

Using a Daily Message Board in the Preschool Classroom

What and How

Week 2 Learning Unit

Creating and Reading the Message Board With Children



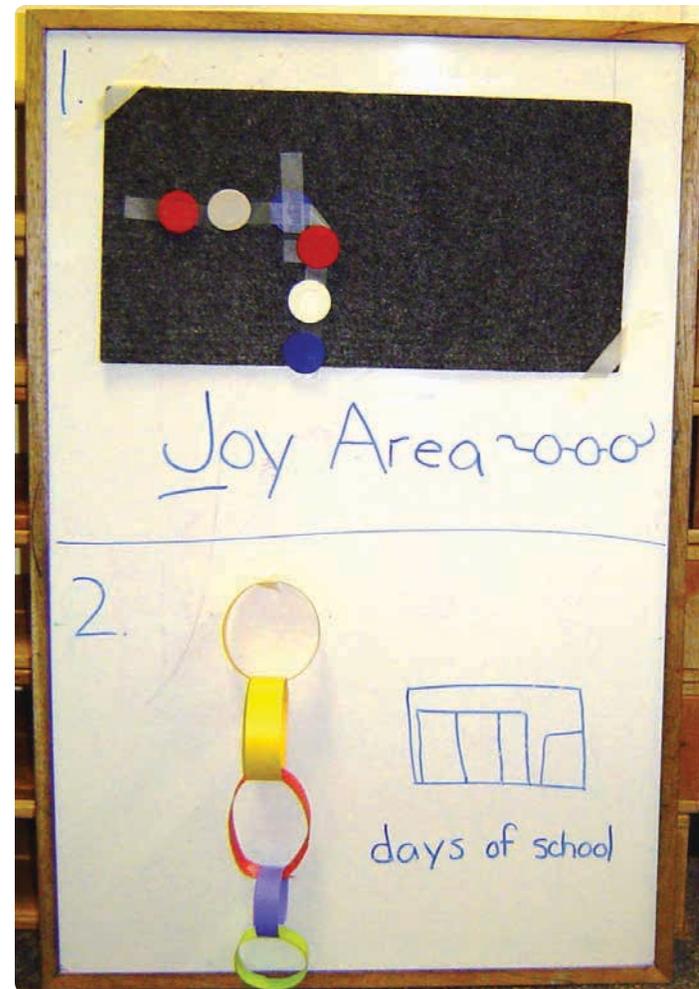
Week 2 Learning Unit Topics

- Creating child-relevant messages
- Types of common messages
- Creating a common classroom language
- Reading messages with children
- Conversing with children about messages



Creating Child-Relevant Messages

- Prepare the message board ahead of time.
- Write messages on a whiteboard, chalkboard, or large piece of paper.
- Keep drawings and written messages simple and brief to support all developmental levels of learning. Use the following to create your messages:
 - Drawings
 - Pictures/photos
 - Real objects
 - Symbols
 - Words and numbers



Creating Child-Relevant Messages (continued)



Creating Child-Relevant Messages (continued)

