

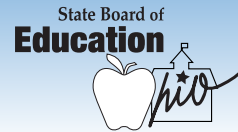
Early Language *and* Literacy Reflection Tool:

Creating Language-Rich Opportunities
and a Literacy-Rich Environment



Office of Early Learning and School Readiness
2008





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Office Of Early Learning And School Readiness Early Language and Literacy Reflection Tool: Creating Language Rich Opportunities and a Literacy Rich Environment

*“Follow effective action with quiet reflection.
From the quiet reflection will come even more effective action.”
Peter F. Drucker*

This tool supports the Early Learning Program Guidelines: Section 2, Outcome 1, Goals 2 and 3.

Purpose:

The Early Language and Literacy Reflection Tool is designed for teachers to use in taking a critical look at their literacy environment and classroom practices in order to create a supportive language and literacy environment across the content areas.

Goals:

This tool should be used for self-reflection: to identify current literacy practices, to examine the language and literacy environment before or after a formal Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO), or for teachers interested in taking a critical look at their classroom environment. Regardless of the option, the goal should be to identify strengths and weakness in implementing best practices. The tool can also be used by administrators in collaboration with teachers as an aid in determining direct technical assistance needs, and through coaching or mentoring to help teachers develop and implement an action plan for improving their practices.

Directions:

Review the examples that are listed under each element. These are examples of children and teachers who are interacting in exemplary literacy environments. Please keep in mind that these are just a few examples, and that there are many additional ways to support these elements.

Note evidence of your indicators in the space entitled, “***My Learning Environment.***” Look for ways that this information might support your understanding of the critical elements that are necessary to provide literacy rich environments to children. It would be helpful to make notes and questions after each section that may lead you to identifying specific elements you may want to address.

Create your Action Plan to determine how you can improve your literacy environment, based on the specific elements you have identified through the reflection process. This may require that you create several action plans based on the elements you have identified. Start with just one action plan at a time. Work with an administrator, fellow teacher, mentor, trusted colleague or your Early Language and Literacy Specialist to determine how to begin.

Feel free to contact your Early Language and Literacy Specialist for additional resources and support. To obtain contact information for the Early Language and Literacy Specialist (ELLS) in your region, please access the Professional Development Directory at www.ode.state.oh.us, keyword search: “Professional Development for Early Childhood Teachers.”

Sections to Review

Use the space provided below to document the dates you reviewed specific sections of the self-reflection tool. This document could also be used to help develop your individual professional development plan.

Element	Date of Review	Action Plan Created? yes/no	Date of Action Plan (if created)
A. Organization of the Learning Environment			
B. Contents of the Learning Environment			
C. Technology in the Learning Environment			
D. Management of the Learning Environment			
E. Oral Language within Curriculum and Standards			
F. Early Reading within Curriculum and Standards			
G. Early Writing within Curriculum and Standards			
H. Integration of Content Curriculum within Curriculum and Standards			
I. Assessment within Curriculum and Standards			
J. Instructional Activities within Curriculum and Standards			
K. Communication and Collaboration within the Broad Support of Language and Literacy			

A. Organization of the Learning Environment:

1. *Furniture is appropriately sized and in good condition.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Move around the room with intention – Can observe all areas of the room from any position in the room – Remove broken furniture and/or toys from the classroom and replace them as needed – Arrange furniture to communicate an appreciation for aesthetics and comfort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Access materials that are in working order and that have all their pieces – Use equipment that is appropriately sized and in good condition – Manipulate materials that have all the pieces and that may be used interchangeably – Access materials with independence 	

2. *Space is arranged to allow for individual, small group, and large group learning experiences).*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Utilize space to allow for the changing needs of the children throughout the day – Organize space at each center to encourage engagement in activities – Arrange centers to minimize reorganization (e.g., keep enough space for children to play in the block area) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Have space within the setting to work on individual projects – Engage in cooperative play – Participate in small group activities 	

3. *The learning environment is arranged in order to support different types of activities (quiet, active, messy) in ways that encourage independence.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Arrange the environment to instill independence in interacting with materials – Encourage children’s sense of independence when it comes to accessing the materials needed or cleaning up after messy activities – Instruct and reinforce children for their responsibility to keep the room/materials in order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Engage freely in different types of activities independently and with intention – May spend their time in one location if they desire – Help keep the room/materials in order – Play with materials that are open-ended and flexible 	

