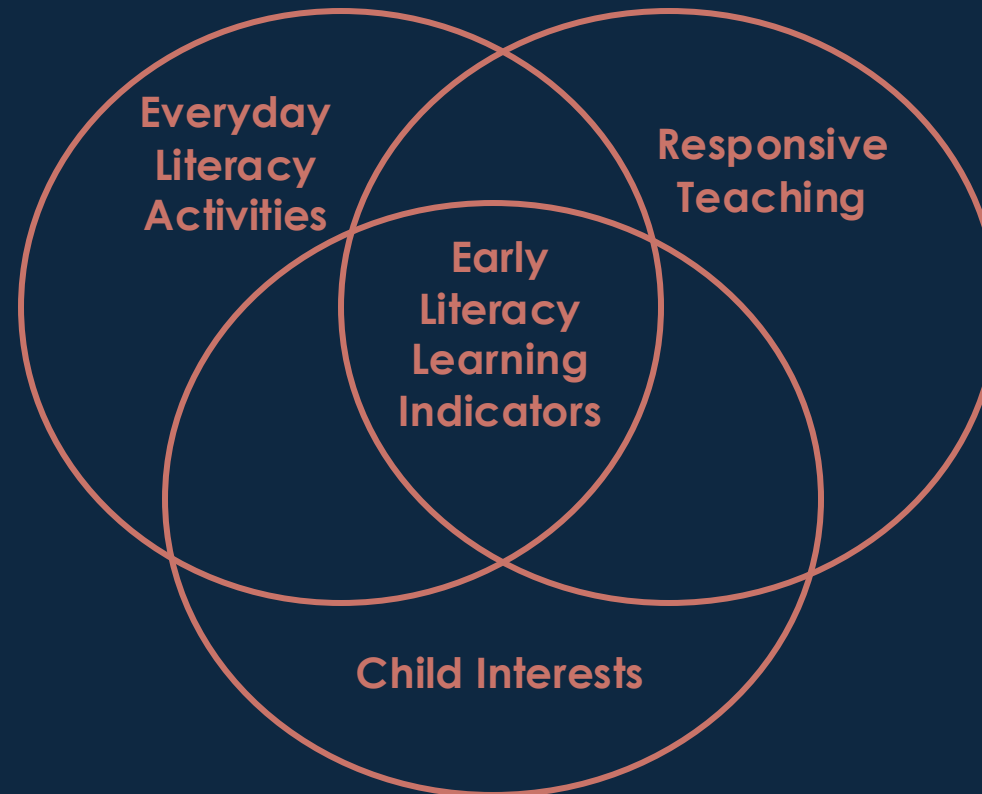


Focus on Literacy-Rich Environment (Center for Early Literacy Learning)



Literacy-Rich Environments



Literacy Rich Environment

- Contexts in which children engage in interest-based everyday literacy activities with responsive adults.
- They stimulate children to participate in language and literacy activities.
- They are interesting, inviting, comfortable, and well-stocked with easily accessible materials.
- They are in classrooms, homes, and many other places around the community.

Classroom settings

- Classroom settings often have a variety of learning centers or areas that can provide opportunities for literacy learning:
- Indoors—greeting area, reading center, writing center, dramatic play center, computer center, art center, block center, music center, science center, snack/eating area, bathroom area
- Outdoors—climbing structure, swings, sandbox, water table, field trips/walks, library visits

Home settings

- Homes also contain a number of areas that can provide opportunities for early literacy learning:
- Indoors—entry area, living room, dining room, kitchen, pantry, bedroom, home office, basement, bathroom, garage
- Outdoors—yard, driveway/pavement, outdoor play areas, library visits, shopping, riding in the car/bus

