Host: Having enough materials and choices of things to do in a classroom promotes positive behavior. Conflicts over materials are an all too common problem in a preschool classroom.

Host: One way to help with this is by creating centers that have a variety of materials available and multiples of the most popular items. While you can’t always have enough magnifying glasses or scissors for each child to have one, often having just a few will do the trick. Having at least 5 choices in each center means children will find something that interests them and there will be enough materials to go around.

Host: We visited a preschool classroom to see this idea in action. Let’s take a look.

Narrator: Teachers promote positive behavior when they create learning centers with enough materials and choices. This science area has at least five choices and multiple items at different levels of learning to interest children and support positive behavior.

Teacher: I think, I think, we have one more box on the shelf, and I think it’s still in the box on the shelf.

Narrator: There are multiples of the most popular items.

Teacher: Is it in there?
Student: Yes!
Teacher: It is in there!

Narrator: This block area also has adequate numbers of materials.
Dr. Jeffrey Trawick-Smith, Expert: A study was done recently on children with special needs, and the authors of this study, the researchers, asked this question: “What features of a classroom lead children with a variety of different disabilities to stay engaged, involved, in play activities and learning activities?”

Dr. Jeffrey Trawick-Smith, Expert: The third most important factor for keeping these children really focused on activities in the classroom, were the number of play choices these children had. The greater the number and variety of materials in centers, the more involved these children were in learning and play.

Dr. Jeffrey Trawick-Smith, Expert: This same finding has been found in a number of studies on typically developing children as well.