

What Happens in a Preschool?

WHAT IS A PRESCHOOL LIKE?

No Two Preschools
Are Alike

Looking at a
Preschool Classroom

The Preschool Day



edc

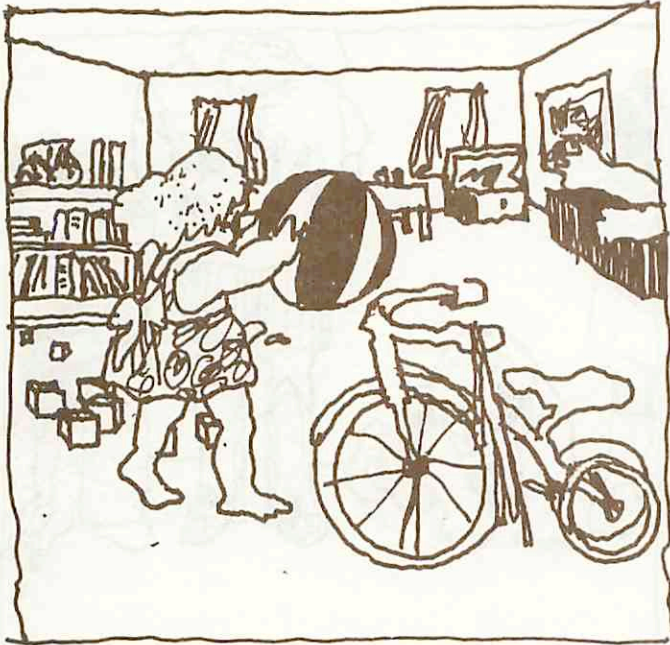
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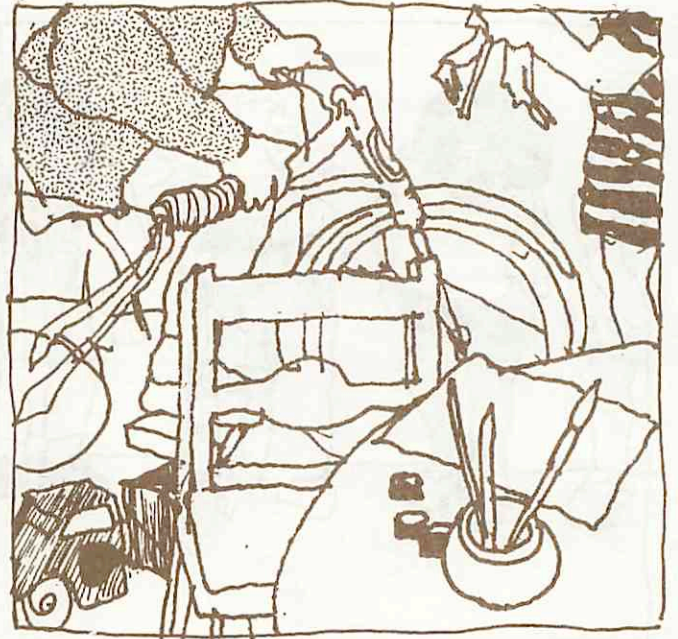
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No Two Preschools Are Alike



Some preschools have plenty of space...



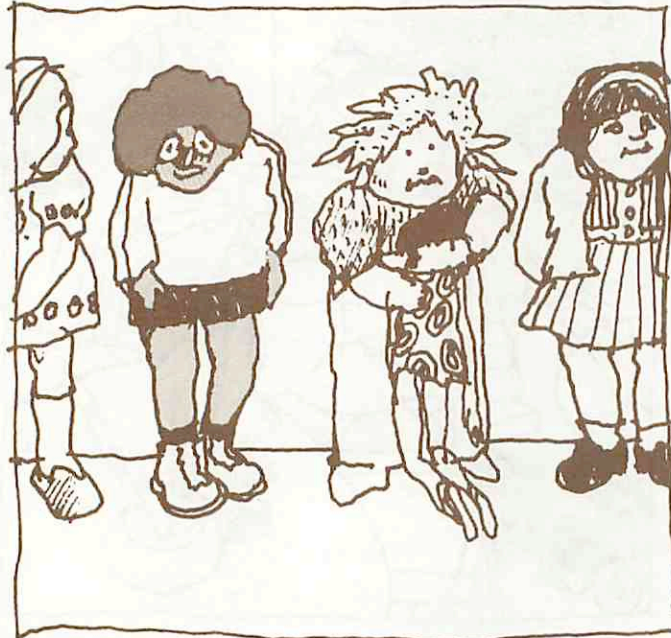
...others have very little.



Some have enough money to buy toys and games and other materials...



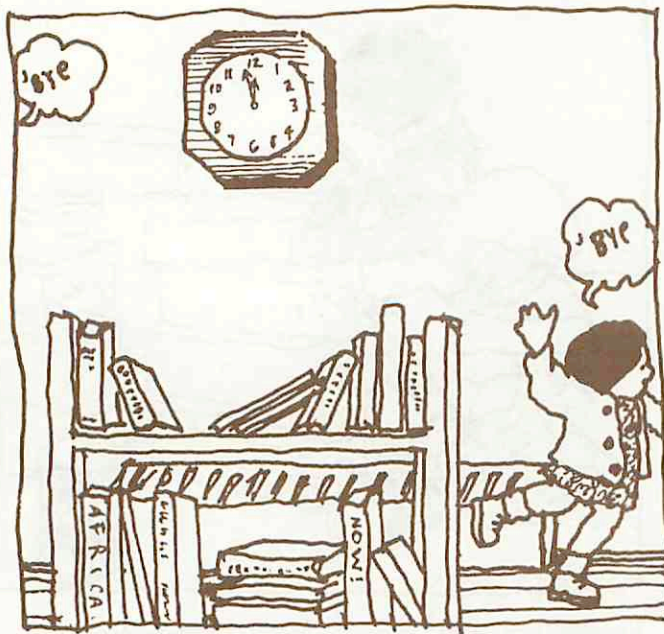
...others don't have much money and the staff makes things by hand or asks friends to bring things in.



Some preschools are for children of one age (like three-year-olds)...



...others are for a mixture of ages (like one-year-olds to five-year-olds).



