

Establishing an Activity Center Approach

Setting up activity centers in your gathering area or in individual class spaces is an excellent way to involve children as they arrive on Sunday morning. What church doesn't have early arrivals, including the teachers' children? The centers can be set up ahead of time. They should require minimal supervision.

Children are active learners. Centers provide opportunities for the children to explore, investigate, discover and experience a variety of activities in their own individual ways. Meaningful interaction between the teachers and children can then occur in a relaxed manner. Centers can also be used as part of the lesson activities. They provide an excellent environment for teaching spiritual principles in a relaxed and natural way.

In a multi-age space, even activities generally considered age-appropriate for younger children can be enjoyed by all ages. Examples: playdough and Legos

Permanent centers such as a reading corner, housekeeping area, or art corner can be set up in the classroom for the younger children if the space is not used for other programs.

Activity centers can solve a myriad of problems found in many children's ministries, for example

- We have only one large room for all the children.
- We have preschoolers through fifth grade in one group.
- We don't have enough teachers to teach all the age groups.
- We have little or no money for furniture or equipment.

Easy Activity Center Ideas: Materials can be stored in separate boxes or baskets and brought out as needed. They work well for arrival time by giving kids something to do as they settle in. They're also handy for those times when the lesson goes short or the service goes long.

- **Art Table**
Provide assorted paper, markers, crayons, scissors, glue sticks, stickers, foam rubber stamps and washable stamp pads. It's not necessary to put everything out every time. Vary the materials.

Sometimes put out two-inch strips of card stock so children can make bookmarkers. Sometimes (prior to a holiday) put out card making supplies with paper, stickers and other fun embellishments.

- **Library/Reading Center**
Placing assorted children's books and some cozy pillows on the floor provides a welcome and comfortable activity.
- **Playdoh**
Homemade playdoh with rolling pins and cookie cutters is a favorite activity for all ages. Manipulating the dough is relaxing and gives children an opportunity to socialize. Parents can be recruited to make the recipe at home.
- **Legos**
Boys and girls of all ages love creating with Legos. Fill a bin with enough pieces for several kids to build something.
- **Game/puzzle Table**
Older children can teach younger children how to play checkers or some other game. Puzzles of different skill levels can be individual or group activities.
- **Graffiti Board**
Put out a white board with odor-free dry erase markers or piece of poster board or large piece of butcher paper with washable markers. Any of these can provide a fun outlet for the artistic children. A question, theme, or starter sentence can be written in a corner and children can add their thoughts or pictures. This can be a pre-session activity connected to a lesson
- **Magnets**
A collection of magnets and metal items to work with can be an engaging and fun activities for children in kindergarten or above. Excellent educational sets can be found in a teachers' supply stores. Dollar stores sometimes have refrigerator magnets shaped like fish, veggies, fruit and butterflies. A cookie sheet can be added and the different magnets can be grouped and counted.

These are a few ideas that are easy to find and set up and that children enjoy.