CHAPTER 4

ORGANIZING AND MANAGING INSTRUCTION IN PRESCHOOL

Small-group instruction with the teacher.

One of the advantages of preschool is that teachers work with the same group of children in a half- or whole-day setting. As a result, teachers can really get to know their students and design instruction based on student interests and needs. In addition, preschool teachers are responsible for creating the classroom environment, teaching all of the content areas, administering assessment measures, putting instruction together in a meaningful way, and working with parents. In this chapter I discuss three important

issues related to classroom organization and management when teaching literacy skills: (1) thematic instruction; (2) assessment to guide instruction; and (3) instruction in whole-class, small-group, and one-to-one settings to ensure that individual needs are met.

THEMATIC INSTRUCTION: INTEGRATION OF LITERACY AND CONTENT

As mentioned in Chapter 2, John Dewey (1916/1966) was largely responsible for bringing the concept of an interdisciplinary approach to teaching. This interdisciplinary approach, or the integrated school day, teaches skills from all content areas within the context of a topic or theme being studied. The themes that are studied at school come from children's real-life experiences and topics of interest. Learning experiences are socially interactive and process-oriented, giving children time to explore and experiment with varied materials. If, for example, a class is studying dinosaurs, the students talk about them, read about them, write about them, do art projects related to dinosaurs, and sing songs related to the theme. In doing so, they learn about dinosaurs and develop skills in all of the content areas. Literacy activities are purposefully integrated into the study of themes and in all content areas throughout the school day (Pappas, Kiefer, & Levstik, 1995).

Preparing a Thematic Unit

Themes that are used to integrate the curriculum can be selected by the teacher and the children. Giving students a choice between two or three themes to learn about is important. It gives the students a sense of empowerment. When the topic is selected, allow the children to brainstorm about what they would like to learn (Rand, 1993). For example, in preparation for a unit on the four seasons, I asked a class of preschool children to help with the unit by deciding what they wanted to learn. I used a web to chart their ideas. I started it for them by writing the words "The Four Seasons" inside a circle at the center of the paper. Next I drew spider-like lines projecting from the "Four Seasons" circle. I then drew a circle at the end of each line. Each circle on the web was filled with one of the following questions that children posed:

"What are the four seasons?"

"What is it like in the winter and what do we do?"

"What is it like in the summer and what do we do?"

"What is it like in the spring and what do we do?"

"What is it like in the fall and what do we do?"

When planning a unit, such as the four seasons, the teacher needs to include theme-related literacy activities in all of the content areas scheduled throughout the school day.

Figure 4.1 presents a mini-unit written by Ms. Nagy. As you will see, she integrates content-area activities throughout the day that focus on the theme being studied and on literacy development. If a class is studying the four seasons, the teacher creates activities to enhance language and literacy within different content areas.

Parents can be helpful in supplying materials for different units or sharing expertise related to the unit.

Thematic instruction adds interest to the school day and gives a purpose for learning reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing skills.

1. *Literacy and content skills developed:* Vocabulary development, listening comprehension, letter identification, word identification, science information about seasons.

Activity: The teacher reads an informational book about the four seasons. After the book is read, the children discuss and role-play their favorite seasonal activities. The teacher writes and illustrates the activities mentioned, such as planting in spring, swimming in summer, raking leaves in fall, and building a snowman in winter. The teacher identifies the letters *S* for spring and summer, *F* for fall, and *W* for winter. Children identify letters in their names that appear in the season words and read the words together.

2. *Literacy and content skills developed:* Vocabulary development, phonological and phonemic awareness, working with rhymes and syllables, music in the form of singing together.

Activity: The teacher and children sing a song about spring. As they sing and clap the syllables of the words, the teacher lists and illustrates the words that rhyme. The class reads the words and talks about them.

3. *Literacy and content skills developed:* Reading and understanding photos, identifying details in photos, modeling writing, science information about the season.

Activity: The teacher encourages discussion about three different photographs that include information about the fall. The photos include people raking leaves, children picking apples and selecting pumpkins at a farm, and so forth. The information children generate is written on a chart. The class reads the chart together.

4. *Literacy and content skills developed:* Vocabulary development, following directions, reading whole words, art experience.

