
CHAPTER

9

Creating an Environment
That Enhances
Emergent Literacy

*Twinkle, twinkle, little star
How I wonder what you are.
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle little star
How I wonder what you are.*

—TRADITIONAL

For young children, the world is filled with wonder. Everywhere they look, there is something new to discover, and each discovery gives rise to new questions. Children use what teachers in Reggio Emilia, Italy, refer to as “one hundred languages” to share their wonder and their questions with us. In addition to the words of their language(s), young children use gestures, manipulation, drawing, sculpting, dance, pretend play, music, and even misbehavior to tell us what they know and what they wonder about. As they get older, spoken and written words become more important. The other “languages” feed into and support emergent literacy.

An environment that enhances emergent literacy gives children a sense of trust and assurance even as it excites their wonder and invites them to explore. Whether it is in a home, a school, or a community setting such as a library or play space, an environment that supports emergent literacy is full of possibilities for imagining and opportunities for pretend play. It provides children with not only a wealth of spoken and written words but also many opportunities to engage in reading, writing, singing, and storytelling activities.

Setting up these kinds of environments for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, or mixed-age groups is usually a three-step process:

- 1.** Create a safe and comfortable setting that supports relationships and invites exploration. Rooms for toddlers and preschool children should include spaces for quiet and active play, for intimate gatherings, and for larger group activities.
- 2.** Furnish the rooms with equipment, books, and materials that are appropriate for the developmental age or stages of the children.
- 3.** Make the environment “print rich.” Add decorations and learning materials that demonstrate various functions of print and that provide the children with multiple opportunities to explore print in various forms. Post signs and symbols that show children and adults what the environment offers and that invite their participation, reflection, conversation, and play.

CREATING AND FURNISHING
ENVIRONMENTS THAT SUPPORT
RELATIONSHIPS AND INVITE
EXPLORATION

All young children appreciate environments that are organized, uncluttered, interesting, and attractive. Whether you are setting up a classroom, a family child-care home, or a space for child-and-parent activities, you will need to make sure that the space is cozy and welcoming for both children and adults. Here is a basic checklist of recommended features for indoor environments:

- The environment is safe for young children to explore. It is free of hazards and meets all licensing and fire department standards. Everything is in good repair.
- The environment is easy to keep clean and to maintain.
- The environment includes different kinds of spaces that are appropriate for different kinds of activities: active play, messy play, quiet concentration, large-group activities, private conversation, eating, sleeping, book sharing, building, and pretending.
- Flooring is appropriate for the children's ages and activities. Washable mats, area rugs, vinyl remnants, quilts, etc. are used as needed to create inviting, easy-to-clean surfaces for sitting, crawling, toddling, active play, cooking and eating, and messy play.
- Public spaces and work spaces are light and bright, but not glaring. Walls are painted in attractive colors such as beige, light green, or light blue that are neither somber nor overly bright.
- The environment is well organized. An environment that is cluttered is confusing to children and can be overstimulating.

- The environment is interesting at a child's eye level.
- Toys and books that children use are attractively displayed where children can reach them. High shelves and childproof cabinets hold spare materials, toys that have temporarily been taken out of circulation, and things that children should not have access to without adult supervision. It is easy to tell where things belong. Like items and items that are used together are grouped in logical ways. Shelves, bins, or baskets may have labels or pictures that indicate their contents. Some labels reflect overarching categories such as "farm animals," "vehicles," "doll clothes," "furniture," or "tools."
- The environment reflects the children's cultures. Books, commercial and homemade toys, wall displays, artifacts, nature and science collections, foods, sleeping spaces, dolls, pretend-play materials, furnishings, and gathering spaces welcome children and their families, draw from their traditions, and help them feel at home while also teaching about a wider world.
- The environment embraces children's home languages. Books, bulletin board displays, communications to parents, charts and schedules, and other environmental print reflect all of the languages that children and their parents use.
- The environment celebrates children's identities and showcases their products. Photographs of the children and their families are on display. Children see their names on their personal spaces and artwork as well as in other displays.
- The environment works not only for the children who use it but also for the adults.

Teachers take into account their own needs as they set up their classroom. Frequently used adult materials are easy to access but beyond children's reach or safely locked away. Materials that are used only occasionally can be put on higher shelves or in storage.

—Teachers and adult visitors have safe places to keep purses and other private possessions that are out of the reach of children.

