

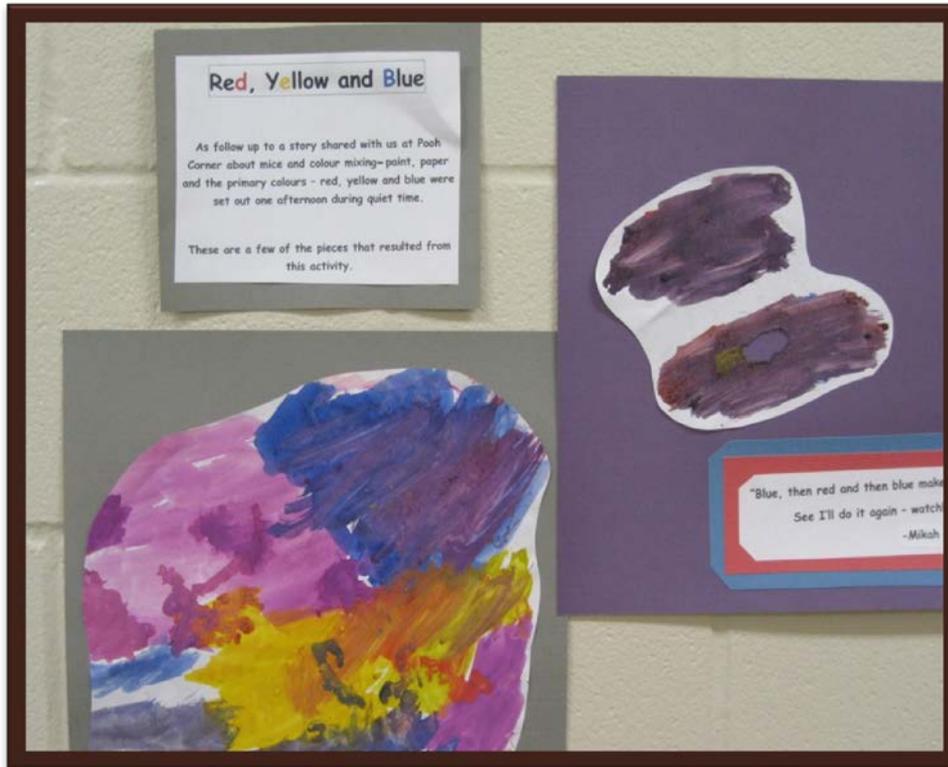
Promoting  
Language and  
Literacy  
through a  
Print Rich  
Environment



# Environmental Print is:

“the print seen in our immediate surrounding and is used in our everyday lives.”

“the print found in the natural environment of the child and it appears in many contexts and formats.”





Young children show us their awareness of print in their environment.





Young children show us their print awareness when they recognize and use photographs, signs, symbols and names in their environment.



How the environment is arranged and what it contains plays an important role in the development of children's emerging literacy skills.





Photos and print provide cues that support children to independently find and return materials.







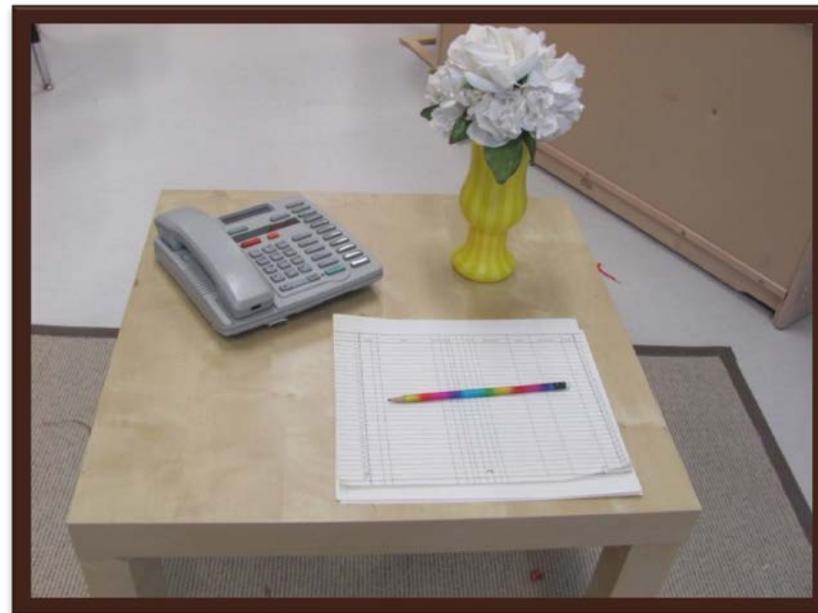
The shelves in the art centre are each labeled with text and photos.

This supports the children in using the materials independently.





Invitations and learning centres can include opportunities for reading and writing.



This picture shows a sign-in table for a group of toddlers. It is right beside the place where parents sign children in and out. A clipboard and markers are provided – enabling young children to use print in meaningful ways!





Print is used alongside picture representations to provide meaningful messages about how the space and materials are to be used.



In each photo you can see different ways of showing toddler and preschool children how many children are invited to various learning centres.

# Infusing Print in Dramatic Play Centres





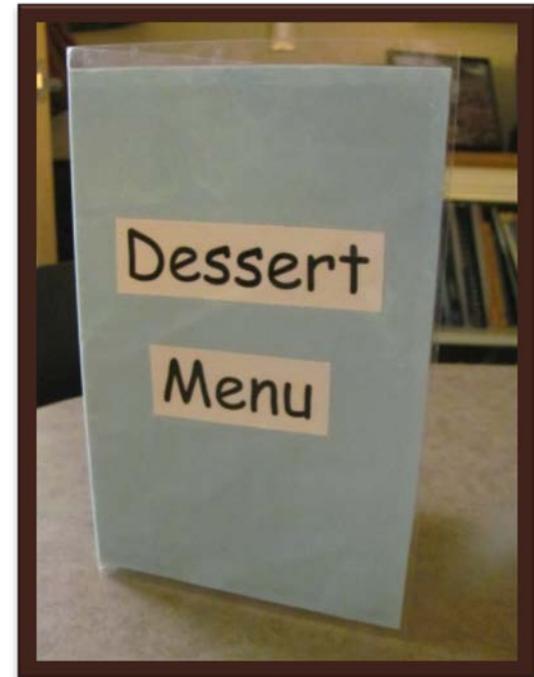
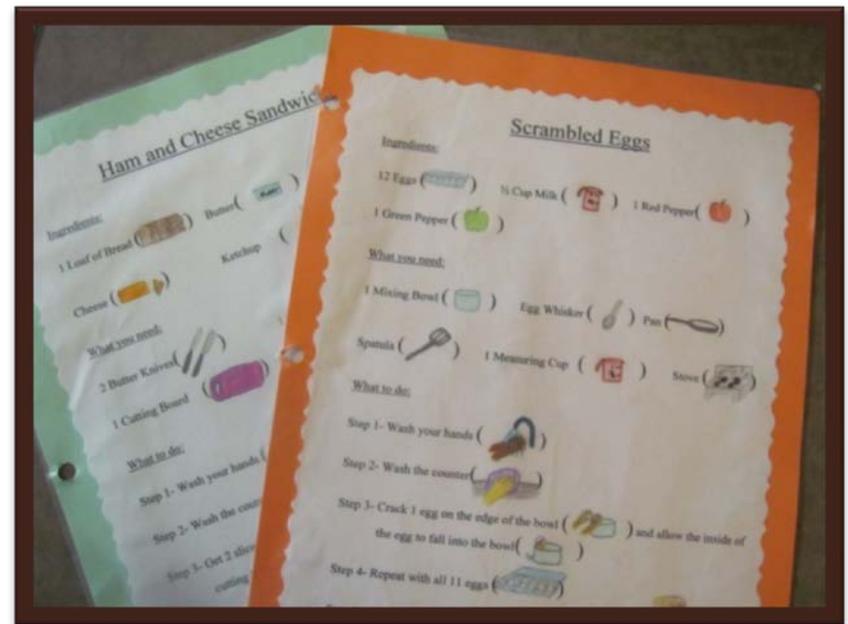
Dramatic  
play areas  
have labeled  
shelves and  
real boxes  
and  
containers.



