working in a variety of groupings at the independent activity centers, the teacher engages students in Instructional Conversation in homogeneous groups at the IC center, which is now the primary vehicle for teaching. Academic language is used to discuss complex topics and to advance students’ conceptual understanding. The teacher prepares questions that promote dialogue and thoughtfulness, and builds understanding by questioning students on relevant knowledge and experiences. Also, activity centers are developed that either follow and/or precede the IC center to reinforce or assist emerging understandings.

In Phase V, the teacher assesses students’ knowledge, experience, and preferences in during the IC. Activities focus on the teaching of new academic content. Students engage in both peer and self-assessment of student products.

A Phase V science lesson was observed in a third grade classroom of students with mixed English language proficiency. The teacher engaged a homogeneous group of students in an IC about an expository text they’d read on reptiles, drawing extensively on students prior knowledge and experiences to generate a t-chart of characteristics and habitats. Other students worked independently in heterogeneously grouped centers on such tasks as a reptile habitat classification game; journal entries on the main ideas of the text, questions, predictions and opinions; a science observation tasks, “I See, I Wonder;” and a JPA center where all students contributed to a class book on reptiles. In this class, there was a high degree of talking, assisting, writing, and engagement.
Phase V (cont.)

Sample Classroom Layout for Phase V

Today: Activity Centers

F Group – Teacher-led IC Center
E Group – Follow up Activity Center
Groups A, B, C & D – All other Activity Centers

* Student Generated Activities
Phase V (cont.)

**Primary tasks to accomplish during Phase V**

**Shift the focus to academic content, and engage homogeneously grouped students in IC**

- Shift the focus from logistics, behavioral expectations and community building, to academic content
- Engage homogeneously grouped students in Instructional Conversation, now the primary vehicle for teaching, daily at the IC center
- Develop activity centers that either follow or precede IC center activities to reinforce or assist emerging understandings
- Group students in a variety of groupings at the independent centers
- Have students perform both self- and peer assessment of work products
Checklist for Phase V

Use this checklist to guide your progress through Phase V

New to Phase V:

Roles and Responsibilities
♦ Teacher begins activities with an opening and ends with a closure to maintain and reinforce behavioral expectations and community values, and for introducing and problem solving activities
♦ Teacher encourages student interaction and mutual assistance
♦ Teacher praises students often for appropriate participation
♦ Teacher monitors students while they work
♦ Students interact positively over tasks, providing mutual assistance
♦ Students succeed in collaborative activities to generate shared products (JPA)
♦ Students perform tasks with high rates of success
♦ Students complete independent tasks within the allotted time and know how to use extra time
♦ Students work without teacher assistance on independent tasks
♦ Students effectively use and maintain classroom systems for storing, retrieving, and circulating work products

Tasks/Activities
♦ Tasks relate to instructional goals
♦ Tasks differ according to individual students’ needs
♦ Multiple activity centers are functioning

Grouping
♦ Students function appropriately in mixed groups
♦ Each student works in a variety of groupings with every other student at the independent centers
♦ Teacher makes grouping decisions for academic instruction at the IC center for Instructional Conversation
♦ Students work in homogeneous groups at the IC center and the follow-up centers

Routing
♦ Students move to and from activity centers within a minute.
♦ Teacher routes mixed groups of students systematically through independent and follow-up activity centers

Assessment
♦ Teacher informs students often about their progress
♦ Teacher assesses student work products and uses the results to guide the design of future instructional tasks and material
♦ Students perform self and peer assessments of work products
Guidelines For Designing A Successful Instructional Unit Using Activity Centers

Perform the following steps to create your activity center unit

Break the unit into ‘chunks’, designing one or more activity centers for each ‘chunk’

♦ Select the outcome or theme for the unit.

♦ Break it into ‘chunks,’ relevant subsections, main concepts, or components using the Activity Center Planning Web.

♦ Design one or more activity centers for each ‘chunk.’

♦ To assist students keep track of work completed, create a Student Activity Log (see Sample Material) for your unit.

♦ Create an overview of the activity centers unit, similar to a syllabus, and provide it to students and parents. Include the goal(s), a brief description, and assessment criteria for each activity center.
Guidelines For Designing A Successful Activity Center

USE THE CHECKLIST BELOW TO CREATE SUCCESSFUL ACTIVITY CENTERS!

It’s very important to design activity centers that ensure the success of all students - thoughtful and simple to do!

♦ Establish the learning goal of the activity and link it to appropriate content standards.
♦ Design a ‘challenging’ activity for some activity centers, and remember to provide sufficient scaffolding to ensure all students will be successful! We want to engage students in thoughtful activities that are simple enough for all students to complete on their own.
♦ Some activity centers will be for students to practice skills and processes.
♦ Include tasks that provide opportunities for students to use content language through discussions or extended writing assignments.
♦ Design activities that are relevant to students by connecting them to their lives and interests, or draw from students’ prior knowledge and experience.
♦ Determine what product students will generate. In many of your activity center tasks, have students collaborate with a partner or in small groups to create a shared product. This will facilitate student dialogue and negotiations on various aspects of the task.
♦ Break each complex task into manageable subtasks to ensure student success!
♦ Include optional extensions for students who work quickly, or those who may benefit from additional, more challenging work.
♦ Determine how the product will be assessed, such as with a rubric, points, or a checklist; the criteria for assessment; and whether the assessment will be done by the student, a peer, or the teacher.
♦ Make activity center instructions (e.g., signs, task cards, or instruction sheets). Design instructions with your students in mind. Consider ability levels and language proficiency when determining factors such as font size; number of words; vocabulary; or the need for diagrams or visual representations.
♦ Clearly state your assessment criteria on the task card.
♦ Gather and organize resources for each activity center.

