

# Artroom Centers: *Part Two*

Robb Lane

*Editor's Note: Part One appeared in the March 2004 issue.*

**L**earning centers have helped my school's art program to soar, not just stay afloat. The benefits of centers include: increased student motivation, better student behavior, more flexibility in art media to introduce, less budget expenditure, easier grant funding, enhanced art vocabulary, addressing multiple learning abilities, better genuine student evaluation, student use of higher-order thinking skills, group work developing interpersonal skills, teacher acting as a facilitator—not lecturer, and exploration and experience used for learning.

When designing learning centers for your classroom, start with the National Visual Arts Standards and state frameworks. Make sure that all the objectives are met:

- Observe the exploration process of students, and imagine what they might be able to do and learn if there was a special work area. The initial time invested in the planning and design of each center really pays off in terms of student learning.
- Try to select a wide breadth of art reproductions, resources, and media that represent a broad variety of world cultures. Information displayed in each center should offer students a depth of additional resources related to their activity, so they can move between viewing, reading, and production.
- Strive for a balance between two-dimensional and three-dimensional art forms. Select basic age appropriate tools that are mostly indestructible, and can be easily replaced

with others. Try to be sure most students can handle the basic skills, and if desire and ability are there, they can stretch the possibilities of the media.

- Place each center in your classroom depending on how many students will be working there and how much space their movements require. Prepare for water needs, allowing students to retrieve water and wash hands independently. If a

- Try to include at least one center for recycled items. When recycled items come in from custodians, teachers down the hall, or students with bags from home, there is a ready center to deposit these materials in—they don't pile up in your closet waiting for a workday to be sorted.

With centers, you can easily incorporate themes being studied in the regular classroom. Whatever the class

is currently studying can be explored visually in a center of choice. Students are motivated to genuinely express themselves in their independent explorations. I don't see the self-defeatism that I used to see in students all doing the same activity.

When students miss my class, they don't fall behind and miss their only chance at working with a process. If students arrive late to class,

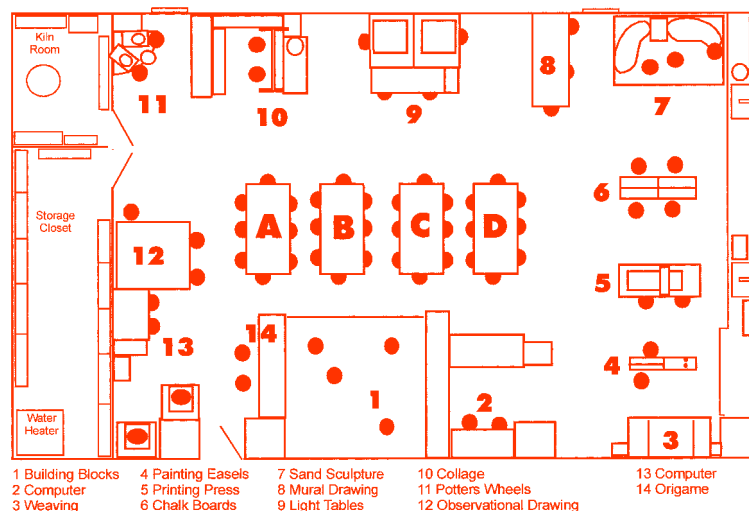
they know to start at their seat at the central tables, wait to answer a question, and scan the room for available space at a center.

Allowing freedom of individual selection can be difficult when it comes to evaluation, but I use a chart and a different colored pencil for each of the nine weeks, so I can track each student's progress through the centers. 🌀

*Robb Lane is an art specialist at Fairfield Primary School in Columbia, South Carolina. rlane@fairfield.k12.sc.us*

## WEB LINKS:

[www.eduplace.com/rdg/res/classroom.html](http://www.eduplace.com/rdg/res/classroom.html)



center needs electricity, make sure that switches and outlets are out of students' reach.

- Try each center yourself; mimicking the potential movements of the most challenging of students, making sure students can work with little danger of an accident, or disruption from a neighboring center. Try to make most centers accessible to wheelchairs.

- Centers can be assembled from furniture discarded by classroom teachers as they acquire new furniture. You might be able to use small grants to fund some centers. I was able to do this through a business partnership program.