There are inexpensive and easy ways to include print in the dramatic play area.

For example, during children's dramatic play the housekeeping centre often becomes a restaurant. You might add:

- ✓ menus
- ✓ recipe books
- ✓ notepads
- ✓ grocery store flyers
- ✓ recipe rebus charts
- ✓ phone books

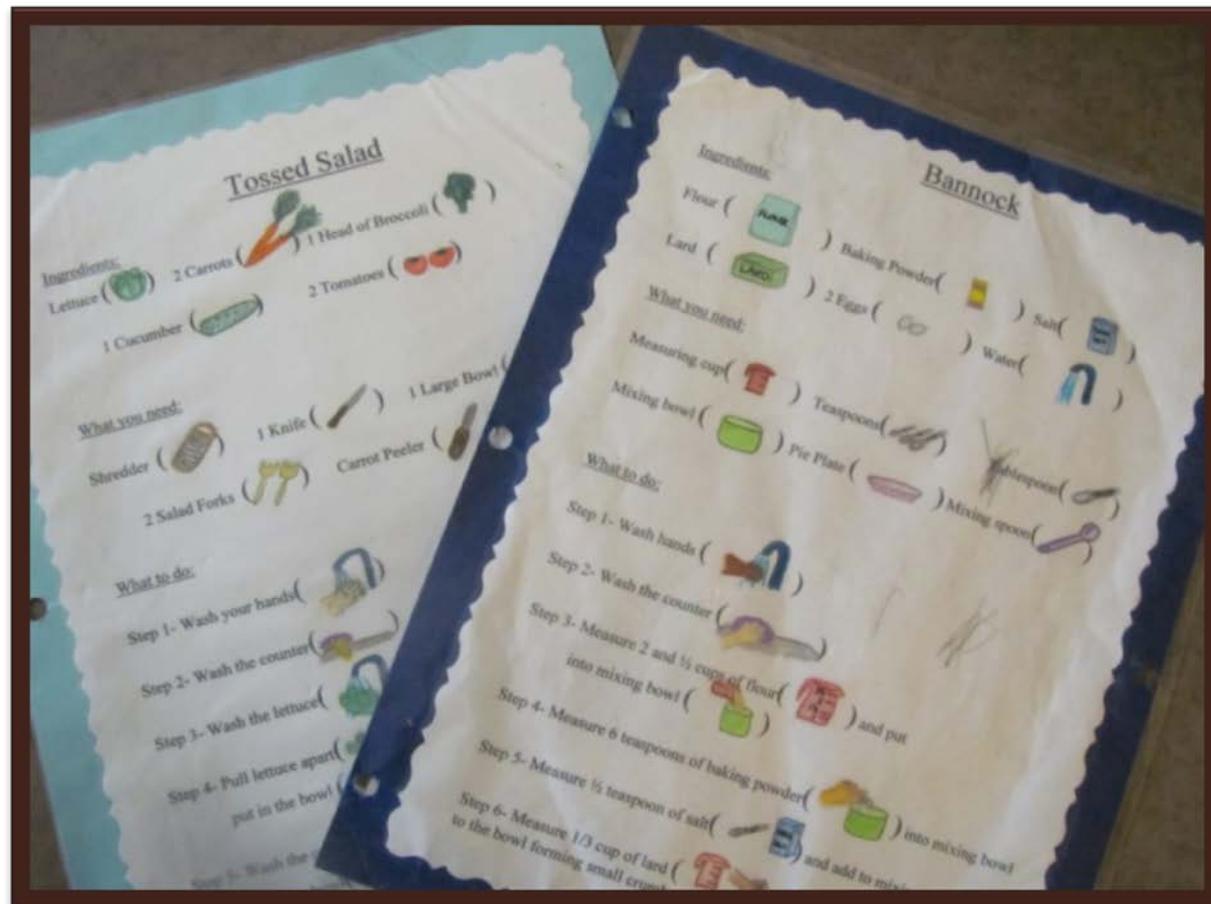




What other print rich items could be included in the dramatic play area?

Consider the sort of dramatic play that is currently engaging the children.

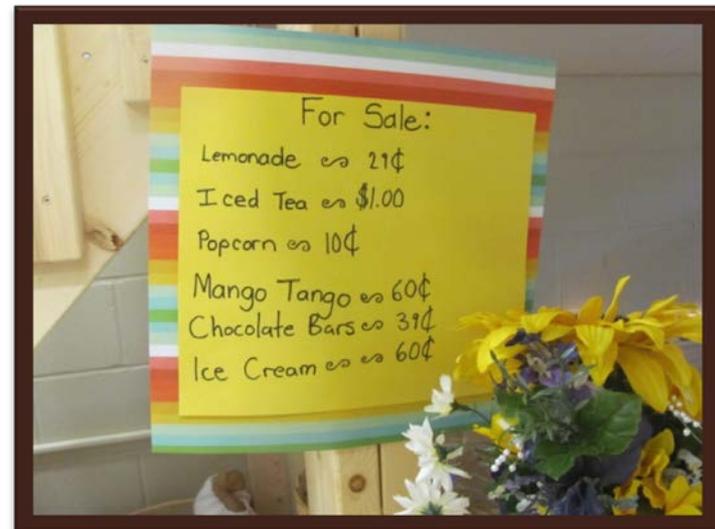
What sort of print rich items could enhance their play? Add one or two to the dramatic play environment and observe how the children use them.



# *"The Lemonade Stand"*



A dramatic play experience, such as this lemonade stand, can include meaningful reading and writing.



*"The Office" or "Writing Centre"*  
invites children to experiment with print in meaningful ways – the ways that they see the adults in their lives using print.