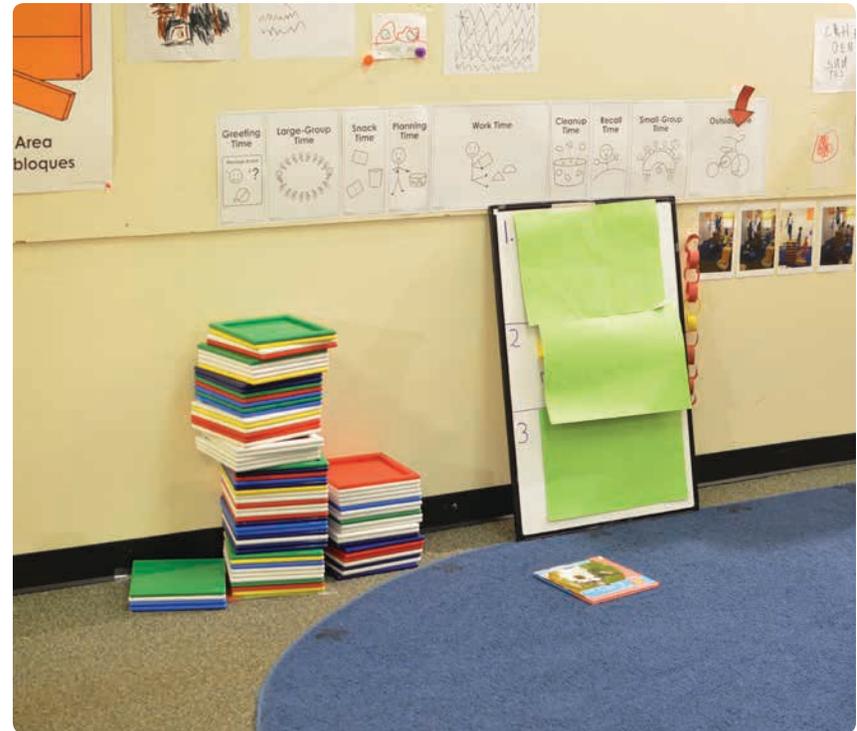


Creating Child-Relevant Messages (continued)



Creating Child-Relevant Messages (continued)

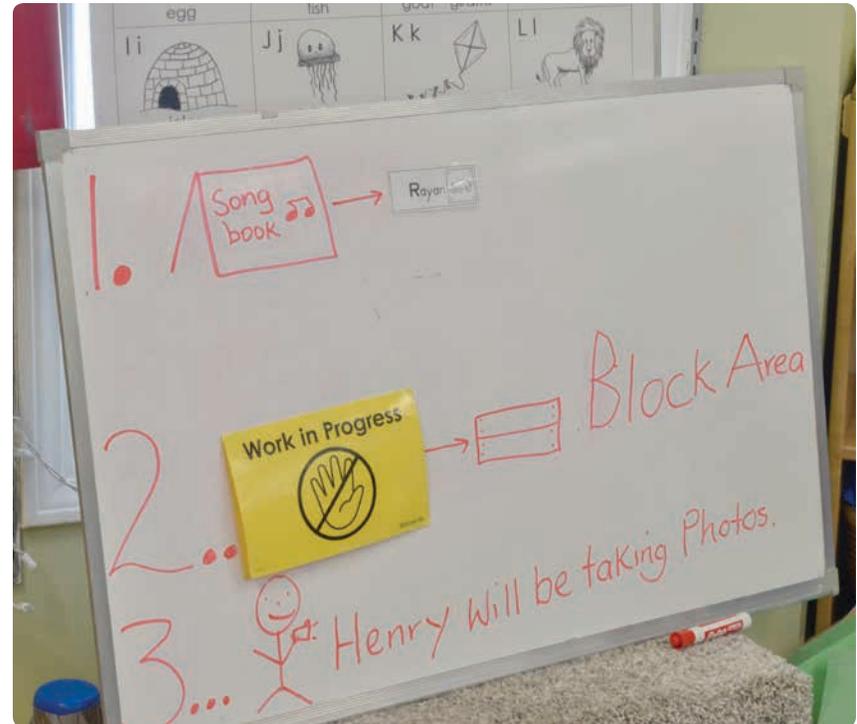
- Identify each message with a numeral.
- Keep each message covered until it is ready to be revealed.
- Position the message board at children's level.
- Reveal one message at a time in sequence as you read them with children.
- Keep a marker/eraser near the board for any corrections, changes, and/or additions.



Types of Common Messages

- Who's not here?
- New materials
- Changes in the daily routine
- Classroom visitors
- Classroom dilemmas

Let's look at these one at a time!



Who's Not Here? Messages

- When we share with children that a classmate or teacher is absent, they are invited to talk about that person's well-being and learn that others may miss them when they're the one who is absent. This information also helps children plan whom they will play with and think about who will support them throughout the daily routine when a familiar adult is absent.
- This can be represented in a concrete way with a paper chain link. For example, when a teacher is on vacation for a week, children help take a paper chain off the link each day until the teacher returns to school.



Be aware of the reason for the absence of a teacher or child(ren) as it can lead into sharing families' culture and traditions. For example, a child is absent because there is a new baby in their family; a child is going on a trip to see their grandparents in Mexico; a teacher is out sick, so children make cards).

New Materials Messages

- These are messages that let children know there are new materials available to help them make informed plans. Teachers can share information about the materials and ask children for ideas about where the materials are located and how to use them.

When adding new materials based on interests, curriculum content, and developmental levels of learning, think about ways to incorporate materials from families' home cultures (e.g., cultural fabric as blankets to wrap babies; chopsticks and wok to pretend to cook; seed pods from Africa to count with).