- Adults have comfortable places to sit while working with an individual child or group or while just observing. A space for infants or toddlers contains a rocker, glider, or swing that an adult can use to comfort or feed a baby.
- A bulletin board either outside the door or near the entrance keeps parents abreast of what is happening in the classroom and of community events and resources that might be of interest to them.

Environments for Infants

The Happy Land Child-Care Center, at the urging of parents, had decided to add an infant room to their child-care center. They hired two caregivers, Mrs. Cuddles and Miss Bright-Eyes, to care for eight babies, ages 2 months to 12 months. The caregivers' first task was to plan the physical layout of the room that they would share. Unfortunately, these two caregivers disagreed from the beginning on how the room should be set up. They decided that, rather than argue with each other over each decision, they would write out their separate ideas and present them to the director. The director, they hoped, could help them develop a layout with which both would be comfortable.

Mrs. Cuddle's List

Room décor and furnishings: Paint the walls light blue, and install wall-to-wall carpeting; space eight standardized cribs far apart so the babies will not disturb one another and will not share germs; use incandescent lighting so the room will not be too bright; add two adult rocking chairs, two changing tables, one playpen with a washable mat, two baby windup swings, and a bulletin board for tracking each child's day.

Toys and equipment: CD player, a collection of lullabies, foam blocks, rattles, wind chimes, mobiles that attach to the sides of the cribs, an unbreakable mirror, baby swings, soft squeak toys, music boxes, cloth books, a fabric ball and washable stuffed animals, and soft covers to put over the bottles.

Miss Bright-Eyes' List

Room décor and furnishings: Sky-blue or white walls, tile floor with area rug, three feeding tables, a changing table, wall mirrors with pull-up bars, an infant play pit, a water-play table that

could be filled with water or sand, a crawl-through tunnel, a rocking boat, mats for climbing over, a small bookcase, low shelves for manipulative toys, colorful wall hangings and large family photos, eight small cribs grouped together on one side of the room, a baby bounce chair, and a rocking chair for adults.

Toys and equipment: Cardboard blocks, board books with bright illustrations, busy boards, dolls and stuffed animals, pop-up toys, a beach ball, containers for filling and emptying, water-play toys, sponges, cake pans and wooden spoons, knob puzzles, stacking rings, stacking cups, a pot with a lid, a tape player with a collection of Raffi tapes, shape puzzles, trucks, jack-in-the-box toys, and pull toys.

Mrs. Moderation, the director, pointed out that although both lists were different, they were not incompatible. Mrs. Cuddles was most concerned with creating an environment that was quiet, healthful, and parent-friendly and that would meet the needs of very young infants and of infants who might be overwhelmed by too much stimulation. Miss Bright-Eyes wanted to create a more stimulating environment that mobile infants would enjoy and that would give them opportunities to develop their physical, cognitive, and emergent literacy skills. Fortunately, the two caregivers were able to recognize and respect each other's point of view, and with guidance from their director, they became an effective team.

As you arrange and equip an infant classroom, remember that every baby is unique. Infants differ from one another in developmental age, temperament, and prior experiences in child care and their home environment. As you plan a developmentally appropriate environment, make sure that the room arrangement you select is both safe and flexible and that the furnishings and toys you select will be appropriately challenging for babies of different ages with differing capacities, needs, and preferences. Most important, the environment you create should be safe, healthy, and comfortable and should make each baby feel at home.

Room Arrangement and Furnishings That Support Infant Development

When setting up an environment for infants, take the following steps to ensure a setting that will support infant development:

- Make certain that the furniture, equipment, and toys that are placed in the classroom can be washed and disinfected on a regular basis.
- Make sure that the floor coverings can be washed and that there are no loose rugs on the floor that would cause a person to slip.
- Arrange the furniture so that the caregiver has a clear view of every infant.
- Arrange the cribs in the sleeping area so that babies can see and watch one another. Make sure that they are at least 18 inches apart and that the caregiver can have full view of every infant.
- Create protected areas where infants who are not yet crawling can see one another as they play on the floor and where an adult can comfortably join them. In a mixed-age group, arrange these areas so that infants can also watch and interact with older children without being in the middle of the fray.
- Create safe but interesting spaces for crawlers, using tunnels, peepholes, furniture to pull up on and peek over, mirrors, low windows, different surfaces to touch or traverse, and toys and displays at floor level.
- Provide a play area with an easily cleaned surface in a defined space—for example, a corral, empty wading pool, or giant playpen, where two or more older infants can play together. Make sure that a variety of books and toys are within easy reach.
- Provide a changing area where running water and all supplies are within reach so that the caregiver can use changing time as a special opportunity to interact with the infant. A mirror, board books, and a few toys will help make changing time a time for conversation and play.
- Provide a quiet area with a rocking chair where infants can be quieted, soothed, comforted, nursed, or given a bottle. Place a collection of board books and some soft toys or fabrics nearby.

