



Cindy's Corner

Setting Up a Class-Run Pizza Parlor



Start the New Year off with a super motivating activity. How about setting up a weekly pizza parlor offering “ready to cook” pizza for family or staff? It does take some organization, but it is not as daunting as it sounds. Once it gets up and running you will see the benefits. It's a great way to incorporate functional concepts and skills in a meaningful setting. Map out a structure that will work for your classroom or child. If you are setting up a pizza parlor at school, organize your pizza service so that the uncooked pizzas are ready for pick-up before lunch - staff can cook their own pizza when they are ready to eat. If you are making pizzas at home, freeze them until you are ready to deliver them. Opening day will be a bit chaotic, but don't worry, it will get better, just have fun with it!

Make posters, fliers and daily notices to advertise your business (*composition*). At home, go door to door in the neighborhood or make phone calls to friends and relatives (*communication / social skills*). Role-play the appropriate exchange ahead of time. Create a rote script, or prepare personal communication devices and step-by-step switches with exchanges as needed. Make the rounds of classrooms and offices or put up a sign-up sheet. Keep it manageable. Put a limit on the number of pizzas you are capable of producing - you can always expand as you gain experience. One or two good-natured family members or neighbors might be enough for your start-up business!

Have a delivery service or a designated pick-up area. Design a checklist with the appropriate medium for your students - Braille, large print, Mayer-Johnson pictures, or tangible objects representing drop off places, e.g., the gym, the office, the Lobby. For sighted students who are nonreaders, use photographs of customers (use a software program that allows you to insert photographs paired with a square symbol to create a check off box). At home, phone neighbors or family members to let them know their pizzas are ready for pick up or to arrange a delivery time.



Before you begin, present your idea at class meeting (*ELA Discussion*). Solicit ideas, give choices, and talk about how to advertise, how to get pizzas to the customers and what kind of toppings to offer. Survey family and staff to see how much interest there is and determine what toppings are popular (*Data Analysis & Statistics*). Have a contest to pick a name for your business. Make it a class decision or pull the school or family members into the decision; offer a free pizza as a prize. Have another contest to design a logo. Check out surplus restaurant warehouses to get unassembled pizza boxes, aprons and paper chef's hats - this helps to create a sense of group and makes it exciting. Design aprons with your logo.

Create pizza-themed *ELA* lessons. Add pizza-related *vocabulary* to your monthly vocabulary words. Read stories about pizza. Create a poem, a rote script, or a catchy jingle to recite for offices, clinical staff and teachers (*composition, communication*). Follow up the activity with experience stories, using personal communication devices, switches and language support strategies as needed (e.g., open-ended sentences or phonemic cueing). Braille, type, or print up labels from a list of regular customer's names to label boxes. For fun, create pizza-related Mad-Lib stories to work on generating language. Research the history of pizza. Learn about where ingredients come from and how they get to the market. Study how cheese is made. Make tomato sauce and pizza crust (*following directions*).

Work on money concepts. For entry-level students, charge whole dollar amounts for each pizza, e.g., one or two dollars a pizza. Use the money you make to build money concepts, expand math vocabulary, and demonstrate the concept of buying and selling. Model how to handle money and conduct a money transaction. Recycle the money you make back into purchasing ingredients. Work on trading (e.g., ten one dollar bills for a ten) and functional addition and subtraction. Go to the market and buy ingredients for toppings if you have the opportunity (*Community experience*). If you have assigned students to regular workstations, let them buy the ingredient for that station (*money transactions and money handling*). Be sure to explore how the grocery store is organized and label what department each ingredient is found in.

To set up your pizza business, you will need:

- Prepackaged pizza crust
- Pizza sauce
- Toppings (mushrooms, peppers, scallions, pepperoni, broccoli, olives, cherry tomatoes, pineapple, etc.)
- Prepackaged shredded cheese
- Pizza boxes (optional)
- Assorted trays, plates, bowls, utensils, Baggies
- Latex gloves
- Moneybox (or money pouch) and money for change



To ensure a successful initial experience, start by having the toppings prepared ahead of time. As your child or class become comfortable with the process, use backward chaining to gradually expand their role to include collecting material and prep work.

Prep work ideas:

- Rinse vegetables (*wet/dry, hot/cold, spatial concepts, quality control*)
- Prep vegetables (*parts to the whole, one hand to stabilize, one to manipulate, spatial concepts, geometry, fractions,*)
 - Remove stems from mushrooms
 - Break flowerets off broccoli stalks



- Chop vegetables (such as green peppers) that have been cut into lineal strips



- Halve or quarter cherry tomatoes, olives, or mushroom tops
- Open containers to remove ingredients (*hand skills, spatial concepts, problem solving*)
- Assemble pizza boxes (*hand skills, following directions, spatial concepts, problem solving*)

Break the actual pizza assembly down into a series of steps by setting up individual topping stations in a logical left/right progression. Assemble each pizza cooperatively by passing it from station to station (*communication and social skills*), or let each student progress through the stations independently (*sequencing*). Use the topping stations to reinforce basic number concepts and counting skills. For example, take one ("just one") pizza crust. Put one scoop ("just one") of sauce on the crust. Count out 5 slices of pepperoni, 4 mushroom quarters, three pieces of pineapple, one handful ("just one") of shredded cheese...

Start the assembly line with a stack of premade pizza crusts at the sauce station (a student working to simply "reach out and find" can be placed at this station with a partner. Direct them to "reach out to find a crust" and assist with passing it to their peer to add the sauce). To add sauce without drowning the pizza (which may still happen!), use a measuring cup to ladle sauce from a large open bowl or pour from a small pitcher to a count of five (*measuring, judgment*). For foolproof measuring, put premeasured sauce into a series of individual baby jars with lids (*Rotary motion/wrist*). End the assembly line with a packaging station. Package each pizza by placing it into a Ziploc bag, sealing it in plastic wrap, or placing it directly into an assembled pizza box (*spatial concepts, problem solving, hand skills*). Transfer to a cart for delivery (*range of motion*) or carry boxes (*grasp/palm facing up*) to a designated place. Collect money upon delivery, use a collection box (and the honor system, or assign a regular time to collect money. Do what works for your child or student.



Note of caution, don't cancel your weekly pizza business without advance notice. Teachers are largely good-natured, but beware of a teacher who didn't bring their lunch because they were expecting pizza!

Keep a sense of humor, don't worry about creating a mess, and remember to wash your hands!

Have fun!