Create Low-Cost Environments

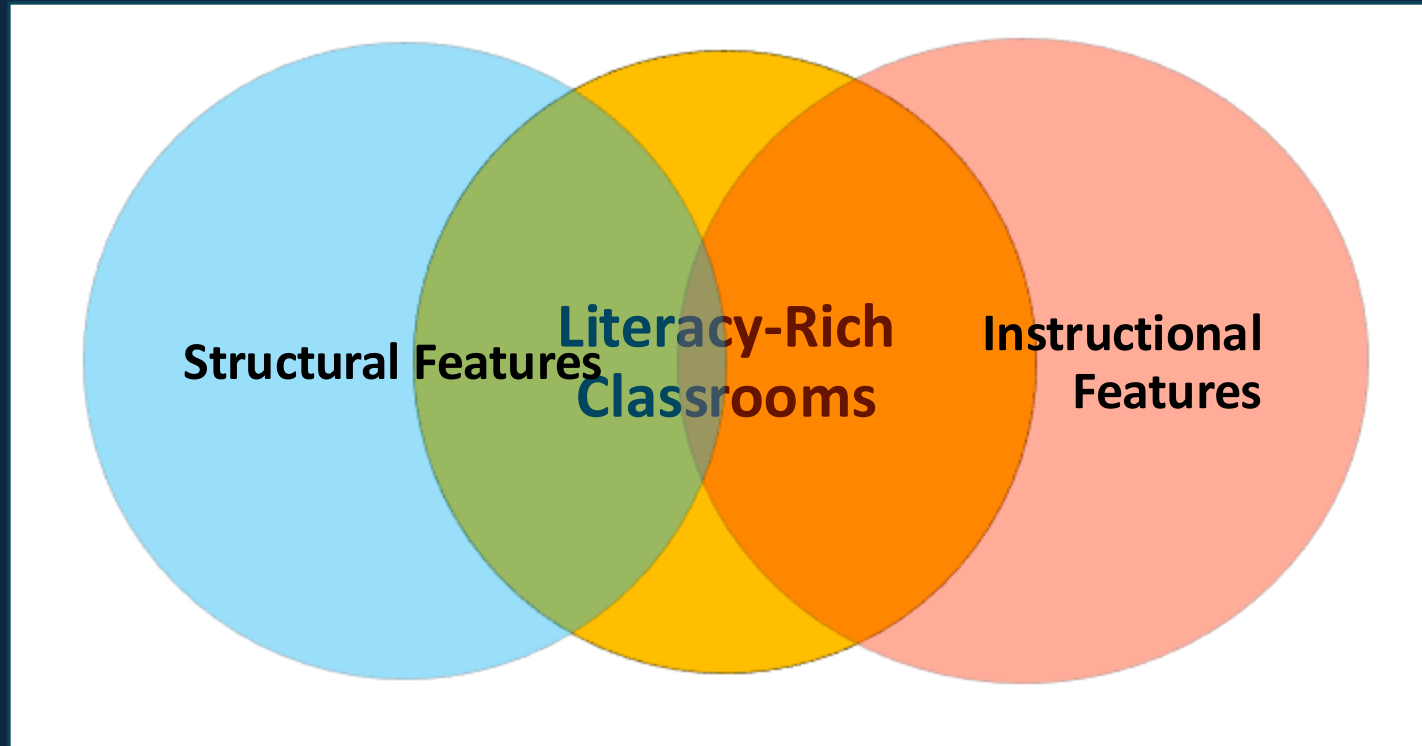
- You can create a literacy-rich environment using many low-cost alternatives including:
- Re-use clean household-item packages with printed labels
- Collect discarded items and recyclables from local businesses
- Use free materials that come in the mail
- Collect free samples
- Request donations of materials
- Seek out free/low-cost books and other materials on the internet

Research says...

- Research conducted by the National Reading Panel (NRP) found that skills in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension are essential to literacy development (NRP, 2001).
- Before students with disabilities can begin to develop these five skills, they need to understand the functions and uses of literacy (Ehri & Sweet, 1991; Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995; Mason & Allen, 1986; Sulzby & Teale, 1991).
- A literacy-rich environment is a setting that stimulates students with disabilities to participate in language and literacy activities in their daily lives thereby giving them the beginning understandings of the utility and function of oral and written language.

Literacy rich environments

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



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



Back to the Structural Features of Literacy Rich Environment: **What kinds of books?**



Varying in level of difficulty from simple to complex text



Representing a variety of text genres such as information, rhyming, alphabet, concept, simple story narratives, and more

Classroom Environments

Classroom settings often have a variety of learning centers or areas that can provide opportunities for literacy learning:

- Indoors: greeting area, reading center, writing center, dramatic play center, computer center, art center, block center, music center, science center, snack/eating area, bathroom area
- Outdoors: climbing structure, swings, sandbox, water table, field trips/walks, library visits
- [Books, Nooks, and Literacy Hooks](#)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqZ-ceU_aYM