The writing centre /office contains print materials that may be seen and used in children's homes such as:

- address books
- phone books
- pads of paper
- sticky notes
- envelopes, stamps
- calendars
- business cards
- labels
- notebooks
- file folders
- assorted forms
- newspapers & magazines
- a variety of writing tools



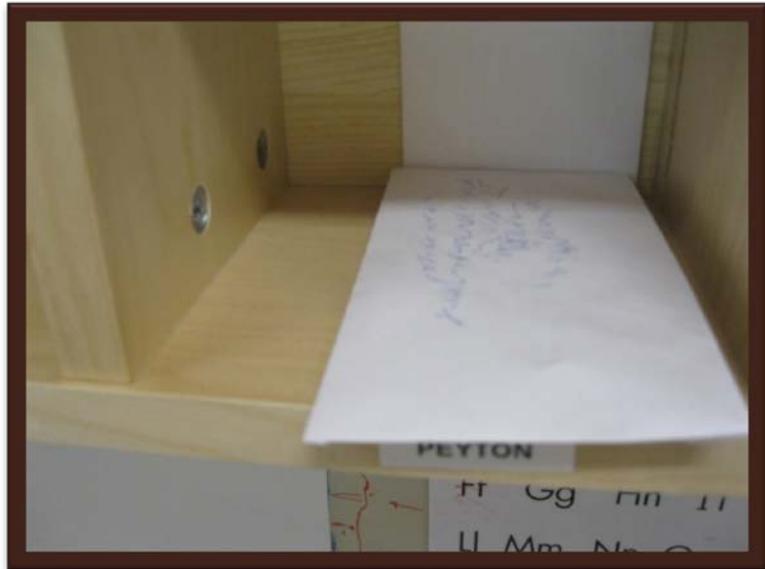
# *"The Post Office"*

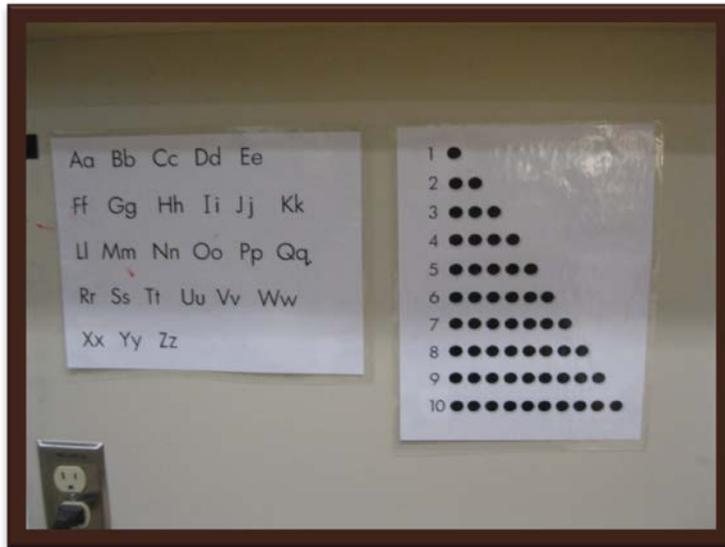
Children use print to send and receive messages at a post office centre!



Laminated reusable envelopes in a variety of sizes, special stamps that have been created with the children's names and photos and/or reusable laminated stamps can be provided.

Real, used stamps taken from letters can also be used – Cut them off your received mail and the children can glue them onto the envelopes containing their "letters".





These four charts are in the writing centre in a room for 2 1/2 - 3 1/2 year old children

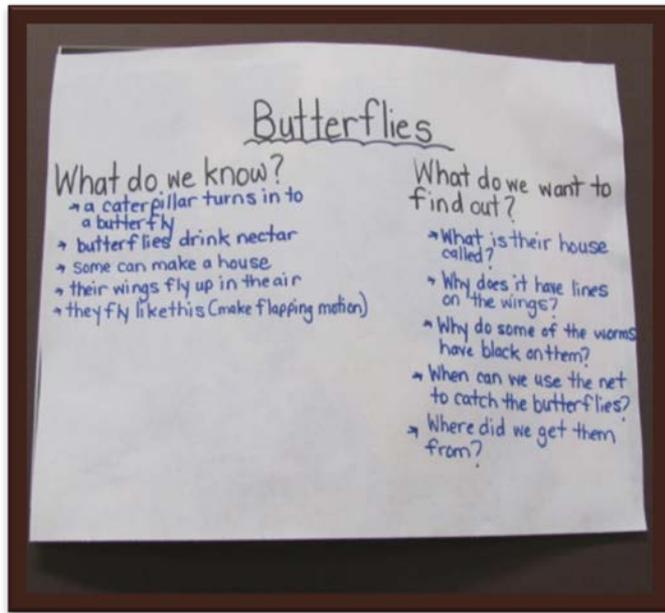
References to the alphabet are posted at children's eye level.



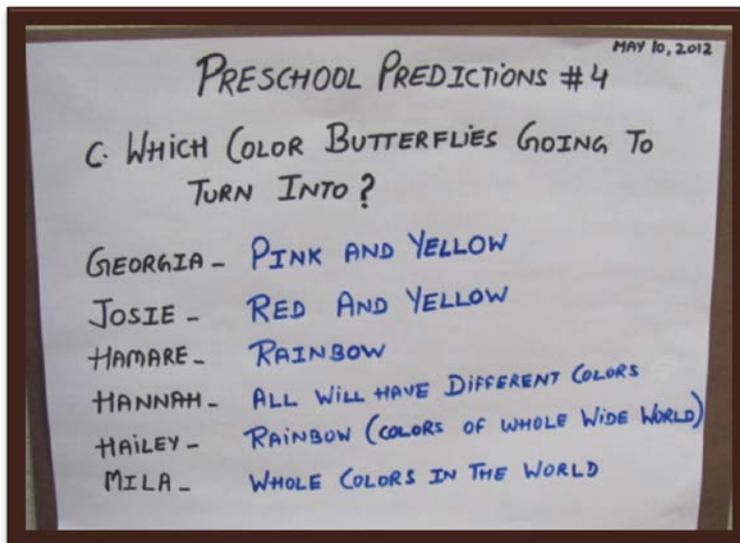
# Children's experiences and creative representations provide opportunities to display print

Children's ideas are documented and posted in print around the learning environment for children and their families to see.





Children's predictions, questions and ideas during this butterfly project are written down, posted at their eye level and will be used for future reference.



Children see that their ideas are important and their contributions to this project are valuable.

Fri. May

## Preschool Predictions #4

a. When will the larvae turn into butterflies?

Mila → 3 days

Josie → tomorrow

Bradley → 65 days

Alexander → 100 days

Hannah → until I go to kindergarten

Hailey → when it's summer

## Preschool Predictions #4

b. What will come first - the butterflies or Kayley's baby?