4. *The classroom has an established traffic flow and the environment is not barren or over-stimulating.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rotate materials in response to learning needs and supports – Arrange the room in response to interests, themes and/or topics related to educational goals – Maintain an environment in an organized and aesthetically pleasing way for children and adults – Display children’s written work and artwork on walls not overrun with commercially made posters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Move freely around the classroom without interrupting others – Have long access materials – Use materials appropriate to their current interests – Have a location to place materials that they want to display 	

NOTES/QUESTIONS:

B. Contents of the Learning Environment:

1. *Materials are organized in conceptually related groups.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Organize materials to support children’s independent engagement in their use – Develop centers with materials that support and enhance learning goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Easily access materials grouped according to curricular areas – Have access to materials that support language and concept development relating to current interests 	

2. *Appropriate and sufficient materials are available in centers.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rotate materials according to children’s interest and teaching plan – Monitor use of materials and centers, and change them based on their reflection on practice or as children’s interests change – Restock art and writing materials daily – Vary materials according to the degree of difficulty, to accommodate differences in children’s learning – Include open-ended materials that encourage creative and divergent thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interact with materials, including a variety of books, writing materials and related artifacts – Use materials in ways that demonstrate learning (e.g., a block center stocked with a variety of building materials, pictures of the community, maps, clipboards with writing materials and utensils, and narrative and informational books) 	

3. *Interesting materials (realistic and nonrealistic) are provided that actively facilitate children’s engagement in learning activities, either alone or with others.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provide realistic materials and props – Intentionally create an environment that supports children’s full engagement in current interests – Encourage discovery-based learning with materials (e.g., glass beads, wind chimes, shells) related to math, science and creativity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Actively engage in play that is purposeful – Use items (e.g., real menus and calculators in a restaurant dramatic play center) that demonstrate understanding of print – Have access to materials of interest that will expand conceptual knowledge 	

4. *Materials are changed to reflect current play themes, subject integration, skills and interests.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Create a safe environment to practice language and literacy behaviors – Invite parents to bring in materials or help create more realistic environments that deepen ongoing investigations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Help guide how the classroom looks based on their needs and interests – Play in centers that are created to integrate all subject areas and reflect natural settings for learning; demonstrate an understanding of indicators 	

5. *There is a predominance of child-generated original work.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Display child-generated original work and avoid using “the craft of the day” in place of this work – Position children’s work in different areas of the classroom and in the hall with possible pictures, computer-generated descriptions and authentic drawings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Observe their original work displayed in an organized way – Are involved in all writing processes that originate from daily activities – Have opportunities to revisit their work through the use of photographs, class books or portfolios 	

NOTES/QUESTIONS:

C. Technology in the Learning Environment:

1. *Children have daily access to computers and other technologies. These technologies are in working condition and have appropriate children’s software programs.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support children’s use of the different technology tools by providing instruction, modeling and guidance when in use – Monitor all technologies to confirm that they are in good working order – Monitor software programs for appropriateness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interact with computers, printers, tape recorders and cameras – Use these tools to help document ongoing projects, explore new topics, and support current language and literacy experiences – Use technology to express their ideas 	

2. *Technology is used for a variety of purposes including the planning and coordinating of ongoing themes or projects.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Create opportunities to use technology in projects of study – Model how technology will support learning, then let children try it – Document projects and learning outcomes by making recordings, by collecting pictures and by creating computer-generated writing to display or to collect for the portfolio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use computers to support research and interests, to make signs and to create reports, in addition to playing educational games – Utilize digital cameras to document learning products and projects 	

3. *Keyboards and computers are available in the writing center and other centers, with activities that are relative to content.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Incorporate computers into the writing center and support this type of writing – Model ways to access information on different subjects, such as finding environmental prints and printing out realistic pictures of insects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interact appropriately in a writing center that includes a computer, keyboard and printer – Access computers with teacher support (e.g., science) to retrieve information on a particular topic that supports interests and/or learning strategies 	