Classroom Materials

Examples of Materials

- Phone books
- Dictionaries
- Menus
- Recipes
- Labels
- Signs
- Printed directions
- Student work
- Alphabet displays

Adapted Materials

- **Tactile Books** — textured print or pictures within books for students to touch and sniff
- **Manipulatives** — hands-on skill building materials such as pattern blocks, color tiles, and reading rods
- **Slant boards** — boards propped up on an angled book stands to assist students with their writing
- **Pencil grips** — a pre-shaped grip that is placed over a pencil to assist students with proper grip and letter formation

Classroom Materials

- How can you use the same types of materials in different activities or learning centers?
- Materials can and should be used across different activities to help children develop their ability to use them in varying contexts.
- For example, dry-erase boards and markers could be used in the kitchen to create “To Do” lists as well as in a reading area to practice writing/scribbling behavior.

How a Literacy-Rich Environment Facilitate Access?

- Creating a literacy-rich environment in school enriches literacy experiences of students who may have limited exposure to literacy due to delays or disorders in their development.
- Making literacy a part of the environment and ensuring that all children have access to the general education curriculum (e.g., Braille for children with visual impairments, assistive technology for children with physical, communication, or cognitive delays) occurs in many ways.

How a Literacy-Rich Environment Facilitate Access?

- Teachers assess the abilities and challenges of students, then problem solve to determine what opportunities will best meet the needs of these students.
 - Specific recommendations for alterations in the environment are best made on an individual basis and with consultation of special educators and related service providers.

Background and Cultural Considerations

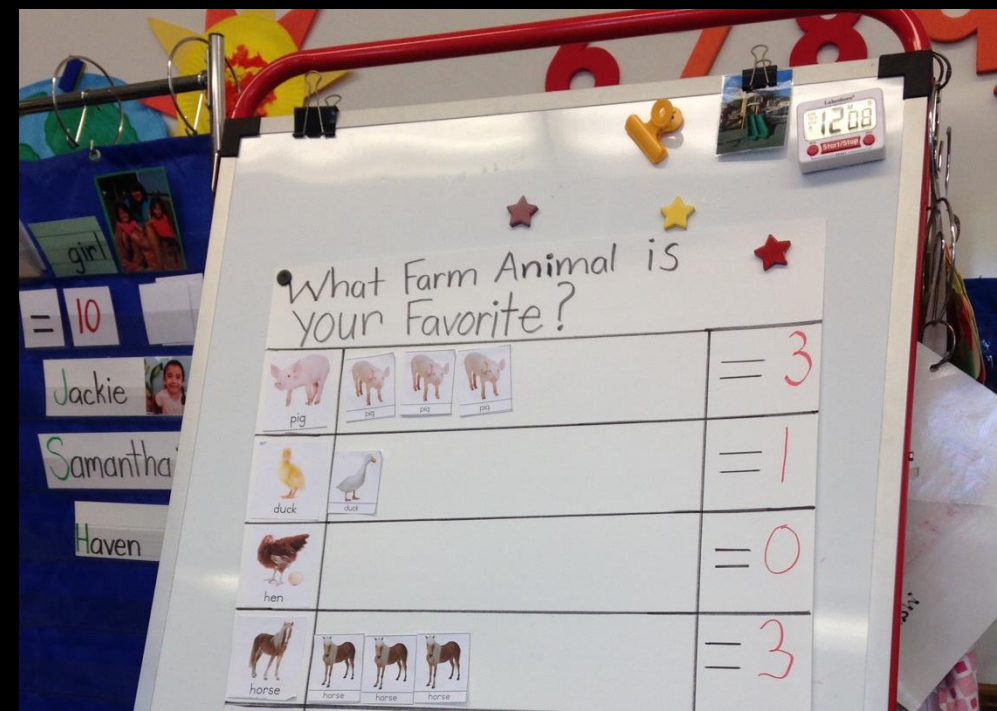
- Research indicates the importance of culture in understanding students' backgrounds and home literacy environments as well as the influence that cultural values have on literacy development.
- Students who have not been exposed to specific vocabulary or literature will need additional support with learning concepts from new material. Teachers can discuss the literacy goals for each student with parents in order to gain support at home.