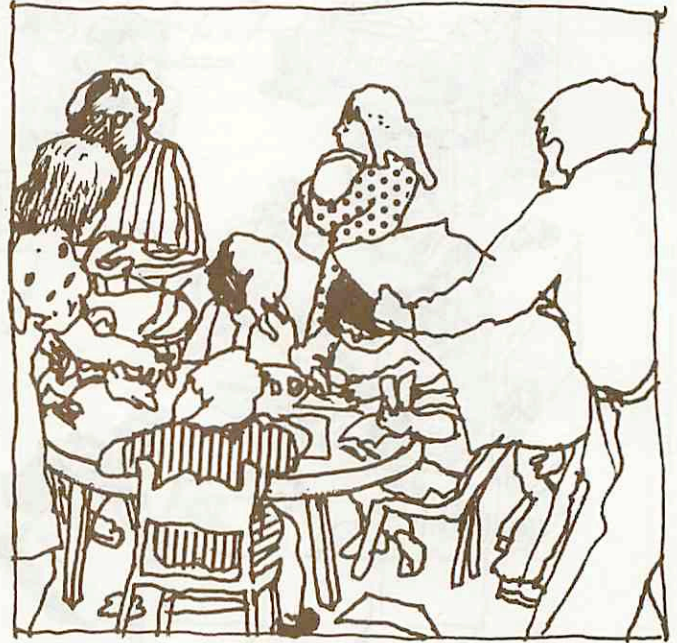
Some preschools have just a morning or afternoon session...



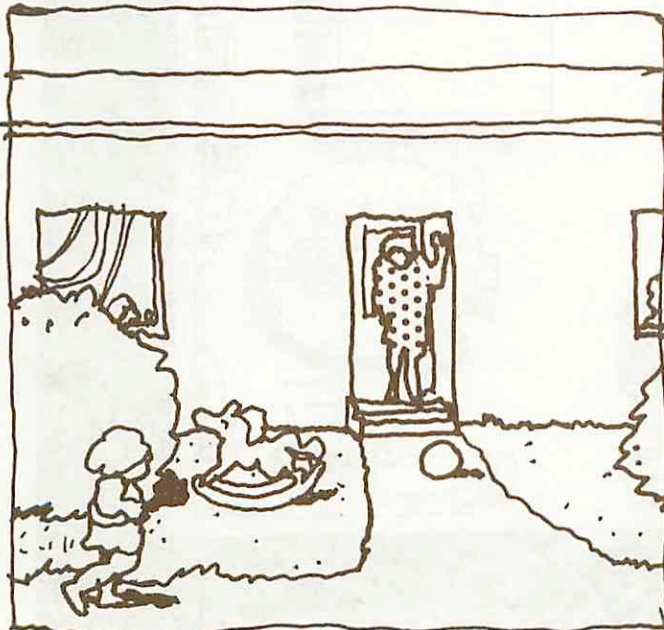
...others stay open all day.



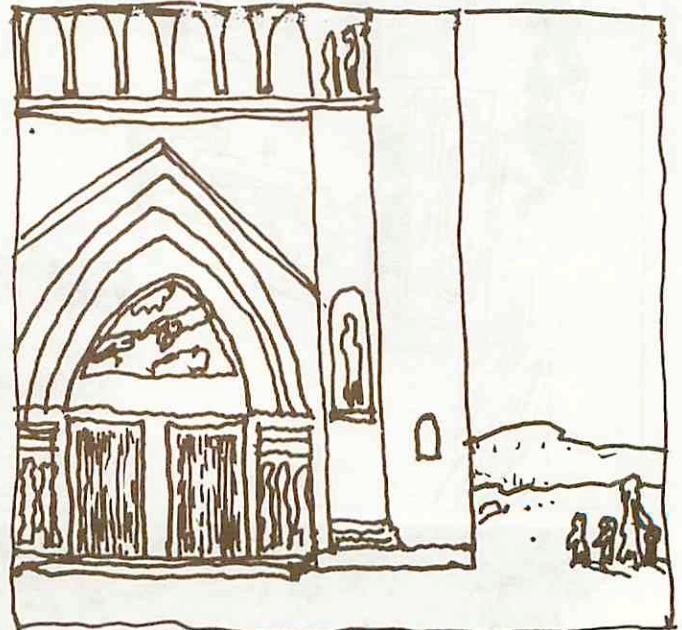
Some preschools have just one or two teachers...



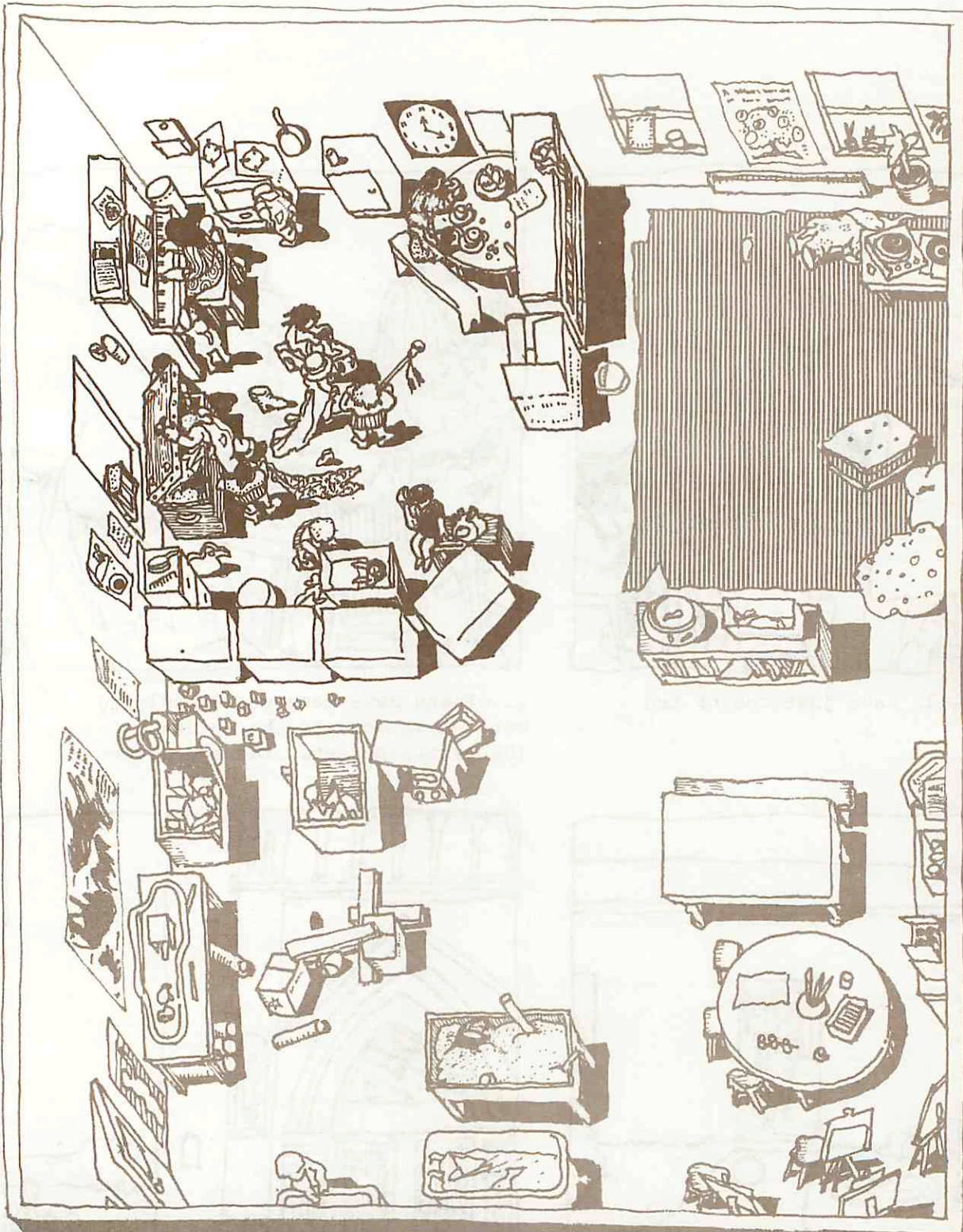
...others have many people helping out: teachers, teacher aides (helpers), parents, teenage students.



