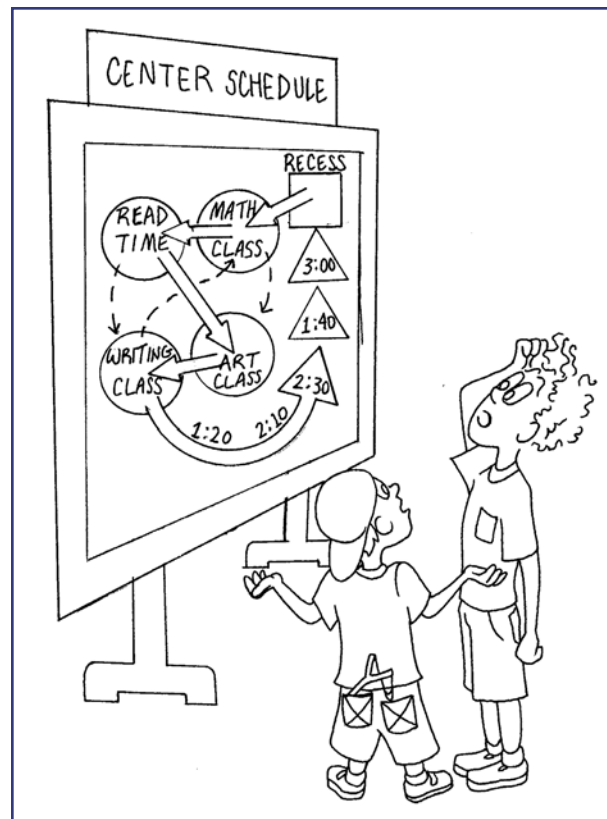


- **Free reading**
Allow students to free read using the classroom library as the center. Let students read quietly on their own or with a friend in their group.

The Time Factor

The time you allot for center use depends largely on how much time you need for actual teaching, the learning you want to occur, and the grade you teach. Kindergarten teachers often cover all their academics in the morning and set aside time in the afternoon to do centers. In kindergarten the students are given up to half an hour per center as it takes them longer to get involved in, complete, and clean up the activities in preparation to move to the next center. That means in an hour of afternoon center time, each child rotates through two centers. For those that teach half-day kindergarten, center time is even shorter and, in some cases, it's limited to every other day. In the face of such time restrictions, many teachers don't choose to rotate the children through all centers every center time, instead they have the students stay at one center and go to a new center the following day.



"I don't have a clue where we go next, do you?"

Generally, for first and second grades, approximately 15 minutes per center works well; for third, fourth, and fifth grades 20 minutes is adequate. Keep in mind that, depending on the nature of the activities, you may want to increase this time. If you were to teach third grade and had four groups, you would be looking at about 80 minutes of center work in a day. It's very unlikely that you would have that much uninterrupted time—and what would you do if you had more than four groups?

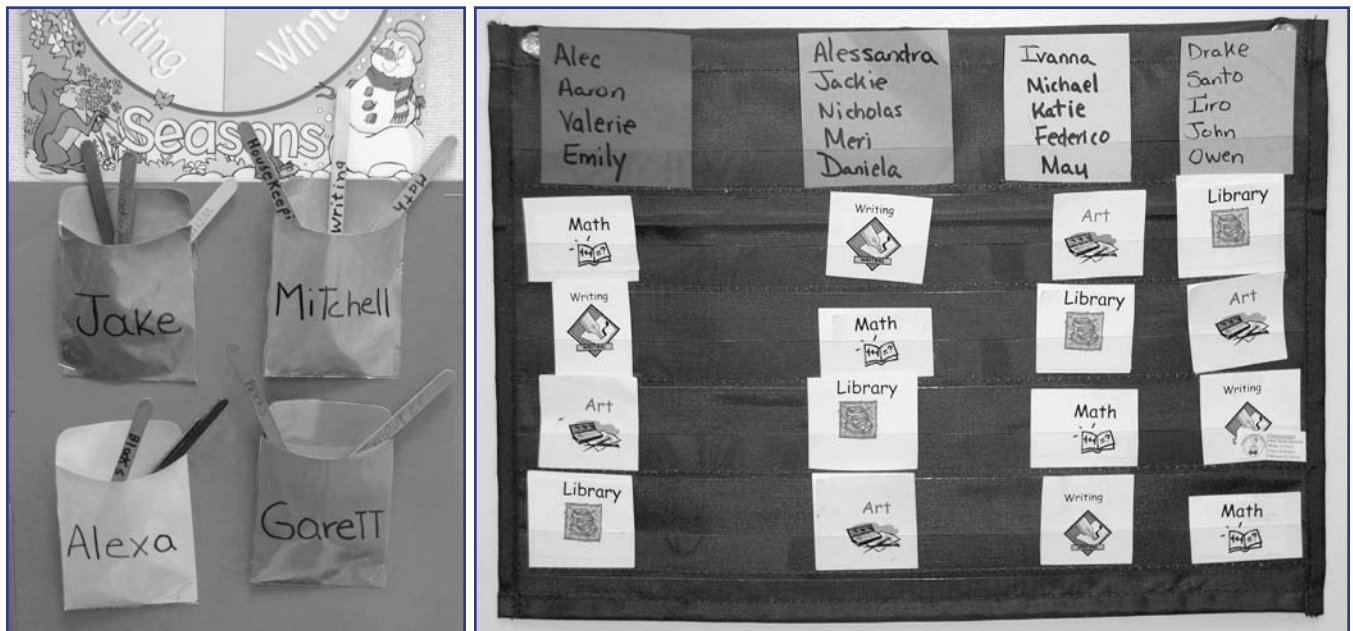
To combat the time issue you could:

- Schedule half the rotations in the morning and the other half in the afternoon.
- Spread the centers over two days.
- Give shorter amounts of time to each center.
- Have larger groups with fewer centers so there are fewer rotations (and less time) required.
- Use centers only once a week, blocking off the appropriate amount of time required to get through a rotation.
- Adjust your center work to reflect the time constraints: you can do four fifteen minute activities, but if you only have three activities, make three groups and give them twenty minutes at each center.

What to do While the Students are at Centers

During center time, teachers often pull children out of their centers for individual work. If you plan on doing this, let the class know ahead of time that, even though it might not be during *that* day, everyone will get a chance to sit with the teacher.

Using centers also allows you to work with a small group of students while the rest of the class is busy working. You can meet with students



Charts for managing center rotation can be made once at the beginning of the year. Change group and center names as needed.