



## Cindy's Corner

### Set Up a Multi-Class Flea Market

Spring is always a good time to clean out toy boxes, classrooms and attics. And what better way to recycle all the discards than to organize a flea market! A flea market theme can generate multiple related activities and provides a natural environment to work on classification and money skills. Interactions that take place in a flea market setting are characteristically repetitive, making it a good place to work on communication skills and social interactions.

To keep it manageable, isolate what skills you want to work on and design your flea market around them. Think of the roles your students can play as



you break the flea market theme down into structured steps and related workstations. Work collectively on one project at a time, such as poster making, or have ongoing workstations and daily job assignments for students to work at simultaneously. For example, think about setting up

multiple workstations for sorting, packaging, poster making, money sorting, and crafts.

Put up posters advertising the flea market. Deliver regular notices to request contributions and provide updates. Make this a regular assignment for students who benefit from the opportunity to alternate seatwork with movement. To collect items for your flea market, set out large boxes in the school lobby, or on your porch at home. Make sure to clearly define what you

are looking for, so you don't end up with washing machines! You also might want to limit the number of people you invite to donate items, so you are not over-whelmed with "stuff".

Check collection boxes daily for donations. This is a good opportunity to work on the basic concept of *empty/full*. Make collecting donations a regular job assignment for students working on *grasp and release* (picking something up and purposefully releasing it), or students who need to work on expanding *range of motion* (reach down, lift up). Push or pull a cart, or a barrel with

wheels to transport items back to the classroom  
(*Physical Science/Physics: Position and Motion of Objects*).

Continue to focus on grasp and release and expanding range of motion by transferring donations from

the barrel to a collection box in the classroom for sorting.



Think like a department store. Organize things into broad categories (e.g. toys, clothing, jewelry, kitchen items, hand tools, etc.). You can structure the sorting process multiple ways, depending on the level of each student. For students with entry-level classification skills, start by sorting grossly dissimilar items, such as CD's from stuffed animals. For students working at higher levels, sort similar items, such as Bristle Blocks from Leggos. Divide categories into sub-categories. For example, sort jewelry into groups of necklaces, rings, earrings, pins and bracelets; sort toys into action figures, board games, stuffed animals and dolls. Match pairs of shoes, or earrings. Assign categories and instruct students' to search for items that belong to their category (*scanning and discrimination skills*). Set up a tray with related items and ask the students to find items that don't belong to the category.

There are many options for flea market-themed activities. Let the class vote on what kinds of supplementary tables to set up. Brainstorm what kinds of

things to make, such as baked goods or craft items. Give choices. In the classroom, package paper bags with "freebies," using miscellaneous items, such as recycled McDonald's toys, snack food, juice packs, candy, or stickers (*one-to-one correspondence*). Give one free to each customer who makes a purchase. Think about setting out a craft table at the flea market with material for "do it yourself" craft projects. Put a student at the craft table to offer instructions and assistance. Sell kits you have packaged in the classroom with the material to create simple art projects at home (e.g., paper, crayons, stickers, stencils, markers, glue sticks...). Set up a refreshment stand. Have students sell lemonade, snacks, or juice boxes. Sell individual carnations, or seedlings from a plant table. Assign a student to bag the customer's purchases, or help to carry them to the customer's house, or classroom.



Focus on functional money skills and the concept of buying and selling. Structure all money transactions according to the needs and skill levels of your students. For students working on entry-level money concepts, have a dollar table and a quarter table. Or think about limiting

the cost of all items at the flea market to dollars, or quarters. If students are working on beginning counting skills (e.g., counting to five), you could price everything at their table for up to five quarters, or dollars. Put a student with strong money skills at a table making change, so customers will have correct change for their purchases.

Work on money handling and related social interactions. Role-play the appropriate communication skills needed to conduct repetitive money transactions. Practice the motor planning skills involved in the passing and transfer of money, e.g., reaching out, grasping, and depositing in a designated place (use money boxes or waist packs). For students on higher levels, work on making change. At the end of the yard sale, count the proceeds. Sort the coins. Trade quarters for dollars, and count out the

number of dollars to see how much you made. Take the money you collected to the bank, purchase something for your classroom, donate it to a good cause, or do something fun with it!

Work on appropriate communication skills and social interactions. Model how to initiate and terminate a conversation. Teach a rote script if needed. Have a greeter at the entry, "Hi, welcome to our flea market, let us know if we can help you." Put a student in charge of thanking customers for coming and saying goodbye. Program personal communication devices and multi-step switches with appropriate exchanges so that nonverbal students can interact with customers. Follow the flea market activity up with experience stories; use written compositions, dictated narratives, scrapbooks with remnants from the flea market, Mayer-Johnson pictures, actual pictures, or switch operated computer stories.

Have fun!