

Tips for Staff:

Creating a Culture where Writing is Valued

Your homebase probably offers many opportunities already where children are encouraged to write. But does your homebase as a whole reflect a culture where writing is valued?

Consider the following:

- Do you offer children frequent opportunities to use writing in meaningful ways? For example, when a note needs to go to the kitchen that you have 18 children for lunch that day, have a child write that note. Or when you want to remind parents to send boots to the center for the expected snow storm the following day, have a child or children write the note to their parents, accompanying it with a picture of boots and place it in their cubbies. Children can also be encouraged, for example, to put a note on the hamster cage as a reminder to feed the class pet.
- Do children regularly hear, “That’s important. Let’s write that down” in response to their ideas, questions, observations, etc.? Each child should have a blank journal/notebook for recording anything from how seeds responded to sunlight and water to suggestions for new items on the snack or lunch menu.
- Is there a vehicle for children to communicate in writing to each other? Construct or purchase small “mailboxes” where children can leave notes they have written for each other. This could be as simple as joining several empty half-gallon milk cartons with one open end. Each milk carton forms the mailbox for one child.
- Is dramatic play used as an opportunity for enhancing writing skills? Have you offered any of these options recently or something similar that encourages writing?
 - Post office/express mailing site: Stock the dramatic play area with paper, envelopes, writing tools, stamps, stamp pads, tote bag to carry mail, computer address labels, small trays, express envelopes, etc. Have a space for children to write letters as well as a place to purchase stamps. Make sure each child has a “mailbox” to receive their mail.
 - Business Office: Provide file folders, paper, pens, index cards, post-its, calendars, clipboards, brochures, computer, etc. Encourage written communication as a way to effectively manage an office.
 - Bookstore: Have available a cash register, stick-on price tags, a shelf of books, tablets for writing down orders, receipts, and bags to hold purchases. After browsing, children can “purchase” or “order” books of their choice. Orders are written down and receipts are given for each purchase.

Let your creative juices flow in creating a culture of writing in your center and thereby encourage the start of a lifelong love of writing in children.

Resource:

Neuman, S. B., Copple, C., & Bredekamp, S. (2000). *Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices with Young Children*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

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