4. *Computers and other technologies are loaded with appropriate learning activities.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research appropriate and interesting software and technology activities - Supply programs that reinforce language and literacy behaviors in a playful manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage in computer-based learning that is appropriate for their age and development - Interact with software programs that support open-ended activities and that utilize discovery-based learning 	

NOTES/QUESTIONS:

D. Management of Learning Environment:

1. *The teachers organize the daily schedule to facilitate construction of knowledge.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Balance the daily schedule to include quiet and active opportunities – Post a children-friendly schedule – Adjust the schedule when children are deeply engaged in exploring a topic of interest – Help children understand the daily schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Understand the daily schedule and use it as an aid to transitions – Participate in a variety of activities that expose them to new information and literacy experiences – Are taught to follow routines and rules that support social development 	

2. *Clear expectations for children’s behavior are consistently communicated in multiple ways.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use a variety of ways to communicate expectations (e.g., written rules and contracts, large group discussions, peer-to-peer discussions and individual discussions) – Use social conflicts as a tool for learning – Use teachable moments to explain the concept of an accident as opposed to an instance of aggression – Develop classrooms rules with the children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Demonstrate that they know what is expected of them both from a social aspect as well as from a learning aspect (e.g., using materials correctly at the science center or working cooperatively in a group) – Refer to classroom rules posted at their eye level when needed for social conflict resolution – Engage in conversations with peers and teachers about behavior through teachable moments or introduction to centers 	

3. *Management strategies consider children’s input and encourage their purposeful engagement.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Create a safe, caring and responsible community within the classroom environment – Expect and encourage children to have input on projects, expectations and responsibilities – Encourage risk taking and use it to understand misconceptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Contribute to discussions and plans regarding projects and how they should proceed, what tools they might need or a schedule change that would allow additional time to investigate – Take risks (both learning and social) with the understanding that it is acceptable to do so 	

4. *Approaches to language and literacy build on children’s diverse personal, family and cultural backgrounds.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Have meaningful conversations with families and children about their backgrounds – Bring families into learning experiences – Represent those experiences within the classroom settings – Support children’s understanding of appropriate ways to express their anger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Express their cultural backgrounds in writing, art, songs and photos – Encounter artifacts from their home culture within dramatic play centers, writing and other centers in the classroom – Identify feelings they may experience verbally (e.g., I am really mad) 	

5. *Teachers demonstrate fairness and respect for individual children and their contributions to the classroom.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Create a safe and supportive learning environment to practice skills and explore new topics that include encouraging children to contribute to a discussion or project – Facilitate an environment that puts the children’s contributions and ideas in the forefront – Incorporate social learning guidance as called for such as in social conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Share stories and pictures from their home and culture – Contribute to the class by commenting freely during large and small group meetings – Are beginning to understand the impact of actions and events on feelings, with teacher assistance 	

NOTES/QUESTIONS:

E. Oral Language within Curriculum and Standards:

1. *Teachers provide opportunities that support oral language development in a variety of ways.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Take advantage of large group, small group or individual time to accomplish language goals and to monitor language development – Engage in conversations with children and model rich vocabulary – Help children increase listening skills through planned activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Participate in a variety of experiences to practice listening skills, oral comprehension, expressive language and phonological awareness – Work together to share ideas, plan for projects and engage in free choice activities 	

2. *Oral language is used to broaden intellectual purposes — questioning, predicting, problem solving, analyzing and reflecting.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Extend language experiences, rather than answer “yes/no” to questions – Use thoughtful questioning to extend expressive language and comprehension – Reflect on conversations with children in order to guide deeper thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Link prior experiences to stories, listen to and comment on the stories – Ask questions about the topic or story – Work together during play to solve potential problems (e.g., if there are four children and two menus, “Why don’t we share?”) 	

