

2

Planning Your Literacy Program

Knowledge of the components of literacy prepares teachers to plan a literacy program. Planning for literacy learning is active and continuous, and it involves all staff members in finding ways to meet the individual needs of each child and the group as a whole.

Before teaching, think about these questions:

- What do I want children to know and be able to do?
- What essential dispositions am I fostering?
- How will I evaluate and assess the children’s learning?

During teaching, think about these questions:

- Are children learning what I expected?
- Is unanticipated learning occurring?
- Are things going as planned?

After teaching, ask:

- What worked?
- What needs to be changed?
- What is the evidence?

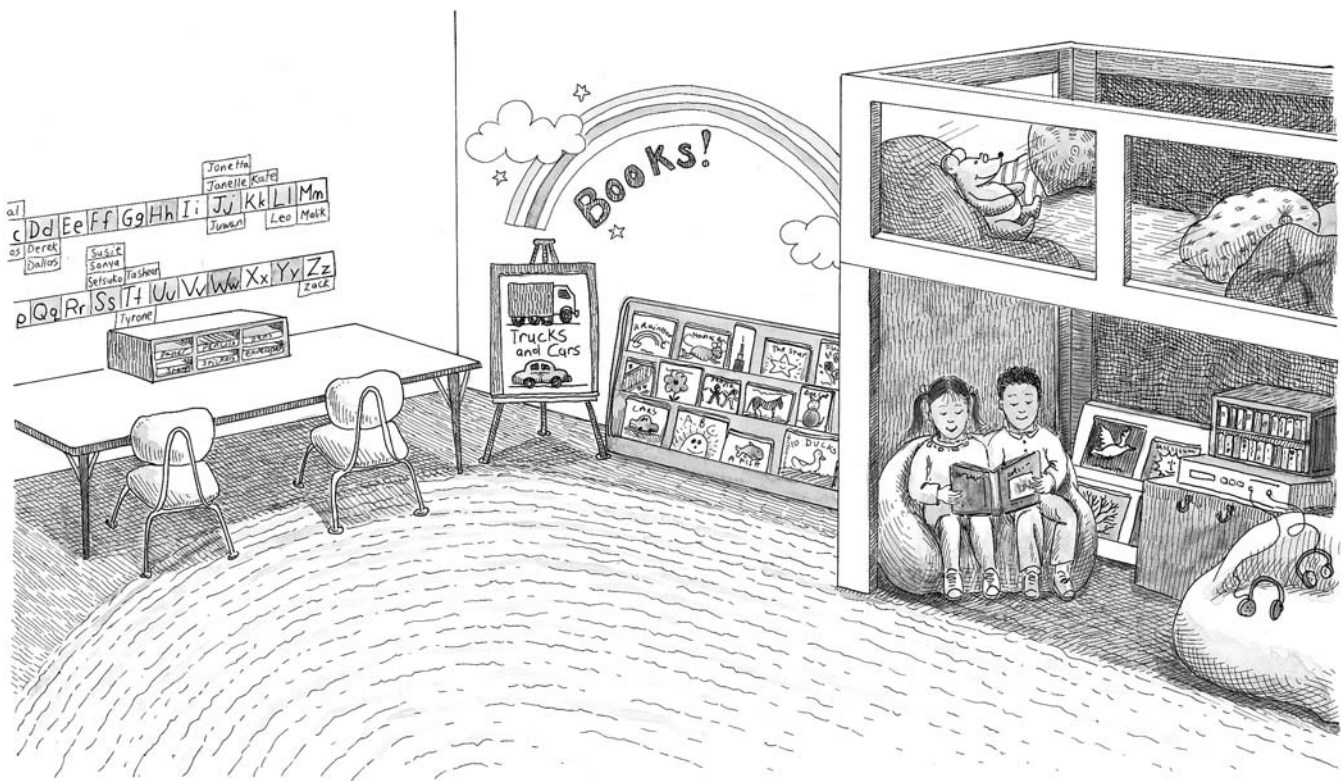
When planning is careful and tailored to children’s needs, children’s efforts are more likely to be successful. Without ongoing planning, learning is left to chance.

In order to plan effectively and to address the questions mentioned above, teachers need to know the *goals and objectives of literacy learning*. The 2 goals and 13 objectives specifically related to language and literacy are listed below. Because children develop language and literacy skills as they work in many areas of the Curriculum, you will see a chart of the 50 objectives (Goals and Objectives at a Glance) as well. Many have implications for language development. For example, as you observe children’s social/emotional development and consider objective 10, “Plays well with other children,” there will probably be many opportunities to observe language development as well.

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With these learning objectives in mind, teachers work to create a *literacy-rich physical environment* that supports and stimulates language and literacy use. Next, teachers think about how to incorporate *literacy experiences throughout the day* purposefully, in all routines and activities.

Because today's preschool classrooms are so diverse, teachers must think about ways to *meet the needs of all children*. They have to explore ways to challenge children with advanced skills, and to accommodate children with disabilities and those who are English language learners, so that they can benefit fully from the program. The final section of this chapter offers a guide to implementation to help you make language and literacy a central part of your program.



