

Does Rotation Meet the Preschooler's Needs?



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When considering rotating preschoolers ages 3 years to 5 years, there are several major concerns to address. These concerns are directly related to the basic needs of the preschool child. The preschoolers need to develop trust with any adult with whom they spend time. The time we have is so valuable because it is so limited. Moving a child from one setting to another with new teachers will make developing a relationship of trust difficult.

The child will experience the feeling of love as the teachers spend time with them individually. In a setting where the preschoolers as a class are moved into a room planned for one specific activity, all the children will be expected to take part in that activity. The teacher's concern will be that the child completes that activity in the assigned time. The child and the teacher will have less opportunity to relate individually in this setting. The rotating teachers will have several classes of preschoolers and limited time in which to get to know them. This will result in less time and opportunity to develop feelings and expressions of love.

Preschoolers need the security of familiar faces in familiar places. The preschool rooms are set up to meet their needs and to offer experiences at their developmental level. When we rotate preschool activities, will there be tables and chairs in each room to fit their physical size? This would require several sets of tables 30" by 46" by 22" and chairs 13" from the floor. This basic equipment is expensive and duplication would not be practical.

By moving the preschooler from one room to another, we are expecting the child to adjust to new conditions, expectations, rules and limits. They are best ministered to when their environment is constant and consistent.

As we consider the characteristics of preschoolers, we will recognize how they are limited when they are rotated from area to area for specific activities. Preschoolers are curious and need opportunities to explore a variety of activities and materials with freedom to move from one activity to another. They are creative and enjoy experimenting freely with material. In setting up rooms for limited activities, the opportunity for choice and creativity is restricted.

When a room is set up for a specific age, preschoolers will have opportunities to make choices. They will take turns using some materials and will be encouraged to share space and materials in other areas. This helps them develop necessary and useful life skills. In a rotating situation, all of the children will be using the same material at the same time. They will not experience sharing or taking turns.

Moving preschoolers from one room to another requires use of valuable time in unnecessary transition. It is less likely that the child will be able to help in the responsibility for cleaning up as he or she does in the self-contained room.

The safety factor must also be examined when moving preschoolers. During times when we most likely will have new children, making safety a priority is essential. The move will require close supervision by the teachers, and the route from one location to another must be free of hazards. Hallways and stairways must be clear, safe, and away from heavily trafficked areas. Each room must be checked for electrical outlets within reach of the children. Furnishings not needed should be moved out of the room. This places added responsibility on teachers or the church staff.

As we consider all the elements involved in moving preschoolers, we must evaluate our choices. We must ask ourselves if our decisions are based on what is best for the child or on what is convenient for the adult. Is our teaching child centered or teacher centered? Are we taking a giant step backward?

Each preschool director and teacher has the joyous opportunity to influence a child. We may provide experiences that will help them develop loving and happy feelings about church. Our challenge is to plan for them in order to assure that our goals will be reached for each child. We must consider all the elements involved as we plan and make decisions which will have long term results in the life of each preschooler.

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