Some preschools have their own special building...



...but most preschools are a part of a larger building like...a church...or a school. Some preschools even use borrowed rooms, and the preschool staff must set up and take down all the equipment every day.



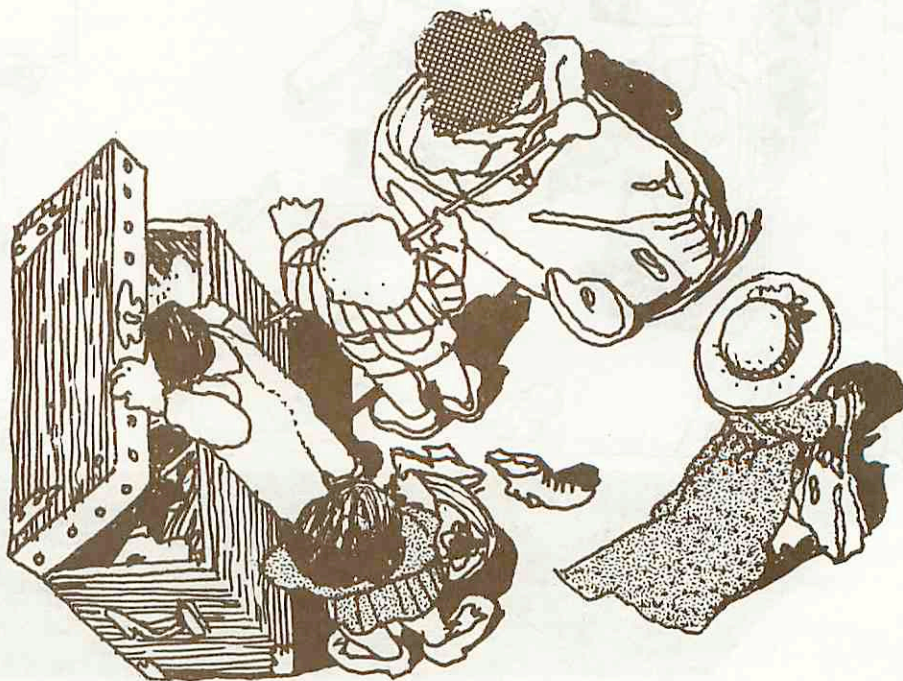
Looking at a Preschool Classroom

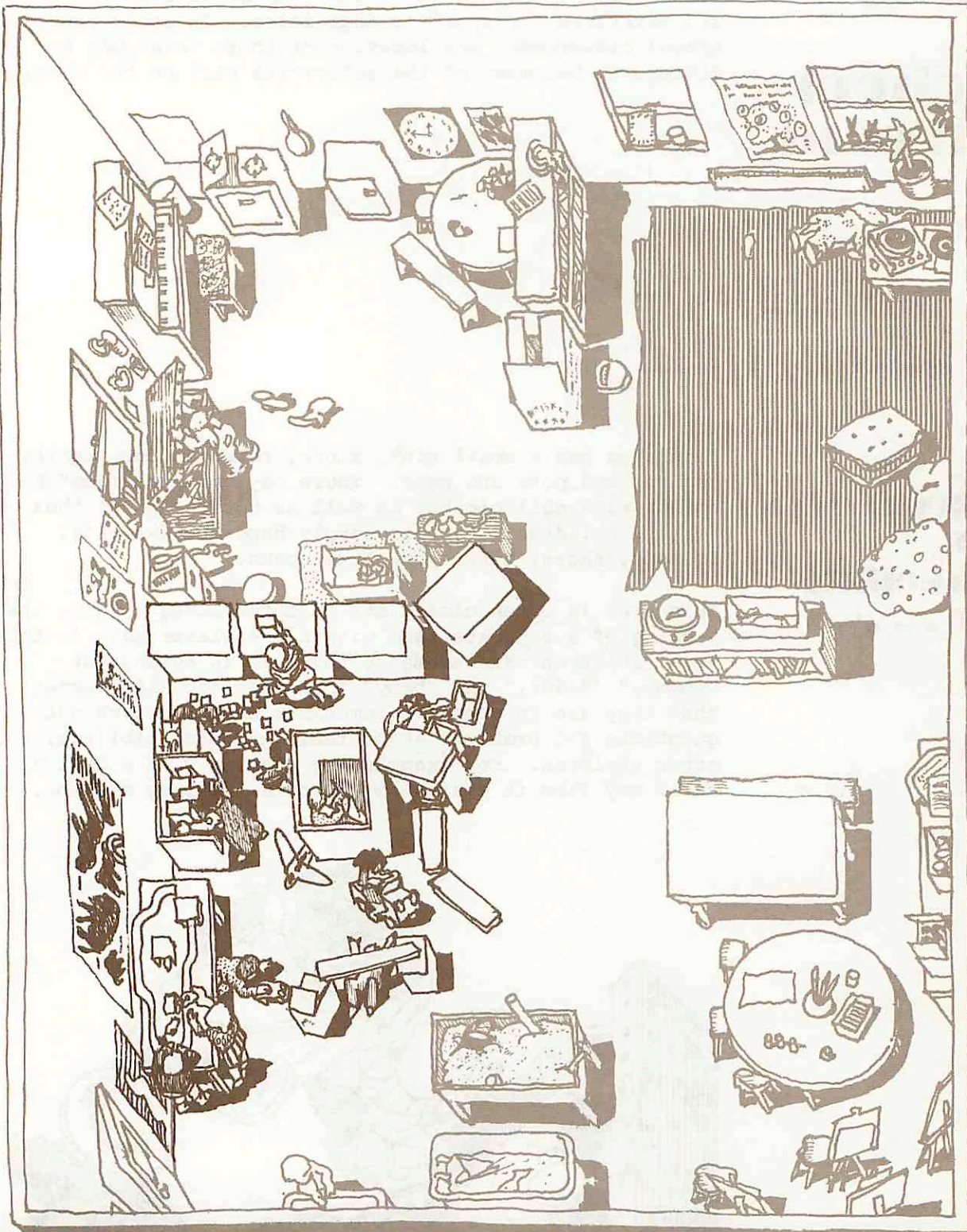
On the following pages is a description of one preschool classroom. In each area of the room described, there are materials for specific activities. In other preschool classrooms, the location of these areas may be different, but many of the activities will be the same.