### Kayley's baby

- Kylee
- Tanner
- Martie

### Butterflies

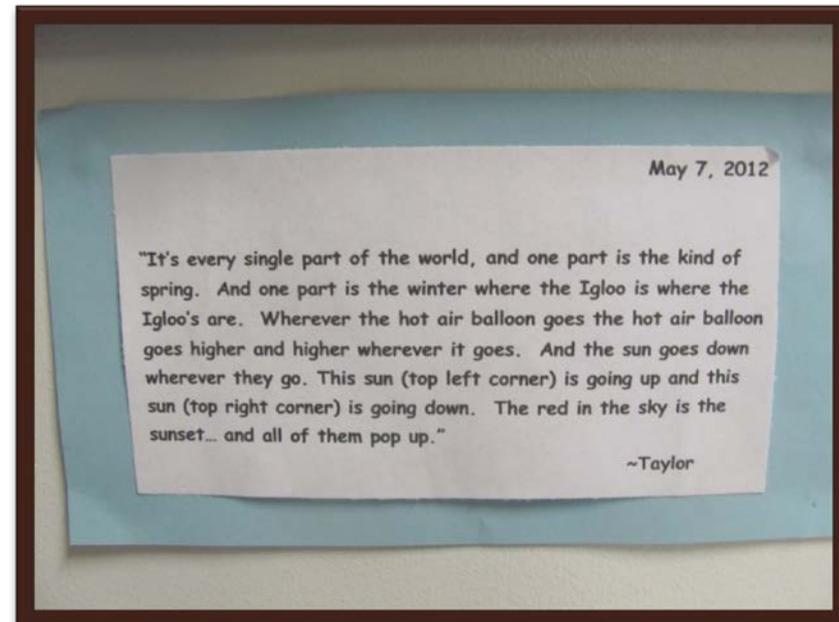
- Mila
- Hannah
- Hailey
- Josie
- Alexander

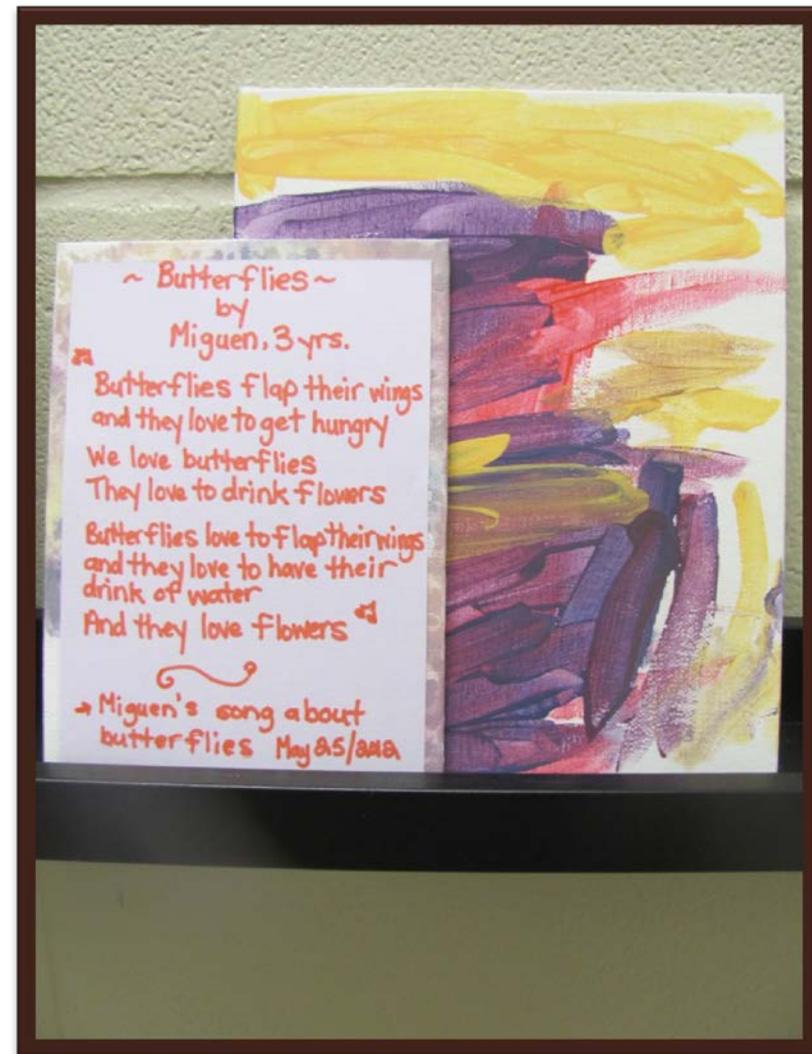
Children's artwork is carefully and respectfully displayed, providing additional opportunities to include text that has importance for them.





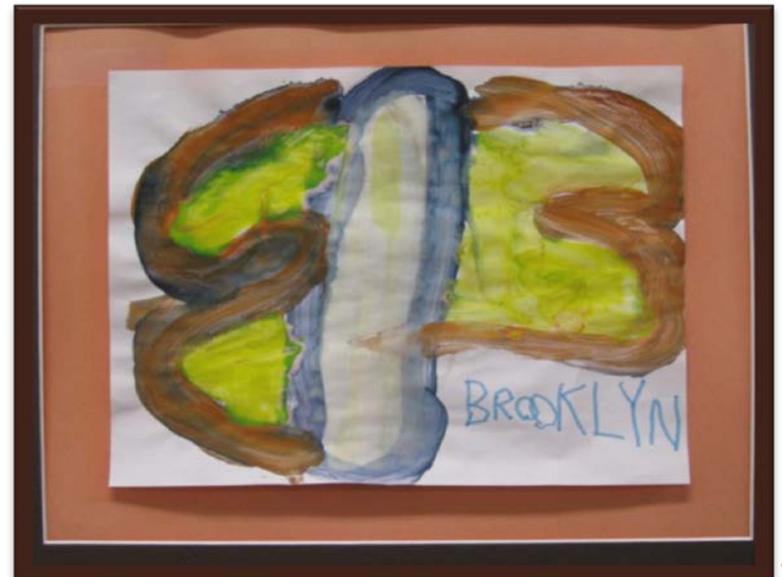
Adjoining text provides quote's from the children, transcriptions of their conversations, information about the process of the experience as well as the educator's response.