Strategies for Students from Diverse Backgrounds:

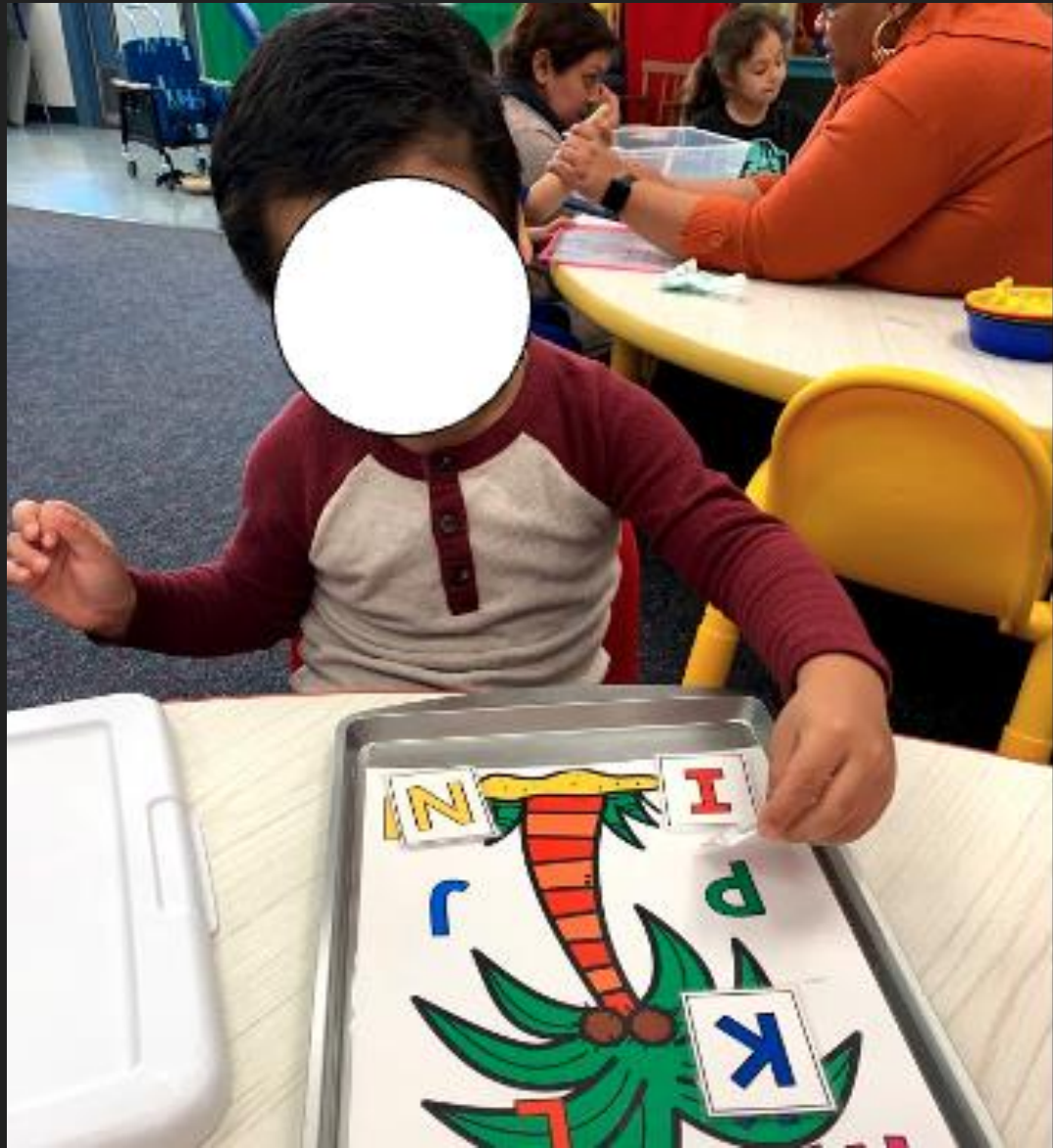
- Read aloud frequently
- Include children's primary language in print around the classroom
- Allow children to make mistakes when attempting to use a second language
- Encourage children to read the same books repeatedly to become familiar with text
- Plan activities that involve using language

