

SIG Schools Across the State

In this issue, we focus on four SIG schools in the middle part of Tennessee: **Collinwood Elementary, Middle, and High Schools in Wayne County**, and **Cora Howe Elementary School in Davidson County**.

Collinwood, TN, is in Wayne County, about midway between Nashville and Memphis. SIG staff members working with Collinwood schools are Suzy Page and Julie Sullivan. Suzy is the University of Memphis project coordinator for SIG

schools in West Tennessee and portions of Middle Tennessee. Suzy, a former teacher of both children and adults, works directly with teachers in SIG schools to provide them with strategies and suggestions for improving students' reading skills. Julie works through Family See **SIG Schools**, page 3

It's TCAP Time in Tennessee!

Students in Grades 3-8 take the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) Achievement Test each spring. The Achievement Test is a timed, multiple choice assessment that measures skills in Reading, Language Arts,

Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. Student results are reported to parents, teachers and administrators. In addition, some schools choose to administer the Achievement Test to students in Kindergarten and Grades 1 and 2.

How Can We Help Our Students at Test Time?

Adapted from Tennessee Dept. of Education • <http://www.tennessee.gov/education/assessment/tsteststrategies.pdf>

Task	What Teachers Can Do	What Parents Can Do
Preparing all year long	<p>The number one method for helping students do well on tests is not test practice, but good teaching! By using different methods of teaching and different levels of text that match individual students' needs, teachers can better prepare students for tests.</p> <p>Teach children in several ways that will help them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • receive knowledge (know, state, recall) • comprehend (understand, summarize, restate) • apply (solve, inform, report) • analyze (illustrate, correlate, outline) • synthesize (compare, revise, categorize) • evaluate (test knowledge in various ways) <p>Use a variety of test formats throughout the year so that students are familiar with different formats.</p> <p>Provide children with increased stretches of reading time during the school year so they can build stamina for long testing periods.</p>	<p>Help your children learn good study habits. Insist that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do their homework • keep a record of assignments received and completed • turn in homework on time • get make-up assignments when they are absent • ask teachers for help when they don't understand what's been taught or said • ask teachers for extra help when needed. <p>Discuss with your children the topics they are learning about so that they can show you that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • know the material, understand it, and can summarize it for you • can solve the problem or answer the question and tell you how to do it • can tell how the information is related to other things in their lives • can compare or revise as needed. <p>Go over your child's graded tests when he/she brings them home to show what he's done well and how he can improve.</p> <p>See TCAP Time in Tennessee, page 2</p>

TCAP Time in Tennessee, cont. from page 1

Task	What Teachers Can Do	What Parents Can Do
Preparing for Test Day	<p>Notify students of the testing dates in advance and send a note to parents to inform them of the schedule.</p> <p>Explain the purpose of testing: as a yardstick to measure how the schools are doing, as well as how much the students are learning.</p> <p>Become familiar with the materials and procedures to be used with the tests.</p> <p>Identify which students may need and/or be eligible for test accommodations.</p> <p>Read the Test Administration book carefully for instructions and information.</p> <p>Be sure to pre-code any necessary student-specific data carefully on answer documents.</p> <p>Encourage all students to be present on test days.</p>	<p>Note test dates on your home calendar so you can help student be ready.</p> <p>Schedule doctors' visits and other appointments on non-testing days. It's important that all children are present for tests. However, if your child is ill, please keep him/her home and notify the school. Find out when and if make-up tests will be given.</p> <p>Help your child understand that tests are not only used to measure his/her progress, but also to show how well the school and teachers are doing.</p> <p>Encourage your child to ask questions of the teacher if he/she does not understand test instructions.</p> <p>Be sure your child gets a good night of sleep before test days.</p>
Day of Test	<p>Create an uncluttered testing environment.</p> <p>Review with students these hints about testing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read and pay careful attention to all directions • read every answer before choosing one • reread the passage if you need more information • don't guess—try to get the correct answer by reasoning and eliminating • skip difficult questions until all other questions have been answered • make sure to record the answer in the right place on the answer sheet • don't change an answer unless you are certain the first answer you checked is wrong • work as rapidly as you can with accuracy • if you have time, check your answers. 	<p>Encourage your child to eat a good breakfast before heading off to school.</p> <p>See that your child arrives at school on time and is relaxed.</p> <p>Be sure your child has any equipment he/she needs, such as pencils.</p> <p>Tell your child to listen to what the teachers say about the tests, and to be careful with marking answers.</p> <p>Talk to your child about the testing hints listed on the left to be sure he/she understands them.</p> <p>A little bit of test anxiety is normal; it can help students work harder and more efficiently. However, too much stress affects performance: encourage your child to do the best work he is capable of doing, but don't stress scores and results.</p> <p>Don't overemphasize the importance of the test. Remind your child to relax and think positively!</p>
After Test	<p>Reward children for their hard work!</p> <p>Use test results to strengthen areas where children need improvement. Celebrate success!</p>	<p>Reward children for their hard work!</p> <p>Use test results to strengthen weaknesses and celebrate strengths!</p>