Some Preschools Have a Housekeeping Corner . . .

This area has a small sink, stove, refrigerator, table, chairs, and pots and pans. There may be a "bedroom" for dolls, with doll clothes as well as "dress-up" clothes for the children. Parents supply hand-me-down hats, dresses, shoes, ties, and pocketbooks.

This area is often closed off on three sides to give the feeling of a separate room within the classroom. In this area, children can become so involved in acting out "mommy," "daddy," and "baby" that they actually forget that they are in school. Sometimes children work out questions and problems about their parents, siblings, and other children. For example, by playing with a doll a child may find it easier to accept a new baby at home.



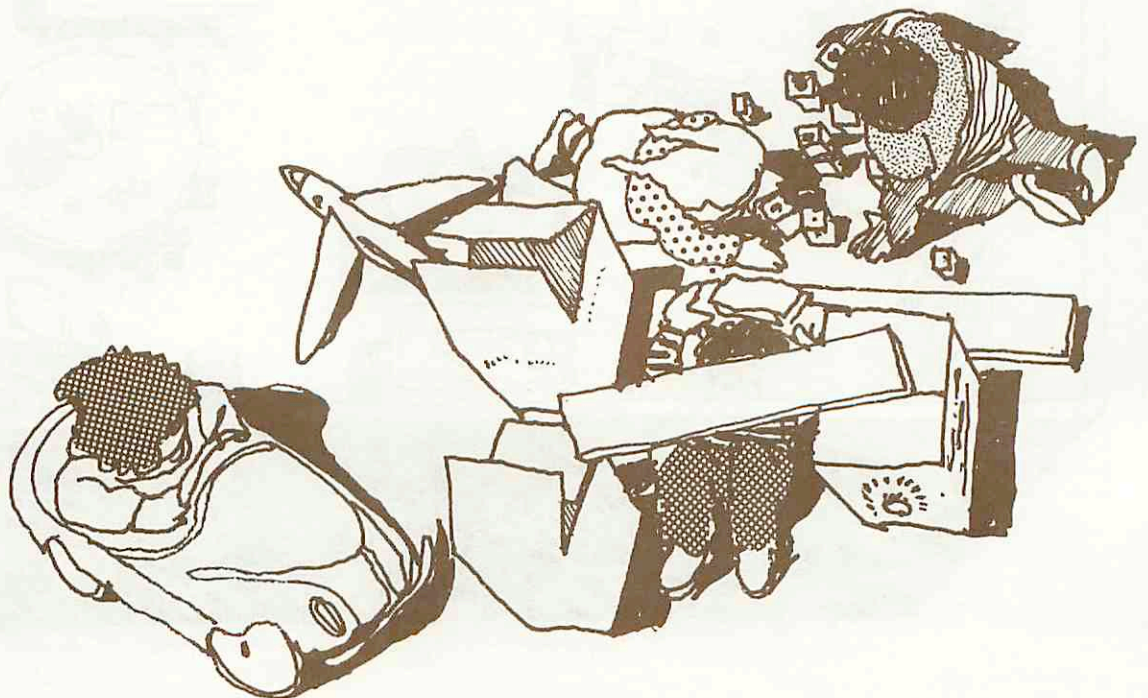


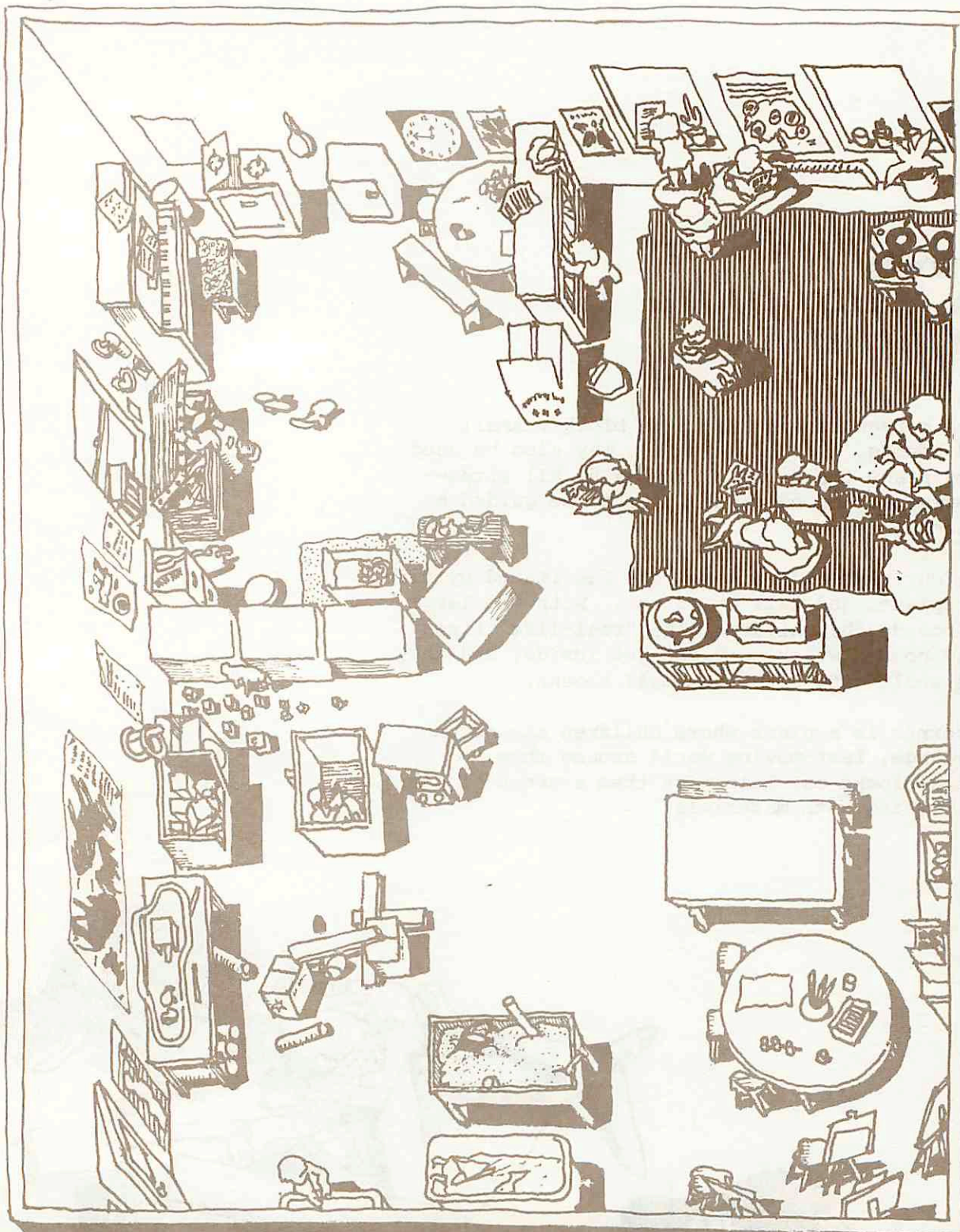
Some Preschools Have a Block Corner . . .