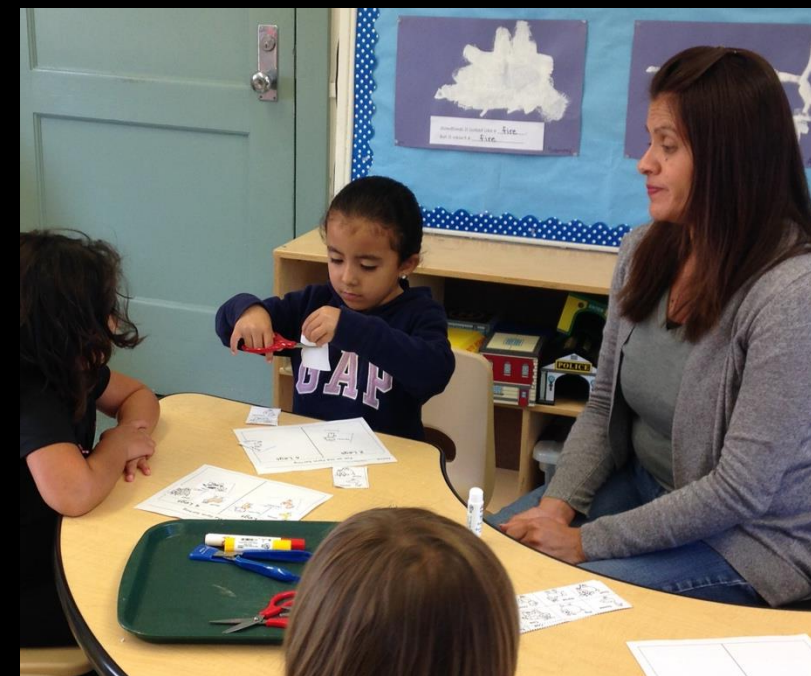
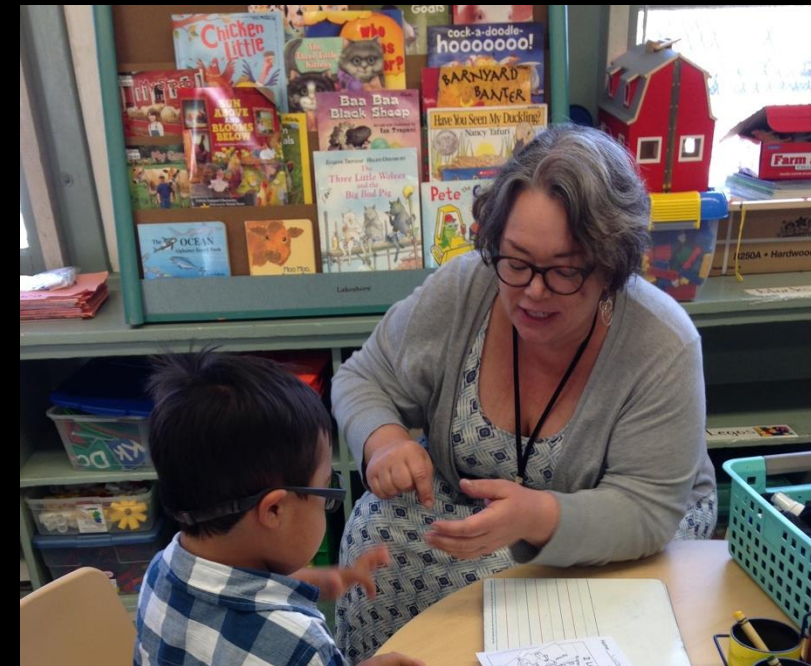
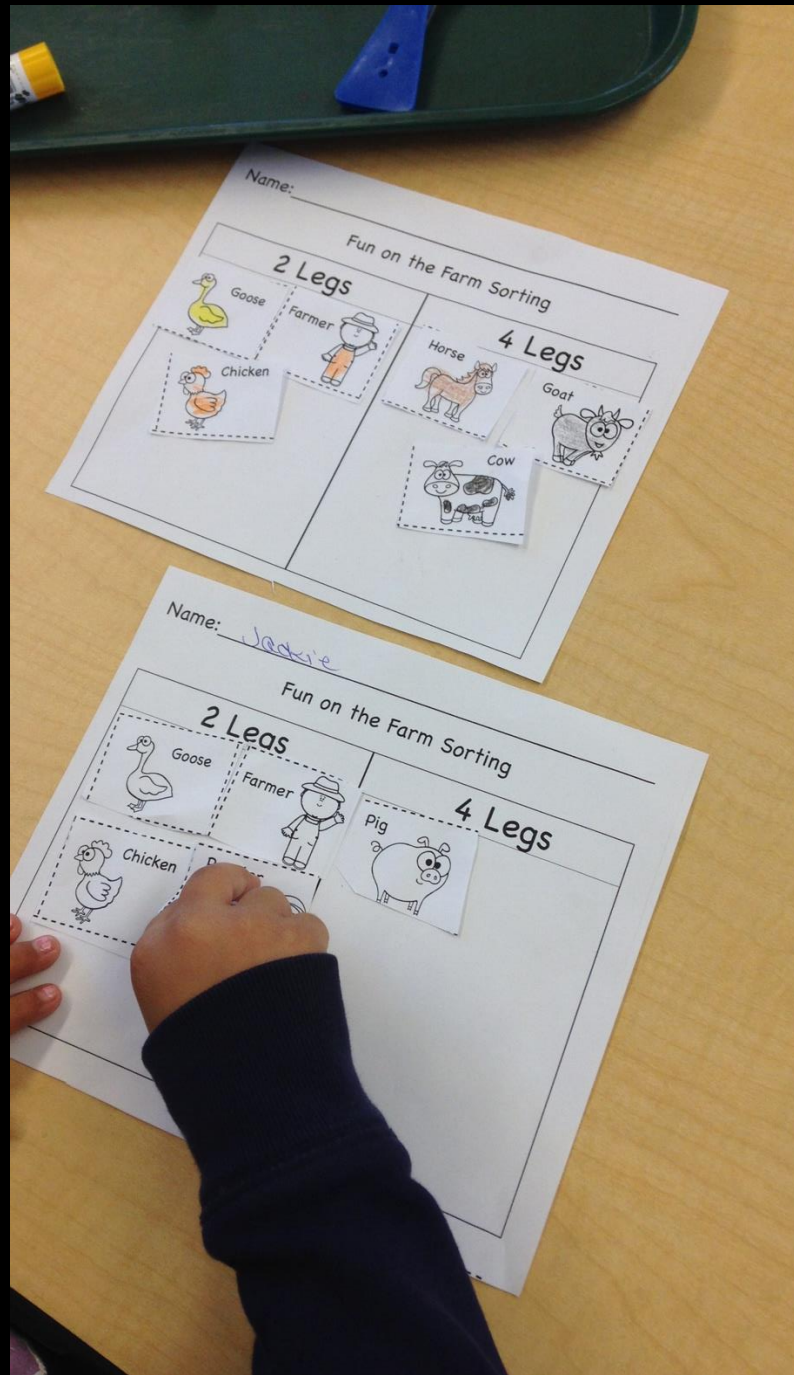
Benefits of Literacy Rich Environment