Changes in the Daily Routine Messages

- Since predictable routines help children navigate their day, any change in routine can be a potential roadblock to learning. Teachers can use the message board to inform children ahead of time about changes to the daily schedule, such as field trips or changes to the sequence of the day, so they aren't surprised by the change.



This class is going to take a walk to local museums in the neighborhood for their field trip.

Classroom Visitors Messages

- It is very important to let children know when visitors will be coming into the classroom, who they are, and what their purpose is in visiting. Sharing who will be joining the classroom can help those children who may be timid around new adults to feel more comfortable. This also allows children to prepare for other adults in the classroom who may be playing or not playing visitors.

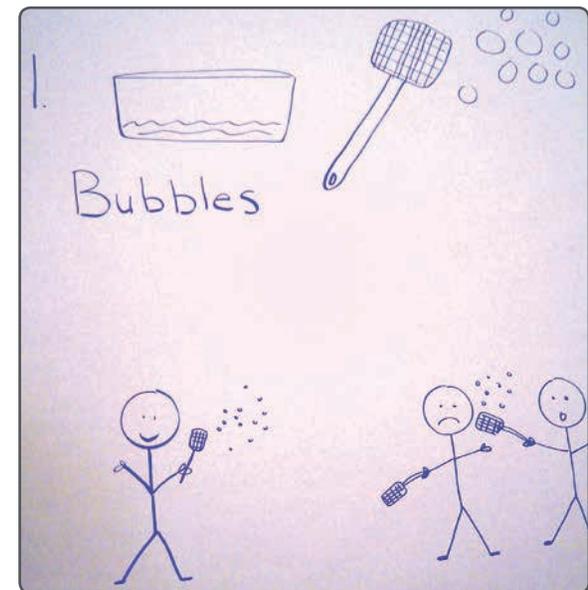
Encourage families to get involved in sharing their culture, traditions, careers, hobbies, and celebrations with children during different part of the routine (e.g., father's band came in for LGT to sing songs and show instruments; parents from China showed children how to make dumplings at SGT; families celebrating Hanukkah shared songs and the lighting of the Menorah at LGT; grandparents came in and told African folklore to children at Read Aloud time).



Classroom Dilemmas Messages

- Using messages is one way to initiate a conversation with children about specific classroom problems that need to be solved with all children's input (e.g., cutting dolls hair).
- Sharing social stories at message board time is a way to help the whole class with social situations they may be struggling with and need guidance to handle. It is a way of sharing social situations delicately and getting all children's ideas in support of the outcome.
- See Message Board activity on pg. 45 of the *Using a Message Board* resource

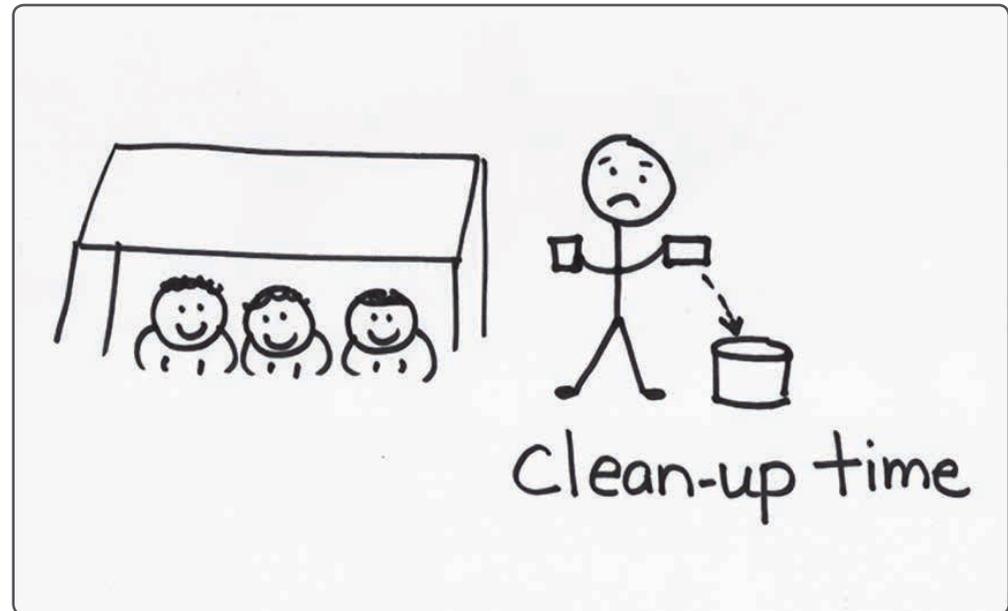
Be aware of tension and classroom social issues that segregate or leave children out, such as children talking about issues that they hear and see from their home or community that affect the relationships they have at school (e.g., skin tone; hair texture; race; gender; politics; teasing other children because they are different for any reason). Listen to children's conversations and discuss their ideas openly without shaming or belittling. Use the conflict strategies for stopping harmful words and discuss with children how all children should be treated. As teachers, reflect on your own actions and biases and model respect of all children. Continue to grow your knowledge and understanding when leading REDI discussions with children to ensure respect and equity for all children and families.