Finally, triple check that all the resources students might need are available - oversupply! You might want to make a checklist for yourself with a list of supplies needed for each center, including the task card or instructions, the assessment criteria, and necessary materials.

1 Challenging Activities are those in which students generate new knowledge by using information to perform complex tasks that require various forms of elaboration such as analysis, synthesis or evaluation. Challenging Activities also include (a) clearly stated, high expectations for student performance, (b) assessment (e.g., rubrics or checklists) by teacher, peer, or self, and (c) assistance through modeling, explaining, interacting, and feedback (teacher, adult, peer, or self).
Additional Features of Activity Centers

Consider including some of the features below as you increase your skill in designing and implementing activity centers.

Include students in the development of activity centers, and allow them some choices

- Include more complex rotations to increase diversity at all activity centers in terms of friendship, interest, language, diversity, gender, and ability².

- Provide students with some choice (‘Student Directed Activities’³) between tasks within each activity center.

- Provide students with choice of which activity in which to participate.

- Include students in the development of activity center tasks.

- Include students in the evaluation of activity centers (see Sample Material).

- Create several activity centers from which students can select.

- Involve students in establishing procedures and expectations through discussions or class meetings. (Add your own ideas, based on your teaching experience, to this list.)

  a) __________________________________________________________

  b) __________________________________________________________

  c) __________________________________________________________


³ If you include ‘Student Directed Activities’ we suggest one of the two following formats: (1) design 7 activity centers for each week from which students choose 5 to complete; on any given day students work at the activity center of their choosing (to prevent ‘congestion,’ limit the number of students who can be at a given Center at any time); or (2) design 5 ‘required’ activity centers, and 2 ‘optional’ activity centers that students attend when their work in ‘required’ Centers is complete.
SAMPLE MATERIALS FOR ACTIVITY CENTERS

✓ Classroom Management
✓ Student Activity Center Record Keeping Log
✓ Student Evaluation of Activity Centers
✓ Activity Centers Overview
✓ Task Card: Book Reviews
✓ Assessment: Book Reviews
✓ Task Card: Circle Graphs
✓ Assessment: Circle Graphs
✓ Task Card: Commercials
✓ Assessment: Commercials
✓ Task Card: Planting Ipu Seeds
Classroom Management

Effective classroom communities require classroom management. There are many systems readily available and widely employed. We present a simple but effective method here for one approach that a novice or experienced teacher may find useful, recommended by Tharp, et al., (2000).

SCIPP: Simplify, Cooperate, Ignore, Praise, and Promote, is a tool that supports the building of a cooperative classroom community by providing guidance to teachers and presenting expectations for student behavior.

SCIPP:

- **Simplify**: simplify early tasks to ensure student success.
- **Cooperate**: ask students for input on community building, listen and respond, put students’ suggestions to immediate use, and give important community responsibilities to students.
- **Ignore**: attend to what is going on, ignore minor irregularities, expect inappropriate behavior to disappear if not given attention, and enforce community derived consequences for continued inappropriate behaviors.
- **Praise and Promote**: showcase accomplishments, promote and praise appropriate student participation, and praise academic effort and products by describing how they meet performance standards.
Student Activity Center Record Keeping Log

Name: ________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Center</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Complete or Incomplete</th>
<th>Describe What You Did Today</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
Student Evaluation of Activity Centers

1. Which Activity Center did you find most useful? Why?

2. Which Activity Center was not especially useful to you? Why?

3. What suggestions do you have to improve any of the activity centers or make them more meaningful to you?
   - Activity Center 1: “Title 1”
   - Activity Center 2: “Title 2”
   - Activity Center 3: “Title 3”
   - Activity Center 4: “Title 4”
   - Activity Center 5: “Title 5”

4. What do you like about working at activity centers? Why?

5. Is there anything you dislike about working at activity centers? Why? Do you have suggestions for improvement?
Activity Centers Overview

(Students, We will go over this together prior to beginning our activity centers)

Students and Parents:

The following is your guide to activity centers in our class.

At each activity center you will have one class period to complete the work (55 minutes). If the activity is not completed in the allotted time, you need to make plans to complete it either during lunch, recess, or after school. If the activity is not completed and you do not arrange for out-of-class time to complete it, the activity will receive NO CREDIT. Please be responsible, make sure to complete make-up work the same or the following day.

Be sure to turn in your work so you receive credit. Ask your activity center partners for help when you need assistance. Please provide assistance to all Partners when they need it. Maintain a noise level that allows students at other activity centers to concentrate on their work.

Activity Center Behavior Expectations

1. Students give and receive help to one another.
2. Students will remain at the center for the duration of the allotted time, and not seek assistance from the teacher if the teacher is working with students at the IC center. All students will have the opportunity to work at this activity center.
3. Students take care of center materials and clean up at the end of each period.
4. Each student is a responsible active participant.
5. Students will fill out their Activity Center Record Keeping Logs every day.

[Here, insert one brief paragraph describing each Activity Center.]

Activity Center 1: Title
Description
Assessment

Activity Center 2: Title
Description
Assessment

Activity Center 3: Title
Description
Assessment

Activity Center 4: Title
Description
Assessment
SAMPLE TASK CARD

ACTIVITY: BOOK REVIEWS

8th GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS

Learning Objective: Discriminating Between Fact and Opinion

Materials
♦ Paper/Pen/Pencil
♦ Samples of book reviews from book covers, newspapers, or websites
♦ Chart paper, one per group
♦ Scoring Rubric for Individual Book Review

Activity/Product: At this activity center your group will brainstorm ideas about what could be put into a book review on the book just read. Each group will produce a T-chart on facts and opinions. Each student will write a book review.

Assessment: Group Assessment: A group grade will be assigned to the Facts and Opinions T-chart based on: (a) accuracy, 30%; (b) thoughtfulness, 30%; (c) quantity, 40%, minimum of 15 facts and 15 opinions. Individual Assessment: Partners will exchange papers and use the Scoring Rubric to score and give feedback to their partners.