- Develop a flexible schedule that recognizes individual differences, and provide transition markers such as dimming the lights, going outside, or playing lullabies to establish a daily rhythm.

Toys and Equipment That Support Infant Development

As you acquire and organize toys and equipment for the infant area, take the following steps to support infant development:

- Provide toys and equipment that take into account the developmental characteristics of young and older infants.
- Provide opportunities for infants to see, hear, feel, and manipulate interesting things.
- Provide a CD player with different types of music, including lullabies, classical music, baby songs, and songs with a strong rhythm (You can use different musical selections to mark transitions within the day.)
- Provide infants with opportunities to experience handling different textures and to lie on different surfaces.
- Provide visual displays such as mobiles and wall hangings that give babies different visual experiences.
- Provide toys that change shape or produce an interesting effect when infants manipulate them.
- Provide washable dolls and stuffed animals.

Environments for Toddlers

Miss Set-in-Her-Ways, who had been the teacher of the 4-year old group for 6 years, was reassigned to a toddler classroom with children ranging from 14 months to 3 years. She began by re-arranging the toddler room into interest centers, with a center for pretend play, a center for building and constructing, a science center, a math center, a reading and writing center, a social studies center, a

music center with a piano and drums, and an art center. She equipped the pretend play center with a structure that could be used as a store or an office. She put small tables and chairs in the other areas, with the exception of the block center, where she put nothing but a big shelf for the large, wooden unit blocks. When the director came into the room, she looked horrified. Miss Set-in-Her-Ways could not understand why the director was so upset.

Can you help Miss Set-in-Her Ways understand the problems with her layout?

Between the ages of 1 and 3 years, toddlers are making important developmental strides. They need environments that encourage active exploration, conversation, friend making, and pretend play.

Toddlers are learning new physical skills such as walking forward and backward, squatting to pick up a toy, carrying heavy objects, climbing on play structures, going up and down stairs and slides, pulling wagons, pushing big toy trucks, racing around on riding toys, opening and closing doors, throwing balls, and moving small chairs from place to place.

Toddlers are interested in playing with manipulative toys that enhance small-muscle skills and encourage problem solving. They love building toys and enjoy stacking up blocks and knocking them down, putting puzzles together, playing with stacking toys, busy boards, dressing frames, lock-boxes, pegboards, and small objects that they can sort. They can use a variety of tools and are progressing from imitative play to pretend play.

Toddlers are learning language at a rapid rate and love to listen to stories being told and books being read. They enjoy singing songs, participating in finger plays, scribbling and painting, pretending to write, participating in book reading, reciting ditties, drawing pictures, and engaging in mini and maxi pretending.

Arrange the rooms in interest areas that differentiate the kinds of play that the area invites. For example:

- Consider dividing the room into an area for greeting parents, an area for climbing and active gross motor play, a “house corner” for pretending, an area for sensory play such as water and sand play, and an area for quiet play that includes a soft surface

and a cozy place for reading books, as well as low tables or hard surfaces for art activities, mini-play, and puzzles.

- Use double shelves, walls, or low, sturdy dividers to designate the boundaries of an area.
- Provide play materials that take into account the developmental needs of the toddlers in your group.

Developmental Needs of Young Toddlers

Consider these developmental needs and interests as you set up areas for young toddlers:

- As 1-year olds learn to walk, they develop a special interest in pushing, pulling, and carrying things around. Provide purses, carrying bags, and large beach balls that they can carry; rolling toys such as corn poppers, carpet sweepers, and toy strollers that they can push; and small wagons and trucks with short ropes attached that they can pull.
- In addition, 1-year-olds are interested in discovering the relationship between containers and the things they contain. Favorite activities include pulling toys off a shelf, emptying and filling containers, and throwing objects into wastebaskets or toilets. We can capture this fascination with containers and their contents either by filling small containers with ice cubes and letting toddlers take out the ice cubes and put them in a second container or by filling a bin with oatmeal and letting the toddlers scoop the oatmeal into different-sized containers.
- As we engage young toddlers in activities that encourage manipulation, they are learning about the different properties of objects and discovering their own capacity to make interesting things happen. The discoveries that young toddlers are making enable them to gain real-world knowledge that provides the basis for language learning.
- Young toddlers are great imitators and like to have child-sized versions of the items that their parents use. As toddlers imitate talking on the telephone, sweeping the floor with a broom, or feeding a cracker to a teddy bear, they are repeating acts that they have watched adults perform. As they grow

older, this imitation turns into pretending. If the appropriate prop is unavailable, an older toddler may, for example, use a square block as a cup or a long block as a telephone. The toddler is using the blocks as stand-ins for real objects, making the leap into symbolic thinking.

Developmental Needs of Older Toddlers

Consider these developmental needs and interests as you set up areas for older toddlers:

- Although young toddlers spend much of their time actively exploring their environment and discovering the kinds of things that they can make happen, 2-year olds also are developing a special interest in playing with other children. Favorite activities include stacking cardboard blocks together and then knocking them down; rolling, pounding, and making snakes or pancakes out of clay and showing them to one another; riding beside one another on push cars or trucks; climbing, jumping, and chasing one another through tunnels in a primitive version of follow the leader; or hiding together in cozy places and reading books together.
- In addition, 2-year-olds also enjoy spending short periods of time sitting with a friend or two at a small table. They like to put together knobbed puzzles; play with stacking rings; manipulate sorting toys; complete form boards; string beads; make designs with giant pegboards; make chains out of snap-together blocks; finger paint; or tear, paste, and scribble on paper.
- By the time a child is 2 years old, we usually see the emergence of genuine pretending. The 1-year-old will simply babble into a toy telephone; the 2-year-old will carry out a sequence of events—making a ringing sound, putting the receiver to his ear, babbling or saying “Hi, Daddy,” and hanging up the phone. The child will repeat this same sequence over and over again.
- Another way that 2-year-olds’ pretending is more sophisticated than that of a 1-year-old is that the 2-year-old is learning to share her pretending with another child. Two-year-olds may decide to bake a birthday cake together, then sing

“Happy Birthday”, blow out the candles, take a pretend bite of birthday cake, and, once again, blow out the candles.

- Because 2-year-olds enjoy routines and can attend to a whole-group activity for a short time, it is a good idea to set up a part of the room for “circle time.” It is also helpful to follow a simple daily schedule that provides blocks of time in which children can experience different types of activities. For example, a full-day program might have an arrival time routine, a mid-morning playtime, outdoor play, lunchtime, naptime, mid-afternoon playtime, outdoor time, and good-bye circle. However, unhurried time is one of the best gifts we can give young children, so the schedule should not create pressure to rush.

Environments for Preschoolers

An exciting learning environment for preschoolers does not have to look like a classroom, but it should offer a variety of play and learning experiences as well as different types of activities. It should affirm children’s identities by reflecting their cultures, languages, and interests. It should encourage creativity, support language, and inspire pretend play. It should also be flexible, taking on different shapes and appearances as children’s interests evolve and as the curriculum shifts from one theme to another.

Preschoolers like to participate in shaping their environments. With just a bit of encouragement, they will build “forts” with pillows, sheets, and furniture; set up obstacle courses; and construct myriad other settings for their pretend-play scenarios. They also enjoy making things, and they love to see their work on display.

An environment for preschoolers must also take into account the different temperaments, learning styles, and activity patterns of individual children. Some children will tend to flit from activity to activity; others will concentrate intently for long periods of time. Some will prefer the intimacy of a small group and a quiet setting; others seek the excitement of a larger group and of active, often noisy, play.