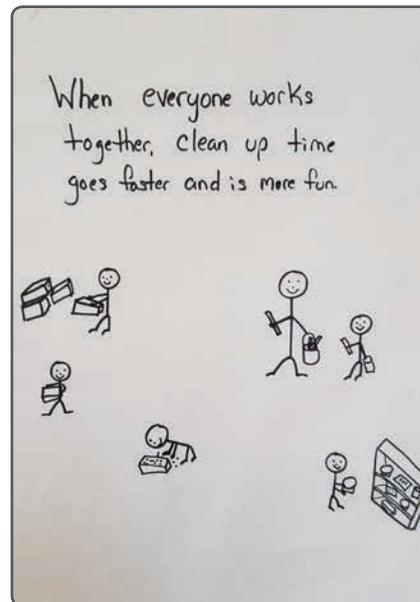
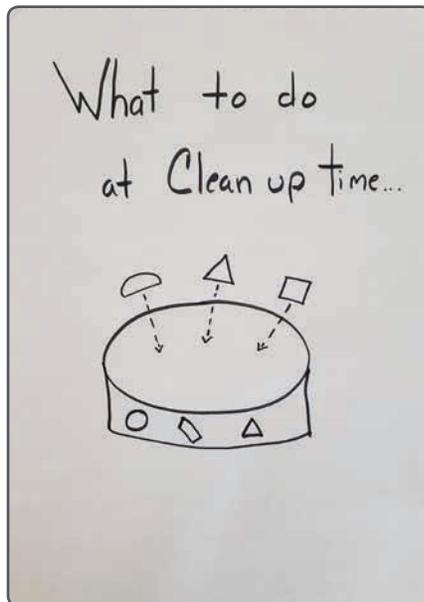
At outside time children were hitting others with the fly swats and bubbles.

Example of a Classroom Situation or Dilemma

- Decide what the problem is
- Draw the situation
- Prepare a page or space for children's ideas
- Have a marker available
- Make this the last message
- You can turn this into a booklet for children to refer to during the day



Turning a Classroom Situation Into a Story



- We can...
-  Use our hands to put away toys
 -  Go to an area and help clean up
 -  We can work together
 -  We can put all the big toys away first... Big Blocks
 -  We can use a bucket to clean up
 -  We can beat the music while cleaning up

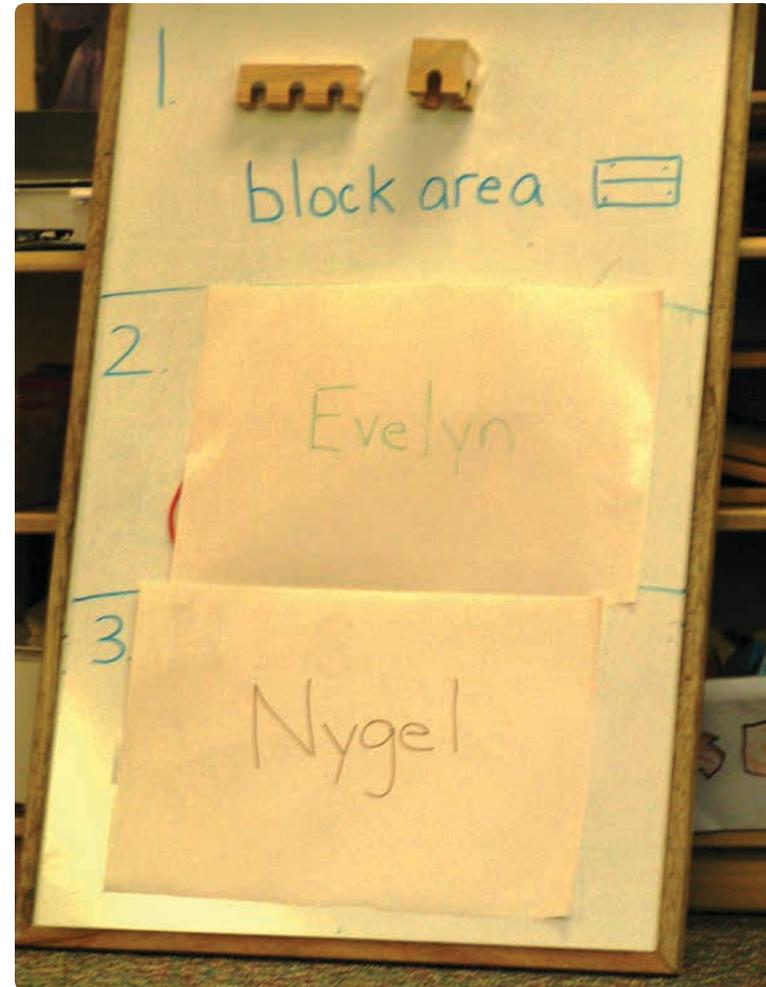
Why a Common Classroom Language?

