

Creating Literacy Centers in the Classroom for Our Youngest Learners (Ages 2-4)

Literacy skills begin to develop early on for children. Follow these suggestions to create centers in your early childhood classroom to enhance literacy skills.

Nursery Rhyme Center: Singing nursery rhymes help children develop phonemic awareness which is important for developing phonics. Set up a center for children to sing their favorite nursery rhymes. Include the nursery rhyme written on cards, hand-made or printed displays, and toys related to the nursery rhyme. For example, if you create an “Incy Wincy Spider” nursery rhyme center include toy spiders, webs, and other books about spiders.



Photo taken from: <http://www.sparklebox.co.uk/gallery/gal1351-1360/gal1352.html#.Wzt7KNJKiUk>

Story Sack Center: Bring beloved stories to life by creating a center around a favorite storybook. Create a backdrop to represent the setting for the story and include puppets, masks, or other toys so that children can act out the story. This helps children begin to develop story retell skills. Include important words from the story in your display as well as sequencing words like first, next, last. For example, for a story sack for “The Three Little Pigs,” include 3 pig

puppets and a wolf puppet as well as items for children to build like straw, sticks, and foam bricks.



Photo taken from: <http://www.sparklebox.co.uk/gallery/photos/gal1676-1700/gal1695.html#.Wzt9RTJKiUk>

Writing Center: Young children need lots of exposure to different styles of paper and writing tools to develop the skills of both holding a pen or pencil and writing as a means of self-expression. It is normal if children’s writing is a scribble on a piece of paper and if they “tell you a story” to go with their scribble. It is also developmentally appropriate if they tell a story to match their writing one day and change the story the next day. They are beginning to understand that written words are connected to spoken words. At your writing center include different types of paper and writing utensils, posters that display the way to hold writing utensils, alphabet cards or posters, and words. Help children see that writing has different purposes by providing examples of different types of writing such as friendly letters, storybooks, party invitations, and more. You may tie your writing center into your current unit or theme.



Photo taken from: <https://www.pinterest.com/mamabare42/ece-literacy-and-numeracy/>

Role Play Center: Role play is important in early childhood education because it inspires imagination, develops speaking and listening skills, fosters social skills such as sharing and turn taking, and supports children to acquire new vocabulary. Common role play centers include pet shops, hospitals, supermarkets, hair salons, and much more. To incorporate even more literacy into your role play center, include books connected to the theme, labels for props, related written materials such as a menu at a restaurant, environmental print found in the setting such as a “waiting area” sign at a pet hospital, and authentic opportunities for writing such as a doctor’s notepad.



Photo taken from: <http://www.sparklebox.co.uk/gallery/photos/gal1651-1675/gal1673.html#.WzuGXdJKiUk>

Fine Motor Center: Fine motor refers to all the tiny muscles in the hand. It is important to develop these muscles and hand-eye-coordination to be able to complete tasks such as gripping a pencil, cutting with scissors, tying shoelaces, zipping or buttoning a jacket, and more. Fine motor centers help children develop these skills in a fun and engaging way. Fine motor centers may include activities such as play dough, weaving, threading pasta or beads onto string, using a clothespin or large plastic tweezers to pick up pom pom balls, and much more! Try to connect your fine motor center to a book you are reading or thematic unit that you are learning.



Photo taken from:

https://www.google.com/search?q=fine+motor+center+photo&rlz=1C1WPZA_enUS801US801&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiihf36koPcAhWmr1kKHa0_DaAQ_AUICigB&biw=1920&bih=974#imgdii=XoWEsj0fZO2CxM:&imgrc=VGQBivF8vxkaIM:

Alphabet Center: While our youngest early childhood students may not be learning letter names and sounds yet, it is important for children to have exposure to the alphabet to begin to develop alphabetic awareness. In your alphabet center include both activities for children to learn the names of the letters of the alphabet and opportunities to practice letter-sound relationships. Include activities such as alphabet books, puzzles, magnetic letters, matching lowercase to uppercase, building letters with wooden pieces, matching letters to words that begin with the sound, and more.



Photo taken from: <https://fairdustteaching.com/2016/10/simple-literacy-provocations/>

Source: Written for Reading Is Fundamental by Erin Bailey, MA

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