



Creating a Literate Classroom Environment



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~ Preparing the Physical Environment ~

Reutzel and Clark (2011) explain that the physical arrangement and organization of a classroom can be powerful and supportive of effective literacy instruction. Literate environments should motivate students and emphasize the importance of speaking, reading, and writing (The Access Center, 2007). Creating a literate classroom environment where students feel well, productive, energized, and safe requires design knowledge (Roskos & Neuman, 2011). Below you will find practical, helpful suggestions and a picture to aid you in designing a literate environment to benefit literacy development for your students. Suggestions are based on the work of Reutzel and Clark (2011), Roskos and Neuman (2011), and The Access Center (2007).

*Create a well-organized library of books of various levels and genres. Include a minimum of about 10 books per student.

*Provide students with other print resources, such as magazines, newspapers, recipes, signs, menus, etc.

*Set up areas with pillows or cozy chairs where students can enjoy reading.

*Use the walls! Display labels, word walls, anchor charts, posters, and student work that will be used and referred to by your students.

*Set up areas for literacy centers or stations. Organize materials in colorful bins that make use and clean up easy.

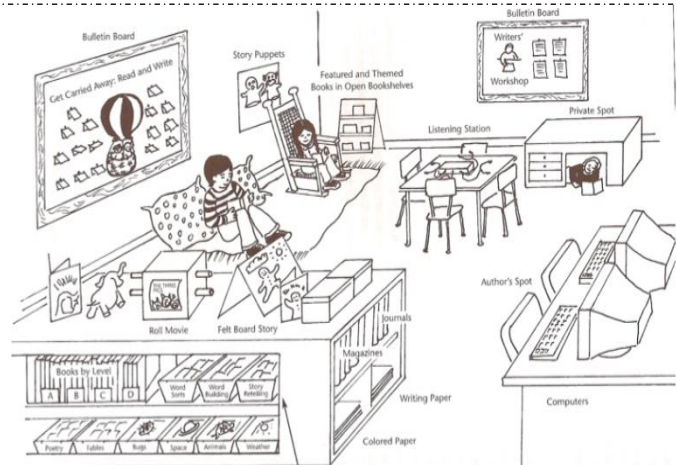
*Provide students with a wide range of engaging materials to promote reading and writing. Some materials may include colorful markers or pens, letter tiles, magnets, puppets, Play-Doh, learning mats, or games.

*Arrange a large rug to serve as a place for the class to gather, read, and learn together away from their desks.

*Incorporate technology. If available, consider using iPads, e-readers, computers, or active whiteboards as tools for motivating students about literacy.

*For more ideas and information, visit www.readingrockets.org/article/21825/.

Notice the labeled features of this quality example of a literate environment.



Morrow, Lesley. *The Literacy Center*. (2002). Portland: Stenhouse Publishers, 4.

~ Creating a Social Environment through Balanced Literacy ~

Balanced literacy is a program designed to help all students learn to read and write effectively. The program firmly believes that all students can be successful in these subjects despite any previous academic difficulties. A well balanced literacy program should support academic growth through positive social interactions and peer learning support. For example if you are teaching a kindergarten or primary classroom, you may want to construct activities for sharing time, read-out loud, small-group reading instruction, whole group math instruction, blocks, dramatic play, computers, and arts and crafts. Positive social interaction can lead to personal growth, self-worth, personal responsibility, cognitive development, and academic achievement. In fact Fred Steele considered social interaction and personal growth as two of the six characteristics that led to an ideal educational environment in an elementary classroom (Mignano & Weinstein, 2007). For more information about how to develop a balanced literacy program please visit <http://www.k12reader.com/category/balanced-literacy/>.

Fred Steele's Six Functions of an Ideal Elementary Environment

1) Security and Shelter

-Create a "safe place" for students to escape from negative social interference.

2) Social Contact

-Consider how much interaction among students is appropriate. (ex: Does desk arrangement facilitate or hinder positive social interaction between students?)
-Think about whether you are making contact with all of your students in a timely manner.