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Voices of Tennessee and is the SIG link to parents in Middle Tennessee.

Collinwood Elementary School

Collinwood Elementary School has an enrollment of approximately 375 students in grades K-4; Gail Bell is principal. Suzy has helped teachers focus on adapting the *Success for All* model for resource students, allowing them to move to appropriate grade levels reflecting their individual abilities. An in-service activity was recently conducted by Suzy during planning periods for grades 2-4 on using novels in the classroom, and teachers are currently working on the use of item analyses to allow assessment results to drive instruction. In addition, SIG provided Voyager Passport materials to fourth-grade classrooms so that fourth-grade students, who had been using Voyager materials in their Reading First classrooms in grades K-3, could more easily transition to non-Reading First classrooms.

As part of its effort to involve families in children's education, Collinwood Elementary School hosted a Literacy Toolkit Workshop for parents on February 28. The workshop provided parents with information and activities that will prepare them to help their children succeed in school. Over 120 parents attended the workshop, while their children participated in teacher-led activities.

Collinwood Middle School

Housing about 355 students in grades 5-8, Collinwood Middle School is headed by Principal Walter Butler. At CMS, teachers work with students to help them develop their reading skills. Because many struggling students are included in regular classroom settings for reading, teachers often co-teach, assisting each other in finding ways to help students learn. Suzy has conducted in-service activities at Collinwood Middle School on topics that range from vocabulary development to teaching with novels, and has also spent many hours working with a group of seventh-grade struggling

readers, demonstrating techniques such as chunking, word families, and audio self-modeling. SIG has provided classroom library materials and numerous differentiated reading items to Collinwood Middle School teachers, helping them to enhance learning opportunities for students. Suzy enjoys Collinwood Middle School so much that she spends some of her off-duty hours attending middle school football and basketball games, after-school tutoring, and PTO.

Julie Sullivan has been working with teachers and staff at Collinwood Middle School to plan a program that will motivate students to read. Plans include using the Accelerated Reading program and providing incentives for students who read books and complete the associated A.R. test.

Collinwood High School

Principal Herbert Luker heads the staff and 335 students in grades 9-12 at Collinwood High School. At CHS, SIG has provided a variety of differentiated reading materials for the resource teachers, who have begun using a new self-paced curriculum to allow students to progress at their own pace, rather than wait for other students. Suzy's other activities include rooting for the Collinwood High School football team, which recently made it to the second round of state football playoffs, beating their arch rivals, Waynesboro!

All three of the Collinwood schools teamed to hold a health fair at Collinwood Middle School in November of this school year. Over 20 booths represented health and educational agencies and provided information about child safety, nutrition, social security, epilepsy, and maternal health. In addition, blood pressure checks and vision screenings were conducted, and a gun safety seminar was conducted by the sheriff's



Fourth Grade student Alex Murphy sits in the cockpit of the Vanderbilt Life Flight Helicopter while first grade student Brooke Morris visits with Life Flights attendants Neil Worf and Michael Gooch at the Collinwood Health Fair.

department. A big hit with students and family members was the arrival of the Vanderbilt Life Flight helicopter. Many students and parents took advantage of the opportunity to climb aboard the helicopter, as shown in the accompanying photo. The Collinwood Health Fair was a successful example of school, home, and community collaboration.