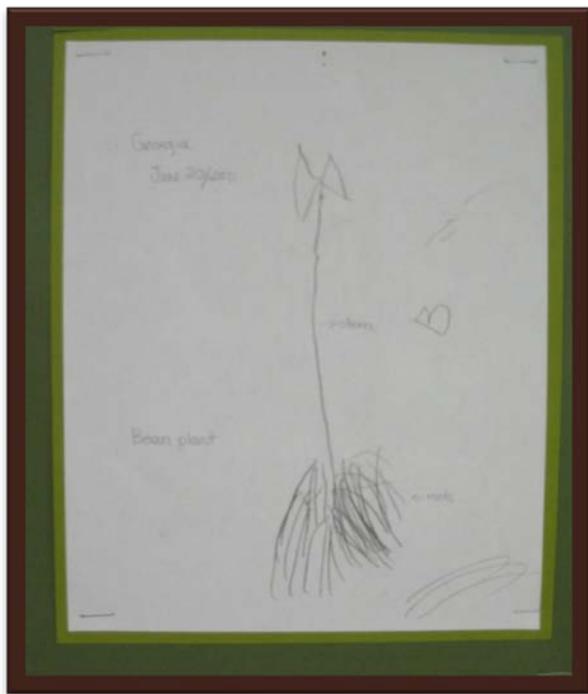




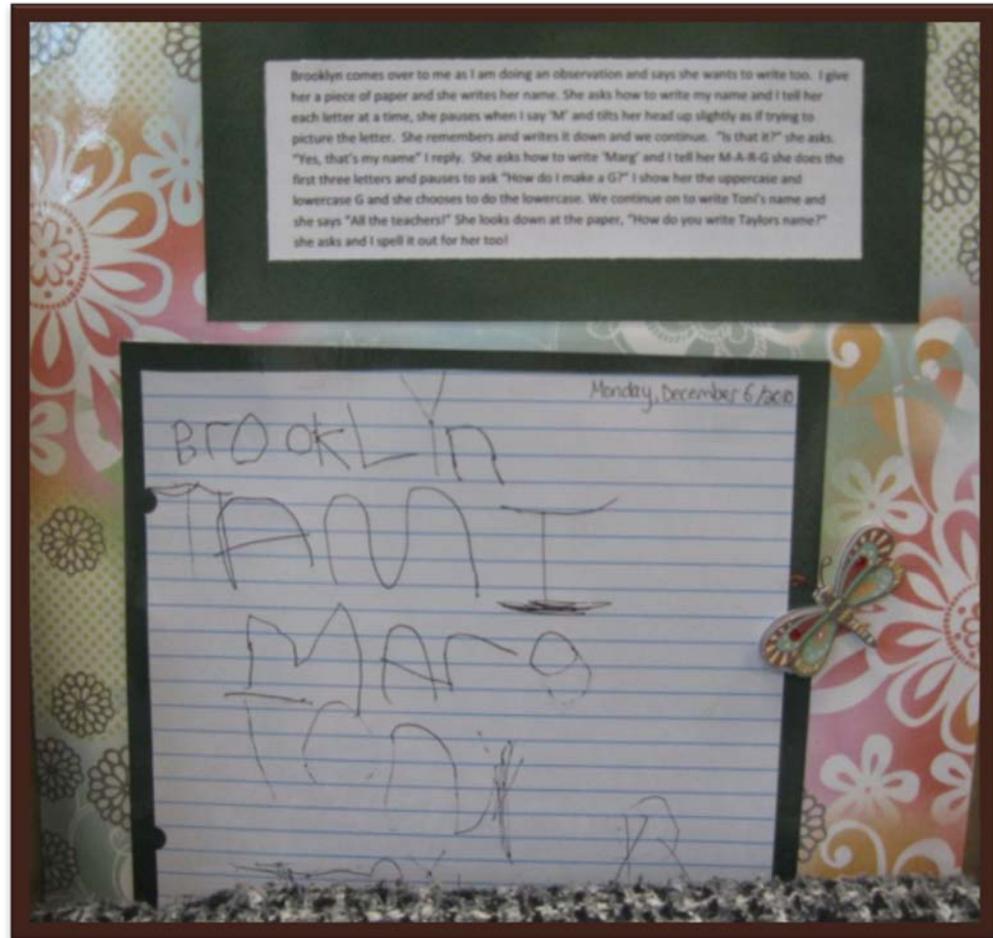


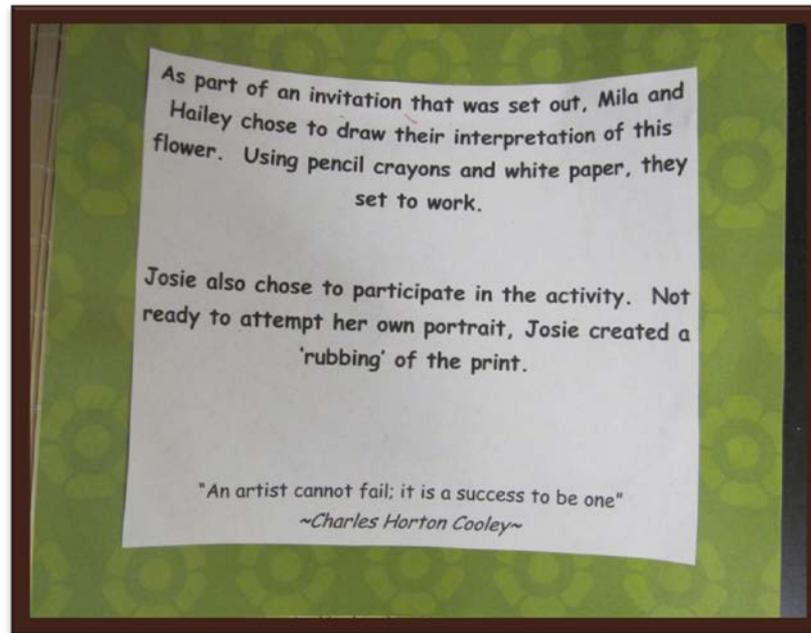
Children often include their name and other print forms in their artwork.





Educators may also add dictated information about the child's work using the child's own words and phrases





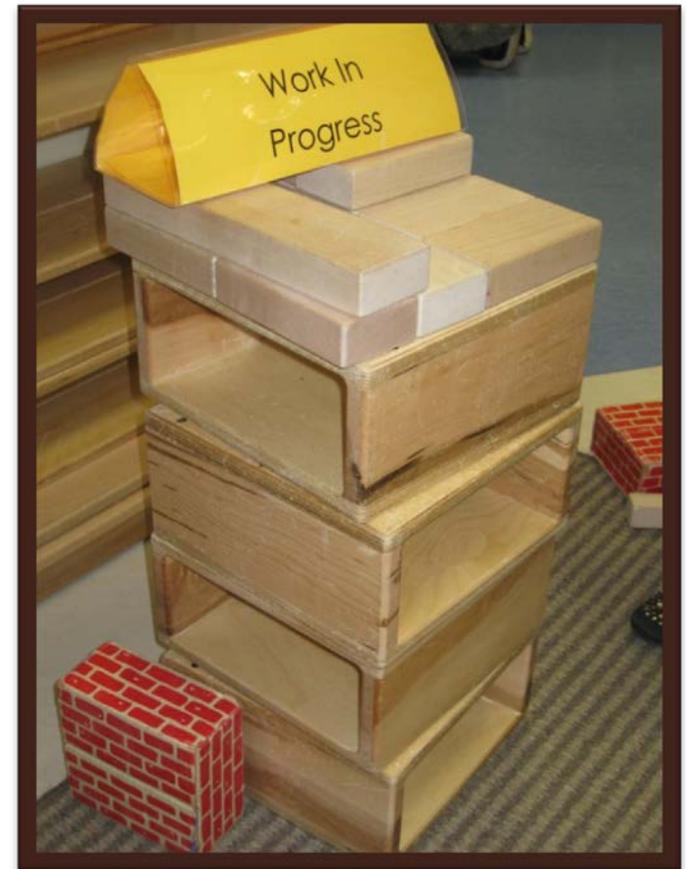
These pieces of documentation were placed just outside the door to the preschool classroom for children and families to read.

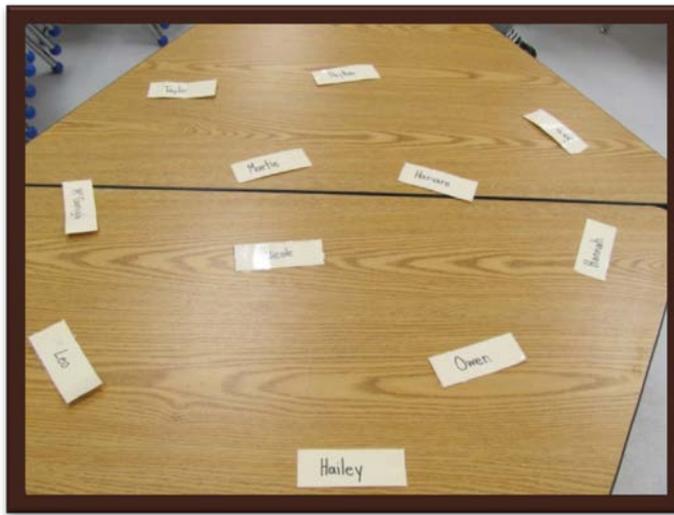
Classroom signage becomes useful print.  
"Work in Progress" and "Closed" signs are used with and by older toddlers and preschool children.



