

# “CENTER”ED AROUND CCSS

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Centers provide children with the opportunity to have hands-on experiences as they develop task initiation and task completion. Centers also nurture responsibility, self-directed learning, and social skills.

Hint! Make a digital camera available so children can take photographs of their projects in the centers.

## READING LITERATURE

Flannel Board – To make a simple flannel board, staple the sides of a file folder and glue felt to the front. Make characters from felt or copy color photos from the book, cut them out, and attach a piece of Velcro to the back. Model how to retell the story and then invite the children to retell it using the felt pieces.

\*Use milk filters to make story pieces.

Story Bracelets – String color-coded beads on a pipe cleaner to help prompt children as they retell stories.

Book Club Order Forms – Save those book club order forms for identifying different types of texts.

\*Children can also use old school supply catalogs to cut out books and sort them.

Nursery Rhyme Juke Box - Cut 4 ½" circles/CDs out of fun foam or cardboard. Run off nursery rhymes and glue them to the circles. Put the circles in a gift bag. When you have a few extra minutes pretend to hand a child a quarter as you say, “Put in your quarter and choose a rhyme.” That child can lead the class in saying the nursery rhyme.

Story Glove - Write the following on each finger of a cloth work glove:

1. Somebody
2. Wanted
3. But
4. So
5. Then

## Class Books

Make class books and include a page for the children to sign their names as authors, illustrators, or authors and illustrators. Include a copyright date

and the school as the publisher. Don't forget a title page and "The End." You might also want to add a page for "comments" and let children take the book home to share with their families. You could even add a dedication or an ISBN number!

Read with Me If... This idea makes it seem like the students are special and they "get" to reread with the teacher!

Read with me IF you...like chocolate ice cream  
like broccoli  
have a dog  
have pants on  
are wearing red

Voice Box - Make copies of fluency cards (free on [drjean.org](http://drjean.org)) and place them in a small box. Let children choose a card and then reread books or poems using that "voice."

## **READING INFORMATION**

SCHEMA - Connecting with Books - Teach children sign language for "connect." (Make circles with thumb and index finger and join like a chain.) Explain that when students connect what is in the book with what is in their head they can make that sign to let you know that they are listening.

3-2-1 - Hold up three fingers and remind children to be good listeners because after you finish the book you will ask them:  
3 things they learned. (Hold up 3 fingers.)  
2 things they found interesting. (Hold up 2 fingers.)  
1 thing they still want to know. (Hold up 1 finger.)

Books Up - Pass out a book to each child. Can you show me the front of your book? Hold up the back of your book. Where is the title of your book? Switch books with a friend and show each other the front, back, and title.

Musical Books - Arrange chairs in a circle and place a book on each chair. Place some music. Children march around and when the music stops each child finds a chair, sits down, and begins looking at their book. After a minute, ask random students simple questions, such as: What do you think your book is about? What is the setting? Would you like to read the book? Place books on chairs and begin marching to the music until it stops again.

Inform, Persuade, or Entertain? Why do you think the author wrote this book? Was it to entertain you? Does the author want to inform you? Or, do you think the author wants to persuade you?

Cover Exchange - Exchange the cover on a book. Let the children talk about what the book will be about and then begin reading the book. Listen to their explanations after the book is read.

## **READING FOUNDATIONS**

Left to Right! When doing choral reading have the students stand to the left of the room. As you read, take a step to the right for each word. At the end of the line jump “down” to the next line. Everyone moves back to the left and quickly moves to the right with every word until the end of the next line. Repeat until the end of the poem, chart, etc.

\*You can also add movements and sound effects for punctuation. For example, clap for a period, jump for an exclamation point, and shrug shoulders for a question mark.

Letter Looker – Loop around a pipe cleaner to make a “letter looker.” Children can identify letters in the classroom and in books with their lookers.

Class Alphabet Books – Write different letters of the alphabet in the middle of a sheet of paper. Each child selects a letter and creates an object, animal, or design out of the letter. Can they turn the letter into something that starts with that sound? Put their pictures together to make a class alphabet book.