Directions
Step 1: Brainstorm in your group what could be included in your book review. Discuss these questions: (a) What happened in the book? (b) Where did the book take place? (c) What did you like about this book? What didn’t you like about this book? (d) Would you rewrite the ending, if so how would it end and why? (e) Have you ever read another book with a similar plot? How are they alike and how are they different? Which book do you like better and why? Each person should make a list of the ideas shared.

Step 2: Divide the chart paper in half. Using the list generated in Step 1, on the left list the facts, and on the right list the opinions. Please be sure to write down the page number by each fact for easy reference.

Step 3: Each student will write a book review, using ideas from the T-chart and the sample book reviews. The Scoring Rubric for your Book Review provides a guideline to complete this individual assignment.

Step 4: Find a partner and exchange book reviews. Assess each other’s reviews using the scoring rubric. Give your partner your assessment feedback on how to improve his/her review. After your partner has assessed your book review, write a final draft that incorporates your partner’s feedback. Hand in both your first and final drafts along with the feedback you received from your partner.

Tips
♦ Think about reviews you have read on books, movies or CDs. What phrases or words do those critics use to influence the reader to go out and purchase or not buy the book, movie, or CD?
♦ Think about the audience who would be most likely to read your review.
♦ Look over the sample book reviews for ideas.
# Scoring Rubric for a Book Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria/Points</th>
<th>This is a Comprehensive Book Review! (20 points)</th>
<th>This Book Review is Approaching Completion! (10 points)</th>
<th>This Book Review Is still on the Drawing Board! (0 points)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>- Provided book title, author(s) and other related references - Submitted on time - Included all required parts and contents <strong>(5 points)</strong></td>
<td>- Provided book title, author(s) and other related references - Submitted beyond due date - Included a few required parts and contents <strong>(3 points)</strong></td>
<td>- Provided no book title, author(s) and other related references - Submitted beyond due date - Included a few required parts and contents <strong>(0 points)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>- Analyzed the facts and opinions accurately - Supported the review with book contents - Used meaningful persuasive language modeled after sample book reviews to influence readers - Compared to another book to strengthen the review - Addressed the appropriate audience <strong>(10 points)</strong></td>
<td>- Analyzed the facts and opinions with some accuracy - Supported the review with a few book contents - Used some language that influenced readers - Compared to another book to strengthen the review - Did not address the audience appropriately <strong>(5 points)</strong></td>
<td>- Analyzed the facts and opinions inaccurately - Did not support the review with book contents - Failed to use language that influenced readers - Failed to compare to another book - Did not address the audience appropriately <strong>(0 points)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics of Writing</strong></td>
<td>- Presented accurate grammar and spelling - Used complete sentences - Followed the writing conventions for a book review <strong>(5 points)</strong></td>
<td>- Presented acceptable grammar and spelling - Used some incomplete sentences - Followed the writing conventions for a book review <strong>(2 points)</strong></td>
<td>- Presented unacceptable grammar and spelling - Used incomplete sentences - Followed the writing conventions for a book review <strong>(0 points)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sample Peer Feedback/Comments for Revision**

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48
Activity: Circle Graphs

8th grade Mathematics
Learning Objective: Presenting Numeric Information Visually

Materials
- Pencils/rulers/protractors
- Graph handout

Activity/Product: At this activity center, you will work with a partner to produce 4 circle graphs. This will prepare you to make the graph for your survey question results.

Assessment: Self-assessment. Use the key provided in the class Key Binder.

Directions

Step 1: Watch the demonstration on constructing a circle graph.

Step 2: Complete the first circle graph by drawing the specified angles. The fraction, the percent it represents, and corresponding degrees are provided. Label each section of your graph with the percent and degrees.

Step 3: Draw the second circle graph. This time you must first determine the corresponding degrees for each of the fractions and percents that are provided. Label each section of your graph with the percent and degrees.

Step 4: Draw the third circle graph. This time you must first determine the corresponding percent and degrees for each of the fractions that are provided. Label each section of your graph with the percent and degrees.

Step 5: Draw the fourth circle graph based on the results of this survey question: There are 18 students in a math class. On a recent test, 6 students received an A, 9 students received a B, and 3 students received a C. Draw a circle graph that represents this information. Title your graph and provide a label for each section.

Step 6: Correct your work using the key in the Key Binder. Correct any errors you may have made. Check to see that everything is appropriately labeled.

Step 7: In your math journal, explain to an absent student how to do this graphing activity. Provide an example. Tell her how this task relates to our unit on Community Surveys.

Tips
- Before graphing, check to make sure the percents you calculated add up to 100 and the degrees add up to 360.
- Draw the angles from smallest to largest – smaller angles are easier to draw.

