

Characteristics of Infant, Toddler, and Prekindergarten Language and Literacy Environments

Infant/Toddler Language and Literacy Environment

- A variety of materials, ranging from simple to more complex are available throughout the classroom
- Materials and displays reflect diversity and children's home cultures
- Cubbies are labeled with children's photos and names
- Pictures of familiar people, things, and original artwork are displayed at eye level
- Containers are labeled with pictures and words
- For older toddlers, a picture schedule is displayed at eye level
- A variety of materials that support pretend play are available
- A variety of books and literacy materials, including sturdy books that children can handle independently, homemade books, and storytelling props are available
- A variety of materials to support writing and drawing are available for toddlers
- During routines caregivers describe what is happening to the child
- Opportunities to enjoy stories and books are afforded throughout the day
- Caregivers model language throughout the day, including talking as they do things
- Adults engage in activities with children, sitting at their level and interacting with them, describing actions and labeling items.

Prekindergarten Language and Literacy Environment

- Writing materials, a variety of books, and other texts are available in developmental play/interest areas, representing various cultures and disabilities
- Variety of materials/furnishing to make space comfortable and attractive while reading (e.g., carpeted floor, bean bag chair, and child-size rocker)
- Books include storybooks, nursery rhymes, informational-text, predictable text, alphabet, languages spoken in the classroom, and numbers/counting
- Props for retelling stories are available (e.g., puppets, flannel board and story characters, magnetic board, and story apron)
- Materials for writing, including alphabet charts, a variety of paper, and various writing tools in usable condition are available (i.e., pencils, blank paper, etc.)
- Alphabet on the wall is displayed at children's eye level
- Print in the classroom includes: labeling objects, providing information (e.g., schedule, recipes), shared writing, and identifying classroom practices (e.g., waiting lists, charts)
- High-quality literature is chosen from a variety of genres appropriate for children's interest and conceptual level
- Children have access to books being read aloud so that they can retell the stories in their own words
- Language and literacy experiences are planned and children are engaged in them during small and large groups
- Language and Literacy development is enhanced through shared reading opportunities to make predictions, focus on rhyming, interact with the text utilizing various strategies (e.g., pointers, framing tools, and highlighting tape), allow for chiming in during subsequent readings, and respond to text through discussion writing, music, art, and/or drama
- Weekly Lesson Plans include evidence of language development skills: Phonemic Awareness, Vocabulary, Concepts of Print, and Letter Names/Sounds

Strategies to Support Inclusive Language and Literacy Environments

- Provide good models of communication, including sign language and other alternative methods.
- Use special or adaptive devices and/or processes to increase the level of communication and/or participation.
- Use a favorite toy/activity/person to encourage communication and/or participation.
- Use peers to provide specific language models.
- Provide alternate versions of texts (e.g., audiobooks, books in Braille).
- Use assistive technology so that children can interact with literacy materials.
- Separate skills and behaviors into smaller steps.
- Use alternate methods of communication for response.
- Encourage and welcome support personnel to work in the classroom modeling instructional strategies and problem-solving for the child's teachers.
- Use alternative strategies when communicating with children who are non-verbal, have language delays, or are English language learners.