\*Hint! You can make alphabet books to go with almost any theme, such as “Foods We Eat,” “Animals,” “Toys,” etc.

Clap a Name – Glue a photo of each child to a sheet of paper. Cut out small hands. Have children glue hands for each clap/syllable in their name. Put the pages together to make a class book.

Instruments - Have children beat out syllables with instruments. You could also use cardboard rollers, straws, pencils, etc. like drum sticks to tap out rhythms and syllables.

Park Your Car – Draw three spaces on a rectangular sheet of paper. Give children a toy car. Say a word. Have them “park” the car according to where they hear a particular sound.

For example: hat – Where do you hear the /t/ in hat?  
(Child places the car in the third space.)

Sports Spell - Pretend to be athletes and spell as you bounce a basketball, kick a soccer ball, swing a bat, swim and dive, fish, hit a golf ball, and so forth.

Phrase Phone – Recycle an old cell phone with this prop. Write fluency phrases on jumbo craft sticks and place in a plastic cup. Children remove sticks and read the phrases on the phone.

[theschoolbell.com](http://theschoolbell.com) - “Dolch Kit” with “Student Practice Book” is perfect for differentiated instruction! Plus you’ll find phrase cards.

Read, Write, Quiet Boxes – Each child will need to bring in an empty cereal box. Cut the top off the box and make slanted sides. Children can paint their boxes or decorate them with construction paper. Store blank books, pencils, and simple books that they can read in the boxes. Children can use their boxes as a quiet activity after lunch or if they finish their work early.

Roll a Heart Word - How about calling high frequency words “heart words” because you have to know them by heart. Here is a great game called roll a heart. Take six words and make a grid as shown. Children roll a die and then write the word in that grid (starting at the bottom). They keep rolling and writing until time is called.

Who Let the Words Out? - Use the same chant as, “Who let the A out /a/ /a/ /a/ /a/” and insert word wall words.  
For example, “Who let AND out? AND, AND, AND!”  
\*Hint! Hold up flash cards or point to the words on the wall.

Build a Bear Hangman - Play a game similar to hangman except building a bear is so much more positive than a noose! Put blanks on the board for each letter in a word. Children take turns calling out letters. If the letter is not in the word draw the bear's head, body, ears, arms, legs, etc.

## **WRITING**

Writing Bracelet - Give children a silly band to wear around their wrist when they write. Explain that when you ride in the car you have to put your seatbelt on. When you write you need to put your seatbelt on as well. (Loop the silly band around the pencil.) Mom and dad will be in the

front seat (thumb and index finger) and the kids will be in the back (middle, ring, and pinky).

Snap, Clap, Slap - You can use this idea for saying the alphabet or for spelling word wall words or vocabulary words.

SNAP your fingers "upstairs" in the air for letters that start at the top line.

CLAP your hands in front of you for letters that are "downstairs" and start at the middle dotted line.

SLAP your thighs for "basement" letters with a tail that go below the line.

Noodle - To practice writing numerals, letters, etc. give children a 9" inch section of a swim noodle. They can use both hands to write in the air (activates both sides of the brain.) Say, "Statue of Liberty" when you want them to listen and hold their noodles in the air.

Rule Book - Have a class discussion about why rules are important. Give each child a sheet of paper to draw a rule that they think would be good for the class. Let them write or dictate a sentence about the rule. Put their rules together to make a class book. When children are behaving inappropriately, get the rule book and point to a page in the book as you say, "Look, it says in the book you need to \_\_\_\_\_."

Things the Teacher Needs to Know - When a child comes to you to complain or tattle, hand them the book and say, "Write it all down and don't leave out a thing. I'll read it later on when I have more time."

Cartoon Frames - Give children cartoon frames in which they can draw events. Start with two frames so they can do the beginning and end. Next, give them three frames to draw the beginning, middle, and end. Finally, provide four frames so they can draw first, next, then, last.

\*Demonstrate how to add dialog bubbles.

Love Your Sentence - Teach children this "handy" way to edit their work.

Hold up your thumb if you started with a capital letter.

Put up your index finger if it makes sense when you read it.

