

Colourfully illustrated children's dictionaries, student-created serial postcards storying imaginary holiday adventures, and visual responses to poetry decorated the hallway leading into Pat's classroom. In the classroom itself, an abundance of student work was displayed throughout the room. Posted on all available bulletin board space was an uncommon and diverse array of written and visual student productions, sometimes several revised drafts of a written creation being exhibited to demonstrate the process involved in the product. In one corner of the ceiling was a compelling mobile, an imaginative and sensitive response to literature, as evidenced by the representation of characters, Laura, Amanda, Tom, and Jim, the characters from Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*. There they hung, delicately suspended in their own separate worlds, connected only by a thin filament of thread, the infrangible ties of family and past history. And at the back and center of the room was an imposing five foot tall oak tree! With some ordinary construction paper, marking pens, and an interesting and resourceful treatment of various other types of art materials, an inventive group of students had depicted an intriguing and fascinating response to *To Kill A Mockingbird*. The oak tree was, in fact, a museum to house important artifacts from the story.

.....

Classroom Organization

The modern elementary classroom typically is furnished with movable desks to accommodate a variety of classroom arrangements. Most teachers place the desks in groupings of four to six children facing each other. Because constructivist science is facilitated by children working in groups, this cluster-type arrangement is ideal. From time to time, you may want to rearrange the desks so all children are facing the front during substantial periods of large-group instruction. Occasionally, it may be desirable to rearrange the desks to provide for individual work or to clear a large floor space.

It is a good idea to have a science center in your classroom. This is especially useful in today's climate where, in many school districts, science is not a major player in the curriculum and teachers have to work in whatever science they can when they can find the time. The science center is used as a focal point for beginning and continuing inquiries into the topics prescribed by the curriculum or topics of the children's own choosing. You can suggest to children that they use their free time in the science center.

The science center takes many forms. It may simply be a desk or a table located at one side of the room where you and the children place ongoing projects to facilitate continuing investigation. It may be a cabinet with a work surface and storage space where many of the science activities are performed, although this limits the number of children who can work on science at any one time. You may want to reserve a desk or table somewhere in the room for interesting "try this" or continuing investigation activities that will not be done with the whole class. Although laboratory facilities that include gas and water seldom are required in elementary classrooms, some teachers have at their disposal counter space with plumbing that can be used for science investigations. Portable laboratory tables suitable for elementary school children are available through educational science supply firms and can be shared among several classrooms. Regardless of how you allocate space, the science center should be easily accessible to all children. It should contain equipment and materials that children can use to continue investigations started in class

or to pursue investigations they themselves have developed. (See Figure 9.7.)

Be sure to consider the special needs of children with disabilities—wider aisles, freedom to move around the **classroom**, special desks and tabletops, access to materials and equipment, access to technologies, and other needs (see Chapter 7).