Activity: The teacher provides the children with dark blue construction paper for a background, along with bits of silver foil, white doilies, cotton balls, white tissue paper, white yarn, and chalk. The children are asked to create a winter collage or picture. The children are encouraged to talk about the materials and their pictures while creating them. The teacher writes down each student's favorite picture-related words on an index card to create a Very Own Word box for each child. The children then read their Very Own Words with the teacher.

5. *Literacy and content skills developed:* Hypothesizing, predicting, vocabulary development, writing, science.

Activity: The teacher asks the children to observe a pan filled with water and discuss what the water looks like, how it feels, and what it does. She asks the children to predict what the water will look like frozen. The water is put in the freezer or outside, if it is cold enough to freeze. When it is frozen, the discussion focuses on what the water looks like and how it feels. The class then allows the ice to melt and discusses freezing and melting again. The teacher records and illustrates what was found in experiments and reads the written recording together with the class.

FIGURE 4.1. Thematic instruction: Seasons.

GUIDING INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING THROUGH THE USE OF ASSESSMENT

The purpose of assessment is to find out how well a child is progressing, but more important, to organize an instructional plan to meet the child's needs. It is difficult to talk about assessment and instruction separately. Assessment guides instruction. Some basic principles and procedures for assessment are discussed here. However, practical applications for assessment of children's performance are discussed throughout the book in chapters that deal with the different skills and instructional strategies. Early literacy educators, with their concern for children's interests, learning styles, and individual levels of ability, have made us begin to take a closer look at our methods of assessing performance. It is apparent that standardized group paper-and-pencil tests are not always sensitive to strategies drawn from early literacy constructs. In addition, it has become clear that one measure cannot be the main method of evaluating a child's progress. Rather than testing children, we need to assess their performances for growth in many areas and under many conditions. Assessment should help the teacher, child, and parent determine a child's strengths and weaknesses and plan appropriate instructional strategies. Assessment should match educational goals and practices. To meet the needs of the different populations in our schools, assessment measures need to be diverse, because some children may perform better in some situations than in others.

The joint position statement of the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) on learning to read and write (1998) recommend that evaluation for preschoolers be appropriate for their ability level and cultural backgrounds. When selecting an assessment measure, be sure it matches the objective in the preschool curriculum. Quality assessment should be drawn from real-life writing and reading tasks and should continuously follow a range of literacy activities.

The type of assessment referred to here is often called *authentic assessment.* There are many definitions of the term, but one that seems to capture its essence is that authentic assessment represents and reflects the actual learning and instructional activities of the classroom. Several principles emerge from an authentic assessment perspective. The following is adapted from guidelines set forth by Ruddell and Ruddell (1995).

1. Assessment should be based primarily on observations of children engaged in authentic classroom reading and writing tasks.

2. Assessment should focus on children's learning and the instructional goal of the curriculum.

3. Assessment should be continuous, based on observations over a substantial period and the collection of daily performance samples.

4. Assessment should take into account the diversity of students' cultural, language, and special needs.

5. Assessment should be collaborative and include the active participation of children, parents, and teachers.

6. Assessment should recognize the importance of using a variety of observations rather than relying on one assessment approach.

7. Assessment must be knowledge based and reflect our most current understanding of reading and writing processes for the age and grade of the child being assessed.

To accomplish these goals, assessment must be frequent and include many types of assessment. The main goal is to observe and record actual behavior that provides the broadest possible picture of a particular child. A well-known authentic measure is Clay's (1979) Concepts about Print Test, which evaluates what the child knows about print and how it is used in books. Every chapter in this book that deals with a specific area of literacy development, such as comprehension, contains a section with suggestions for collecting assessment information related to that particular skill. A list of general authentic assessment measures that will help paint a comprehensive picture of a child is provided in the next section.

AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT: MEASURES AND STRATEGIES

Observations

Prepared forms or teacher-created forms are used to record children's behavior. Observation forms usually have broad categories, with large spaces for notes about children's activities. Goals for observing should be planned, and forms should be designed to meet the goals. Teachers can write down interesting, humorous, and general comments about the child's behavior in the classroom. Observations should focus on one particular aspect of the child's performance, such as oral reading, silent reading, or behavior while listening to stories or writing. Within the descriptions of behavior, dialogue is often recorded.

Daily Performance Samples

These are samples of the child's work in all content areas that are done on a daily basis. Various types of samples should be collected periodically. Samples of writing, artwork, science, and social studies reports can be collected throughout the school year.