Cora Howe Elementary School

Further north is Cora Howe Elementary School in Nashville, with about 250 students in grades pre-kindergarten through fourth grade. SIG staff members Julie Sullivan, the family consultant from Family Voices, and Kandy Smith, SIG coordinator from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville have been working with Principal Theresa Dellehay, teachers, and staff at Cora Howe. Because Kandy formerly held positions as principal, teacher, librarian, and coach, she understands the difficulties school staff face when trying to craft educational opportunities that will work for all students.

The technical assistance provided at Cora Howe involves working with the two fourth grade teachers, who are the only teachers in the K-4 school who are not involved directly in the Reading First initiative. SIG provides scaffolding for these teachers as they strive to ensure that their classroom instruction is best-prac-

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tice research-based instruction.

In each grade-level at Cora Howe, there is a classroom with only English Language Learner student enrollment. This educational arrangement is necessary because the school's population is over 60% English Language Learners; making the modifications that ELL students need and deserve is made easier by having all of the ELL students in one classroom with a teacher who understands and appreciates their distinct needs. While some might question the lack of a heterogeneous mix in these classrooms, anyone visiting the ELL classrooms at Cora Howe would see that there is still much diversity, both in culture and ability levels. Grouping the children together because of their need to learn English as well as content material seems to work well. Cora Howe is the hub school in this area of Davidson County for K-4 ELL students.

In the fourth grade classrooms where SIG is actively involved in providing support, there is a traditional classroom with 24 students and an ELL classroom with 14 students. The teachers exchange students for a part of the literacy block. Both teachers are experienced and motivated to provide the very best educational experience to all of the fourth grade students, and they have also been very open and appreciative of the SIG support they have received thus far.

Starting in a small way, one of the first ways in which SIG was involved at Cora Howe was through the purchase of clipboards for the ELL classroom; there are so many things that these students need to learn and know that the teacher uses every available moment as instructional time. As students wait in the hallway during restroom breaks, the teacher has an activity on paper that provides for instruction. One such activity was a writing assignment that involved writing a paragraph at the top of the paper and illustrating the writing at the bottom of the page. The teacher had borrowed clipboards and did not have enough, so SIG was able to support this valuable learning time for these students. SIG has also bought books for both fourth grade classroom libraries featuring various cultures and ethnicities.

Another area of interest for both fourth grade teachers is in literature circles. Kandy Smith was able to provide information concerning literature circles, discuss the information with the teachers, and then model literature circles for each classroom, reading the fairy tale "Rapunzel" and modeling several roles that may be assigned in a literature circle setting. In the ELL classroom, after the reading of the story, the teacher, who has an amazing ability to explain and



Teachers Nichole Lockwood and Diana Isbell with student Jonathon Jones enjoy the Multicultural Night at Cora Howe Elementary School

reach students, drew pictures and reenacted the story in the classroom so that students would understand it well. Kandy will soon visit the traditional classroom to help create literature circles and support the teacher as she allows students to participate in this activity for the first time, discussing the classic Charlotte's Web.

A book room at Cora Howe is perfect for continuing to implement literature circles in the fourth grade classrooms. The plastic totes in the book room are organized by topics in the content areas. SIG will provide support for the fourth grade teachers to bring this leveled literature into their classrooms; providing instruction through these texts will allow the teachers to support each student at his/her own level.

One innovative method used at Cora

UPCOMING CONFERENCES OF INTEREST

46th Annual Early Childhood Conference at ETSU

<http://child.etsu.edu/news.html>

July 27-29, 2005

Pre-k and kindergarten teachers and assistants from participating SIG schools are invited to attend ETSU's Early Childhood Conference in Johnson City, Tennessee. Educators from SIG schools are entitled to travel stipends, lodging, registration and some meals. In addition, several other special events have been

created specifically for SIG participants. For more information, please contact SIG Project Coordinator Katherine DeVault at devault@etsu.edu or 423-439-7841.

