

Introduction

Teaching essential skills and knowledge through thematic units is a popular method of teaching. Teaching with Purpose Themes: All Things Fall demonstrates ways to implement thematic activities into essential learning centers as well as fun group time activities to include such as:

Group Time



Language Experience

This section consists of open ended questions to ask the children. As the children give you their answers, record them on paper or a poster board then post it for the parents to read. The language experiences could be used as journal prompts as well.

Quick Tip: Keep record of the answers the children give you. At the end of the school year, compile all of the questions and answers and create a book for the parents as a keepsake.



Graph

Graphs elicit categorization, counting, and concepts of more, less and equal. Pose questions to the children then have them choose which category best suits them. Write their names on the graph in the preferred category. After all of the names are recorded, count each category and compare, including which one has more or less.

Quick Tip: If the children are old enough, have them write their own names on the graph.



Science Experiment

These are simple experiments to be done during group times. Some of them may be easy enough for the children to do in the science center independently. While doing the experiments, remember to use science vocabulary such as *predict*, *observe*, and *results*.

Quick Tip: Post the results of the experiments for the parents to see.



Estimation Station

Estimating is another great way to enhance math vocabulary and concepts such as more, less, and equal. Create an estimation jar to deposit objects in for the children to guess the amount. Record each child's estimation. After everyone has estimated, take the objects out and count them. Look back at the record of the guesses and decide if the children estimated more, less, or equal the actual amount. Post the results for the parents to see.

Quick Tip: Remind the children that estimating is guessing. They want to get as close as possible, but it is okay if it is not exact.



Math Journals

Math journals are a great introduction to story problems. Give each child a blank piece of paper and crayons. Read the math journal prompt and have them draw a picture to figure out the problem. The numbers that are provided may be changed to work with the number your class is focusing on.

Quick Tip: Math journals should be used for children ages four and older.



Poems

Poetry promotes phonemic awareness. An effective way to use poems in the classroom is to pick one poem to focus on each week. Write the poem and post it in the group time area. Everyday, read the poem at least one time and point at the words as you read them. At the end of the week, give each child a blank piece of paper, three hole punched, with the poem written at the top. Encourage the children to illustrate the poem. After they are finished, put the poems into their "poetry folder" which is simply a three-brad folder for each child. Send the folder home with the children to read with their parents over the weekend and have the children bring the folder back to school at the beginning of the following week. Be sure to remind the parents how important it is for them to bring the folders back. At the end of the school year, each child gets to keep his/ her folder.

Quick Tip: Poetry folders should be used for children ages four and older.



Finger Plays and Songs

Not only do finger plays and songs make any group time fun, they also promote language development and math skills. If possible, try to include movement with them.



Cooking

Cooking activities may be done during group times or, if the activities are simple enough, they may be put in a science or math center to be done independently by the children. Ensure that children wash their hands before participation and that safety measures are always taken.

Quick Tip: Ensure there are no food allergies in the class before doing all cooking activities.

Learning Centers

The learning centers included in this book are the essential learning centers set forth by *Teaching with Purpose: Essential Learning Centers*.



Art/ Creativity

The art center should be designed to encourage the children to work independently and freely create while experimenting with different materials.



Writing

The writing center exposes children to different print and allows them to experiment with it while creating stories.



Quick Tip: This center is for children ages four and older.



Manipulative

The manipulative center is a great center to enhance fine motor development as well as encourage problem solving skills.



Math

The math center is the perfect way to ensure children are getting the foundational skills they need in math. In addition to number recognition, they are also gaining the math concepts that are needed for counting, ordering, patterning, and comparing.



Science/ Discovery

The science center allows children to present questions, experiment with possibilities, and explore different ideas and solutions. It allows the children to think “outside the box” and solve problems.



Sensory

The sensory center provides opportunities for children to use all of their five senses while learning. This center is usually a tub filled with a substance that can be held, heard, smelled, or seen.



Block/ Construction

The block center provides the children the opportunity to build, construct, and create. This is an important center because it enhances everything including fine motor skills, math skills, literacy, and science concepts.



Literacy/ Language

The literacy center encourages the love and appreciation of books as well as teaches children the concepts needed to be successful readers. Although books are important, the literacy center can be expanded to include file folder games, sequencing cards, and any other activities that might enhance reading readiness skills.



Dramatic Play

The dramatic play center allows children to better understand the world and different situations around them. This center has endless possibilities and can evolve into many different scenarios.