Audiotapes

Audiotapes are another form of assessment that can be used for the following purposes: to determine language development, to assess story comprehension through

recorded retellings, and to analyze progress in the fluency of oral reading. Audio-tapes can also be used in discussion sessions related to responses to literature as tools to help teachers understand how students function in a group. In addition, the tapes can help teachers identify and understand the types of responses that children offer. Children can listen to their own audiotapes to evaluate their story retellings and their fluency.

Videotapes

Videotapes relate information similar to that in audiotapes, with the additional data that can be gained by seeing the child in action. Videotapes can be used for many different purposes. Therefore, they should be done with a purpose in mind and evaluated with a checklist or observation form. Teachers can also use video-tapes to assess their own performance.

Surveys and Interviews

Surveys can be prepared by teachers to assess children's attitudes about their own learning or student's likes and dislikes about school. Surveys can be in the form of questionnaires or interviews with written or oral answers.

Parent Assessment Forms

Authentic assessment also involves parents as evaluators of their children. Parents may be asked to collect work samples from home and to write anecdotes about behav-ior. They may be provided with forms for observing and recording behavior. Parents need to encourage their children to talk about their schoolwork at home. A survey for parents about their child's reading and writing habits at home is useful. Parents are an important resource for information about the child from the home perspective.

Conferences

Conferences allow the teacher to meet with a child on a one-to-one basis for the following purposes: to assess skills such as reading aloud, to discuss a child's progress, to talk about steps toward improvement, to instruct, and to prescribe activities. Children should take an active role in evaluating their progress and are equal partners in the assessment process. Parents also are involved in conferences with teachers about their child's progress. They meet with teachers alone and with their child. They bring materials they have collected at home to add to the packet of information.

Checklists

Inventories that include lists of developmental behaviors or skills for children to accomplish are a common form of authentic assessment. The list is prepared based

on objectives a teacher may have for instruction. Therefore, the inventory is designed to determine whether goals set forth have been accomplished. Checklists for skills are presented throughout this book for your use.

Portfolio Assessment

A portfolio provides a way for teachers, children, and parents to collect representative samples of children's work. The portfolio can include work in progress and completed samples. It tells what children have done and what they are capable of doing now to determine where they should go from this point forth. The teacher's portfolio should include work selected by the child, teacher, and parent. It should represent the best work that a child can produce and should illustrate any difficulties he or she may be experiencing. It should include many different types of work samples and represent what the child has been learning.

The physical portfolio is often an accordion-type folder with several pockets to hold work. The folder can be personalized with a drawing by the child, a picture of the child, and his or her name. Portfolios are often passed on to the next grade; as a result, the pieces collected need to be carefully selected to limit the size of the folder. The portfolio should include different samples to represent different areas of literacy and the best work the child has to offer. Included, for example, should be: daily work performance samples, anecdotes about behavior, audiotapes of oral reading, language samples, story retellings, checklists that record skill development, interviews, standardized test results, a child's self-assessment form, journals, a writing sample, and artwork.

Throughout the chapters of this book, assessment is discussed at the end of sections that deal with specific skill development. Multiple measures are offered to include in a portfolio of assessment materials for children. These materials should help teachers create appropriate instructional strategies, help parents understand their child's development, and make the child aware of his or her strengths and weaknesses and how he or she can improve.

Standardized Tests

Standardized tests are being used in preschools. Therefore, it is important to know what they measure, how they are created, and how they should be used. Standardized tests are supposed to measure what students have learned. These tests are prepared by publishers and are norm-referenced; that is, they are administered to large numbers of students in order to develop norms. Norms represent the average performance of students who are tested at a particular age. When selecting a standardized test, it is important to check its validity for your children. That is, does the test evaluate what it says it tests for? Does it match your goals? The reliability of the test is important, as well. That is, are scores accurate and dependable? Other features of standardized tests are as follows:

1. *Grade-equivalent scores* are raw scores converted into grade-level scores. For example, consider a preschool student who takes a test. Is the student's score equivalent to the scores of students at the same age and grade level? Or is the score considered above or below age or grade level?

2. *Percentile ranks* are raw scores converted into percentiles. They tell where the child ranks compared with all children who took the test at his or her grade and age level. Therefore, if a youngster receives a percentile rank of 80, it would mean that he or she scored better than or equal to 80% of those students who took the test at his or her grade and age level and that 20% of the children who took the test scored better.

