

**RESEARCH BRIEF**

# Right to Supportive Learning Environments and High-Quality Resources

**Children have the right to supportive learning environments and high-quality learning resources.** Accessible learning environments that provide opportunity for robust, literacy-rich experiences, interactivity, and exploration of thought should be inclusive of teachers, students, families, and communities. Educators must not only acknowledge social and cultural identities at local and global levels but also audit their resources and practice to ensure they are bias free, culturally responsive, and student centered. Literacy and learning resources can take the form of text, audio, video, and interactive technologies—all of which need to be current, relevant, and in good condition. Access to print, digital, audio, and visual resources should encompass high-quality and representative children’s literature as well. Physical and virtual learning spaces of the classroom must be prioritized to achieve a truly supportive environment.

—*Children’s Rights to Excellent Literacy Instruction*

**S**upportive learning environments are often characterized as safe spaces—and for good reason. When students feel seen, heard, and validated, the classroom becomes a sanctuary, one in which developing learners are more likely to engage and explore. Fostering that kind of positive environment requires educators to invest in a child’s physical and social needs in addition to academic ones. Accessibility, inclusivity, and cultural responsiveness are just some of the key ingredients to developing a literacy learning environment that empowers students and sets them up for the greatest chance of success.

Children have the right to excellent literacy instruction that is relevant and responsive. All educators—at classroom, school, district, and policy levels—have a responsibility to ensure responsiveness within instruction, books, assessments, and digital spaces for all students. Classroom spaces and pedagogical practices should have a breadth of instructional materials and methods that cross interdisciplinary units and provide scaffolded offerings inclusive of and sensitive to the diverse cultures and individualities that are representative of the students in the classroom and school community at large (Montgomery, 2001).

To provide opportunities for all stakeholders to promote equity and cross-cultural understanding in the relevance of resources, classrooms should be encouraged to extend learning past classroom walls and to develop school partnerships with local and global communities. Such efforts can comprehensively align relevance, respond to it, and curate school environments to sustain it.

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## **Access to Print and Digital Resources**

Print and digital resources within classrooms can allow for blended learning opportunities and offer environments of cultural relevance for excellent literacy instruction. Classrooms providing access to print and digital resources are better equipped to celebrate diversity and diversify instruction on the basis of the needs, sensitivities, languages, and lived experiences of children.

In a blended classroom learning environment, students are better supported to develop digital competencies and to connect learning from and to home environments and experiences. Collections of print and digital books available for children should offer variety in topic, level, and format, and students should be supported to develop a love of reading print, listening to oral stories, and creating their own stories through written, spoken, and multimodal expression of ideas.

## **Meaning Making Through Multimodal Texts**

Resources should include a range of modalities to enable students to become discerning users and creators of multimodal texts, both digital and print. Texts may contain various combinations of key semiotic systems (visual, linguistic, spatial, gestural, and audio). To make meaning with text systems, students require an understanding of the codes and conventions associated with each system and an ability to synthesize information contained within the modalities present in each text.

The broad repertoire of practices of creating meaning also requires competence with using and analyzing texts. Therefore, the range of resources should afford opportunities for students to understand the purpose and function of diverse text types and to see how such factors determine text structure and tone of language used (Freebody & Luke, 2003). Such experiences with texts enable students to engage in critical analysis and to interrogate the perspective of the author; as constructors of meaning, they then can consider the impact on their own beliefs and the impact on belief systems of others. Provision of an extensive range of multimodal resources therefore provides the foundation on which students can be supported to communicate confidently within their learning spaces and in their communities, both locally and globally.

## Literacy-Rich Learning Spaces

Literacy-rich learning spaces must be culturally relevant, responsive, and sustainable, and spaces should offer ease of access for students to successfully interact with information and learning experiences. Spaces should be safe, comfortable, welcoming, and inclusive. Learning spaces, including building materials, furniture, displays, technology, and instructional materials, should be supportive of the physical, social, and learning needs of all students within the class or school community and should be reflective of the diverse cultures, interests, and backgrounds of all students. Students should be encouraged to add to the space and the space should be used to support learning with works-in-progress displayed, movement encouraged, and interaction with print and literacy experiences intentionally promoted throughout space and time during the school day.

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## Developing Mindful Learners

Every child with the right to read has the right to excellent literacy instruction and the right to supportive learning environments and high-quality resources. High-quality, open educational resources as accessible books, texts, and digital resources are for all to use, manipulate, and learn from. Supportive learning environments should accompany the components that itemize the space and should be in harmony with research and instructional practice. Literacy-rich learning environments and those that are robust and high quality invite inquiry and exploration and support development of thoughtful and responsible learners who are ready to share questions, ideas, passions, and dreams with the world.

This research brief expands on the third of four tenets that compose the International Literacy Association's *Children's Rights to Excellent Literacy Instruction* position statement: [literacyworldwide.org/rightstoread/statement](https://literacyworldwide.org/rightstoread/statement)

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#### About the International Literacy Association

The International Literacy Association (ILA) is a global advocacy and membership organization dedicated to advancing literacy for all through its network of more than 300,000 literacy educators, researchers, and experts across 146 countries. With over 60 years of experience, ILA has set the standard for how literacy is defined, taught, and evaluated. ILA’s *Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals 2017* provides an evidence-based benchmark for the development and evaluation of literacy professional preparation programs. ILA collaborates with partners across the world to develop, gather, and disseminate high-quality resources, best practices, and cutting-edge research to empower educators, inspire students, and inform policymakers. ILA publishes *The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, and *Reading Research Quarterly*, which are peer reviewed and edited by leaders in the field. For more information, visit [literacyworldwide.org](https://literacyworldwide.org).



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