Stick up your pinky finger if you put punctuation at the end.

Then you'll know that you LOVE your sentence. (That's sign language for "love.")

eBook or Traditional Book ? - Select a traditional children's book and then download a copy of it on your eReader. Read both versions to the class. Let them compare and contrast the different styles. Which one do they prefer? Why?

What Can You Find Out? Select a wide range of books on a topic of interest or a theme you are exploring. Put the books on a table along with paper and pencils. Challenge the children to look through the books and see what they can find out. They can draw pictures or write words about what they learn.

## **SPEAKING AND LISTENING**

Ears and Mouths - Working with a buddy can be difficult for young children. Give each pair a picture of an ear and a picture of a mouth. The child holding the "mouth" is the talker and the child holding the "ear" is the listener. Then switch.

"I" Phone - You will need a cylinder block, an index card, and tape to make your "I" phone. First, make a capital "I" on the index card and tape it to the block. Pass the "I" phone around the class as each child holds it and says a sentence beginning with "I..." They can say what they are happy about or what they are looking forward to doing that day. Only the person with the "I" phone may talk!

\*Pass around the phone at the end of the day for children to say something new they learned or something they did that made them feel proud.

Podium - Make a podium from an old music stand or a box placed on a table. Use the podium for show and tell, book talks, and other discussions. \*How about "close your eyes" show and tell?

Don't Understand - Children can use this sign when something is not clear to them. Put your index finger next to your brain and wiggle it like you are turning on a light as you shake your head "no."

Brain Tickets - Purchase raffle tickets at a dollar store or office supply store. Before children leave each day they have to tell you something they learned to earn a brain ticket. Encourage parents to ask their children what they did to earn their brain ticket each day.

Manners, Please - Teach children how to answer a phone call using a play phone or old cell phone.

\*Model how to shake hands and state your name when meeting someone new.

\*Prompt children to say, "Please," "Thank you," and "Excuse me" with sign language cues.

## LANGUAGE

Invisible Writing – Practice writing letters in the air with your index finger. Don't forget to erase when you're finished!

Tummy Writing – Have children lay on their tummies and extend their finger above their head. They can practice making lines, circles, shapes, and letters.

Word Power Dictionary – Each child will need a pocket folder for this project. Run off alphabet letters (two per page) to go in their folders. As you add words to the word wall, encourage children to write them in their personal dictionaries. When children ask how to spell something, make sure they write it in their dictionaries so they'll have it in the future.

Word Detectives – Model how to be a word detective when you come to a word you don't know. First, look around the word for clues. Does the sentence give you some information? Check out the sentence before and the sentence after for clues. Look in the word. Do you see a root word, prefix, or ending?

Vocabulary Parade – Let each child choose a "Fancy Nancy" word that describes them. Write the word on a 36" x 4" strip of paper. Let the children decorate the strip. Pin words across children's bodies and let them parade around the room. Encourage each child to tell the definition of their word and why they chose it.

Wacky Sentences - This game is a take off from Eric Carle's HEAD TO TOE. Create noun cards (children's names, animals, etc.) and verb cards. Uses different colors of poster board or index cards for the nouns and verbs. Draw stick figures acting out the verbs. Children draw a card from each pile and then make up a "wacky" sentence with the noun and the verb. \*Older children could write the wacky sentence and then draw a picture of it.

Show Me Punctuation - Teach children the following motions for punctuation marks.

. Hand out like "stop."

? Shrug shoulders.

! Show muscles.

Teacher says a sentence, and the students show the correct punctuation.

I like to ride my bike. (Hand out STOP.)

Do you like to ride a bike? (Shrug shoulders.)

That's a big snake! (Show muscles.)

Riddle Book - Create a "Riddle Book" for each child with blank paper stapled between construction paper. The children get to decorate the cover. The teacher reads a riddle to the class each day. Establish a routine where everyone smiles when they think they know the answer. The children then draw a picture of what they think the answer is and try to write the word. The children share their thoughts and then the teacher shares the answer.

\*Hint! Invite children to "think out loud" and explain the riddle to classmates who might be confused.