3) Symbolic Identification

4) Task Instrumentality

5) Pleasure

6) Personal Growth

-Is there a large variety of books displayed in a way that encourages students to engage in voluntary, personal-interest reading?



~ Establishing Effective Routines ~

Fenlon, McNabb, & Pidypchak (2010) state to make the most of literacy instruction, a framework should be used as an efficient planning tool for the teacher and a daily routine should be established that allows for predictability for the students. The literacy practices in a daily routine should include print concepts, familiar or self-selected reading, word/letter work and vocabulary development, guided or structured shared reading including instruction in reading strategies, text comprehension, and writing for authentic purposes (Fenlon, A., McNabb, J. & Pidypchak, H., 2010). The following is a list of suggestions for a daily literacy routine:

Instruction	Range of Time	Class Configuration	Examples of Teacher-Led Activities
Initial 90+ minutes daily	25-45 minutes	Whole Group	Work with Core Comprehensive Reading Program (CCRP)
			Phonemic Awareness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Segmenting sounds Blending sounds
			Phonics & Fluency: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sound-letter relationships Blending & decodables Dictation and spelling
			Vocabulary & Comprehension: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust Vocabulary Instruction Pre-reading strategies During reading strategies Post reading strategies
TOTAL TIME: 45-55 minutes	Small Groups (Group 1-6**)	15-20 minutes * M T W Th F	Group 1: segment sounds with Elkonin boxes
		Session 1 1 4 2 5 3	Group 2: word building with letters & pocket charts
		Session 2 2 5 3 1 4	Group 3: review complex blending strategies
		Session 3 3 1 4 2 5	Group 4: reread the decodable book
			Group 5: choral reading of a new poem
Immediate Intensive Intervention	20 minutes	3 X per week 1 1 1	Work with Supplementary Reading Programs (SRPs)
			Group 1 also needs iii, which requires work on the following skills in addition to work with Elkonin boxes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> phonemic segmentation with mirrors common syllable patterns with spelling reading a decodable book at instructional level

- *Interactive read aloud
- *Introduction to new vocabulary
- *Shared reading
- *Spelling
- *Guided reading
- *Literacy stations/centers
- *Writing (Kidwrite)



Research shows that students need at least 90 minutes of uninterrupted reading instruction per day in order for sufficient student reading development, and that this instruction must be dense: systematically delivering explicit teacher directions; scaffolded over time; and differentiated across the classroom (Just Read, Florida!, 2005). The table above provides an example of a schedule that incorporates all literacy instruction effectively.

~Effective Grouping Practices~

According to Reif and Heimburge (2007) a literacy classroom involves a mix of grouping formats. It is important for teachers to choose the format that is most beneficial to the instruction or student practice taking place. No single program works for all children, so it is up to the teacher to modify and adapt lessons to meet the needs of all students (Reif & Heimburge, 2007). Students should have the opportunity to work collaboratively with the teacher and their classmates in interactive literacy centers. Literacy centers provide students with opportunities to enhance their collaborative learning skills while teachers focus lessons on guided reading instruction and extension activities. Some tasks in the literacy classroom may require whole-group instruction while other tasks are fit for the literacy centers or one-on-one guided instruction (Elbaum, Tejero, Vaughn, & Watson, 2001). The teacher will play a critical role in facilitating the instruction of each. The following are some strategies and suggestions from Reif and Heimburge (2007) to help structure interactive literacy centers and grouping practices in the classroom:



- *Make use of students various learning styles
- *Include manipulative-based activities within groups, such as pocket charts to build words, tape recorders, dry erase boards, reading games, sequence cards, etc.
- *Include open discussion within groups such as, literacy groups, represented by the leveled reading groups.
- *Flexible grouping is considered an effective practice for enhancing the knowledge and skills of students without the negative social consequences associated with more permanent reading groups (Elbaum et al., 2001).

References

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