SIG Summer Institute

<http://sig.ck.utk.edu>

July 18-20, 2006

Preston Hotel, Nashville Airport

The Second Annual SIG Summer Institute will be held July 18-20 in Nashville, TN. The purpose of the

Institute is to provide professional development to teachers in SIG schools. Participants will have opportunities to select sessions that will enhance the strategies they use to teach reading. Session choices will include content area reading, using test data to plan lessons, learning centers across the curriculum, motivating students to read, and many other topics. For more information, contact Reggie Curran atrcurran@utk.edu or (865)-974-1320.

Howe Elementary School to assist diverse students is in the cafeteria, where stuffed animals are placed on the glass case above the meats so that students are able to know whether meats are beef, pork, chicken, etc. This allows students to be certain that they are eating according to their religious practices.

As part of the family involvement portion of the SIG grant, Julie Sullivan helped Principal Theresa Dellehay devel-

op a Multicultural Family Night in November. The event was very well attended, even though inclement weather caused tornado sirens to blare throughout the evening. Countries represented included India, Greece, Japan, Mexico, China, and America. Ethic foods from around the world were featured and enjoyed by participants.

Cora Howe recently held a parent meeting, during which Parent Literacy

Resource Toolkits were distributed. Eighteen parents attended, and discussion were conducted in Spanish, English, and Somali.

Julie, Suzy, and Kandy thank all of the staff members at Cora Howe, Collinwood Elementary, Collinwood Middle and Collinwood High Schools for welcoming them to their schools and classrooms and for working so hard to help Tennessee students.

SPOTLIGHT ON SIG WORK GROUP

Institutions of Higher Education Work Group

Each of the staff members of the Tennessee State Improvement Grant is a member of one of the following three groups:

- **Service Providers Work Group**
- **Parent Work Group,**
- **Institutions of Higher Education Work Group**

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- Service Providers Work Group
- Parent Work Group
- Institutions of Higher Education Work Group

In this month's *SIGnal* we are highlighting the work of the Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) work group. Members of this group include faculty and staff from ETSU, TSU, UT-Martin, UT-Knoxville, Vanderbilt, the Center for Literacy Studies at UT-Knoxville, and the TN Department of Education. Currently chaired by Susan Benner at UT-Knoxville, the work group has revised its goals and outcomes to establish an open network of reading and special education faculty throughout the state. Goals and outcomes for this group are outlined below:

1. Review a number of scientifically-based methods of instruction and intervention, make recommendations for local education agencies (LEAs) on major resources to use in building reading programs, and serve as a major resource of IHEs, the State Department of Education, and LEAs (via the SIG website) for the selection of scientifically-based strategies for reading.
2. Create a network for discussion among IHE faculty.
3. Develop a set of guiding principles for appropriate practices that may reflect some of the original intended outcomes for the IHE work group.

The IHE work group agreed to work together to communicate across the state to faculty at all institutions of higher education with programs in reading and/or special education. They have discussed approaches that could be used to facilitate this communication and agreed to tie in with other state meetings

at which the target faculty would already be present.

The first invitation to join the open network occurred as a part of the Tennessee Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (TACTE) fall meeting. On October 7, 2005 approximately 25 persons representing 12 institutions of higher education and the Department of Education came together to discuss the SIG and the particular role of the IHE-WG within the SIG. The attending group agreed that there was a need to establish an ongoing means of communication for IHE faculty in reading and special education. As a result of recommendations made at this meeting, a listserv was established that is open to anyone interested in participating in reading/special education issues in Tennessee. Those interested in joining may do so at the following url:

<http://listserv.utk.edu/archives/rdg-sped.html>.

A second open network meeting was held November 15, 2005 in conjunction with the Tennessee Reading Association Conference. At this meeting the Tennessee Reading Policy under consideration by the TN State Board of Education was discussed. If you are interested in reading this policy you can find it at the following url:

http://www.state.tn.us/sbe/Oct05/IVC_Early_Childhood_Policy.pdf.