3. *Children are encouraged to communicate and to practice language through turn-taking interactions and by engaging in conversation.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provide structured time for building language skills – Take time for impromptu opportunities to engage children in discussions – Facilitate turn-taking, extend children’s talk by asking questions that promote inquiry, and provide details about the process of their learning – Develop relationships with children to facilitate meaningful conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Demonstrate turn-taking skills and the ability to engage in conversations around different topics – Talk with children and teachers about a variety of topics that interest them – Engage in conversations with their peers during free play, circle time, snack time and other activities 	

4. *Exposure conversations, story readings and shared writing support children’s language development.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ask questions to extend children’s responses – Record responses by anecdotal records, running records or actual tape recordings to be used to plan further language and learning experiences and to monitor development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Discuss interests, share stories and share play experiences with their peers as well as their teachers – Contribute to learning by asking questions, making predictions and reflecting 	

5. *Intentional efforts are made to expand children’s spoken vocabulary and to increase children’s word knowledge.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Note words needing discussion before reading a story or introducing a topic – Provide resources and additional materials to support and enhance vocabulary knowledge – Use questions to extend children’s spoken vocabulary – Make comments about children’s conversations and interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Refer to words in the writing center that are posted on the wall with a picture definition, or that are recorded in a “My Words” journal with a picture of the object drawn by the child – Use words they have been exposed to in their play (e.g., during water table play a child points out the shark and dolphin correctly to the teacher or to a peer) 	

6. *There is a place for dramatic play that includes many props and materials that provide oral language opportunities.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provide materials relevant to children’s interests – Ask parents or members of the community to provide additional materials used to support rich language experiences, culture and family traditions – Provide open-ended materials that encourage imaginative play (e.g., pieces of fabric, collection of rocks) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Access a wide range of materials that support their understanding of print and language opportunities – Interact with materials relevant to their interests or to a particular book or theme they are studying – Interact with realistic, non-stereotyped, multicultural props and materials 	

7. *Children’s prior knowledge and personal interests are used as the basis for conversations, activities and learning experiences.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Review portfolios and journal entries to learn more about children’s current interests in a systematic manner – Extend conversation by having favorite books and other props available – Talk with family members, send out surveys and keep up with ongoing communication in order to understand current interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Talk about things that remind them of their experiences when discussing topics of interests or when hearing new literature read to them – Ask to hear stories relating to what they are interested in or ask the teacher to re-read a favorite story – Tell stories about their ideas – Dictate or write about stories or characters 	

8. *Patterns of development (in both first and second languages) are considered when planning for oral language activities and instruction.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Understand that a continuum for language and literacy development can be used to help determine developmental levels of individual children and to plan appropriate activities for increasing oral language – Review formal assessment data as well as ongoing assessments to plan for language instruction – Consult when necessary with education specialists, speech and language therapists, and family members to help determine how to facilitate growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Experiment with their second language – Work with the teacher in small groups and individual times in advancing newly learned words in both their first and second languages – Share their first language with other children and adults – Access books and materials in both their first and second languages 	

NOTES/QUESTIONS:

F. Early Reading within Curriculum and Standards:

1. *Sufficient time for shared reading and discussion are included daily in the classroom schedule.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Schedule time each day for at least one shared reading, and specify this on the daily schedule – Prepare the environment to include big books and different genres in centers – Plan different activities to incorporate the same storybook repeatedly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Daily engage in shared reading within small groups or larger groups – Listen to repeated readings and demonstrate increased familiarity with each reading – Discuss characters and sequence of events – Ask teachers or other adults to read to them daily 	

2. *There are informal opportunities for children to explore, read and hear stories throughout the room and at varied times of day.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Stock books in every center area, and allow time for children to informally interact with books – Read to children during self-selection time and at other times of the day – Invite community members and parents to come in and read to children on an informal basis – Rotate books frequently to help sustain interests, but still allow access to children’s favorite books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Access books to look at as they arrive, followed by time to engage in small group reading of a particular text – Listen to books on tape, or to animated books on the computer – Check reference books or act out a book in the dramatic play center – Access a separate area that is set aside just for book reading 	

3. *Daily reading experiences are regularly planned for and provided in a variety of settings — large group, shared reading, guided reading in small learning groups, and individual reading with teacher or peer.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Arrange the daily schedule to provide time for children to engage in shared reading activities – Read to children when asked – Include a variety of genres in the classroom – Encourage participation in a shared reading process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Curl up on a pillow or rug looking at a book with a teacher or individually during independent choice time – Discuss parts of a selected story during a small group reading – Begin to demonstrate concepts of print 	

