

## Creating a Literacy Rich Environment for Young Children

Research has shown that the foundations for literacy are laid very early in life. The task for caregivers is to provide an environment that supports literacy and helps children develop an understanding and a love of reading and writing.



Ms. Coleman is unhappy with her classroom layout. In her classroom, furniture is lined up along the walls. One big open space is in the middle of the room. Ms. Coleman's children spend a lot of time in that open space. They sometimes make a lot of noise that is hard for her to control. She wants her classroom to better support the learning of the children. Instead of one big space, she wants to establish a number of smaller, quiet areas where children can go to examine books, write and draw, engage in social play, and work with puzzles and other games. Ms. Coleman transformed her classroom to enhance her students' learning opportunities.



Today, she uses cupboards, screens, and tables to divide her classroom into children's work areas. She does this to better define the activities that will take place in different parts of the room. She makes and puts up these labels for the areas: Library Corner, Games and Puzzles Table, Writing Table, Blocks Place, Art Studio, Housekeeping Room, and Science Space.

She makes sure that all of the children can comfortably sit on the big rug next to the Library Corner. She knows she will have them sit there when she and the entire class read books and do other activities together.

She provides dress-up clothes and other props in the Blocks Place and the Housekeeping Room. These will be the areas in which the children engage in dramatic play. She provides writing materials—pencils, crayons, and paper—next to the Writing Table as well as in the Art Studio, Blocks Place, and Housekeeping Room. The children often incorporate writing into their artwork as well as their dramatic play.



She encourages them to label their drawings and to write out lists and plans for their dramatic play.

She displays many examples of printed materials, yet she does not display excessive print or print that is not meaningful. The children are able to see labels, signs, and printed directions in the places that count.

Alphabet displays on a nearby wall were placed at the children's eye level as they sit at writing tables.

The children's work was displayed throughout the room.

She changes the labels as different toys, games, and puzzles came into the classroom. She has the children provide the names and sometimes the signs. As the children learn more about print, the labels that appear in the classroom get longer and more detailed.

She places a rug and big pillows in the Library Corner, making it a cozy, inviting place. The children quickly learn that they can go there with several friends to look at and discuss books and magazines.



She makes sure that the bookcases contain a variety of books—traditional storybooks, modern storybooks, alphabet books, number books, wordless pictures books, and books about animals, plants, and the peoples who live in different parts of the world. She includes books that portray the cultural and language backgrounds of the children in the classroom. She keeps current issues of magazines for young children on an easy-to-reach shelf.

Most of the books on the bookcases come from the classroom library, but others are part of a revolving collection of books that Ms. Coleman gets from the public library. She changes the collection of books every few weeks, based on the topics being studied by the children and on their current interests.

As the year progresses and the children create their own books, she sets up a special display shelf to hold the children's work. She prepares one shelf for cassette players, headphones, and tapes for the children to use to listen to stories.

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## References

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