Although many criticisms are associated with standardized measures, they do present another source of information about a child's performance. It must be realized, though, that a standardized test is just one type of information, which is no more important than all of the other measures discussed earlier. Many question, however, whether it is necessary to use standardized tests with very young children.

Concerns Associated with Standardized Testing

There are a number of problems associated with standardized tests. We must recognize that they represent only one form of assessment; their use must be coordinated with that of other assessment measures. Some standardized tests do not accord with the instructional practices suggested by the latest research and theory on early literacy. Teachers may feel pressured to teach to the test because schools are sometimes evaluated on how well children perform on standardized tests. Teachers who succumb to this temptation could use inappropriate strategies for teaching young children. In addition, teachers may spend a great deal of time preparing children for standardized tests by drilling them on sample tests similar to the real ones. Administrators and teachers must understand the shortcomings of standardized tests and the importance of using multiple methods of assessment. The use of multiple assessment tools given frequently throughout the school year would tend to prevent undue emphasis on the standardized measure. If standardized tests are used, teachers need to help youngsters learn about them. Children need to learn how to follow the directions and how to fill in the answers.

Another concern with standardized tests is bias. For example, standardized test scores are less reliable with younger children than with older children. Furthermore, some standardized tests are still biased in favor of white, middle-class children despite genuine attempts to alleviate the problem. Their use tends to place rural, African American, and bilingual youngsters at a disadvantage. Prior knowledge plays a large role in how well children do on the test. Children from white, middle-class homes tend to have experiences that lead to better achievement on

the tests. In addition, following test directions such as "Put your finger on the star" or "Circle the goat that is behind the tree" is often a problem for the young child. Children who have never seen a goat may not circle anything because the animal on the page might look like a dog to them.

Preschoolers can take standardized tests only on a one-to-one basis. In a group setting, children will not be able to follow directions or stay on task. Finding suitable tests is difficult. Some standardized tests that have been accepted for use in the preschool community are the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn & Dunn, 1997), a test given on a one-to-one basis to assess vocabulary development. A comprehensive measure for preschool is called the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS; Good & Kaminski, 2003). DIBELS is a set of short, standardized, individually administered measures of early literacy development designed for regular monitoring of the development of prereading and early reading skills. The Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Preschool (PALS; Invernizzi, Sullivan, Meier, & Swank, 2004) is a standardized, individually administered assessment of phonological awareness. Another well-accepted standardized measure for preschool is the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) Toolkit (Smith, Dickinson, Sangeorge, & Anastasopoulos, 2002), which is a three-part test. It is an observation form that (1) evaluates the classroom literacy environment by using a checklist; (2) assesses classroom literacy instruction through an observation rating scale; and (3) uses a structured teacher interview to determine teacher knowledge about literacy development in preschool. The instrument has been shown to be reliable and valid.

According to recommendations by the International Reading Association (1999) concerning high-stakes assessment in reading, it is recommended that teachers:

➢ Construct rigorous classroom assessments to help outside observers gain confidence in teacher techniques.

➢ Educate parents, community members, and policy makers about classroom-based assessment.

Preschool standards are being written for literacy development of 3- and 4-year-olds. We recognize that children this young are capable of learning many literacy skills and enjoy learning them if they are engaged in activities in an appropriate manner. As a result of a study in 15 states, Schickedanz (2004) created a list that was representative of preschool literacy objectives (see Table 4.1).

TABLE 4.1. Preschool Literacy Objectives

Listening comprehension

- Listens with increased attention.
- Listens for different purposes.
- Understands simple oral directions.
- Listens to and engages in conversation.
- Listens to tapes and responds to directions on the tapes.

Speech production and discrimination

- Identifies differences between similar-sounding words (e.g., *tree* and *three).*
- Produces speech sounds with increased ease and accuracy.
- Experiments with language.

Vocabulary

- Shows an increase in listening and speaking vocabulary.
- Uses new vocabulary in daily communication.
- Refines understanding of words.
- Increases listening vocabulary.

Verbal expression

- Uses language for a variety of purposes.
- Uses sentences of increasing length and grammatical complexity.
- Uses language to express routines.
- Tells a simple personal narrative.
- Asks questions.
- Begins to retell stories in sequence, that are narrative and informational texts.