4. *Thoughtful questioning and conversations about books are part of the daily schedule.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Create time for children who need explicit instruction in rhyming and plan activities around a particular book they are familiar with – Review books before reading determine when to ask questions or extend meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Point out words or letters within the text – Answer questions after a particular story has been read and dictate their response on chart paper – Discuss favorite books or characters with other peers and adults 	

5. *Children’s experiences are used in scaffolding instruction so that children build understanding of story content and skills for reading. A range of appropriate teaching strategies are ongoing, systematic and planned each day.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Scaffold by modeling, guiding practice and supporting independent practice by the student, and then gradually withdrawing support once the child is demonstrating application of the strategy – Use the assess-plan-teach model to plan activities based on the needs of children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Work within small groups or individually with a teacher who is scaffolding language and literacy experiences – Practice strategies on familiar stories – Participate in daily reading activities that include time for predicting, questioning and discussing 	

6. *Teachers foster children’s active engagement with text (written by authors or by themselves) through dialogue and activities to help them understand and acquire new knowledge. They coordinate book-reading experiences with ongoing curricular activities and learning goals for children.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Encourage children to use their written “stories” or “texts” as comprehension and reading strategies – Provide books that are relevant to the current theme – Place books around the room to strengthen interest and accessibility of different texts that expose children to different genres, different forms of print and the roles of print 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Demonstrate newly learned strategies of comprehension or phonological awareness – Use books to help foster investigations in the current theme of study or other interests – Publish their own writing and use it to inform others 	

NOTES/QUESTIONS:

G. Early Writing within Curriculum and Standards:

1. *Children write, draw and talk about life experiences through the many opportunities and motivations for children to see and use their emergent writing.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Encourage children to write down their thoughts and to draw and talk about their experiences – Support writing efforts by allowing time in the schedule to write and display writing at children’s eye level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Write about experiences – Extend discussions with drawings (e.g., retelling a story) – Use time each day for writing, drawing and/or dictating 	

2. *Writing is differentiated from art activities, and there is a developed and well-supplied writing center. In addition, various writing materials and tools are available to support children’s spontaneous writing.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use the writing center to expose children to different writing media – Provide a writing center, which is separate from the art center and which contains writing utensils, paper, word charts, alphabet charts, computers, printers, dictionaries and other writing aids – Include writing materials in every learning center and environment in the daily experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Participate in writing events daily (e.g., through centers, independent choice, story time) – Use writing utensils, paper and clipboards in centers to record such things as notes, menus and science observations 	

3. Teachers systematically introduce and guide children's learning of varied genres of writing and help children see connections between reading and writing.

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expose children to a variety of books and forms of printed text – Assist children in making connections between reading and writing by encouraging them to read both their own and other children's writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Engage in small group writing, especially around topics of interests or current classroom themes (e.g., write about a field trip to the apple orchard) – Create their own writing based either on a narrative, persuasive or expository piece of literature (e.g., children compare different versions of the <i>Three Little Pigs</i> and then write their own versions) 	

4. Teacher models writing and, when appropriate, instruction is provided (forming letters or writing words).

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Model correct writing technique that includes using uppercase and lowercase letters – Engage in self-talk as a form of teaching, as they write down words and sentences while children watch – Make lists of ideas and materials for a new learning center, with children's assistance – Write children's words during a shared reading discussion – Are available during key writing times to support emergent writing development and to assess the stages of writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Approach the teacher or peers for help in forming letters in their names – Access word walls for correct spellings for titles of special drawings they have created – Help create lists or answer questions as the teacher writes down their comments – Form letters or words with the teacher's guidance, upon request 	

5. *Teachers encourage meaningful opportunities to write and provide a place for children to store and display writing*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize the classroom to support children's attempts to display and publish their works - Create opportunities for children to engage in writing about current interests by journaling or by responding to an event or story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Post selected writings on a wall or in a working portfolio - Store writing in a journal or in a cubby to be taken home - Help create documentation panels that include their writing and art 	

NOTES/QUESTIONS:

H. Integrating Content Curriculum Within Curriculum and Standards:

1. *Centers are integrated with and reflect other subject areas. The use of meaningful themes and concepts encourages integration of activities, materials and interactions organized around goals for children’s conceptual understanding.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Design learning centers to display the current interest of study – Display artifacts, including drawings, writing samples and pictures – Use assessment information to plan and organize the environment – Arrange the environment to support inquiry, creativity and independent learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use a variety of methods to learn more about the theme – Practice emergent literacy behaviors through their interactions with materials (e.g., using clipboards to write down observations during a sink or float activity) as they learn about early learning content 	

2. *Themes emerge or are planned that develop over time — a week or more. Books related to themes and interests are displayed in the classroom.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Plan themes that are based on children’s interests – Allow themes to build over time – Change themes that don’t capture children’s interests – Incorporate a wide variety of books that support the current theme – Place books around the room for high access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Discuss what they would like to know more about – Change the direction of the theme of study because of questions that result from the theme – Refer to books on certain subjects, including story books, poems and information books, to gain information 	

3. *Opportunities for language and literacy skills reflect goals for literacy and content area learning. They include high access to quality vocabulary and academic words.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Select high quality literature – Review the books in order to identify key concepts for discussion with children – Review goals for content area learning – Use Ohio’s Early Learning Content Standards to plan learning opportunities while keeping in mind developmental domains (e.g., social/emotional, physical, cognitive) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Engage in a variety of language and literacy experiences to increase their vocabulary, reading development and phonological awareness – Use newly learned words related to theme of study in conversation during center time (e.g., “I am going to play with the dolphin. Why don’t you take the shark?”) 	

NOTES/QUESTIONS:

I. Assessment within Curriculum and Standards:

1. *Planned, systematic and ongoing evaluations provide evidence of children’s progress and a range of assessment techniques are used for planning and adjusting instruction.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Plan instruction that is both interesting and relevant to children’s goals and needs – Collect anecdotal and running records, checklists, and work samples, and store them in a way that can be shared for planning, conferencing and possibly developing interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Observe teachers taking notes and dictating their words on work samples or during small group activities – Select items for portfolios 	

2. *Assessment data is used to adjust instructional practices, to ensure individual children’s growth and achievement. Children’s needs are supported at centers, small group instruction and other learning areas.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use the assess-plan-teach cycle to help foster learning – Monitor classroom materials, activities and learning experiences to support individual progress and achievement – Utilize both informal and formal assessment tools to guide their instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Participate in activities that foster learning that is aligned with content standards – Work in a variety of centers that foster math, science and social skills content 	

3. *Ongoing communication with a child's family provides information about the child's learning and development.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inform parents about each child's individual goals and progress - Receive input from parents through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - letters - home visits - conferences - phone conversations - home/school notebook (a notebook about the child that is passed between the teacher and the family daily) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share with their families the activities they are experiencing in the classroom environment - Talk to their families about their projects and what they are learning in the classroom - Share their portfolios with their families on a regular basis - Share with the teacher things they are doing at home (e.g., pictures, drawings, favorite books) 	

4. *Consistent communication with administrators, specialists and outside resource personnel informs classroom-based instruction for children.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain records in portfolios to share with administrators, specialists and outside resource staff to help guide instruction and support individualized plans for children - Involve families in this process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use their portfolios to review prior work - Make judgments about their work samples before sharing information with their families 	

NOTES/QUESTIONS:

J. Instructional Activities within Curriculum and Standards:

1. *Learning activities are intentionally aligned to Ohio Early Learning Content Standards, and assessing children’s learning is used to plan and design learning activities.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Note in their lesson plans what activities they have planned to help support Ohio Early Learning Content Standards – Use the assess-plan-teach cycle to continually plan instruction based on children’s needs – Change their plans to meet current needs or the interests of children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are frequently involved in rich and challenging activities that target their specific learning needs – Participate in activities that are designed to strengthen language and literacy across content areas and that are integrated into areas of interest currently being studied 	

2. *Learning goals are clearly communicated to the children and their families, and new skills and strategies are explained and modeled for children.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Talk to children about their learning goals – Model new skills – Have frequent contacts with families about the learning goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Engage in small discussion groups with the teacher about the current topic of study or about the discoveries they have made during the day – Watch the teacher or peer and then ask questions before trying the new task 	