(PUT ALL WORK IN THE ‘COMPLETED WORK’ FOLDER)
## Scoring Rubric for Circle Graphs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria/Points</th>
<th>This is a Complete Circle Graph! (20 points)</th>
<th>This Circle Graph is Approaching Completion! (10 points)</th>
<th>This Circle Graph is Still on the Drawing Board! (0 points)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>- All Circle Graphs are drawn neatly&lt;br&gt;- All Circle Graphs include a title&lt;br&gt;- Turned in on time (5 points)</td>
<td>- Some (50% or more) of the Circle Graphs are drawn neatly&lt;br&gt;- Some of the Circle Graphs include a title&lt;br&gt;- Turned in on time (3 points)</td>
<td>- Few (less than 50%) of the circle graphs are drawn neatly&lt;br&gt;- Few of the Circle Graphs include a title&lt;br&gt;- Not turned in on time (0 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>- All sections of the Circle Graphs are accurately drawn to the correct angle&lt;br&gt;- All sections of each graph are labeled with a descriptive label and the correct degrees and percentage (10 points)</td>
<td>- Some sections of the Circle Graphs are accurately drawn to the correct angle&lt;br&gt;- Some sections of each graph are labeled with a descriptive label and the correct degrees and percentages (5 points)</td>
<td>- Few sections of the Circle Graphs are accurately drawn to the correct angle&lt;br&gt;- Several sections of each graph are missing a descriptive label or have incorrect degrees and/or percentages (0 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td>- Described in detail and with accuracy how to make a circle graph&lt;br&gt;- Provided an explicit example&lt;br&gt;- Described accurately how this task relates to our unit on Community Surveys (5 points)</td>
<td>- Described in some detail and with accuracy how to make a circle graph&lt;br&gt;- Provided an example&lt;br&gt;- Described with some accuracy how this task relates to our unit on Community Surveys (2 points)</td>
<td>- Did not describe with detail or accuracy how to make a circle graph&lt;br&gt;- No example provided&lt;br&gt;- Did not describe accurately how this task relates to our unit on Community Surveys (0 points)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PEER FEEDBACK/COMMENTS FOR REVISION**
ACTIVITY: COMMERCIALS
Unit Topic: Advertisements
Class: 6th grade Health/PE
Learning Objective: Identify Persuasive Elements of Advertisements

Materials
♦ The various hair/bath products brought from home.
♦ Paper/Pencil

Activity/Product: At this center your group will create a commercial for one of the products you brought to class. You will then write two paragraphs individually. First, discuss which product you’d want to buy and why. Second, discuss how commercials persuade consumers to buy products.

Assessment: Group Assessment: A group grade will be assigned by the teacher to your commercial using the criteria stated in the Scoring Rubric for Commercials. Group self-assessment: See step 4. Individual Assessment: Partners will exchange papers and provide feedback on the questions stated in Step 4.

Directions
Step 1: After a demonstration of a shampoo commercial and a class discussion of the persuasive elements of the demo, your group will select a product you’d like to try to “sell” to your classmates.

Step 2: Discuss several ways you might persuade classmates to buy your product. Use the following:
   a) identify a need or desire that your product might satisfy
   b) show how that need indicates a lack of something that adversely affects the viewer’s life
   c) introduce your product – try to be creative
   d) show the viewer how your product will benefit him/her
   e) try to leave the viewer of your commercial with a positive feeling that they will associate with your product

Step 3: Create a brief commercial (less than 30 seconds) that your group will act out for the class.

Step 4: Your group will assess your own commercial prior to presenting it to the class. Hand in your responses to the following:
   a) Does your commercial identify a need or desire of the consumer?
   b) Does your commercial show viewers how they are lacking something in their lives?
   c) Is your product introduced in a creative manner?
   d) Does your commercial show how the product is a solution to a problem in the viewers’ lives?
   e) Does your commercial create a positive feeling in the viewer that they will associate with the product?

YOU MAY REVISE YOUR COMMERCIAL BASED ON THIS SELF ASSESSMENT

Step 5: After the presentation of the commercials (whole-class discussion and analysis follows each), write a one page paper on (a) which product presented you would want to buy, (b) why, (c) how the commercial persuaded you to purchase the product, and (d) how commercials in general persuade consumers to buy products.
**Scoring Rubric for Commercials**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria/ Points</th>
<th>This is an Excellent Commercial! (20 points)</th>
<th>This Commercial could be improved with minor revisions! (10 points)</th>
<th>This Commercial is Still on the Drawing Board! (0 points)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>- All members of the group participated</td>
<td>- Only some members of the group participated</td>
<td>- Only some members of the group participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Commercial was acted out (lines are memorized), not just read from paper</td>
<td>- Some parts of the commercial were acted out, while some parts were read from paper</td>
<td>- Commercial was read from paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Presented when scheduled</td>
<td>- Presented on time</td>
<td>- Not presented on time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Commercial was less than 30 seconds long (5 points)</td>
<td>- Close to 30 seconds long (3 points)</td>
<td>- Significantly over 30 seconds (1 minute +) (0 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Has all of the following elements:</td>
<td>Has 2-4 of the following elements:</td>
<td>Has 0-1 of the following elements:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Identifies a need or desire</td>
<td>- Identifies a need or desire</td>
<td>- Identifies a need or desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Shows how a lack of something adversely affects the viewer’s life</td>
<td>- Shows how a lack of something adversely affects the viewer’s life</td>
<td>- Shows how a lack of something adversely affects the viewer’s life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Is creative</td>
<td>- Is creative</td>
<td>- Is creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Shows how the product provides something needed by the viewer</td>
<td>- Shows how the product provides something needed by the viewer</td>
<td>- Shows how the product provides something needed by the viewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Creates a positive feeling in the viewer to associate with the product (10 points)</td>
<td>- Creates a positive feeling in the viewer to associate with the product (5 points)</td>
<td>- Creates a positive feeling in the viewer to associate with the product (0 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td>- Answered the questions posed on the task card completely</td>
<td>- Answered the questions posed on the task card somewhat</td>
<td>- Did not answer the questions posed on the task card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Presented accurate grammar and spelling</td>
<td>- Mostly accurate grammar and spelling</td>
<td>- Several inaccuracies in grammar and spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Used complete sentences (5 points)</td>
<td>- Some incomplete sentences (2 points)</td>
<td>- 2 or more incomplete sentences (0 points)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PEER FEEDBACK/COMMENTS FOR REVISION**
**TASK CARD**

**Activity(for Preschool): Planting Ipu Seeds**

**Learning Objectives:** Sequencing, following written directions, reinforcement of written name recognition

**Materials**

♦ Pots, Dirt, Sticks, Seeds, Water, Name Tags

**Activity/Product:** At this activity center, students plant an Ipu seed.

**Assessment:** Group assessment by teacher. After student plant their seeds, they collaborate to place each step of their task in order.

