

Creating Intentional Learning Centers for Toddlers

Aligned with ITERS-3

Purpose

Learning centers invite curiosity, independence, and connection. Thoughtfully prepared spaces help toddlers explore, communicate, and practice new skills.

1. Dramatic Play

Learning Focus: Social interaction, language, self-regulation

Materials

Play kitchen, small table and chair, pots, utensils, dolls, soft animals, dress-up items, scarves, hats, shoes, and diverse props reflecting family and community life.

Teacher Tips

- Model simple pretend play (e.g., “Let’s cook soup together!”)
- Add new props based on children’s interests
- Use rich language to name actions and emotions

ITERS-3 Links

Items 18, 3, 29

2. Block Area

Learning Focus: Problem-solving, spatial awareness, cooperation

Materials

Soft blocks, people, animals, vehicles, baskets for sorting, and photos of real buildings or bridges.

Teacher Tips

- Narrate play (e.g., “You built a tall tower!”)
- Encourage teamwork (e.g., “Let’s build a road together.”)
- Rotate accessories to keep interest high

ITERS-3 Links

Items 19, 23, 28

3. Cozy/Reading Area

Learning Focus: Emotional regulation, early literacy, comfort

Materials

Board and cloth books, family photos, cushions, rugs, small sofa, pillows

Teacher Tips

- Read daily, one-on-one or in small groups
- Encourage choice and independence in selecting books
- Offer as a calm, safe space for self-soothing

ITERS-3 Links

Items 15, 3, 1