Sparkle Words – Make a poster on which you write "Sparkle Words" with glitter. Choose a different word each day to be the "sparkle" word. Whenever the children hear the teacher or a classmate using the word they get to whistle, clap their hands, jump up, or make another silly movement.

\*Read over the words frequently and encourage children to use them in their writing.

## **COUNTING & CARDINALITY**

Pipe Cleaner Counting - Put 10 beads on a pipe cleaner (knotting the pipe cleaner on the ends). Children can slide the beads horizontally from left to right as they count to ten – then flip it over and count from 11-20. Keep flipping as you count as high as you want.

\*Hold the pipe cleaner vertically to count the number of words in a sentence.

High Five Book - Make a "High Five" book with children's fingers. Trace around each child's hand on a 6" square and let them decorate it. Attach pages with tape to make an accordion book. Number pages 5, 10, 15, 20...etc.

\*Make a "Piggie Book" by tracing around children's feet. Practice counting by ten's with this book.

Circle Count - Children stand in a circle. The first child says "one," and children continue counting around the circle. When you get to ten or a set of ten, that child must sit down. Continue counting until you get to 100 and then start all over again. The last child standing is the winner.

Magic Number Count – The children stand in a circle. The teacher picks two random numbers (such as 14 and 27). The first child begins the count

with 14. The child who says 27 must sit down. The game continues starting on 14 and ending with 27.

Cup of Math – You will need bathroom cups and a file folder to make this game. Trace around the bottom of a cup on the file folder 20 times. Write the numerals 1-20 in the circles. Write the numerals 1-20 on the cups with a permanent marker. Mix up the cups. Children match numerals on the cups with the numerals on the file folder. Sweep off the cups. Can they stack them in order?

One on One Book - You will need heavy paper, black construction paper cut in  $\frac{3}{4}$ " squares, glue, and book rings to make this book. Glue a specific number of squares on each page as shown. Write the numeral at the top and the word at the bottom. Children take manipulatives (counting bears, cereal, pennies, shells) and match them up one-to-one with the squares on each page.

\*Give pompoms of two different colors. How many different combinations of pompoms can they use to make each number?

Parking Lot - Draw off a parking lot with a set of dots in each space similar to the one shown. Write numerals on toy cars with a permanent marker. Children match the cars with the correct parking space.

\*You can also use cars with numerals for numerical order, addition, ordinals, place value, and to reinforce other math concepts.

More, Less, Equal – Write  $>$ ,  $<$ , and  $=$  on index cards and place them in a bag. Make a set with manipulatives. Invite a child to choose a card from the bag. That child must then make a set that is more, less, or equal based on the card they chose.

\*This is a great game for children to play with a partner.

\*Squish is a similar game played with play dough. The first child makes a set with the play dough. The second child chooses a card and must then make a set that is  $>$ ,  $<$ , or  $=$ .

Dealer's Choice - Write "high," "low," and "equal" on a piece of paper as shown. Give children a deck of cards (remove the face cards.) Children turn over two cards at a time and place the cards in the appropriate pile.

Shoestring

Write numerals 0-20 on a cotton shoestring with a permanent marker. Insert a bead. Children move the bead as they count. Can they show one more? Two less? 3 plus 2?

Mingle

Children walk around the room whispering “mingle,” “mingle.” The teacher calls out a number and the children have to form groups of that amount. The remainders go to the front of the room.

\*Let the remainders cluck like chickens!

## **OPERATIONS AND ALGEBRAIC THINKING**

Hands Up Addition - Cut hands out of construction paper and glue down the palms. Bend the fingers on each hand to make sets.

\*Use for addition, more/less, etc.

The Same As - Use “equal” and “the same as” interchangeably. Teach children sign language for “equal” by sticking out fingers horizontally and touching.

Math Mat - You will need a square sheet of paper to make a math mat. Draw lines similar to the ones shown. Explain that the line in the middle is like the equal sign in an equation. What is on one side has to equal what is on the other side. Demonstrate how to make a set in the top left section and a set in the top right section. Count. Pull down the objects into the bottom section and count how many altogether.