Children use these signs to save their work and to know when areas are not available at the moment.

Children independently follow these directions and use these signs to send messages to others.





The names and photos of the children, family members and educators are displayed at the children's eye level.



Children are frequently seen looking at, pointing at, and discussing these photos and the accompanying text.



## Room Rules

- Use Walking Feet



- Use Gentle Hands



- Be Kind to Each Other



- Be Kind to Toys and Books



- Use Inside Voices



The room rules were developed with a group of preschool children. The photos and text support the children in their efforts to be independent .



Documentation and photos are kept safe in the infant and toddler rooms behind acrylic display boards or they are laminated. This invites children to view the materials at their level while protecting the documentation.



Books provide natural opportunities . . .

. . . for children to engage with print and are offered at the children's level. Children are invited to use books throughout each day.

The daily schedule invites large and small group sharing of books.



Children's literature is also shared with children individually which is a wonderful opportunity to interact and converse with children one-on-one.

A wide variety of picture books – both fiction and non-fiction are available.



These books are routinely changed as children's interests shift.



Books are grouped in a variety of ways and placed throughout the room where they relate to centres and/or invitations.





Print Rich  
Documentation  
The children's experiences are documented and shared in a variety of ways. Valuing the "ordinary" moments is the focus and these experiences are shared in print and photos.



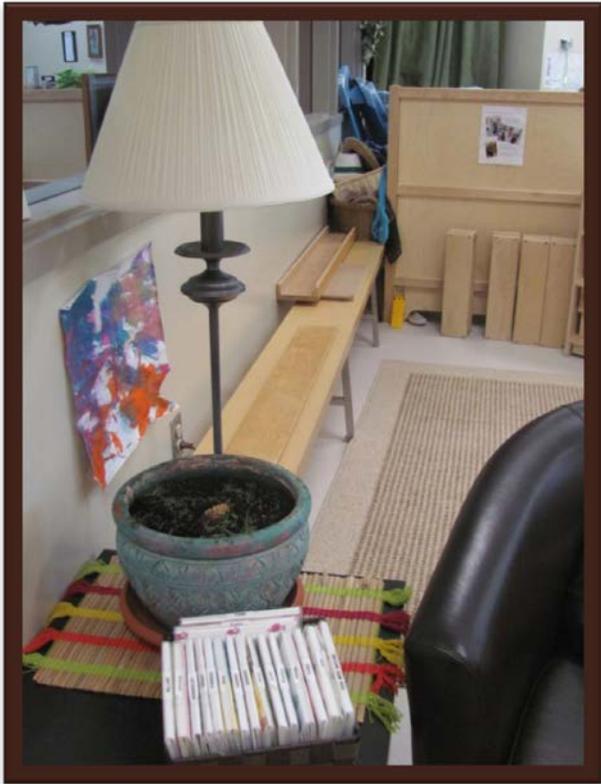
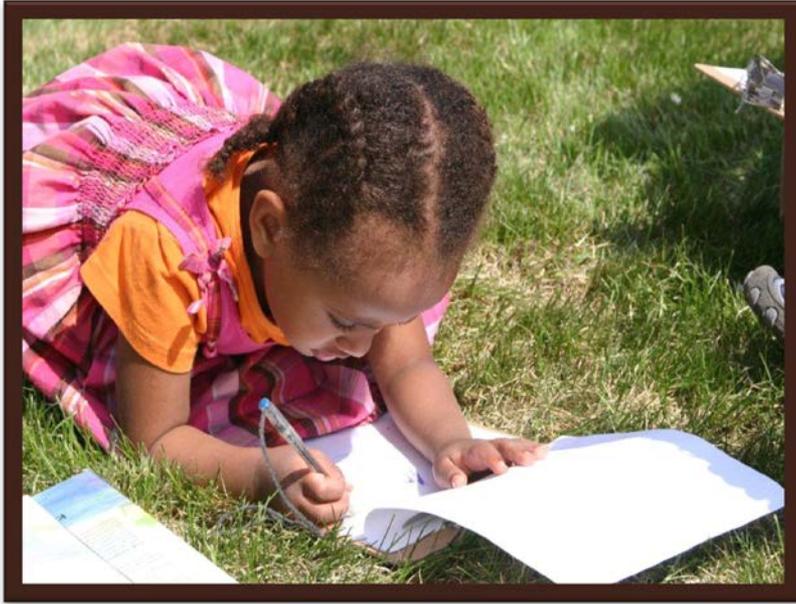


Photo Albums provide very personal print opportunities. A photo album for each child contains photos and text from the program and from home. Children are always interested in seeing themselves and their peers in photos.



Evidence of children's engagement with print can be infused throughout the program.





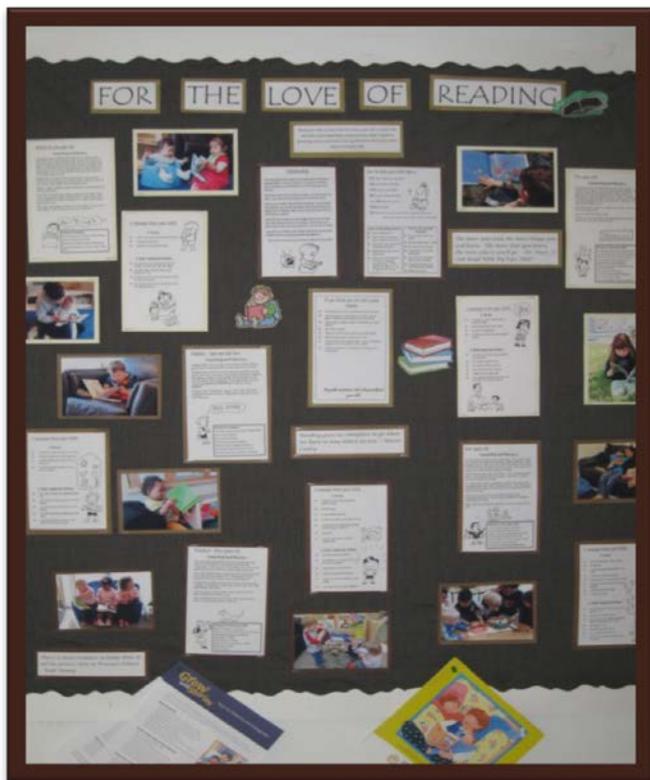
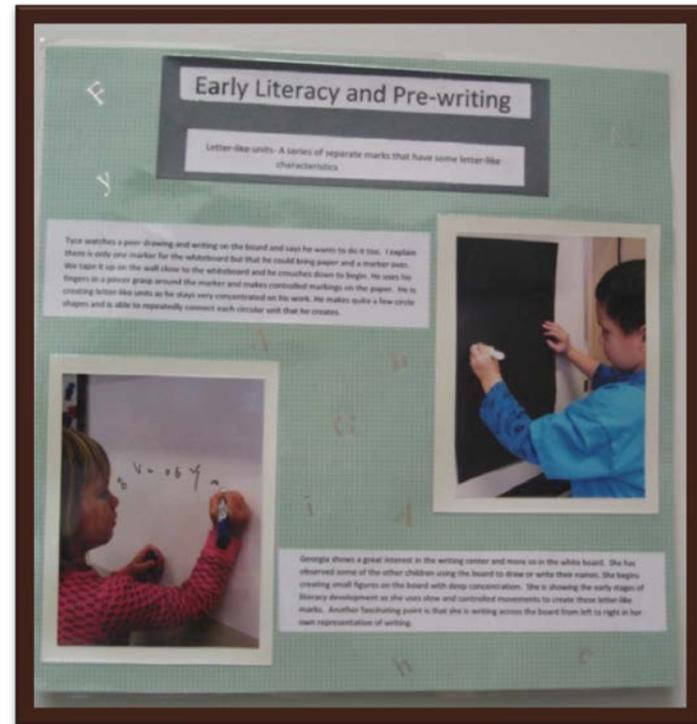
Photos and documentation about writing, reading, speaking and listening are displayed in the children's environment and in adjoining hallways.





