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Chapter 1

Developmentally Appropriate Program



The Three- to Seven-Year-Old Child



Known as the pre-operational child, this is an interesting and unusual thinking child.

Understanding how this child thinks is critical to structuring a learning center classroom that is appropriate.

For the pre-operational child, language is the dramatic attainment. Between the ages of three and seven the child develops a significant amount of vocabulary.

Communication of thoughts and ideas is developing and needs to be stimulated and encouraged. Placing labels and developing categories are major processes during this age.

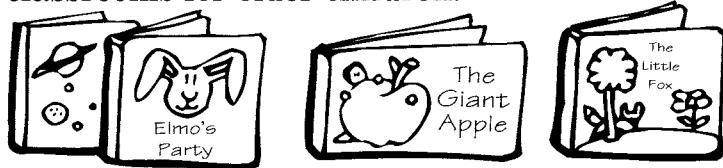
The social aspect of the child from three to seven is still primarily ego-centric, but it is becoming more and more interactive during this stage. Children begin to work out their own problems, when given opportunities to do so. This social knowledge is developed when children interact with adults and other children. For this reason, social development is closely linked to the development of language.

Another major development of the pre-operational child is the ability to represent what has been learned or discovered. This new thinking is a result of the development of logic. Children have figured out that objects stay the same. In addition, they have learned that something other than the object can be used to represent the object. This allows the child to play in a symbolic manner—draw, paint, use objects to represent something else.

Learning Centers and the Three- to Seven-Year-Old Child

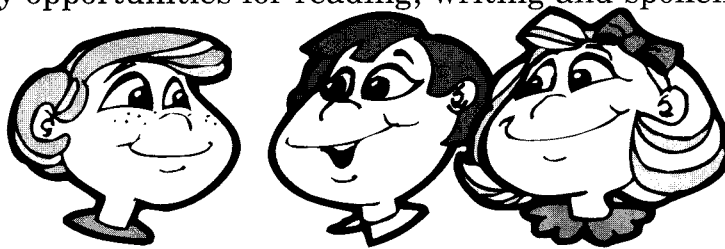
In creating a learning center classroom, the most helpful information we can draw on is the information about the pre-operational child. For this reason, the classroom for this age child will look and operate in some ways that are different from classrooms for older children.

Language Development



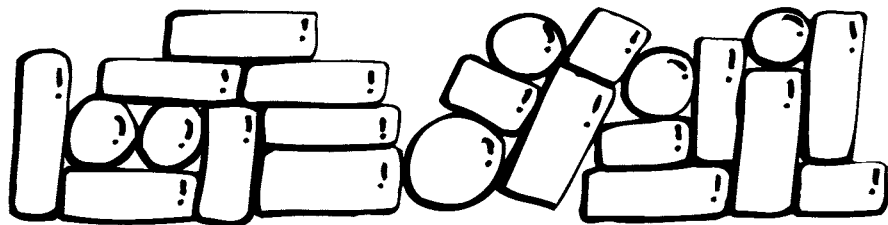
The opportunity for language development in learning centers is endless. Besides being the obvious place for books, a Language Center (and other areas) offers experiences in the printed word, conversations, documenting work in print and seeing print in the environment. A well-designed center should include many opportunities for reading, writing and spoken language.

Social Development



Young children develop social skills in every center where interaction and problem solving is allowed. The Dramatic Play Center is just one place where this type of development is available for children. Social skills are obtained in block play, discussing art ideas, arguing over a puzzle piece, sharing a snack, singing a song, reading a story and many other group activities.

Representation



When young children work in centers like the Block, Art or Manipulative Center, they are often showing or representing what they know. Their block buildings demonstrate what they have learned about the school, their house or an airport. Their craft projects can show their understanding of form and structure, their manipulative work often allows a play representation of real world situations.