In the block corner, there are large blocks, small blocks, and boards. The block corner may also be used as a parking place for cars and trucks of all sizes--miniature ones, sit-on ones, and ones to be guided by a child's hand.

Three- and four-year-old children are fascinated by fire engines, airplanes and tall buildings. With the large blocks and boards the children make "real-life" fire stations and houses which they can get inside, and they can build a whole city with the small blocks.

The block corner is a place where children can reconstruct the large, fast-moving world around them. Building with blocks can help give them a sense of confidence in working with materials.





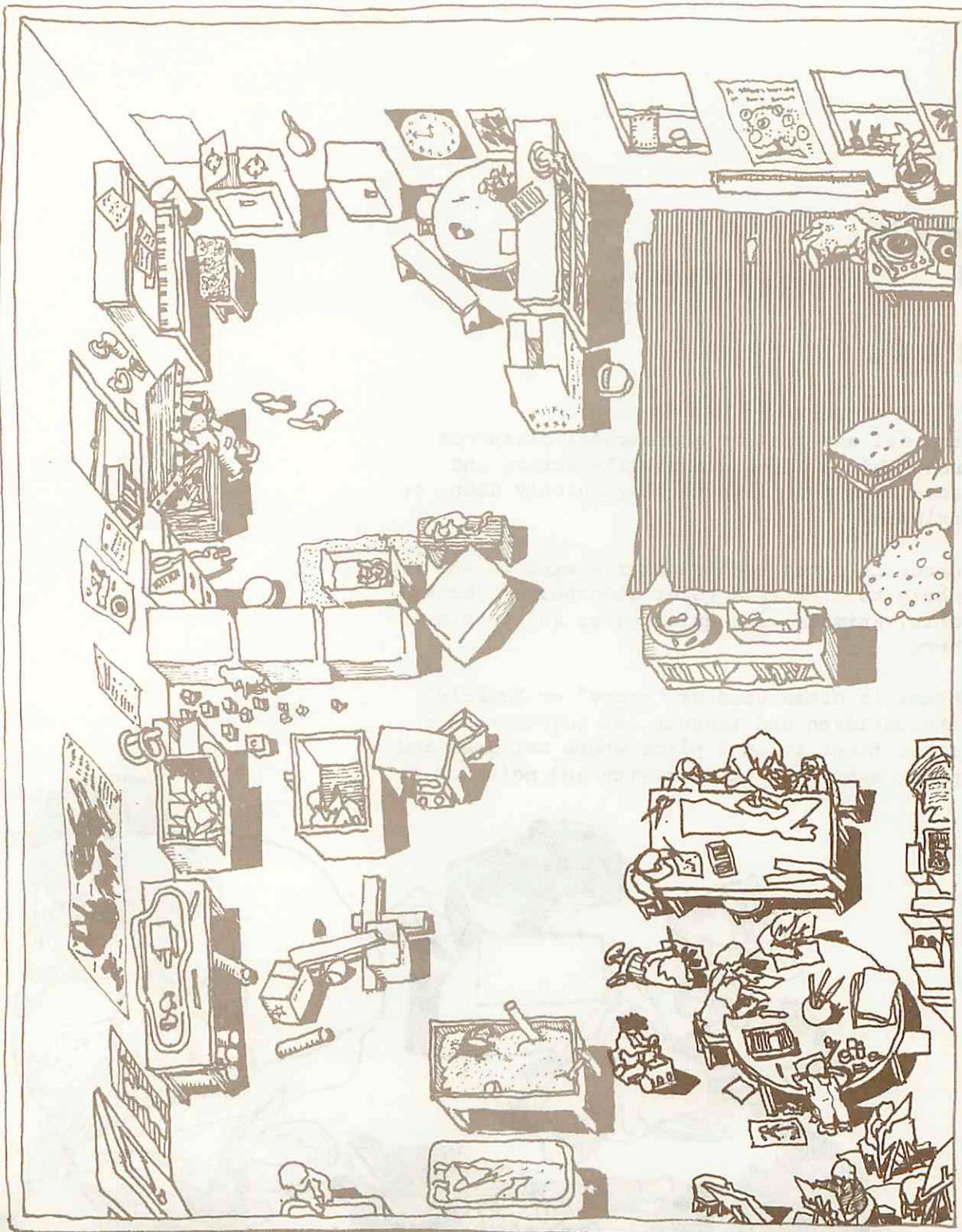
Some Preschools Have a Quiet Corner . . .

It is hard to call any area of a preschool classroom "quiet." Preschool children are usually active and noisy, but sometimes they like to play quietly alone or with a few friends.

The quiet corner is often located near a window, and rugs and pillows help to give it a quiet atmosphere. Books, records, plants, animals, and quiet games and toys are also found here.

The quiet corner is often used at "story" or "circle" time, when the children and teacher get together as a group. At other times it is a place where children and teachers can get away from the activity and noise of the class.

