

# Building, Energizing, and Re-envisioning the Literacy Curriculum

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Book 2 of 3 in the series

LITERATE DAYS: READING AND WRITING WITH PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY CHILDREN

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# Expanding Literacy Explorations in Play



**CONSIDER THE RESEARCH:** Play is one of children's primary learning tools, and learning *literacy* through play is no exception. Preschool, kindergarten, and first-grade students should engage in sociodramatic play every day at school, and their teachers should get involved. Research shows numerous positive literacy-related effects of adults becoming involved in play. Positive effects have been observed when adults: act as an audience to the children's activity; introduce and encourage the use of literacy materials in play; suggest specific uses of literacy materials; and model literate behaviors (Christie & Enz 1992; Morrow 1990, Morrow and Rand 1991, Roskos and Neuman 1993; Vukelich 1991; 1994).

Use this lesson to support your students in expanding their uses of literacy in their play.

## PREPARATION

*In Book 1, Grounding Children in Routines and Procedures for Meaningful Learning, it was recommended that you start the school year with a home living play center enriched with literacy materials. Over the first month or two of the school year, take note of the themes your students are developing out of this center (such as shopping, operating a restaurant, or running an office). From these themes, choose one that has potential for exploration over the course of several weeks. Use the present lesson to encourage expansion of that theme, and repeat this practice throughout the year. Form 10.1 provides an example of materials to include for typical play themes explored in preschool, kindergarten, and first-grade classrooms.*

- Prepare Form 10.2 to use as a visual.

**Animal Care:** pet care books, feeding charts, health information sheets, material to make labels for pet names  
**Castle:** various forms of pencils and other writing utensils; fiction and nonfiction books about castles; fairy tales; knight tales  
**Celebrations/Parties:** materials for creating invitations; books about parties and celebrations; cookbooks  
**Home:** mail, recipe books, books, calendar, newspaper, TV Guide, telephone book, catalogs  
**Kitchen:** recipe books, note cards for recipes, food packages  
**Law Enforcement:** material for making badges, child safety information, notepads for note-taking  
**Library:** books, note cards for checking out books, stamp and ink pad  
**Mail:** stationery, envelopes, paper, stamps and stamp pads  
**Medical:** clipboards, health information sheets, books about health and the human body, prescription pads, appointment books  
**Office:** Post-its, note cards, paper, envelopes, paper clips, stapler  
**Restaurant:** menus, order pads, material for making place mats, a chalkboard for specials  
**School:** easel, big books, a book bin, paper, chart paper, Post-its, teacher magazines  
**Ship:** world maps; nautical maps and charts; fishing charts; books about ships, oceans, sailing, pirates, and mermaids  
**Store:** cash register, money, slips for making receipts, materials for labeling and pricing objects, coupons, advertisements  
**Weather and News:** transparencies for creating weather reports, transparency machine, books about weather, paper, real weather reports, weather words on note cards, maps, weather maps

Form 10.1 Teaching Tool: Play Themes and Literacy Materials Idea List

### Form 10.1

#### Teaching Tool: Play Themes and Literacy Materials Idea List

Play Center: \_\_\_\_\_

Play Roles:

Reading and Writing Materials:

Form 10.2 Classroom Visual: Play Centers

### Form 10.2

#### Classroom Visual: Play Centers Thinking Tool

## INTRODUCTION

“I’ve noticed that you are using the play area to do lots of things. One theme I’ve noticed is \_\_\_\_\_. I have a question for you. What real people are involved with this theme? What do these people read and write? What materials could we bring in to allow you to do this?”