♦ Students watch as teacher demonstrates the entire planting process, pointing to each direction on the task card below as each step is performed. You may want to provide a photograph of each step.

**Student Directions (place each on an individual 5 x 7 card)**

************************************************************************

1: Get a pot.

2: Spoon dirt into the pot.

3: Poke a hole in the dirt with a stick.

4: Put Ipu seed in the whole and cover it with dirt.

5: Pour water into the pot.

6: Poke your nametag into the dirt.
RESOURCES FOR CREATING ACTIVITY CENTERS

✓ Ideas for ‘Challenging Activities’ from Bloom’s Taxonomy
✓ Ideas for Types of Activity Centers
✓ Ideas for Activities that Require Active Student Participation
✓ Activity Center Assessment
✓ Guidelines for Organizing Activity Centers
✓ Activity Center Planning Web
✓ Instructional Conversation Guide
✓ Tips for Teachers Planning Instructional Conversation
✓ The Do’s and Don’ts
✓ Instructional Conversation Rating Scale
✓ Additional Resources
Ideas for ‘Challenging Activities’ from Bloom’s Taxonomy

**KNOWLEDGE**

Recall specific information. Interpret communicated material without necessarily relating it to other material.

Activity: identify, name, define, tell, list, recognize, locate, memorize, review, match, state, read, relate, reproduce, choose, explain, convert, restate, describe, review

Product: Label, Name, List, Definition, Fact, Test, Reproduction, Recitation, Table, Diagram, Description, Summary, Report, Illustration

**APPLICATION**

Use information in different situations.

Activity: compute, solve, arrange, operate, relate, show, apply, make, translate, illustrate, record, teach, construct, use, practice

Product: Demonstration, Illustration, Diagram, Diorama, Collection, Map, Puzzle, Model, Diary, Report, Solution

**ANALYSIS**

Break down information into parts.

Activity: differentiate, diagram, estimate, infer, order, subdivide, summarize, abstract, classify, compare, contrast, deduce, analyze, distinguish, categorize, examine

Product: Questionnaire, Survey, Report, Chart, Outline, Diagram, Conclusion, List, Plan, Summary, Category

**SYNTHESIS**

Put pieces of information together into a new plan, idea or product.

Activity: combine, create, formulate, design, compose, construct, rearrange, revise, hypothesize, imagine, modify, improve, invent, propose, infer, estimate, produce, design, predict

Product: Formula, Invention, Film, Prediction, New game, Story, Poem, Solution, Art product, Project, Media product, Machine, Advertisement

Judge information according to criteria and offer supporting opinions and evidence.

Activity: critique, justify, conclude, discriminate, support, editorialize, decide, evaluate, dispute, rate, discuss, verify, grade, choose, assess, debate, appraise, defend

Ideas for Types of Activity Centers

**MATHEMATICS**
- Problem Solving Center
- Math Center
- Calculator Center
- Graphing Center
- Summarizing Center
- Patterns Center
- Judging (peer evaluation) Center
- Peer Tutoring Center
- Computer Center
- Map Center
- Survey Center
- Quiz Generation Center
- Letter Writing Center

**LANGUAGE ARTS**
- Bilingual Center
- Listening Center
- Literature Center
- Create Advertisements Center
- Bookmaking Center
- Editing Center
- Webbing Center
- Reading Center
- Story Telling Center
- Story Creation Center
- Poetry Center
- Biography Center
- Paragraph Writing

**SCIENCE**
- Classification Center
- Poster Center
- Demonstration Center
- Water Cycle Center
- Environmental Studies Center
- Mini-Science Lab Center
- Dissecting Owl Pellets’

**SOCIAL STUDIES**
- History Center
- Art & Craft Center
- Community Studies Center
- Relationships Center
- Exploration Center
- Photo Center
- Newsletter Center
- Conflict Resolution Center
- Writing Center
- Music Center
- Exploring Other Cultures Center
- Career Center
- Discussion/Debate

**ALL**
- Student Generated Activity Center
- Game Center
- Research Center
- Evaluation Center
- Synthesis Center
- Reference Center
- IC center (Instructional Center)
- Skill Building Center
- Interview Center
- Vocabulary Center
- Cause and Effect Center
- Critical Thinking Center
- Publishing Center
- Bulletin Board Center

**Note:** Specific center activities can either be interpersonal or individual. Center must accommodate all intelligences to all ability levels.
Ideas for Activities that Require Active Student Participation

**Bodily Kinesthetic**
- Role-play
- Invent a new product or service
- Test an idea
- Participate in a simulation
- Conduct a mock trial
- Collect data
- Conduct experiments
- Demonstrate a process
- Combine elements of drama, music, dance, art
- Produce a newspaper or television program
- Create (art, cooking, sewing, woodworking, writing, music)
- Develop a handbook
- Choreograph a dance to reflect learning
- Design a field trip for learning
- Devise a scavenger hunt to enhance learning

**Linguistic**
- Document implications of an event or situation
- Change a story, event, process, idea, product, bill or law
- Write letters or editorials
- Form and support opinions
- Evaluate rules or laws
- Make or interpret poems
- Write a poem, story, essay, song, explanation, constitution, skit, play, rap, jingle, commercial
- Create a dictionary, glossary, journal
- Make up own worksheets or tests for practice
- Compare and contrast (stories, items, events, ideas, styles, issues, results, processes)

**Musical**
- Create a song, story, play, product, model, etc.
- Make an audio or videotape
- Give a presentation involving musical pathways
- Relate song lyrics to topic under study
- Create a musical instrument
- Write a new ending to a song
- Use musical technology to enhance learning
- Compose a rap or tune that reflects learning