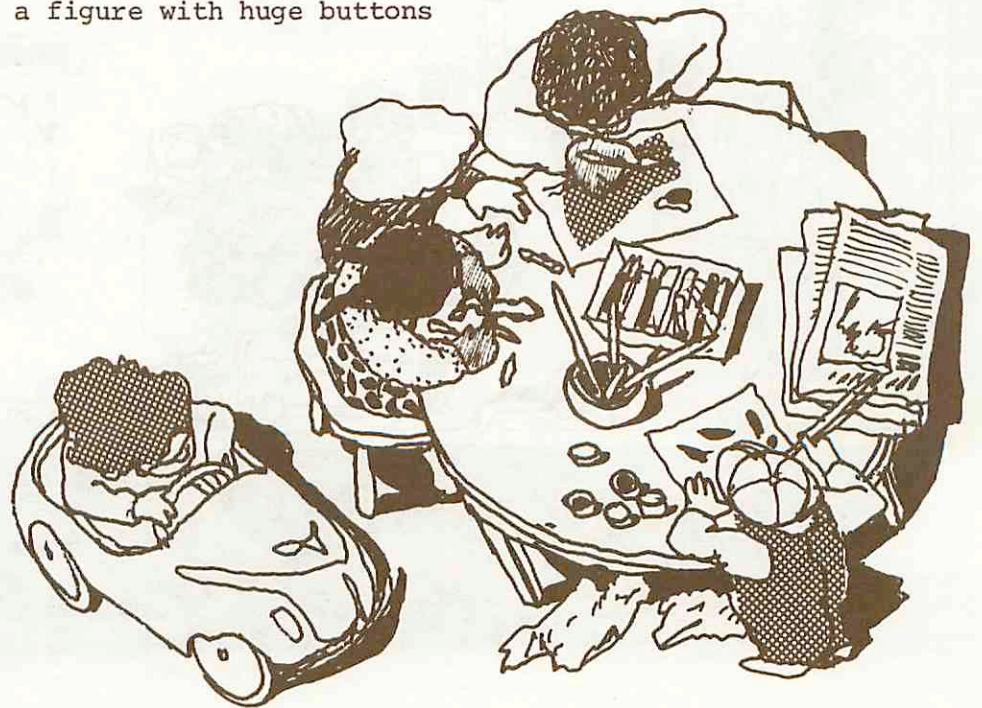


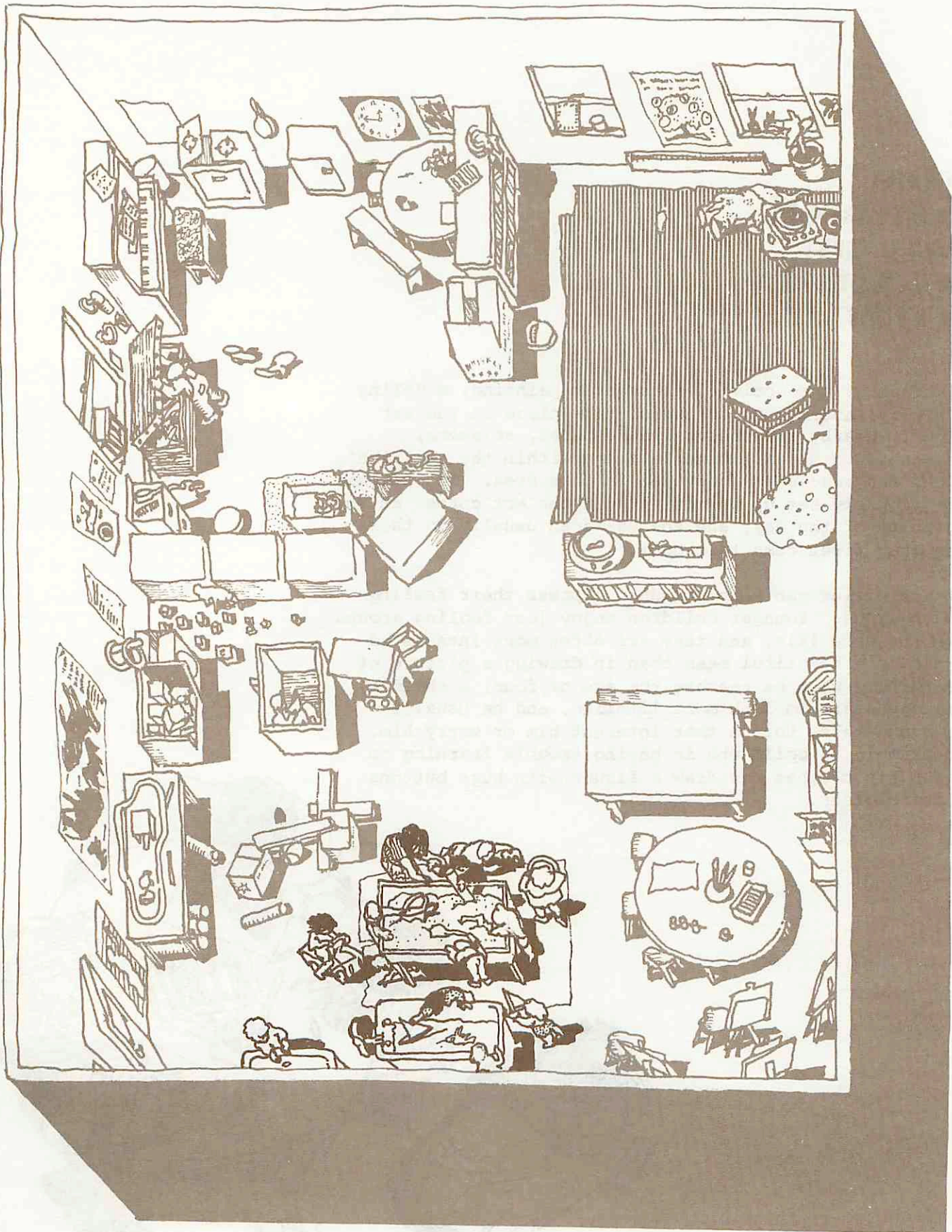


Some Preschools Have an Art Activity Corner . . .

All kinds of art activities, such as painting, modeling with clay, and making collages, take place in the art corner. Nearby are shelves where paper, scissors, crayons and other art materials are within the children's reach, and easels are provided in this area. The teacher will probably set up an activity in the art corner at the beginning of the day, and the children usually go there when they first come to school.