Interest Centers for Preschoolers

One way to create a flexible environment that accommodates children’s varying needs is to set up interest centers that provide settings

and materials for different types of learning and play experiences. The interest centers can be arranged to separate areas for quiet play from areas for active or noisy play. While supporting other aspects of physical, cognitive, and social–emotional development, each interest center should also contribute directly to the enhancement of emergent literacy skills in the following ways:

- Each interest center should provide opportunities for extending children’s vocabulary. A science center, for example, can provide opportunities to introduce words such as *magnet*, *attract*, *repel*, *float*, *sink*, *balance*, *seed*, *germinate*, *roots*, *dissolve*, *absorb*, *melt*, and *evaporate*, along with names of plants, animals, rocks, seashells, and other natural objects. A math center can provide opportunities to introduce the names of different shapes, numbers, operations (*plus*, *take away*, *cut in half*), measures (*foot*, *minute*, *pound*, *teaspoon*), and measuring tools as well as ordinal numbers (*first*, *second*), sizes, and terms of comparison (*greater*, *less than*, *equal*, *more*, *longer*, *fastest*).
- Each interest center should include materials that encourage pretend (and real) reading and writing. An imaginary play center could include pencils, pads, and ledgers or appointment books for playing store, restaurant, or doctor’s office; a math or science center could include charts, graph paper, lab notebooks, a calendar, and a weather log. An art center could include crayons, clay, markers, tempera colors, and finger paint along with a variety of cutting, drawing, painting, and stamping tools that give children opportunities to practice hand–eye coordination, improve their finger dexterity, and begin to form letters or words.
- Each interest center should include picture books. These can be related to the center’s ongoing purpose or to a current theme or project.
- Each interest center should display attractive signs with the name of the center and a representative symbol. Of course, these signs can change if the block center turns into a city or the pretend play center becomes a spaceship or a bodega.

The following paragraphs represent one example of a set of interest centers that encourage preschoolers to explore, converse,

pretend, and learn. This set of interest centers is noteworthy because it is balanced; together, the areas provide opportunities for children to learn and practice a broad range of information and skills.

The Imaginative Play Center. This interest center provides opportunities and materials for symbolic play. It may include the following features:

- Kitchen units, small table and chairs, doll bed and highchair, shopping cart.
- Multicultural dolls, stuffed animals, bibs, telephones, play coffee makers and toasters, dishes, cups and glasses, pots and pans, empty food packages, cookbooks or recipe cards, play food, placemats or tablecloths.
- Toys that encourage restaurant and store play, including cash register, balance scales, paper for writing shopping lists, paper bags, play money, coupons, menus, tablecloths, and play food.
- Toys that encourage doctor play, including a doctor's kit, BAND-AID® boxes, diplomas, eye charts, flashlights, empty medicine bottles, spoons, and a prescription pad.
- Items for dress-up, including a variety of hats, masks, mirrors, wallets, keys, credit cards, shirts, dresses, shawls, scarves, boots, and shoes.
- Picture books to read to the baby; books about doctors, veterinarians, restaurants, marketplaces; etc.

The Constructive Play Center. The constructive play center provides opportunities and materials for representational play. It may include the following features:

- Basic building materials such as unit blocks, interlocking blocks, and blocks with interesting shapes.
- Recycled objects that can be used for building—for example, cardboard tubes, floor tiles, and boxes of various sizes.
- Fences, bridges, and ramps.

- Miniature toys such as vehicles, traffic signs, doll furniture, people, and zoo and farm animals.
- Materials for building machines, vehicles, and “inventions,” including wheels, gears, gizmos, and magnetic toys.
- Shelves and storage bins labeled with pictures and words.
- Interesting spaces such as a low table that a group of children can build on or around, a mirrored corner, or a box turned on its side that can serve as a parking garage.

The Move and Grow Center. This interest center provides opportunities for physical activities, dance, and musical activities that help children develop and practice large-motor skills, relieve stress, regulate their energy and activity level, express themselves through music and movement, and share in active group activities. It may include the following features:

- A large area that allows children to move about without disturbing children in the other areas of the room and that can accommodate a group.
- Exercise materials such as tumbling mats, skipping ropes, balance toys, Hula Hoops®, and beanbag games.
- Music and dance materials such as rhythm instruments, CDs or tapes, scarves, sets of bells, song books, and a large pad and easel for writing favorite songs.
- Other materials that encourage children to collaborate in creating performances, games, and obstacle courses—for example, low platforms, flashlights, large foam or cardboard blocks, and carpet squares.

The Create and Discover Center. This interest center provides opportunities to learn science concepts and includes materials that encourage experimentation, observation, and data collection. It may include the following features:

- Materials that introduce children to concepts about the natural world, including aquariums, butterfly gardens, worm and ant farms, plants, and terrariums.

- Materials that encourage experimentation—for example, water and sand tables with sieves, basters, funnels, pitchers, bottles, balance scales, measuring cups, prisms, magnifiers, and egg beaters.
- Materials that encourage data collection—for example, a plant-growing center with pots, seeds, rulers, shovels, graph paper, labels, and notebooks or a computer so that children can dictate or record daily observations.