Phonological awareness

- Begins to identify rhymes.
- Begins to attend to beginning sounds.
- Begins to break words into syllables or claps along with each syllable.
- Begins to create words by substituting one sound for another.
- Begins to segment and blend words.

Print and book awareness

- Understands that reading and writing are ways to obtain information and knowledge and to communicate thoughts and ideas.
- Understands that illustrations carry meaning but cannot be read.
- Understands that letters are different from numbers.
- Understands that a book has a title and an author.
- Understands that print runs from left to right and top to bottom.
- Begins to understand basic print conventions (e.g., letters are grouped to form words, words are separated by spaces).

TABLE 4.1. *(continued)*

Letter knowledge and early word recognition

- Begins to associate letter names with their shapes.
- Identifies 10 or more printed letters.
- Begins to notice beginning letters in familiar words.
- Begins to make some letter–sound relationships.
- Begins to identify some high-frequency words.

Motivation to read

- Demonstrates an interest in books and reading.
- Enjoys listening to and discussing books.
- Asks to be read to and to have the same story reread.
- Attempts to read and write.

Comprehension

- Can retell the who, what, when, and where about a story.
- Predicts what will happen next in a story.
- Imitates special language in a book.
- Asks questions about the information or events in a book and answers questions.
- Connects information and events in books to real life.

Written expression

- Attempts to write messages.
- Uses letters to represent written language.
- Attempts to connect the sounds in a word with letter forms.
- Begins to dictate words and phrases to an adult who records them on paper.

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ORGANIZING INSTRUCTION TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

There are many strategies for organizing instruction. Children can be taught as a whole class, in small groups, and individually. Children can be organized in homogeneous groups based on ability or needs or placed in heterogeneous groups based on interests or friends. The use of many organizational strategies is important because some children benefit more in one setting than in another. Having children participate with different children in different groups makes it likely that they will interact with many other children. Preschoolers need to meet in whole-class, small-group, and one-to-one settings for different reasons. Whole-class meetings create a total classroom community, whereas small-group and one-to-one settings provide the teacher with the opportunity to identify their students' individual needs and teach to those needs.

WHOLE-CLASS, SMALL-GROUP, AND ONE-TO-ONE LEARNING SETTINGS

Whole-class instruction is difficult to handle with preschool children because they can listen and concentrate for only a short period of time. Whole-class lessons, sometimes referred to as shared experiences, are appropriate for some situations, such as storybook readings, group singing, and class discussions.

Small groups are effective when close interaction with children is necessary for intentional instruction and assessment of skills. The purpose is to work with children who are at the same level of instruction and who have the same needs. One-to-one instruction provides an opportunity for the teacher to offer personal attention to a child and to learn even more about him or her. When a teacher works with a child alone for instruction and assessment, children can get help with specific skills they are having difficulty with. Children enjoy meeting in small groups and alone with the teacher; they like that private attention. Teachers need several groups so that all children can fit. Teachers select the appropriate instructional skill needs and materials for the small-group instruction. The teacher could be working on letters, colors, sight words, phonological awareness, concepts about books, reading stories to develop listening comprehension, and so forth.

MANAGING DIFFERENT TYPES OF GROUP INSTRUCTION

It is important for teachers to engage children in many group settings for instruction. Whole-class settings are excellent for building a classroom community, brainstorming activities, and having the entire class of children with different backgrounds and abilities working together. Typical activities for whole-class activities in preschool are story time, circle time, music, planning time, writing the morning message, and summarizing the school day.

Small-group instruction and one-to-one interactions between teacher and child are very important in preschool. Small groups are good for projects that require children to work independently of the teacher in centers. Small groups are very important for explicit instruction in skills based on need. There are small friendship groups and groups based on interests. Children also work in pairs or in threes for independent reading and writing.

One important purpose of small-group work is for children to learn to work independently of the teacher and in cooperative social settings with peers. It is a time for children to practice skills already learned. During center time children engage in self-selected reading and writing activities and work with a partner or alone. The teacher acts as a facilitator by answering questions and keeping children on task if necessary.

When children know how to work independently, then the teacher can take a small group for skill instruction. When teachers take small groups for explicit instruction, the other children need to learn that they are not to disturb her. Therefore, the children who are not involved in the lesson need to know exactly what to do, when to do it, and where. A visit to Ms. Shea's preschool classroom provides a look at the organization of independent work.

