

Language-Rich Environments

What is a language-rich environment?

A safe and supportive learning space designed to provide every opportunity for children to use language to further develop their communication skills and build their confidence.



Why are language-rich environments important?

Children who have access to language-rich environments have better outcomes with respect to overall language and literacy development.

Language-rich environments are especially important for children who may need additional support, have language delays, or are learning a new language.



How do I create a language-rich environment?

Children are primed for language development. They learn through imitation, rehearsal, and exploring their physical environments through play. The physical environment should be thoughtfully designed to promote language exploration and interaction. Co-construct this environment with children. You might do this by:

- Planning daily story time, songs, fingerplays, chants, and poems based on children's interests
- Providing access and choice for types of books (i.e., information books, song-based picture books, Canadian authors, picture books with diverse characters and cultures, etc.)
- Thinking-out-loud, asking open-ended questions, providing positive-descriptive feedback, labelling emotions

Language-Rich Environments

- Providing access to writing and drawing materials (i.e., paper, envelopes, writing tools, paint, etc.)
- Providing opportunities for children to interact with adults and peers by engaging in imaginative play and choice-making
- Use of sign language or gestures when appropriate, and visuals that include images and text (i.e., visual schedule, labeled toy bins, emotion visuals, etc.)



References

- Makovichuk, L., Hewes, J., Lirette, P., & Thomas, N. (2014). *Flight: Alberta's early learning and care framework*. <https://flightframework.ca/downloads/Flight%20Framework%20Document%20F.pdf>
- McQueen, D. & Williams, J. (2019, November 27). *How to provide a language rich environment in the early years*. Family. <https://www.family.co/blog/language-rich-environment-early-years>

“Learning requires numerous ongoing and varied opportunities for children to engage with others in responsive and reciprocal relationships, immersed in an environment that is rich in language, joy, and playfulness.”

– MAKOVICHUK, HEWES, LIRETTE & THOMAS, 2014

Helpful Resources for Educators and Families:

Creating Language-Rich Environments

Provides information, videos, and resources, including “Talk Box” and “Talking is Key” for parents and caregivers, which includes speech and language milestones and tips for supporting language development: <https://rb.gy/rgl8ds>

Help Your Child Now

Provides strategies for early language stimulation and creating a language-rich environment. Contains videos and printable documents in numerous languages: <https://rb.gy/a5fqsp>

Providence Child Development Society (*Pathways to Success Resources*)

- **Language Development:** one-page handout for parents and caregivers explaining modelling, expansion, self-talk, and parallel talk: <https://www.providencechildren.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Language-Development.pdf>
- **Language Fun - Singing and Playing Games:** one-page handout for parents and caregivers with song and game suggestions to support language skills at home: <https://www.providencechildren.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Language-Fun.pdf>

- **Serve and Return:** This handout explains what “serve and return” interactions are and why they are so important for young children’s development: <https://www.providencechildren.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Pathways-Serve-and-Return.pdf>

The Hanen Centre

Helpful literacy information for both parents and caregivers. Emphasis on language development for children with diverse needs: <https://www.hanen.org/information-tips/language-and-literacy/early-literacy>