Art activities can help children express their feelings and thoughts. Younger children enjoy just fooling around with the materials, and they are often more interested in making a beautiful mess than in drawing a picture of something. When he reaches the age of four, a child's drawings start to look more lifelike, and he usually draws and makes things that interest him or worry him. For example, a child who is having trouble learning to button his clothes may draw a figure with huge buttons on its clothes.



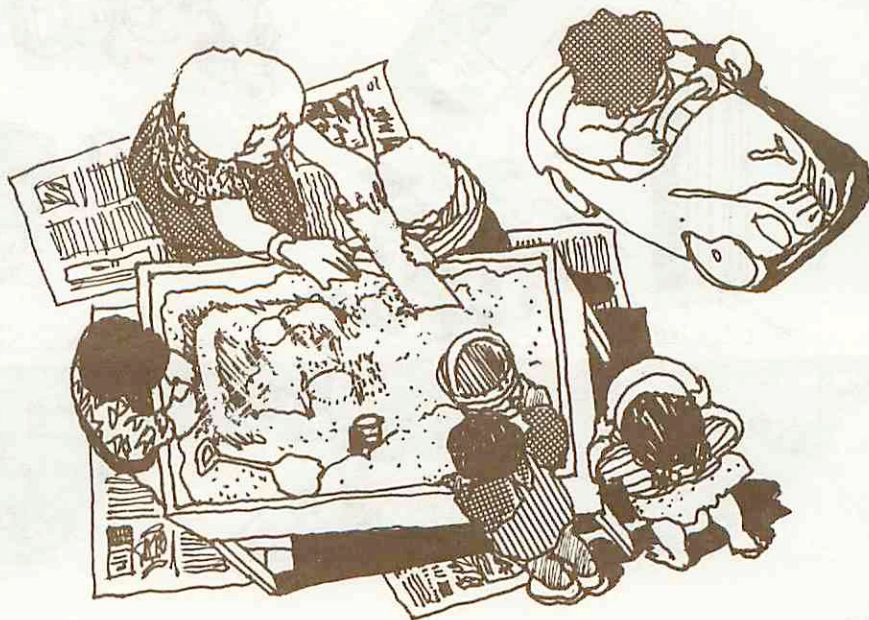


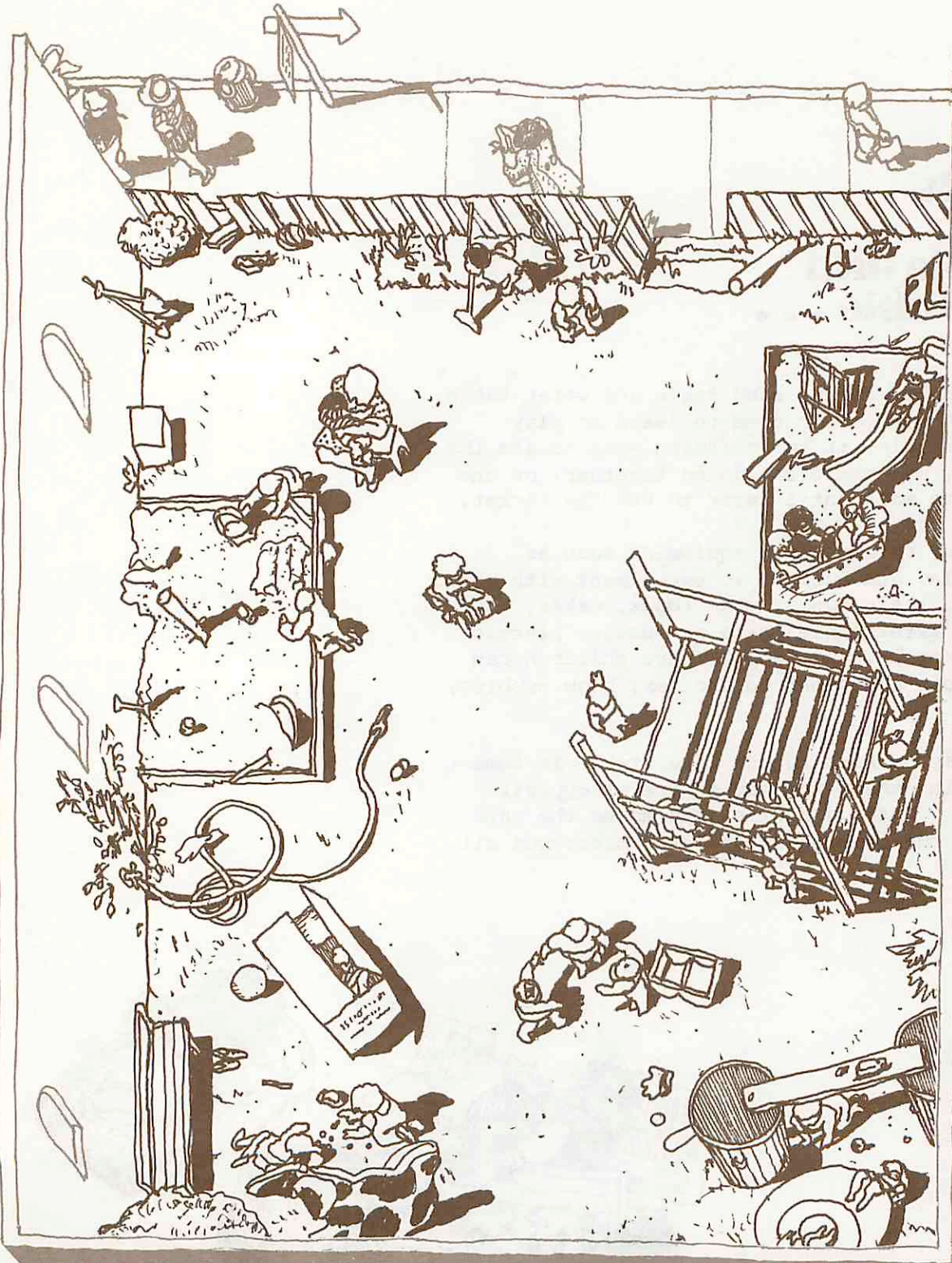
Some Preschools Have a Sand Table and a Water Table . . .

Children often gather at the sand table and water table, so these are good places for them to learn to play together. For example, if two children want to use the only bucket, they may build something together, or one child will have to wait until later to use the bucket.

At the sand table, children use equipment such as strainers, shovels, and buckets to experiment with sand. They mold it with their hands, make roads, cakes, and castles. At the water table there are boats, plastic bottles, corks, straws, and tubes. Here children can pour water from one container to another, blow bubbles, and sail boats.