Attending faculty expressed an interest in learning more about implementation of the policy, particularly the procedures that would be established as a part of the three-tier reading instruction model. Since the model is already in use at Reading First schools, the group thought it would be helpful to understand how Reading First has already been implementing this prevention-based approach to reading instruction. A draft of the considered questions has been posted to the Rdg-Sped listserv and is available in its archives at the same website listed in the previous paragraph. If you are interested in becoming involved with the work being done by the IHE work group, call Susan Benner at 865-974-6228.

Designing a Developmentally Appropriate Childhood Environment

—by Katherine Devault,
East Tennessee State University



Model Early Education Classroom Setup

The dilemma: You were just hired to teach in an early childhood setting. When you visit the space assigned to you, you find a row of cubbies attached to one wall and a few tables and chairs in the middle of the room. It is your responsibility to transform this space into an interesting, appropriate place for young children to spend many hours. What do you do?

For many educators, this is often the case when teaching in early childhood settings. Although it may seem a daunting task, creating a space for young children can be accomplished rather easily by following a few basic tenets.

Define the Needs and Interests of the Children

Educators should first begin the process by defining the needs and interests of the children being served. Children require specific environments that acknowledge their needs and developmental levels. Take, for example, four and five year olds. The brain grows from 75% to 90% of its adult size during these years! In addition, four and five year olds are increasing their large-motor development, but are still struggling with fine motor development (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). It is the responsibility of the educator to plan and prepare a learning environment that fos-

ters children's active exploration of materials as well as increased amount of time interacting with peers, teachers, and activities.

An excellent guideline in determining and evaluating the needs of children is the National Association for the Education of Young Children's definition of developmentally-appropriate practice based on three standards: what is known about child development and learning; the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child in the group; and the social and cultural context in which the child lives. (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). After identifying the needs of the children being served, the next step is to make a plan for classroom environment.

Plan for Classroom Environment

Learning centers should be an integral part of the classroom. Early childhood classrooms should include permanent

centers as well as rotating centers that may be created in combination with a unit or theme based on the children's interests. There should also be space in the room for circle time/class meetings, spots for privacy, display centers and storage shelves, an area for parents picking up and dropping off children, and a space for the teacher. Throughout this entire process, however, the developmental range of the children being served should dictate any decisions that are made. In addition, when creating the environment, keep in mind the complexity of necessary materials, and the need to foster independence, provide structured choices, and personalize the class so that it reflects the children and teacher(s). It is also important to modify the environment so that it could function as an inclusive classroom that will welcome children with special needs.

After determining needs, assess the space. What are its strengths and weaknesses? Where is the access for moving in and out of the space? Where are the bathrooms? What is the light source? What is the heating and cooling source? Are there wall dividers that cannot be moved? Where are the electrical outlets? Where are water sources? These are the fixed things that cannot be changed and will

dictate, to some degree, the planning of the environment.

Creating a space for children's belongings is important and should be a first priority. In this given dilemma, the classroom already has cubbies. If none are provided, however, alternatives are available. Hooks can be attached to walls and plastic boxes or cloth bags used for storage. Consider, though, if the hooks are low enough for children to reach independently. Are there enough spaces or will some children need to share? Are there cubbies big enough for the student's belongings or will extra space be needed? A place for children's belongings is important in that it is a place the child will visit every day, and it conveys the message that the child is important and respected.

Establish Learning Centers

The next step in the design of the classroom would be to establish learning centers. Because this is the most integral part of the learning process, the centers should always be complete and workable. Young children learn through meaningful activities in which various subject areas are integrated (Edwards & Springate, 2000). Keeping this in mind, it is important to integrate literacy into as many centers as possible. In addition, do not be too strict about the boundaries of the center; allow for these lines to sometimes blur. The art center might spill into the block center at times and as long as the work is developmentally appropriate to children, it should be allowed.

Creative Centers

Be aware of placing certain centers together; some will need a separate space. Block, art, sensory and sociodramatic centers are all going to be noisy centers where children are exploring, creating, and growing. Reading, writing, and listening centers, however, require a more quiet space. Do not be tempted to just push centers around the room against the walls—that is simply creating a huge open space in the middle of the room where children will inevitably run. Realizing the influence the environment will

make on impacting the ability to stay on task and eliminate behavior issues will make teaching easier.