- Young children begin to read through recognizing that environmental print, signs, and symbols convey meaning.
- At age two children can “read” pictures and label things. This skill grows as children begin to identify common symbols, read two or more words, and at age five begin to read three or more words in print (COR Advantage, 2014).
- When teachers and children read messages together, they are engaged in shared reading which leads to conversation and exchanges of ideas.
- Understanding alphabetic principle begins as teachers create classroom environments that include words and symbols for objects and ideas that are meaningful and useful to children.



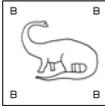
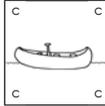
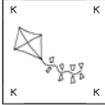
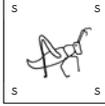
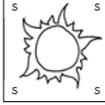
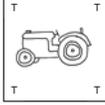
Common Classroom Symbols

- Personal symbols
- Symbols of the school building and common spaces
- Classroom area symbols
- Symbols for parts of the daily routine



Personal Symbols

Children and adults choose a personal symbol (Letter Link) that corresponds to the initial letter and letter sound of their first names.

Katie's Group		
Brennen		
Connor		
Kiefer		
Maya		
Sabina		
Sara		
Trevor		

Symbols of the School Building and Common Spaces

Classroom building representations that help children understand and anticipate transitions to and from their classroom to other spaces.



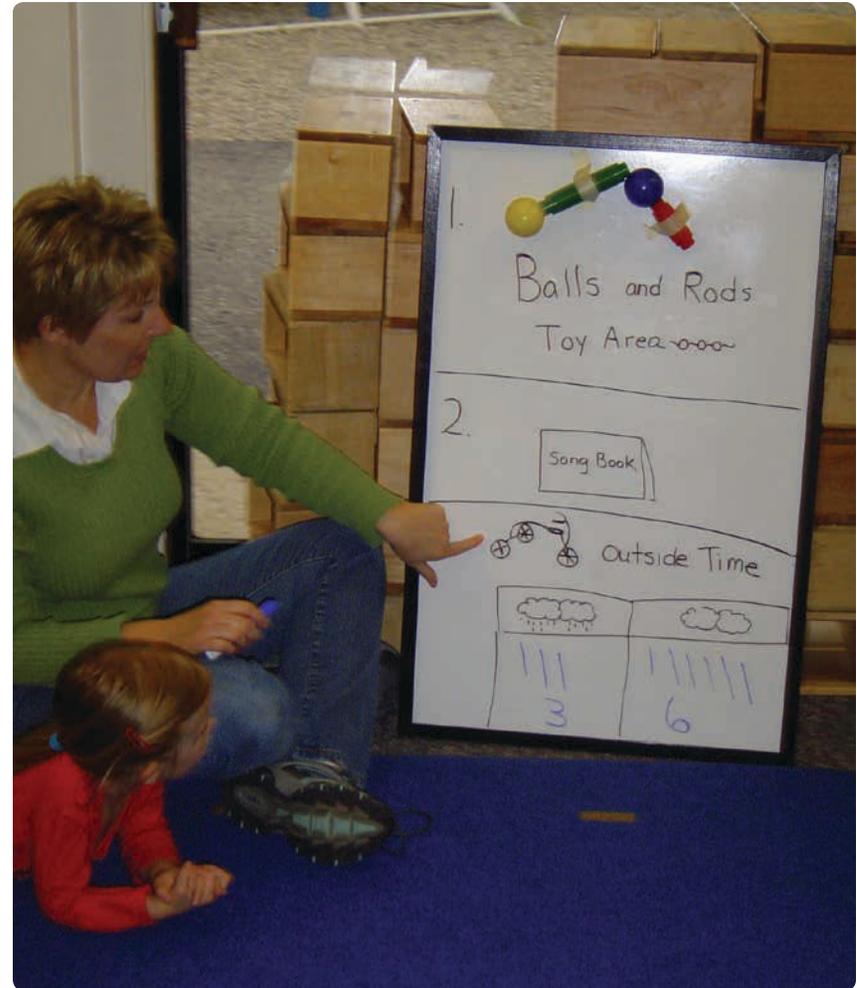
Classroom Area Symbols

Teachers label each area with words and a related symbol, usually an object associated with that area (e.g., a paintbrush for the art area).



Symbols for Parts of the Daily Routine

Choose common symbols to represent changes that occur in the daily routine (e.g., a universal “no” sign drawn through the symbol for outside time when it is raining).



Making a Home Connection With Common Classroom Language

- Share common words and symbols that are used at message board time with parents (e.g., copies of letter link symbols, stay-at-home days, daily routine storybooks for parents to read).
- Encourage parents to use a message board at home.
- Brainstorm with families to find images they could use for parts of their routines at home (e.g., bedtime, prayer, soccer practice, dance, T-ball).
- Encourage parents to make drawings of simple home routines with accompanying words.
 - Example of a routine: (drawing/photo with words)
 - Brush teeth
 - Put pajamas on
 - Get into bed
 - Read a story
 - Turn on the night-light
 - Give a hug

Strategies for Reading Messages With Children

- Model reading a message left to right and top to bottom (e.g., you might say, *When I read a message, I look for pictures, symbols, and words I know*).
- Identify each message by number. Point to the first message labeled “1.” You might say, *Here is message number one. This is where we start*.