**Naturalist**
- Conduct observations
- Collect objects for science projects
- Devise an observation system
- Collect and categorize objects for class project
- Establish a set of rules for an idea, process, or activity
- Inspect a product, activity or lesson; make suggestions or recommendations
- Conduct biological research

**Interpersonal**
- Conduct an interview
- Teach someone how to do something
- Work cooperatively in a group
- Make up problems for others to solve
- Participate in a panel discussion
- Plan and participate in an event
- Conduct a campaign
- Participate in a community meeting/process/project
- Interact with a resource person
- Debate
- Teach or present
- Persuade
- Brainstorm and put information to use
- Use a software program with partner or team
- Find or create an anthology w/team

**Math/Logical**
- Identify problems and pose solutions
- Reorganize a process, product, book, paper, etc.
- Evaluate
- Classify (terms, objects, places, ideas, events, behaviors, data)
- Draw conclusions
- Identify the steps used to learn something or complete a task
- Determine relationships between items, groups, processes, ideas, issues
- Make inferences, predictions
- Solve real-life applied math or science problems
- Prepare budgets

**Intrapersonal**
- Determine qualifications
- Create a new way to do something
- Determine criteria for evaluation
- Make up a game
- Determine/evaluate consequences
- Plan a trip or tour, including all relevant background information
- Respond to imaginary situations
- Identify point of view
- Find an alternative approach
- Make decisions and justify choices
- Evaluate own work and progress, set goals
- Distinguish between fact & opinion

**Spatial**
- Make charts, flow charts, diagrams, graphs, timelines
- Graph survey results
- Sketch a plan
- Prepare a bulletin board
- Make posters, murals, collages, word webs, Venn diagrams, etc.
- Make and solve puzzles
- Design a poster, bulletin board or mural to reflect learning
- Create an illustration for story concepts
- Use drawing to assess student prior knowledge

**Multiple Pathways**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>DIRECTIONS</th>
<th>PROCESS</th>
<th>PRODUCT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The activity is too easy or too difficult. The tasks are only appropriate for a small range of ability levels. The tasks do not draw from students' prior knowledge or experiences. There are no optional tasks for students who complete required tasks early.</td>
<td>The language is inappropriate considering students' ages and abilities. Directions are too general or too detailed for students' ages, abilities, and language proficiency. Students either finish early or do not have enough time to complete required tasks. There is no model or example provided. There is no assessment rubric or checklist.</td>
<td>Students work individually and do not collaborate.</td>
<td>The product is not linked to content standards. The product is not linked to demonstrated learning and interaction. The activity does not require the generation of a tangible product to demonstrate learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The activity is appropriately challenging. The activity is leveled to ensure that students with varied abilities are successful. The tasks build on students' prior knowledge and experiences.</td>
<td>The language is age and ability appropriate. Directions are clearly explained and broken into manageable sub-tasks, taking into account such student characteristics as age, ability, prior knowledge and language proficiency. The activity is appropriate for the time allotted. A model or example is provided. There is an assessment rubric or checklist.</td>
<td>Students collaborate on shared products. The activity generates student discussion or extended writing using content vocabulary.</td>
<td>The activity is not assessed. The product is not linked to content standards. The activity does not require the generation of a tangible product to demonstrate learning and interaction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Name of Activity Center Being Assessed:**

**Answer Each Question and Rate the Activity Center from 0 (Lowest) to 2 (Highest)**

**Activity Center Assessment**
Guidelines for Organizing Activity Centers

The following guidelines will help you arrange your classroom furniture and equipment into activity settings for today’s classroom. These guidelines encourage students’ independence and membership in the classroom learning community and teachers’ needs to interact with students in a variety of formats, particularly Instructional Conversation (IC). Each classroom has special features to consider in addition to those listed here. Every teacher makes arrangements for student travel, materials management, and storage, as needed.

- Assign every student a homeroom seat.
- Decide how students will store and carry their materials (folder, writing equipment).
- Make an area available for large group instructional activity. For elementary students, this may be a rug area on the floor. In other classrooms, students must be able to look at the teacher easily from their seat. Avoid seating students with their backs facing the place the teacher will occupy during large group or other transactions.
- Arrange an AC for the teacher to work with a small group (3-7) of students regularly that has writing display areas (boards, charts) and materials storage space. This Activity Center is in addition to and away from the teacher’s desk.
- Make several ACs available for small group work, dyads, and individual instructional activity.
- Assure that every AC work area is visible from any position the teacher will occupy to facilitate monitoring of student activity.
- Separate quiet ACs from potentially noisy ones.
- Provide equipment such as task cards, bins, or boxes for placing individual/group assignments, storing students’ folders, and texts for each AC planned.
- Match furniture to requirements of ACs:
  a. Most ACs need seating for 3 or more students.
  b. Each AC needs easily accessible storage and retrieval for materials.
  c. Some activities such as art and listening to tape recordings may need a sink, electric plug, or other prep/cleanup areas.
  d. Games may be placed on the floor or a rug/remnant.
  e. Technology needs electricity, hook-ups, supplies, and ease of access.
- Check that traffic patterns provide easy movement between ACs.
- Arrange space for posting materials or needed equipment like charts, semantic webs, or other shared products.
- Provide students with folders to house their work in progress, their routing plan, or contract for the week. Students keep this folder with them during class.
- Designate a storage place for student folders.
- Designate a place for student work to be turned in daily for review.
- Provide mailboxes, folder system, or other arrangement for returning student work. Students retrieve their teacher, self, and/or peer-reviewed work from this system daily.

Instructional Conversation Guide: Elements of the Instructional Conversation⁵:

ICS are Instructional (goal-directed, assessment and responsive assistance) and Conversational (inclusive, responsive, joint participation), resulting in co-constructed knowledge

Instructional Elements

1. Thematic focus. The teacher selects a theme or idea to serve as a starting point to focus the discussion and has a general plan for how the theme will unfold, including how to “chunk” the text to permit optimal exploration of the theme.