Block Centers. Although there are hundreds of ideas for workable, creative centers, the early childhood classroom should include a few standards that remain in the room year round. The block center, for example, is crucial in the early childhood classroom, as well as an easy one to design. Large and fine motor skills will be exercised and developed. In addition, research has shown that more language is used and developed in the block center than any other center!

Develop motor skills by including Lego's, Play-Doh, and small blocks. Although you can purchase blocks, it is just as easy to create blocks using cardboard boxes that are taped together and then covered in a variety of materials (sandpaper, fabric, contact paper, etc.). By creating blocks for the center instead of purchasing them, extra money can then be used to purchase supplemental items such as small vehicles, animals, or multicultural people. As with all centers, be mindful to rotate these supplemental items throughout the year instead of putting them all out at once. The literacy aspect for this center could be paper, pens and crayons to sketch designs, draw completed structures, and label children's work. Finally, use shelving and storage as a division for the center, and remember to find a smooth carpet to absorb sound.



Sensory Centers. The sensory center (typically sand and water), although integral, is often more difficult in the early

childhood classroom due to the lack of water sources, as well as set-up and clean-up issues. The sensory center, however, is where children explore and experiment with different natural materials. As children explore and experiment, they fine tune their coordination skills and find new ways of using materials and tools. If the more expensive sand and water tables are not available, use plastic bins with lids that can be stacked, moved, and easily lifted and emptied. The center should also include small tables low to the ground so that children can stand and work with ease. Plastic aprons or smocks should be provided, as well as manipulatives such as measuring cups, sifters, boats, and tools for digging in the sand. Literacy can be developed by including magazines and picture books that feature water, for example, and how we use it.



Art Center. Young children are very creative and benefit immensely from having an art center in the classroom. The process of creating individual work allows children to understand their world and how to control the tools they use (Isbell, 1995). This center should be large, well-stocked and easily accessible. Work space is important in this center. Large round tables and chairs, easels, shelving, a clothesline for hanging and displaying, and a spot for finished work should be included. In addition to the standard art supplies (scissors, paint, glue, etc.) the art center should be stocked with a variety of found or home-made objects. Old buttons, strips of fabric, feathers, sponges and magazines are just a few of the supplies that could be included. Crucial to the success of the art center, though, is clean-up. Plastic sheets or newspaper could cover table tops and floors, and in areas that lack a water source, buckets

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with soap and rinse water can be used instead. Literacy supplements are found in art books and magazines.



Sociodramatic or Housekeeping Centers. Another important center is the sociodramatic, or housekeeping, center. This is a place where children can develop social skills as well as engage in dramatic/fantasy play. It is also important in the transition from home to school because children already have some experience with the items in this center. In fact, children who are unsure about classroom happenings will often return to this predictable center to build self-confidence (Isbell, 1995). Kitchen sets are expensive to purchase, even when used. Fortunately, the supplies and materials needed for the center are easy to make and acquire. Old boxes of food items can be taped and used, as well as plastic plates and utensils. Instead of limiting this center to a “kitchen set” however, the center should also include a baby bed, multi-cultural dolls and accessories, dress-up clothes and costumes, and, if possible, a small stage for acting out roles and stories. Literacy is easily included in this center as children look through cookbooks, menus, books about people they might emulate in their play, and multicultural books about families.



Writing Center. Finally, a reading and writing center should be available to children. This is an area where children can read, look at books, listen to books on tape, or write in journals. Easily accessible

shelving for books is essential. If book shelves are not provided, an inexpensive alternative is to attach plastic guttering to the wall to place books into (with the cover facing out). This should be a center filled with comfortable spots for children to sit quietly alone or read with a friend.



Privacy Area. Although not a center, it is important to include a spot for privacy in the arrangement of the classroom. A loft would be a great addition to any room, but a spot for privacy can be created using a bean bag, pillow, small tent or canopy. The circle area is also an important spot as well. This area might double as a literacy center where children can read or write. It should be defined by a rug or mats with class charts, planning boards, and daily schedules posted at child’s eye level. Finally, tables should be used for group work, but if there are only desks available, they should be moved together to create group work spaces.