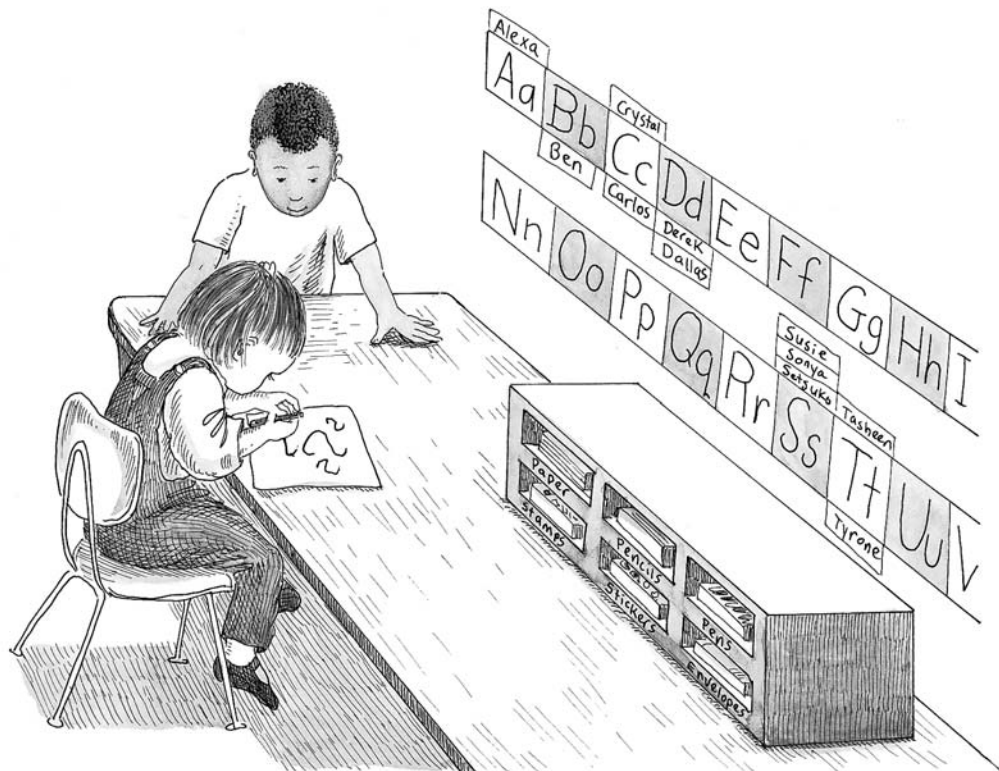
Creating a Literacy-Rich Physical Environment

Creating a literacy-rich environment does not mean merely covering the walls with words or placing charts from ceiling to floor. Teachers encourage literacy learning by thoughtfully planning the physical environment and including print that is meaningful to children.

For classroom literacy materials to be meaningful, they must serve a purpose. Such print materials help children communicate messages and ideas, learn new information and concepts, organize and express their thoughts, care for the classroom, and know what to do. A literacy-rich environment conveys the message that reading, writing, listening, and speaking are valuable and enjoyable.

Preschool children need to engage with literacy materials; to use them in their play; and to talk with adults about what they are doing, thinking, and feeling. Teachers must act intentionally to help children use written and spoken language throughout the day.

To create a literacy-rich environment, consider the basic principles that follow.



Creating a Literacy-Rich Environment

Organize space to promote conversations and language

Divide space into interest areas that are intimate and encourage conversation.

Create spaces for large-group discussions as well as small-group and individual work.

Encourage social interaction through the arrangement of the furnishings, e.g., two chairs at the computer or easels placed side-by-side.

Create cozy, comfortable spaces or niches to relax and read.

Define spaces and interest areas with print and pictures.

Develop a Library Area that is attractive and inviting.

Provide children access to print throughout the environment

Write children's names (using upper- and lowercase letters in conventional form) on charts, cubbies, work samples, cards.

Display a picture and word daily schedule and refer to it throughout the day.

Display the alphabet and have smaller alphabet cards available for children to handle as they write.

Display dictated signs, labels, titles for charts, posters, and other writing that serves a purpose.

Add message boards and class mailboxes for children and families to use.

Post poems, fingerplays, songs, rhymes, and recipes.

Display samples of children's writing.

Include print materials related to a study by creating experience stories, charts, labeled displays, and by providing related literature.

Remove print when it is no longer useful to children.

Enhance interest areas with literacy materials

Display books related to the interest area so that the covers are visible.

Label containers and shelves with pictures and words written conventionally with upper- and lowercase letters.

Provide reading and writing materials and tools for children to use in their play and to imitate adult literacy behaviors (e.g., paper for list-making, appointment books, phone books, pencils, markers).

Provide interesting materials to talk, read, and write about.

Add relevant posters, brochures, magazines, and newspapers.

Place sign-up sheets in interest areas or by activities that are particularly popular but can only accommodate a few children at one time.