2. Activation and use of background and relevant schemata. The teacher either “hooks into” or provides students with pertinent background knowledge and relevant schemata necessary for understanding a text. Background knowledge and schemata are then woven into the discussion that follows.

3. Direct teaching. When necessary, the teacher provides direct teaching of a skill or concept.

4. Promotion of more complex language and expression. The teacher elicits more extended student contributions by using a variety of elicitation techniques, for example, invitations to expand (“Tell me more about____”), questions (“What do you mean by _____?”), restatements (“In other words,____”), and pauses.

5. Promotion of bases for statements or positions. The teacher promotes students’ use of text, pictures, and reasoning to support an argument or position. Without overwhelming students, the teacher probes for the bases of students’ statements: “How do you know?”, “What makes you think that?”, and “Show us where it says___.”

Conversational Elements

6. Few “known-answer” questions. Much of the discussion centers on questions and answers for which there might be more than one correct answer.

7. Responsiveness to student contributions. While having an initial plan and maintaining the focus and coherence of the discussion, the teacher is also responsive to students’ statements and the opportunities they provide.

8. Connected discourse. The discussion is characterized by multiple, interactive, connected turns; succeeding utterances build upon and extend previous ones.

9. A challenging, but non-threatening', atmosphere. The teacher creates a “zone of proximal development” (for definition, see p. 7), where a challenging atmosphere is balanced by a positive affective climate. The teacher is more collaborator than evaluator and creates an atmosphere that challenges students and allows them to negotiate and construct the meaning of the text.

10. General participation, including self-selected turns. The teacher encourages general participation among students. The teacher does not hold exclusive right to determine who talks, and students are encouraged to volunteer or otherwise influence the selection of speaking turns.
Tips for Teachers Planning Instructional Conversation⁶

Instructional Conversation (IC) reflects a plan that is outcomes-based. An infrastructure supports IC as shown in the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTRUCTIONAL ELEMENTS</th>
<th>CONVERSATION ELEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• OUTCOMES-BASED</td>
<td>• INCLUSIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ASSESSMENT</td>
<td>• RESPONSIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ASSESSMENT</td>
<td>• JOINT PARTICIPATION</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These instructional and conversational elements result in co-constructed knowledge.

Planning IC really means having a conversation with yourself.

Planning IC really means having a conversation with yourself. The following set of questions is a guide for planning an IC based on the featured diagramed above. It is important to consider local conditions and student characteristics when planning and enacting IC. ICs can be any length depending on outcomes intended and opportunity to interact.

**Outcomes Based**

1. What do I want to hear my students say after IC that will show they understand concepts or other instructional intent?

2. What do my students already know about participating in conversation on an everyday topic? On an academic topic? Is there a difference?

3. Based on what my students know, what is the instructional intent of the IC? (Early in the academic year, IC focuses on general topics that build relationships, rapport, and negotiate conversational conventions for IC, such as students speaking without raising their hands to encourage joint participation. Later, IC targets learning objectives.)

4. What topics relate to IC instructional intent? What is the topic to introduce first?

**Inclusive**

5. Select a stimulus for beginning IC that encourages every student to talk about experience or background knowledge generally related to IC intent and topics. (The stimulus can be the same as the activity described in Question 9, particularly when teacher and students have established rapport.)

---

Tips for Teachers Planning IC (cont.)

Assessment
6. Formulate questions that will encourage students to talk about themselves and the IC topic (e.g., Have you ever seen or felt or talked about or heard this before? Tell us more about that. What else do you know about this? How did you like it, feel about it, respond to it? What do you think this might have to do with what we are going to talk about? How do you know? Tell me more.).

Responsive
7. List the most likely initial student responses to the IC topic. (IC planning is most successful when it anticipates various outcomes, including some unexpected ones, in the interaction. This is the key to teacher responsiveness in IC.)
8. What will my responses be to those I listed for the students in Question 7?
9. Given the student responses I can forecast, what will assist students to understand the IC instructional topic? (Teachers use manipulatives, illustrations, semantic webs, structured overviews, charts, writing, games, textbooks, tradebooks, student models, and student suggestions.)

Assistance
10. Prepare questions and prompts to find out what students are thinking about the meaning of the activity. Teachers ask open-ended “How” questions to encourage students to talk, including questions about how students feel about the activity. They ask students to restate, summarize, and justify their remarks based on their experience in the activity.

Joint Participation
11. How will the group interact? Will they raise their hands to talk? Will they wait quietly for each other to finish their statements? How will the group decide how to converse? (Sometimes teachers model conversation about school topics with students for the whole class and have a follow-up discussion about how it went. Others get started, and through participation in IC negotiate the ways the group is comfortable conversing.)

Co-constructed Knowledge
12. What do I know now about my students’ understanding of the IC topic? Can they use the ideas and other information on their own? Are they confident about themselves as students in the content area of the IC?
The Do’s and Don’ts

**ICS are Instructional (Goal-Directed, Assessment, Responsive Assistance) and Conversational (Inclusive, Responsive, Joint Participation), Resulting in Co-constructed Knowledge**

**Create a comfortable environment for the students to express their ideas, building on them to promote discussion**

1. Create a challenging but non-threatening environment: (teacher is a collaborator in the discussion)
   - a. students feel free to put forth emerging or incomplete ideas which teacher builds on
   - b. students are comfortable
   - c. students are actively engaged
   - d. students try to come up with ideas of their own without waiting to be cued by teacher
   - e. students’ meaning, negotiation and alternative interpretations are reinforced by teacher