Evaluate Your Learning Environment

After creating the classroom, it is helpful to rely on an outside source to evaluate the environment. The environmental scan from *Early Learning Environments that Work* (Isbell & Exelby) is useful in that it guides educators through a simple, yet detailed, examination of the environment. Is there enough softness in the room? Greenery? Space to display children’s work? The environment truly is another teacher in the classroom and crucial to the success of the child. It is also a process of change and development, though, based on the change and development of the child. Exceptional teachers are never fully satisfied with their environment, and, recognizing that we are all life-long learners, the environment is a reflection of this growth.

References and Recommended Readings:

- Bredekamp, S., & Copple, C. (1997). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.
- Isbell, R. (1995). *The complete learning center book*. Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House.
- Isbell, R., & Exelby, B. (2001). *Early learning environments that work*. Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House.
- Isbell, R., & Isbell, C. (2005). *The inclusive learning center book for preschool children with special needs*. Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House.

Environmental Print

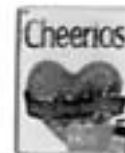
by Sharon Macdonald



Environmental Print is the print of everyday life: The symbols, signs, numbers, and colors found in McDonald's, Wal-Mart, Exxon, Pizza Hut, 7-Up, and on websites, for instance.



Environmental print is everywhere and is a natural starting point to teach young children to read, write, and do math.



Children “read” environmental print within the context of their everyday experiences—their interests and backgrounds. It bridges the gap between the functional print of school and the print outside. Try it with your young children—make a game out of finding environmental print that your children can “read.”

TOOLKIT WORKSHOPS

Workshops for Parents Offered at SIG Schools

Do you want to help your children succeed in school?

Would you like to know how children learn to read and what you can do to help them?

Would you like to receive a free kit packed with information and activities?

Then...the **Parent Resource Toolkit Workshop** is an event you won't want to miss.

Staff members of the State Improvement Grant (SIG) have collected information that will help parents understand how children learn to read, what is happening in their children's classrooms, and how to offer their children help in school. This information has been combined in a toolkit that will be provided at no cost to parents who attend a Parent Resource Toolkit Workshop. Each toolkit includes a binder that contains information about:

- the importance of families in their children's education
- how children learn to read
- strategies to help increase children's reading ability
- activities to make reading more fun
- suggestions for books to read
- how to work with teachers and school administrators
- information about resources for parents

In addition to the binder, each toolkit also contains two books for children, as well as other items that will help to increase children's learning. The toolkits will be distributed during a series of workshops that be offered in each SIG elementary school. Workshops will be scheduled during the coming months at times when space is available in each school, and will be conducted by members of the SIG staff. If your school has not already offered a toolkit presentation, watch for flyers that will announce information and details about your school's workshop plans.



Twins Hannah and Rachel Pate enjoy a book reading with parents, Jesse and Margaret, at a toolkit workshop at Woodbury Grammar School.



SIG staff and parents pose with toolkits at Kepler Elementary School.



At Cora Howe Elementary school, SIG staff and interpreters worked with parents in three languages: English, Somali, and Spanish.



Katherine Devault works with preschool parents at Collinwood Elementary School.

Center for Literacy Studies
600 Henley St., Suite 312
Knoxville, TN 37996

Resources for Parents and Teachers

■ www.crayola.com

Parents, are you looking for a fun craft or activity about a specific holiday, or to occupy children at a party or in the car? Teachers, are you looking for some creative lesson plans that will be fun for students? Children, do you like games and coloring? This site has pages for parents, teachers, and children.

■ <http://www.readingrockets.org/articles/c82/>

Children who struggle with reading need more intensive support. This site outlines additional strategies for helping children read.

■ www.schwablearning.org

Schwablearning, a parent's guide to helping children with learning difficulties is a site created by a family whose child has a learning disability. However, there are many articles that will

help any parent who has a child struggling in school. Under the title, Managing School and Learning, you will find helpful information about reading, writing, math, homework; and working with your school.

<http://sig.cls.utk.edu>

**Check out
Tennessee's SIG
website for resources
and information about
the State Improvement
Grant, as well as
reading, parenting,
and teaching
strategies.**