The Creative Art Center. This interest center provides opportunities and materials for arts-and-crafts activities. It may include the following features:

- Materials that encourage children to explore a variety of media, including finger paint, water colors, poster paint, markers, crayons, colored pencils, dough, clay, chalk, pipe cleaners, craft sticks, and wood scraps.
- Materials that provide opportunities for creative expression—for example, paint, clay, art materials, a variety of collage and woodworking materials, paint brushes, sponges, glue, scissors, different types of paper, wood chips, stencils, pompoms, glitter, pipe cleaners, felt sheets, craft sticks, and yarn.
- Materials that encourage children to practice writing skills—for example, finger paint and soft play dough with which children can practice making letters; an alphabet or set of name cards so that children can copy their names; rubber stamps with letters and pictures; and templates to encourage children to make materials such as diplomas, tickets, menus, and various signs (such as *Open*, *Closed*, *In*, and *Out*) for use in pretend play.
- Magazines and books containing project ideas.
- Posters or picture books about artists and their work, including both fine art and traditional crafts from different cultures (including those of the children in the class).

The Reading, Writing, and Language Center. This interest center provides children with opportunities to enhance language devel-

opment and to foster early reading and writing skills. It may include the following features:

- Language and vocabulary games such as picture cards, lotto games, and table and floor puzzles.
- Small toys to sort and categorize (with accompanying labeled boxes or storage bins) or to use in mini-play and storytelling activities.
- ABC books as well as alphabet and reading games such as inset puzzles, matching cards, pictures dominos, lotto games, rhyming cards, and sound- and letter-matching games.
- A variety of writing materials such as magnetic letters, writing utensils, stencils, crayons, slates, chalk, paper of various kinds, envelopes, blank books and book-making materials, and a computer or an old keyboard.
- A reading nook that includes a book display shelf with a collection of age-appropriate books, beanbag chairs or rocking chairs, pictures, posters, dolls, stuffed animals, and puppets.
- A storytelling and listening area with tape recorders, books and tapes, flannel boards, puppets, and a place for an adult to take dictation.

The Math Center. This interest center provides children with opportunities to learn mathematical concepts, including sorting, classification, sequencing, spatial relationships, measurement, and number skills. It may include the following features:

- Materials that encourage children to sort and classify—for example, rocks, shells, attribute blocks, buttons, beads, miniature zoo and farm animals, artificial fruits, dinosaurs, and vehicles of different colors and sizes.
- Materials that encourage children to sequence—for example, measuring cups and spoons, sequence puzzles, stacking toys, and nesting blocks.
- Materials that help children learn about shapes and spatial relationships—for example, parquetry blocks, shape sorters, pegboards, puzzles, and attribute blocks.

- Materials that help children learn about measurement—for example, balance scales, yardsticks, tape measures, thermometers, and clocks with movable hands.
- Materials that encourage children to learn number skills—for example, a variety of objects for counting, number cards, number puzzles, counting cubes, sandpaper or tactile numbers, number lines, dominoes, play money, and cash registers.
- Counting books and other math-themed picture books, including books that the children have made themselves.

CREATING A PRINT-RICH ENVIRONMENT FOR TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS

A print-rich environment is one in which words and symbols play key roles. In a home setting within a highly literate culture, we would expect to see books, newspapers, and magazines. We would also see mail of all kinds; instruction manuals; and informative labels on foods, clothing, medicines, and other products. We might find notes on the refrigerator or on a bulletin board; scrapbooks and personal records; and special places set aside for writing, including desks, computers, or even a home office. Numbers and letters would be abundantly found on clocks, timers, telephones, scales, remote control devices, calendars, keyboards, monograms, thermostats, stamps, and money.

In the course of a day, a young child might watch his parents read and write as they choose his breakfast cereal, checked its ingredients and nutritional value, get news of the world from television and newspapers (or the Internet), pay bills, follow recipes or directions, read for pleasure, jot down or look up phone numbers, make lists, check the calendar, look at a clock or watch, thumb through a catalog, and leave a note for the baby-sitter. A toddler might handle printed objects as he opens a box of crackers, selects a book or videotape, pushes buttons on a play phone or cash register, scribbles on used envelopes, ~~looks at a scrapbook or photo album,~~ plays with