The sand table may be next to the water table in some classrooms, and in others the tables are at opposite ends of the room. Water added to sand makes the sand easier to shape, but sand added to water makes mud all over the room.

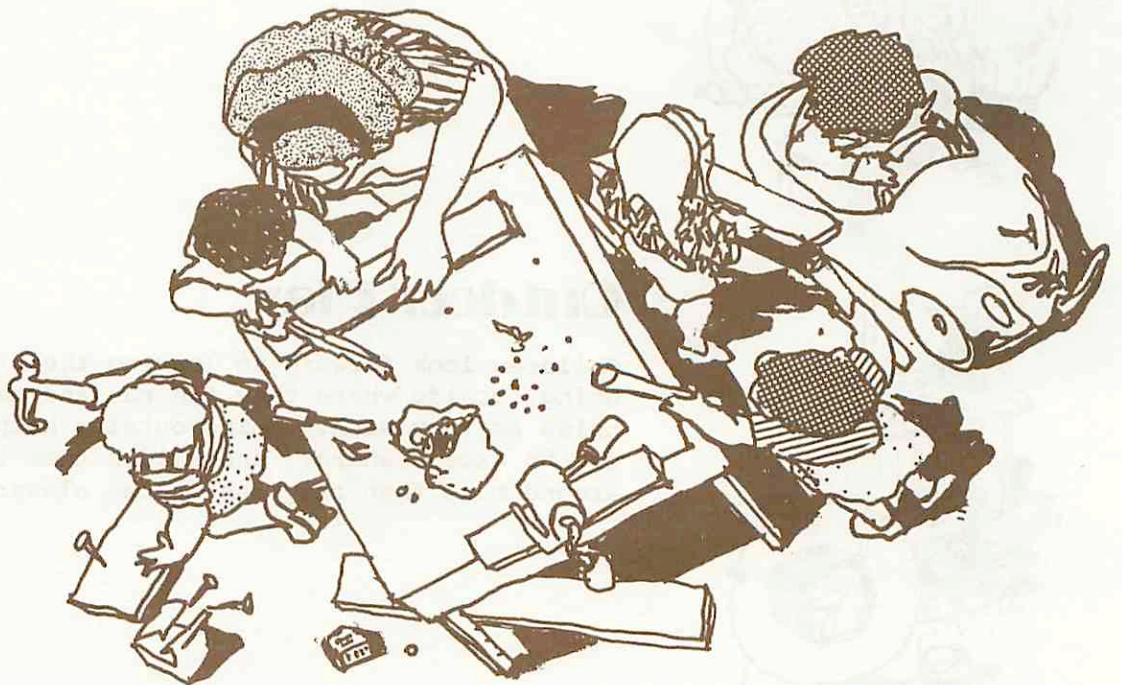




Some Preschools Have a Playground and a Woodworking Area . . .

The playground offers a place where children can run, jump, climb, and shout as loudly as they want. Equipment such as slides, swings, ladders, and tricycles helps children develop their muscles and improve their coordination. The playground can also be a good place to study nature by making a garden, and on rainy or snowy days the children can have fun with puddles and snowmen.

The woodworking area is an exciting place for children. Here they learn how to work with real tools such as hammers and saws. It may take a long time for a child to saw through a piece of wood, but he feels good when it is finished. This area needs close adult supervision because a hammer or saw in the hands of an angry child can be a very dangerous weapon.



The Preschool Day

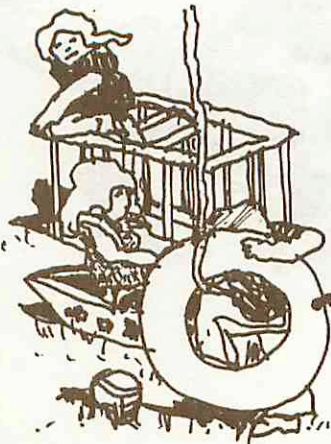
Each preschool teacher has developed a way of running a class. He discovers a routine that is comfortable for the children and for him, and that seems to accomplish the things he feels are the most important. The routine of a preschool is usually planned but flexible, so that while most of the children follow a schedule, individual children may not. Differences in age mean differences in what a child is ready or able to do. A teacher makes an effort to help each child enjoy as much of the program as possible.

The mood of a group of children varies for many reasons. The weather may be bad, the day of the week may be difficult (such as Monday or Friday), or the change from active play to quiet time may cause a problem. Because of these variations, the program and routine of a preschool may change from day to day. While the activities are not always in the order shown here, many preschools do divide their day in a similar way.



Free Play

During this time the children usually separate into small groups of three and four, with each group playing by itself. This time of day gives children a sense of independence, when they can choose what they want to do and with whom they want to play. But it can also be a time of confusion and withdrawal for some children because there are so many things to do. An adult can help in this situation by involving the child in an activity that will include other children.



Outdoor Play

Children look forward to leaving the classroom and going outside where they can run and make as much noise as they wish. Being outside helps children use up excess energy, and allows them to move around more than they can in the classroom.



Planned Activity

Children enjoy choosing what they will do, but they also look forward to activities planned and organized by an adult.

Planned activities allow a child to use materials which are not usually found in the classroom. For example, paper bags are not usually in the classroom, but making paper bag puppets with glue, buttons, and paper is an enjoyable project for the children. By planning these activities ahead of time, the teacher knows what special materials he will need. It often helps to set up a planned activity during free play, for those children who do not want to play by themselves. Such an activity also provides a place for children to go who have a hard time joining a group at the beginning of the day.



Clean-up Time

Children have a wonderful time playing, but their play leaves any room a mess. Clean-up period is as important to the teacher as it is to the children. A teacher does not want to have to clean up everything the children have played with, and children enjoy coming into a classroom which is neat and ready to mess up again with a new day's play.

Children are more likely to clean up if they are given a specific job to do. For example, "Johnny, you are in charge of putting away the crayons, and Billy, you are in charge of the blocks." If a child is put "in charge" of something, he is very proud when the job is completed.



Snack Time

This is usually the children's favorite part of the day. They can learn to cooperate with each other at snack time by passing out napkins and cups, and passing the snack to each other at the table.



Circle Time

This is a quiet period of the day, and it is a good time for reading and songs. The teacher may talk about something that the whole class is interested in, such as a new animal or toy, or a trip that the whole class will take. For most of the day the children are in small, separate groups, but this time gives them a feeling of being part of the whole group.



Lunch and Nap Time

This time is important in schools where children stay all day. In these schools, cots or blankets are usually provided for a nap after lunch. Even if the children do not sleep, it is important that they rest before entering into the afternoon activities.