\*Use divided plates in a similar manner.

Fist Fast Math - Here’s a “quickie” math game that is like “rock, scissors, paper.” Each child will need a partner. Children open one palm. Make a fist with the other hand and place it on the palm. The teacher says, “Fist, fast, math” as children tap their fist on their palm. On the word “math” the children stick out some fingers. Children add their fingers with their partner’s to determine how many in all. If they agree, they continue with the game. If they disagree, they have to work it out.

Spill the Beans - You will need large dry lima beans, spray paint, and breath mint tins for this project. First, spread the lima beans on newspaper and spray paint one side. Give each child five beans to put in their container. Close the lid and shake the beans. How many white beans? How many painted beans? How many altogether? Can you write that equation down? Let children continue to shake the beans and write the different combinations for five.

Bats in the Cave – You will need plastic bat rings or spider rings for this activity. You will also need a plastic bowl for the cave. Turn the “cave” upside down on the table and place a set of five bats in front. Have the children count the amount. Next, ask the children to hide their eyes and

hide several bears in the cave. Children open their eyes and try to determine how many bears are in the cave. Continue with other amounts.

## **NUMBER AND OPERATIONS IN BASE TEN**

Bundles of Ten - Make a T chart similar to the one shown with “tens” and “ones” at the top. Let each child count out ten craft sticks and wrap a rubber band around them. That’s one ten. Children place the bundle on the left. They can choose additional craft sticks to place in the “ones” section. First, children just need to explore making sets 11-19. Then the teacher can call out numbers for the children to make.

Clap and Snap - Explain that you will clap your hands for the tens and snap your fingers for the ones. Children will have to listen closely to see if they can figure out the mystery number. For example: clap, snap, snap, snap, snap = 14

## **MEASUREMENT AND DATA**

Measurement - Give each child 5 connecting cubes. They can walk around the room and compare objects to their cube train using the words “longer” and “shorter.” But, they must use a whisper voice and only use the words “longer” and “shorter.” If they talk, they must sit down.

Cheez-It Measuring - Did you know that Cheez-Its are one inch squares? What a great way to measure!

Bean Counters - You will need clear packaging tape and large dry lima beans to make a bean counter. Place ten lima beans end to end in the middle of the tape as shown. Fold the top of the tape down, the bottom up, and seal. Trim off the ends. Children take the bean counter and place it on the end of the object to be measured. How many beans long is the object?

Eating Math - If you really want children to remember something, let them sing it or eat it! Fill snack bags with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of cereal (with different colors or shapes) or party mix. Have children do some of the activities below with the cereal in their bag:

\*Estimation- How many pieces are in your bag?

\*Sorting- Sort the cereal by color, shape, or size.

\*Counting- Count and see how many you have. Did you estimate more or less?

\*Is it an odd or even number?

\*Use cereal for addition and subtraction.

## **GEOMETRY**

Listen and Draw - First, children will need to make a house out of a sheet of paper. Fold the paper in half lengthwise. Open. Fold the top corners to the middle crease as shown to create a triangle. Fold the bottom edge so it covers the bottom of the triangle. Children use their crayons or pencil to listen and draw. For example: "Draw a door on the house. Make a window above the door. Draw a flower beside the door. Open the house and put a mouse below in the basement..."

Play Dough Book - Draw geometric shapes with a marker on file folders. Laminate. Bind file folders with rings to make a book. Children roll play dough and place it on top of the shapes.

I Spy a Shape! - Play this traditional game using shapes. One child selects an object and says, "I spy a square." Classmates take turns guessing the object by using positional words. "Is it in the front of the room?" "Is it behind the teacher's desk?"...

Pretzel Shapes - Give children pretzel sticks and pretzel twists and challenge them to make geometric shapes. How many pretzel sticks will you need to make a hexagon? How many pretzel sticks will you need to make a triangle?  
How can you make a circle out of the pretzel twist?

Heart Puzzle - You will need a 4" square and a 4 " circle. Cut the circle in half. Challenge the children to make a heart out of the square and two semi-circles.