# Sharing Understanding About Children's Use of Print

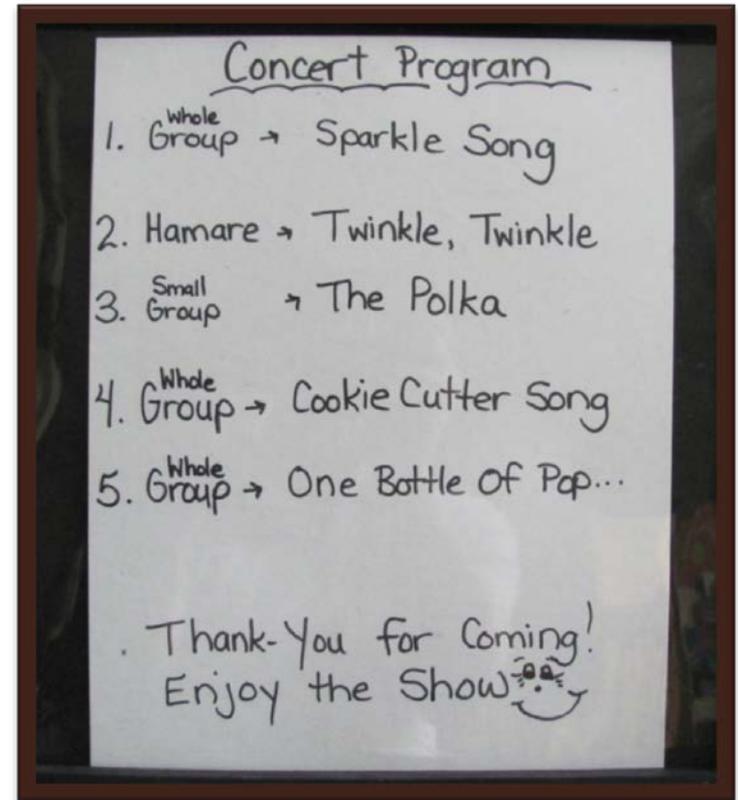
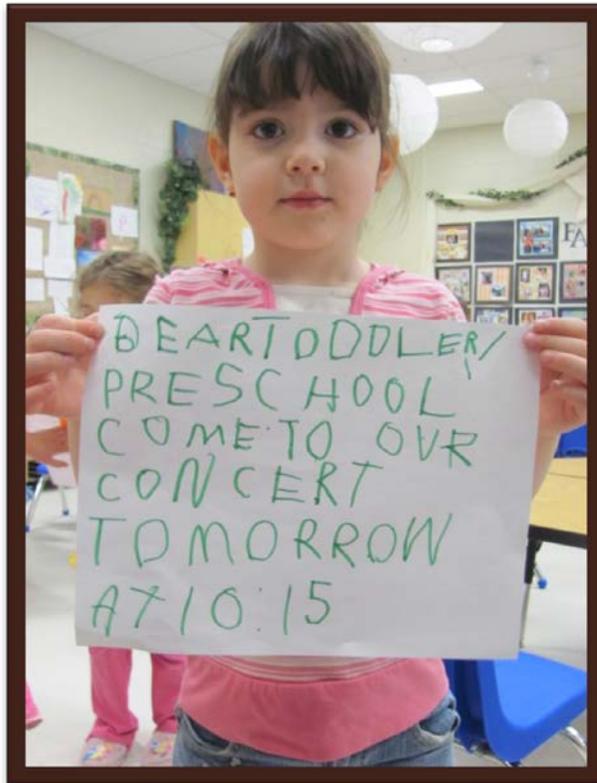
Print is a complex system of symbols. "One of the most important achievements of early childhood is the ability to understand and use symbols" (Kassow, 2006, p.2).



Information about literacy is shared with families and connections between theory and practice are provided.

As the conclusion to a project on music a group of preschoolers have a concert.

They share their knowledge of print by displaying their song list and creating invitations for other groups of children.



An educator excitedly reads one of these invitations to a group of young preschoolers.





One child uses print on a birthday card while another child writes a shopping list reminding her educator to purchase important supplies for the next day.

**With Love to Toni**

*On August 27, 2011 Brynn went running to the post office and grabbed a pencil, book and a calculator and brought it to parent area and started writing on the book.*

Rabbia: "What are you doing Brynn?"

Brynn: "Writing"

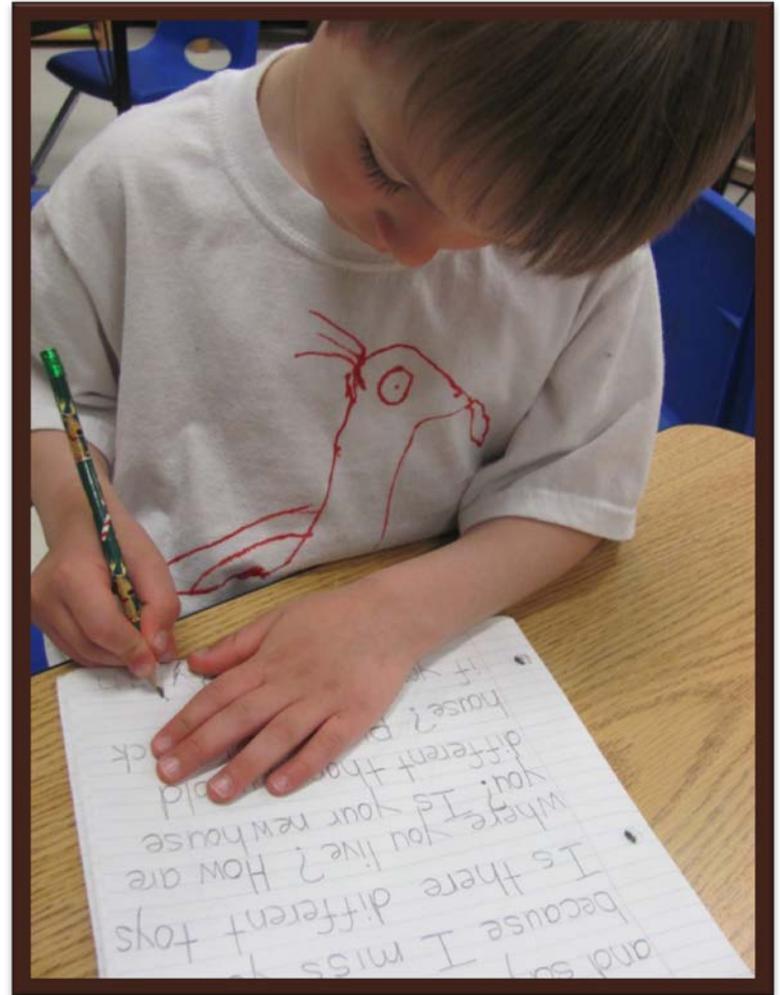
Rabbia: What are you writing?