The activities for independent work that Ms. Shea models for her class are often skill- and theme-related. At the beginning of the school year, she spends time introducing children to the centers in the room and the types of activities they include. She has her class practice working on the different activities. At this time, Ms. Shea does not work with small groups during center time; rather, she helps the children so that they eventually will be able to work independently.

The children are assigned some tasks. The activities they participate in are ones they have done before and involve practicing skills learned. Ms. Shea assigns activities 1, 2, 3, and 4 as follows:

1. For partner reading, children pair off and read the same book together. They also may read separate books and then tell each other about the story they read. The class is studying animals, so the children are to select books from the open-faced bookshelves that include stories and expository texts about animals. Children draw pictures about their books.

2. In the writing center the children look through the book *Rosie's Walk* (Hutchins, 1968), which Ms. Shea read at the morning meeting. They are to copy words that the teacher wrote on the experience chart with icons to help the children remember what they say. Children can look through the book and copy any words they would like and draw pictures to go with their print.

3. The art center has magazines with many photos of animals that children can cut out and use to create animal collages.

4. The computer center has literacy software with activities about animals.

Ms. Shea assigns the children to centers using a chart that indicates who will be going where. The children change from one center to the next when Ms. Shea feels it is time to do so. If she meets with a group for only 5 minutes, she will have the students stay at the same center they just were assigned to; if she meets with a group for 10 minutes, she will have the children change centers at that time and all at the same time. She often coordinates the changing of centers with the changing of small-group meetings. A basket is designated for completed center work.

The management of center time is crucial for its success. Students must know where to go when, they must be familiar with the activities they will use, and they must know where to put completed work. Rules for children to follow when working independently are as follows:

Manipulative materials such as a puppet that represents a story encourage children to work independently and practice skills such as retelling stories.

Rules for Using Materials and Completing Work

➢ Speak in soft voices; people are working.

➢ Put materials back in their place.

➢ Take care of the materials so they are in good condition for others.

➢ Put your completed work in the center basket; accountability for independent work is important.

➢ If you have questions, use the "ask three and then me" rule. Seek help from other students designated as helpers before asking the teacher when she is in a small instructional group.

Rules for Cooperating and Collaborating

➢ Share materials in collaborative activities.

➢ Take turns.

➢ Listen to your friends when they talk.

➢ Offer help to others you are working with if they need it.

Parents can be a wonderful source of help during center time.

LITERACY INSTRUCTION IN SMALL GROUPS IN PRESCHOOL

The objectives for small-group literacy instruction are to focus on a systematic sequence of skills to be developed and to emphasize skills children are experiencing difficulty with. During the lessons many experiences are drawn on to help children with sight words, learning colors, phonological awareness, concepts about books and print, and so forth (Reutzel, 1997; Reutzel & Cooter, 2004).

Typically, there are two to three preschoolers in a group. Materials selected for instruction meet the needs of the students, as well as of the lesson itself. The objectives for the lessons depend on the students' abilities and needs. In these small literacy lessons, children are assessed regularly, and their groups can change as their literacy ability changes. The number of groups formed is not set but is determined by the number of different ability levels represented in a given classroom.

Activities are provided in centers for children who are not in the small literacy-lesson groups. Children are actively engaged in interesting, productive work, practicing the skills they learned during literacy lessons.

In addition to generating a rich literacy atmosphere, an interdisciplinary approach, and assessment, instruction is designed to use different teaching methods, organizational strategies, and grouping procedures so that the differences among children can be accommodated. The centers provide space for independent or social learning, exploration, and self-direction. The classrooms I am describing provide a place for whole-class instruction. The teacher's conference table is a place for individual learning or small-group lessons. All furniture is, of course, movable so that any other needed teaching arrangement can be accommodated. The centers are located to create both quiet, relatively academic areas and places for more active play. The teacher's conference table is situated in a quiet area yet allows the teacher a view of the rest of the classroom. While the teacher is involved in small-group or one-to-one instruction at the conference table, the rest of the class is working independently. The table's location allows the teacher to see all of the children even while working with just a few.

This type of instruction is not an easy task. However, with proper practice that prepares the children to get ready for independent work, and with the help of an aide and parents who volunteer on a regular basis, this small-group instruction is effective and rewarding in terms of student achievement.

Small-group and one-to-one instruction enable the teacher to assess children's achievement and to teach to their specific needs.

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