- A literacy-rich environment does more than provide visual exposure to print. It also provides opportunities for meaningful interaction with it.
- A well-prepared literacy-rich environment invites children's active engagement in at least two different modalities in the practice of integrating visual and verbal literacies to foster emergent literacy skills.












On the Farm


- the barn has a silo
- big rabbit
- a pig
- a horse
- sheep
- meadows
- cow
- goats
- turkeys can fly
- dogs
- chickens
- trucks
- tractors
- a barn
- strawberry field
- wolves will kill a chicken and cows

My Spring Book

I see the  .

I see the  .

I see the  .

I see the  .

Lifecycle of a Butterfly

- caterpillars climb
- they are a chrysalis
- the change is metamorphosis
- they fly
- they get big
- they lay eggs
- they have wings
- they move with their tiny feet
- the butterflies flew away
- A caterpillars job is to eat
- Caterpillars come out of an egg
- Caterpillars eat green leaves
- They get their food from flowers

Incorporating Materials in Functional Ways

- Focus on incorporating materials throughout the environment in functional and natural ways.
- Functional use of materials means that children use the materials for a specific purpose.
- For example:
 - Use paper and pencils to write notes to one another.
 - Place a menu in the dramatic play area.
 - Provide children with catalogs and magazines in the reading area.

ACTIVITY: Setting up a Literacy Environment



- Each group will design a learning center or an area in the classroom (not a book or library). Write descriptions and paste pictures as examples on a word document. Designate someone in your group who will share the group's design.
- When designing your learning center or area, be sure to note the following:
 - Materials included
 - Functional uses of materials
 - Whether materials were high, medium, or low cost
 - In what ways could the materials from each learning center/area created be embedded in other learning centers/areas?

Keep these strategies in mind...

Article: *The essentials of early literacy instruction* (Roskos, Christine, & Richgels, 2003)

These eight specific strategies have their roots in the research on how young children begin to acquire literacy.

