

The Classroom Literacy Environment

A literacy- rich environment requires both **structural** (i.e. material resources) and **instructional** (i.e. teacher-child interactions) features

Structural Features

- the tangible literacy materials that are available to children in the classroom



Instructional Features

- the ways in which teachers interact with children to support their literacy development



Structural Features—The tangibles

- **Children's books**—high-interest books in a well-organized library
- **Print props** (e.g. shopping lists, calendars)
- **Writing materials** (e.g. markers, pens, paper, crayons, chalkboards, chalk)
- **Contact with print** (display of posters, children's writing, signs, teacher's writing, labels, use of black/whiteboard)
 - These displays provide children with examples of how spoken words can be represented in print

Instructional Features

These are the ways in which teachers interact with children to support their literacy development, particularly as it occurs through classroom discussions and activities.

- Teachers' open-ended questioning
- Engaging children in frequent conversations
- Modeling complex vocabulary
- Scaffolding complex thinking
- Providing explicit instruction on language and literacy skills



Build in Opportunities to Talk

- Video: <http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators/module/20/7/19/>
- In this video, you'll see center-based and family child care educators highlight opportunities for conversation that occur in their programs. You'll see how the educators use everyday opportunities to engage children in meaningful talk as they listen carefully, build on what children say, model responses, and observe as children follow their example. As you watch, look for effective strategies used by the educators in the video and reflect on these *questions*:
 - *How do the educators use activities, explorations, and learning spaces to encourage conversation?*
 - *What strategies do the educators use to prompt children to use as many words as possible when they express themselves?*

Model Conversations

- Video: <http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators/module/20/7/20/>
- In this video, you'll see educators model for children how to use language to express thoughts, negotiate, problem-solve, and communicate with each other. As you watch, look for effective strategies used by the educators in the video and reflect on these questions:
 - *How do the educators use modeling to help children communicate?*
 - *What other strategies do the educators use to help children who have trouble communicating effectively on their own?*

Use Complex Language and Vocabulary

- Video: <http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators/module/20/7/21/>
- In this video, you'll see the educators model how to use complex vocabulary and expanded sentence structures. As you watch, look for effective strategies used by the educators in the video and reflect on this question:
 - *What strategies do the educators use to help children expand their vocabulary?*

Discussion:

- *What strategies do you use to model conversation?*
- *What strategies do you use to expose children to complex language and vocabulary?*
- *What did you learn that you will take back to your learning environment and put into practice?*