3. *The teacher scaffolds children's learning and systematically plans learning experiences to foster children's active involvement in their own learning.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support children's active involvement in their learning - Use scaffolding to facilitate learning - Take time to discuss, demonstrate, support and give constructive, corrective feedback when needed - Withdraw support as children become more independent in their learning abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interact with teachers and other children as they work on new skills and refine their existing ones - Work in learning centers with teachers or peers, and then eventually work independently to demonstrate learning of math, science and social studies content 	

NOTES/QUESTIONS:

K. Communicating and Collaborating within the Broad Support of Language and Literacy:

1. *Ongoing, reciprocal interactions between home and school provide information on ways to support children’s literacy learning, including appropriate, meaningful activities that support their practice of literacy skills.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Communicate frequently about children’s literacy development by way of conferences, home visits and phone calls, or through newsletters – Send home activities that support literacy development, such as poems and fingerplays, phonological awareness games, and books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Take home familiar books and books about their interests – Contribute literacy materials from their home environments (e.g., family scrapbooks, letters, recipes) to support learning centers 	

2. *Regular and ongoing communication with families encourages family involvement and support. The teacher encourages families to seek out and use community resources in ways that contribute to language and literacy learning.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Learn about community resources available to families that contribute to language and literacy learning – Create a parent board or library of resources – Type and send a letter of resources connected to child and family literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interact with their families who are involved in the program, including volunteering to read, helping to gather materials for a new theme or helping with a special event – Acknowledge the importance of a notebook to take home from school that includes written communication for the parent, teacher and child 	

3. *Parents are invited into the classroom to better understand how to extend and support children’s learning. Ongoing, active attempts to learn and use information from families and communities in literacy activities are made.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Welcome parents into the classroom so they can better understand how to support children’s learning – Use information from children and incorporate it into daily activities through stories, picture displays, play centers and writing – Plan intentionally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Invite their families to visit the classroom during the day, especially during extended self-selection times – Contribute items to the classroom that represent their community (e.g., pictures of different buildings from the community they can use in the block area, or local menus and phone books for dramatic play) 	

4. *Communication with administrators, specialists and outside resource personnel is consistent.*

Exemplary Literacy Environment Examples:		My Learning Environment
Teachers	Children	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Share information with administrators about successes and challenges – Connect with specialists and outside resource personnel to better support their classrooms – Access information for supporting individual learning goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Participate in learning situations designed to increase support of their overall development – Recognize staff and/or other specialists who interact with the class 	

NOTES/QUESTIONS:

Creating a Literacy Environment Action Plan

Directions: Now that you have had the opportunity to review the evidence of your indicators in relationship to the exemplary literacy environment examples, determine which area you will focus on for improvement. Your notes and questions from each of the sections may help you make this determination. You should create a separate action plan for each area you would like to address. It is suggested that you focus on one action plan at a time. As you create your plan, it will be critical to work with an administrator, curriculum supervisor, education coordinator, program literacy specialist, program teacher leader or other trusted colleague. You also may choose to contact one of Ohio's regional Early Language and Literacy Specialists (ELLS). To obtain contact information for the Early Language and Literacy Specialist (ELLS) in your region, please access the Professional Development Directory at www.ode.state.oh.us, keyword search: "Professional Development for Early Learning Teachers."

What areas do I need to address to improve my classroom?

In the space below, identify one element, along with the specific indicators, that you would like to address to improve your literacy environment.

How do I get started and what supports do I need?

In the space below, list the steps you will need to take that will enable you to make improvements to the selected element and specific indicators. Be sure to list resources to gather and ways your administrators can support your efforts. Include a timeline to document when you will make changes, obtain professional development and meet with someone who will be supporting you through this change. Be specific.

What strategies will I use to integrate this change into the environment?

In the space below, list ways you will address the element and specific indicators that you want to change. Include ways you will address the environment, curriculum, assessment and/or teaching strategies that will be affected.

How will I examine the effects of change?

In the space below, state how you will collect evidence to examine the effects of your efforts for improving your literacy environment. Be sure to look at how your change affects the classroom, children, families and overall program.

Early Language *and* Literacy Reflection Tool:

Creating Language Rich Opportunities *and a* Literacy-Rich Environment





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