Setting Up A Classroom Library

By

Wendy Seger
Cornerstone Literacy Fellow
Purpose of a Classroom Library

A classroom library should be one of the honorable places where literacy is fostered. It is a place of important student work.
We must remember our work as teachers.

Literacy....

empowers students so that they “can make conscious choices, see possibilities, and judge and evaluate the truth and usefulness and limits of what is read, heard, and experienced.”

Jeffrey D. Wilhelm

You Gotta BE the Book, 1997, p 155
What is needed to set up a classroom library that supports literacy?

I. Access to Quality Literature
II. A Warm, Inviting Space
III. Sensible Organization
IV. Ample supplies & furniture
I. Books

What type of books should be included in a classroom library?

“Be choosy. Build your collection slowly. Children should be reading well-written books that promote thinking and have believable, compelling characters who talk the way real people talk and do the things real people do.”

Debbie Miller

*Reading With Meaning*, 2002, p.47
Book Choice
Build a library of texts with a variety in...

Genre
- magazines
- riddle & joke books
- informational articles
- realistic fiction
- memoirs
- poetry collections
- biographies
- maps
Book Choice

Authors

Kevin Henkes
Dr. Seuss
Jacqueline Woodson
Mercer Mayer
Jane Yolen
Eve Bunting
Gary Paulsen
Patricia Polacco
Cynthia Rylant
Book Choice

Levels

- Emergent Readers
- DRA 28-34
- Predictable Text
- “I Can Read”
- Chapter books
A Variety of Text Structures

Provide access to books with **different text structures** so that children get independent practice problem-solving the way text is presented.

- See-saw text
- Geographical text
- Repeated, wrap around
Multi-Cultural

Be intentional about providing choices where all students can see themselves somewhere in text.
Gender Archetypes:
A suggested use of literature in showing how honorable human traits are derived from experience and present in the psyche.

“Literature with archetypes motivates boy to read because it appeals to their psyche and connects to their lives, their interests, and their needs.” (Zambo, 2007)
Students’ Texts
Create a space in your classroom library where the students’ texts are available and honored.
Use Your School Library

Remember the wealth of choice in genre, authors, & levels present in your own school library. Work with your media specialist to find a way to use these books in your classroom.
Think about your classroom library…

• What type of books make up your library?
• How does your book selection support independent readers?
• What changes would you like to make?
• How could you make those changes happen?

TURN & TALK
II. Reading Location

Create space for students that is…

Organized
Reading Location

Comfortable
Reading Location

Calm & Quiet

Students will read with more concentration if the classroom library space is separate from the general flow of traffic in and out of the room.
When establishing classroom routines, be sure to include the classroom library. It might be best to move slowly into this space, first with small groups and teacher supervision. The gradual release of responsibility will help ensure that children understand the behaviors of a good reader.
III. Organization

Organize books by **genre**, **author**, & **level** using plastic tubs
Organize with…

Racks
Organize with...

Shelves
Organize with...

**Bags** (for books with tapes or CDs)
Baskets vs. Crates

Does it matter how books are displayed? Which way of storing books better supports the independent reader?

TURN & TALK
Organize for... independent readers!

A classroom library that supports independent readers will have:

- Books appropriate for a variety of interests, levels, and genres
- Anchor charts to remind readers of strategies
- Tools strategically placed within the library
- Reading logs and response journals accessible
Anchor Charts

As skills and procedures are taught, display charts in the reading areas that remind the students and “anchor” the ideas of the lessons.
Tools & Supplies

- highlighters
- pencils
- folders
- clipboards
- response journals
- post-its
- response pages
Good readers record their thinking.

The literature responses should match the focus comprehension strategy.

**SCHEMA**

**QUESTIONING**
Beginning the Year

Joanne Hindley suggests a ritual for opening up a classroom library at the beginning of the year. Each day, she opens up a different box of books and lets the children help decide how the books will be organized. Then the children know what is available and where it will be stored.

*In the Company of Children*, 1996

Joanne Hindley, teacher in the Manhattan New School
Classroom Library vs. Instructional Books

Not all books should be accessible to the students. Some books are set aside for instructional read-alouds, guided reading, thematic units, & invitational groups. While these books might be placed in an independent reading box or bag, the classroom teacher maintains control of accessibility.
IV. Supplies & Furniture

Suggestions for a classroom library:

- An area rug
- Large pillows (w/removable covers)
- Shelving at the students’ level
- Smaller chairs & tables
- Bean bags
- Floor lamps
- Table lamps
- Easel

- Sofas and loveseats
- “Dish” chairs
- Director chairs
- Coffee table
- Containers with pencils, post-its, bookmarks, & marker boards
- Bins, tubs, boxes, bags & racks
- Rocking chair
- Labels (on Word) or label maker
Shop for Free or Used Furniture
Use Bonus Points!

Scholastic #07620
4,125 Bonus Points

Scholastic #07562
2,750 Bonus Points

Scholastic #07588
3,350 Bonus Points
Books & Furniture
Check the Web

Debbie Miller
*Reading With Meaning*, 2002

There is a plethora of sites that show what other teachers have done to establish a welcoming place for students to read in their classrooms such as the ones below:

http://www.cornerstoneliteracy.org/literacy.html
Video: Creating an Effective Learning Environment

http://www.mandygregory.com/classroom_library1.htm
Check out the bin labels for author boxes
Think of the important work that will occur in the classroom library.

If we can work together with… our students, sharing stories and meanings and building upon these, we can help our students to become the caring, involved, empowered citizens necessary to a democracy made up of diverse people and voices.

Jeffrey D. Wilhelm

_You Gotta BE the Book_, 1997, p.155
References

Cornerstone:

http://www.cornerstoneliteracy.org/literacy.html

Video: Creating an Effective Learning Environment

PPT: “Mentoring Ourselves to Writers”