- Rich teacher talk
- Storybook reading
- Phonological awareness activities
- Alphabet activities
- Support for emergent reading
- Support for emergent writing
- Shared book experience
- Integrated, content-focused activities

Reflection: Literacy Rich Environment

Today, as practitioners, ask yourselves these questions about the classroom environment.

Get Ready to Read!

www.GetReadytoRead.org

Classroom Literacy Environment Checklist

Is your classroom literacy-friendly?

You have an important role in providing the children in your classroom with some of their first experiences with books and reading.

Look around your classroom and think about what you do with the children. If the statement on the checklist is true, place a check in the "true" column. If the statement is false, place a check in the "false" column.

Availability of learning materials...

TRUE FALSE

Alphabet books (e.g., Dr. Seuss's *ABC* book) are readily available for children's use.

Wood or plastic 3-dimensional alphabet letters are readily available for children's use.

Crayons and pencils are readily available for children's writing and drawing.

Paper is readily available for children's writing and drawing.

Children have tables or other surfaces readily available for writing or drawing.

Rhyming books (e.g., Joseph Slate's *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten*) are readily available for children's use.

At least 25 picture books are readily available for children's use.

At least 50 picture books are readily available for children's use.

Now, let's take a Culturally Responsive Pedagogy lens.

Table 1
CRP-Oriented Literacy Teaching Strategies With Diverse Young Learners

Toward dimensions of multicultural education (Banks, 2016)	Our recommended literacy teaching strategies in early childhood classrooms
1. Content integration—Addressing ethnic, racial, linguistic, and cultural differences in classroom curriculum through the stories of individual students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilizing mobile apps such as <i>iTranslate</i>, for teachers who cannot speak the heritage languages of their students from immigrant families, as a starting point to help communicate with them and foster their sense of belonging in the classroom. Creating photo books that feature students in the classroom and help them develop individual and collective oral stories. Helping students design and publish student–teacher coauthored classroom photo books. Encouraging students to talk about, draw, and jot down their own personal stories.
2. The knowledge construction process—Understanding histories and cultural assumptions behind “take-it-for-granted” usage of language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guiding students to investigate the deeper meanings and histories behind the words (e.g., Dim Sum, Kimchi) that are originated from non-mainstream racial/ethnic cultures. Helping students examine the assumptions of objectified uses of culture, such as Sushi as Japanese culture and Dumpling as Chinese culture.
3. Prejudice reduction—Helping students reduce racial prejudices and develop positive racial attitudes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examining teachers’ own racial and cultural assumptions by reflecting on existing classroom materials (e.g., classroom schedule and jobs, children’s literature, “common” festivals and foods) in both physical and curricular classroom environment. Listening to students’ assumptions on race and culture (e.g., the objectified cultural representation), and create curricular activities to discuss families’ uses of various objects, foods, and other home-based materials. Helping students develop a global understanding of ethnic/racial/linguistic/cultural differences by learning from the lived experiences of their peers and their peers’ family members.
4. An equity pedagogy—Emphasizing educational equity that teaching practices are differentiated and understood by all students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilizing multiple modalities (e.g., gesturing, talking, drawing, singing) in teaching. Paying attention to individual student’s cultural backgrounds and lifestyles instead of attaching a cultural label, such as Asian students learning in certain ways. Attending to the emotional challenges that may be faced by children of new immigrants, by helping them keep a feelings journal, via drawings, to record, express, and discuss their emotions.
5. An empowering school culture and social structure—Empowering students and families by serving the needs of marginalized groups in school culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inviting non-English-speaking families to demonstrate arts, culinary, and/or other daily activities from their houses and workplaces (e.g., clothes folding, food making/serving), as part of the teaching of visual and procedural texts to young students. Creating curricular spaces to respect, affirm, and sustain student’s cultural identities, by working with families to develop stories on their unique family traditions, values, beliefs, and practices (e.g., collections of family dining utensils, family drinking cultures on tea/ coffee and cold/warm water), as a way to increase their “exposure” to their children’s school community.

Note. CRP = culturally relevant/responsive pedagogy.

Small Group Discussion: Culturally Responsive Literacy Practices

- Think about the students in your class.
- Examine the different dimensions of multicultural education. What are some recommended literacy teaching strategies that support the implementation of culturally responsive practices, in an inclusive and effective literacy environment?