*As the children respond, fill out Form 10.2 together.*

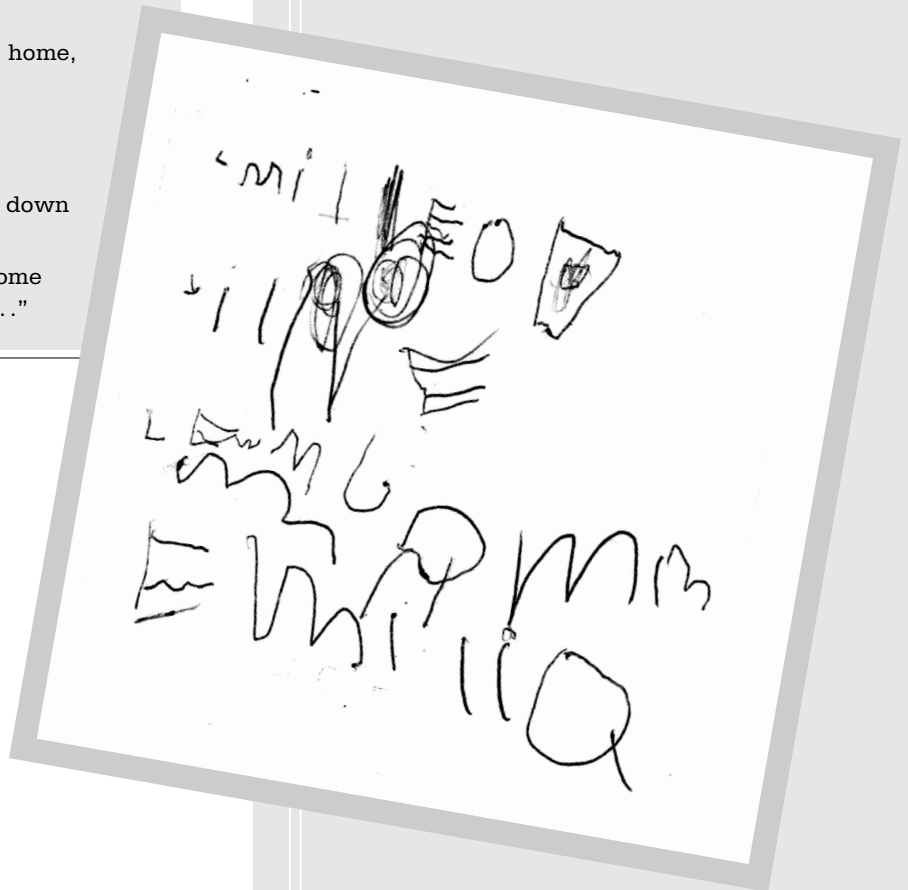
## MODELING AND SCAFFOLDING

*Children serve as powerful literacy models for one another, and should be encouraged to do so during play. Along with supporting children as models, take time each day to visit the center to provide an adult model of literacy use. Observe first and then model how you use written language in ways that are related to the children’s play themes. Also look for meaningful ways to scaffold and extend the literate behaviors children are demonstrating already.*

## EXAMPLES

### Language to Use While Modeling and Supporting Literacy in Play

- “I need to look in this menu to decide what to order. Where is the dessert section? Oh, here it is. Let’s see what we could have for dessert...”
- “Let’s make a menu so that people could really pretend to order the foods we have here...”
- “Could you give me a receipt for this toy I’ve just bought? I want to remember how much I paid...”
- “I need to run to the grocery store. I should probably make a list first...”
- “I think we need some signs so that people will know where to find the different foods...”
- “I have to go now, so I think I’ll leave a note. When \_\_\_\_\_ gets home, she’ll know where I went...”
- “Before I put my baby to bed I’m going to read her this book...”
- “Let me figure out how to use this recipe book...”
- “When I go to the doctor, I usually sign in on a clipboard and write down what time it is. Shall we put one here for people?”
- “Since you’re giving weather reports, it might be helpful to write some weather words. We can put them up with magnets as you report...”





## kidWATCHING:

Make it a practice to collect writing samples from children's play and to reflect on the literacy knowledge students demonstrate as they play. Form 10.3 may be used as a tool for reflecting on the knowledge children demonstrate in play, and for sharing information about children's play with families.



## CLOSURE

“Who read something in the play center today? Who wrote something? What did you read and write? Are there any more materials that we might want to add to the play center?”

Name \_\_\_\_\_

When children play in a print-rich environment, they explore the foundations of reading and writing. The writing sample below was collected as your child was playing \_\_\_\_\_ It demonstrates important knowledge about written language functions, formats, and features:

**Function** (knowledge about why we write). Teacher: Did the purpose the writing served (e.g., grocery list, note, receipt, etc.)

**Format** (knowledge about how print is formatted). Teacher: Did the formatting knowledge demonstrated (e.g., list or written in a column, note includes “date” and “from,” receipt includes price, etc.)

**Features** (knowledge about specifics of writing). Teacher: Did the concepts of print or the phonetic knowledge the child demonstrates (e.g., understands that pictures differ from print, includes initial consonant, shows developing sight vocabulary, etc.)

Attach sample to this form.

Form 10.3 Kidwatching Tool: Observing Literacy in Play

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### Form 10.3

#### Kidwatching Tool: Written Instruction Notes

**Animal Care:** pet care books, feeding charts, health information sheets, material to make labels for pet names

**Castle:** various forms of pencils and other writing utensils; fiction and nonfiction books about castles; fairy tales; knight tales

**Celebrations/Parties:** materials for creating invitations; books about parties and celebrations; cookbooks

**Home:** mail, recipe books, books, calendar, newspaper, TV Guide, telephone book, catalogs

**Kitchen:** recipe books, note cards for recipes, food packages

**Law Enforcement:** material for making badges, child safety information, notepads for note-taking

**Library:** books, note cards for checking out books, stamp and ink pad

**Mail:** stationery, envelopes, paper, stamps and stamp pads

**Medical:** clipboards, health information sheets, books about health and the human body, prescription pads, appointment books

**Office:** Post-its, note cards, paper, envelopes, paper clips, stapler

**Restaurant:** menus, order pads, material for making place mats, a chalkboard for specials

**School:** easel, big books, a book bin, paper, chart paper, Post-its, teacher magazines

**Ship:** world maps; nautical maps and charts; fishing charts; books about ships, oceans, sailing, pirates, and mermaids

**Store:** cash register, money, slips for making receipts, materials for labeling and pricing objects, coupons, advertisements

**Weather and News:** transparencies for creating weather reports, transparency machine, books about weather, paper, real weather reports, weather words on note cards, maps, weather maps

**Form 10.1 Teaching Tool: Play Themes and Literacy Materials Idea List**

Play Center: \_\_\_\_\_

Play Roles:

Reading and Writing Materials:

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

When children play in a print-rich environment, they explore the foundations of reading and writing. The writing sample below was collected as your child was playing \_\_\_\_\_. It demonstrates important knowledge about written language functions, formats, and features:

**Functions** (knowledge about why we write). *Teacher: Tell the purpose the writing served (e.g. grocery list, note, receipt, etc.)*

**Formats** (knowledge about how print is formatted). *Teacher: Tell the formatting knowledge demonstrated (e.g. list is written in a column, note includes "dear" and "from," receipt includes prices, etc.)*

**Features** (knowledge about specifics of writing). *Teacher: Tell the concepts of print or the phonics knowledge the child demonstrates (e.g. understands that pictures differ from print, includes initial consonant, shows developing sight vocabulary, etc.)*

**Attach sample to this form**

**Form 10.3 Kidwatching Tool: Observing Literacy in Play**