   **Don’t:** reject, ignore or censure student responses  
   **Don’t:** merely ask evaluative questions  
   **Change:** tone from school-like to conversational

2. Respond to student contributions:
   - a. build on students’ responses to further their understandings
   - b. recast and expand students’ responses
   - c. use students’ responses to extend the discussion or explore new, relevant themes
   - d. ask questions that respond to students’ contributions and current level of understanding

3. Promote discussion:
   - a. focus on open-ended questions (more than one answer)
   - b. ask discussion-generating questions around a theme or concept

   **Don’t:** focus on recall and known-answer questions

4. Promote connected turn taking:
   - a. succeeding contributions build on and extend previous ones
   - b. relate the discussion to the theme, concept or text of focus

   **Don’t:** shift topics frequently or jump to new, unconnected topics

5. General participation and self-selected turns:
   - a. encourage participation by all but don’t be the determiner of who talks
   - b. encourage students to volunteer by positively acknowledging their contributions
   - c. strive for equal self-selected turn-taking

   **Don’t:** control speech-taking turns

---

Synthesized from various works
The Do’s and Don’ts (cont.)

6. Focus on a theme:
   a. choose an appropriate, worthwhile, meaningful theme or concept
   b. have a plan for how the theme or concept will unfold and what the important chunks are
   c. tie together questions and discussion throughout the lesson

7. Activate and use students’ background and other relevant knowledge:
   a. before focusing on the text (new concept) ‘hook into’ students’ relevant background knowledge
   b. assess if students have the requisite background knowledge
   c. weave students’ contributions into thematic discussions
   d. tie understanding of the theme or concept to students’ prior knowledge
   
   don’t: begin immediately with the text or new concept

8. Provide direct teaching of a concept or skill when necessary within the context of the larger lesson:
   a. teacher provides instruction in context
   b. direct instruction is in the service of assisting understanding
   
   don’t: instruct in areas that are not related to promoting the larger goal or theme
   don’t: make students guess what you are thinking - move forward by providing direct assistance
   don’t: provide unnecessary direct teaching in an inflexible, predefined sequence

9. Encourage student use of more complex language:
   a. promote and elicit student use of extended and more complex language
   b. use questions
   c. use restatements to model or promote more complete expression and language
   d. use pauses (increased wait-time)
   e. use invitations to expand student contributions “tell me more” or “what do you think?”
   
   don’t: use primarily brief and unconnected initiation-reply-evaluation verbal sequences
   don’t: forget to ask students to elaborate their understandings

10. Encourage students to use text, pictures, and reasoning to support an argument, position or emerging hypotheses:
    a. question students about the basis for their statements: why?, how do you know?, what makes you think that?
    b. encourage students to defend or explain their responses and their reasoning
    
    don’t: accept student answers as right or wrong without considering how a student arrived at an answer
### Instructional Conversation Rating Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rater:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Total Score:</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating a challenging but non-threatening atmosphere</td>
<td>The climate of the lesson is primarily non-challenging (does not push understanding), unstimulating, or intimidating</td>
<td>The climate of the lesson is primarily challenging (consistently pushes understanding), stimulating, and non-threatening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsivity to student contributions</td>
<td>The teacher’s talk is rarely or is never responsive to students’ initiations, contributions, or current level of understanding.</td>
<td>The teacher’s talk is frequently or always responsive to students’ initiations, contributions, or current level of understanding.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promotion of discussion</td>
<td>The teacher relies mainly on literal level recall and known-answer questions, and rarely or never uses thematic, discussion-generating questions.</td>
<td>The teacher rarely uses literal level recall and know-answer questions, but frequently uses thematic, discussion-generating questions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of connected discourse</td>
<td>There is a complete or almost complete absence of connected discourse related to the theme of the story.</td>
<td>The lesson is always or almost always characterized by connected discourse related to the theme of the story.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>General participation</td>
<td>The discourse is teacher-controlled and participation is teacher-dominated.</td>
<td>The control of the discourse is shared between teacher and students, and participation is widespread.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thematic focus</td>
<td>No or minimal evidence of a goal or theme.</td>
<td>Overwhelming evidence of a goal or theme.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on background knowledge and relevant schemata</td>
<td>No or minimal attempts to assess, activate, supply, or make use of relevant background knowledge.</td>
<td>Consistent, systematic attempts to assess, activate, supply, or make use of background knowledge.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct teaching</td>
<td>Direct teaching is provided out of the context of the story, is inflexible, excessive, or not given when needed.</td>
<td>Direct teaching is provided in the context of the story, is flexible, and given only as needed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting complex language and expression</td>
<td>There are few or no instances in which the teacher either elicits or models elaboration of the language used in the lesson.</td>
<td>The teacher frequently and systematically elicits and/or models elaboration of the language used in the lesson.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting bases for statements, hypotheses, and conclusions</td>
<td>The teacher rarely or never elicits the reasoning behind, or defense of, students’ statements, hypotheses, and conclusions.</td>
<td>The teacher frequently elicits the reasoning behind and defense of statements, hypotheses, and conclusions.</td>
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</tbody>
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Additional Resources

This handbook was designed as a brief guide for teachers who want to use activity centers in their classrooms. If you are interested in more in-depth literature and samples of activity centers, here are some more resources.

Literature:


Videos:


CD-ROMs:


To order copies of CREDE publications and products, contact:

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<th>CAL Store</th>
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<td>Center for Applies Linguistics</td>
<td>Center for Applied Linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4646 40th Street NW</td>
<td>4646 40th Street NW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington, DC 20016-1859</td>
<td>Washington, DC 20016-1859</td>
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<tr>
<td>202-362-0700</td>
<td>800-551-3709</td>
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<tr>
<td>202-362-3740 (fax)</td>
<td>888-700-3629 (fax)</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:store@cal.org">store@cal.org</a></td>
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