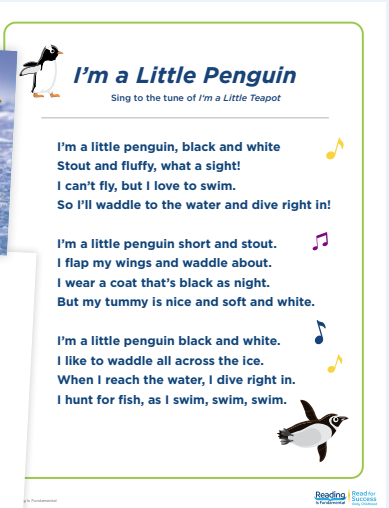
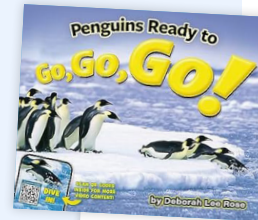


# Creating Literacy Centers in the Classroom for Our Youngest Learners

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 helps children develop phonological 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 props related to the nursery rhyme. For example, if you create an “I’m a Little Penguin” nursery rhyme center include penguin puppets, ice blocks, and other books about penguins.



## BRING A BOOK TO LIFE CENTER

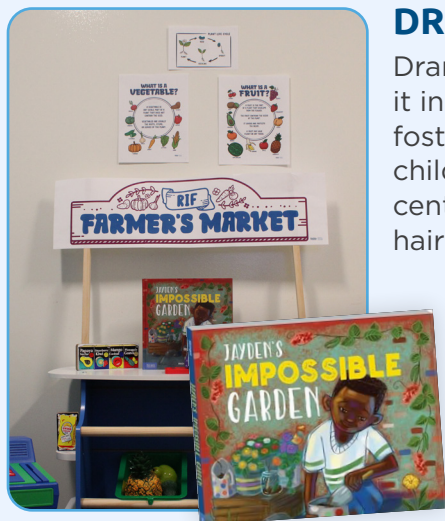
Bring beloved stories to life by creating a center around a favorite storybook. Create a backdrop to represent the setting for the story and include puppets, masks, or other props so that children can act out the story. This helps children begin to develop story retell skills. Include important words from the story in your display as well as sequencing words like “first,” “next,” and “last.” For example, for a center for “Me and My Amazing Body” include props for children to act out being a doctor and taking care of their bodies.

## 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 developmentally appropriate for a child’s writing to start as a scribble on a piece of paper as they tell you a story to match their writing. 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 thematic vocabulary 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. For example, a theme on light may include writing in a stargazing journal.

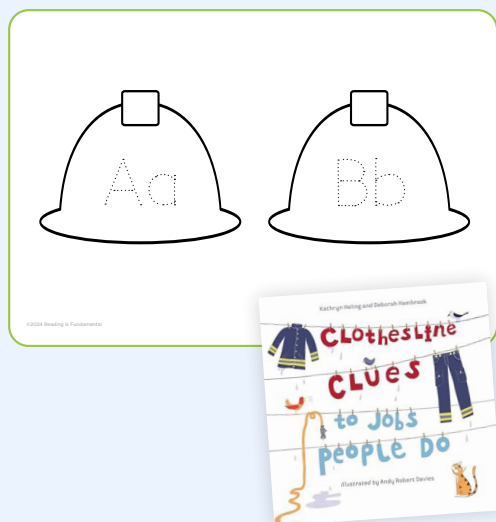


## DRAMATIC PLAY CENTER

Dramatic play is important in early literacy development 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 dramatic play centers include veterinary clinics, doctor's offices, restaurants, hair salons, and more. To incorporate even more literacy into your dramatic 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 veterinary clinic, and authentic opportunities for writing such as a receipt at a farmer's market.

## 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 other everyday tasks. Fine motor centers help children develop these skills in a fun and engaging way such as with play dough, weaving, threading pasta or beads onto string, using a clothespin or large plastic tweezers to pick up pom pom balls, and more! Try to connect your fine motor center to a book you are reading such as a doll house with the book *Families* by Shelley Rotner.



## ALPHABET CENTER

While our youngest students may not be learning letter names and sounds yet, it is important for children to have exposure to the alphabet to develop alphabetic awareness. In your alphabet center include both activities for children to learn the names of the letters 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. Thematic handwriting templates add a fun way to engage with the alphabet!