Brynn: "I'm writing a letter to Toni, im making a grocery list for Toni".

Brynn is well aware of her surroundings and people around her. It's such a pleasure to watch her show affection towards other educators too. Brynn loves going to Toni and in response Toni has a soft corner for her too.

# A letter to a friend.....

In this photo a four year old boy has dictated, to the early childhood educator, a letter to his friend who recently moved and left the child care program. Here he is signing his name at the bottom.



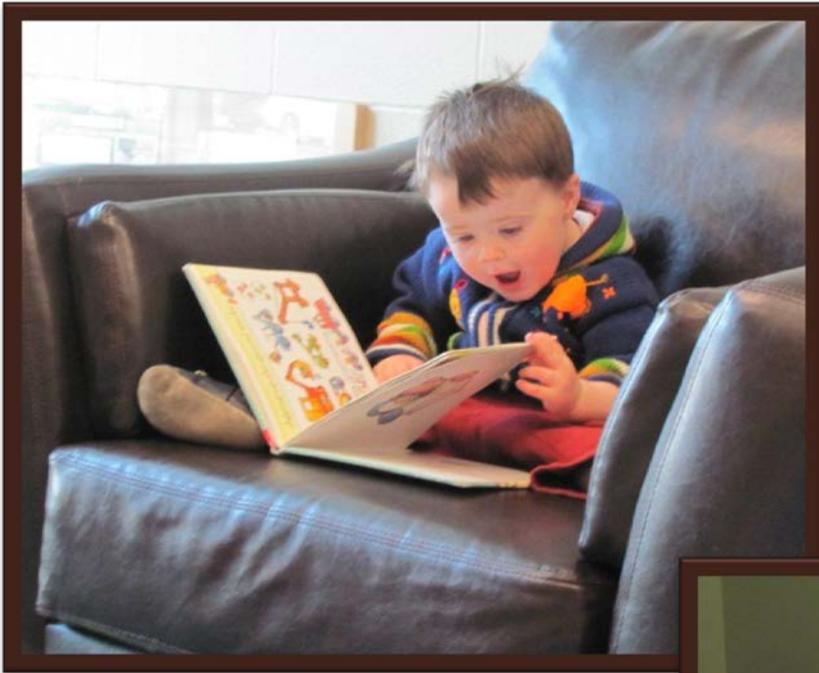


# Think about the relationship between play and literacy.....

“Play can become an important context for the discovery and exploration of reading and writing. It can provide a meaningful rich context for literacy engagement. Indeed, for young children it may be the place to play with print for a purpose” (Neuman & Roskos, 1990, p. 221).

“There are many little ways  
to enlarge your child’s  
world. Love of books is the  
best of all.”  
— Jacqueline Kennedy







"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more you learn, the more places you'll go."  
— Dr. Seuss, "I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!"



It is clear that when literacy materials, tools, and toys are provided in early learning environments . . .



. . . young children's experiences with literacy are enriched and children's play and activities that involve language and literacy increase.





During a group time experience the children share ideas, ask questions and make comments and the educator takes notes to be used for documentation and reflection.

The children see reading and writing modeled in these experiences and their language is captured in authentic and meaningful ways.



"The importance of environmental print is that young children are learning that words mean something and that learning can be enhanced through positive and fun interactions with important adults in their life" (Kassow, 2006, p.7).



# Opportunities for Reflection, Discussion and Decision Making

- Reflection

In what ways do the children in my program have the opportunity to experience print in their environment?

What is my role in modeling and offering children to engage with print in meaningful and playful ways?

# Reflection and Decision Making

- Action

What materials might I add to create a more print rich environment?

Where can I include print in the children's environment?

What strategies might I use to invite children to engage with print in their play?



The following checklist could be used as a tool for self-reflection and can support your efforts in making positive changes in your environment.

### Literacy Rich Environment Checklist

	Is your environment prepared to support rich literacy development?	Comments/Ideas	Questions/Wonderings
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Environment has labels with words and pictures on many supplies, materials learning centres and objects		
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Environment has pictures, illustrations, and students' work displayed throughout and many posted at children's eye level.		
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. List of classroom rules is posted (using pictures, words, objects and photographs)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Students' names have been posted throughout the environment.		
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Word walls are displayed. These are reflective of project work and/or small group interests.		
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Students have immediate access to a variety of printed materials (phone books, dictionaries, menus, recipes, labels, signs, printed directions, student work, play money, flyers/newspapers)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Environment has appropriate resource books for daily activities (poetry, art, drama, hand rhymes, music science, cooking).		
<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Variety of media is available for writing (large writing charts, graphs, pocket charts, enlarged recipe cards, notebooks, pads, white/chalk boards, recipe cards, sticky notes, clipboards, stickers, envelopes, stamps, variety of writing tools)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Listening centre is available with songs and stories on tape (purchased and/or made with educator, families or children reading the stories on tape)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Library area of room is stocked with age appropriate books. (Nonfiction and fiction books are available, books are changed routinely, books are borrowed from local libraries)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	11. Environment has an accessible area for shared large group reading.		
<input type="checkbox"/>	12. Literacy materials are available throughout the space and in all activity areas (menus in dramatic play, books/photos about building in block area, clipboards in and near all areas)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	13. Print is reflective of the children's project work and emerging interests.		
<input type="checkbox"/>	14. Posters, print, photos etc. are at the children's eye level and/or easily accessible to them (placed on low shelves)		

# References

- Inan, H. (2009). Understanding features of amiable environments that can nourish emergent literacy skills of preschoolers. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 3(3), 2510-2518.
- Kassow, D. (2006). Environmental print awareness in young children. *Talaris Research Institute*, 1(3), 1-8.
- Kirkland, L., Aldridge, J., Kuby, P. (2007). *Integrating environmental print across the curriculum: Pre-K – 3 making literacy instruction meaningful*. California: Corwin Press.
- Neuman, S., Dickinson, D. (Eds.). (2003). *Early literacy research Volume 1*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Neuman, S., Roskos, K. (1990). Play, print, and purpose: Enriching play environments for literacy development. *The Reading Teacher*, 44(3), 214-221.
- Ostrow Scher, S. (1999). Creating a print rich environment. Retrieved May 3, 2012, from: <http://fcpsteach.org/docs/Create%20Print%20Rich.pdf>