Teachers can represent all children’s languages in the classroom (e.g., calling the message numbers in Spanish or labeling new material in Arabic). Alternate languages (written and verbal) if more than two languages are used in one classroom.



Strategies for Reading Messages With Children *(continued)*

- Identify pictures, symbols, letters, words, and numbers.
- Think aloud as you read a message (e.g., *I see the picture for outside time; it might tell us something about outside time today*).
- Point out individual elements of a message (e.g., *I see a picture of a paintbrush, our symbol for the art area. Here are the words that say art area*).
- Talk about letters in familiar words (e.g., *Here's the letter 't' in the word toy. Tommy's name also starts with the letter 't'*).

For ELL children, brainstorm with parents about common message board words that can be translated and used during message board time and/or have families write messages in their home language. Keep in mind that some children may be confused at where to start reading because in their culture they do not read left to right and top to bottom. Point to individual messages so these children can see what you are doing.

Strategies for Conversing With Children at Message Board

- Ask open-ended questions to engage conversation:
 - Ask, *What do you see?*
 - Ask, *What symbol(s), letters, or words can you read in this message?*
 - Ask, *What part of this message tells us it's about...?*
 - Ask, *How do you know?*
- Accept and acknowledge all answers given by children
- Set up a concrete way of keeping track of how all children are getting turns with the message board (e.g., pull names by letter link or children's names on popsicle sticks and call on children by name instead of saying *Who wants to...*, which lessens conflicts).
- Be aware of engaging all children at their developmental levels in reading messages (younger children can remove the covers, accept all children's writing and help other children understand ways of writing letters/numbers).

Messages Throughout the Year

- At the start of the year and/or with younger children, create simple messages with pictures, photos, and familiar symbols (e.g., area signs, daily routine symbols, drawing or photo of program building, stop sign, no symbol, question mark, Letter Links, etc.).
- Repeat symbols and messages. Encounters with these consistent symbols help children learn how print conveys meaning.



Messages Throughout the Year (continued)

- Add words to messages as children develop more interest in and knowledge about letters, print concepts, and numbers (e.g., child and teacher names, object names).
- In mid-to-late year, build in opportunities for children to find and correct mistakes on the message board (e.g., miss number the messages, use the wrong first letter of an area [boy area for toy area]).

As you reflect on your interactions with children, how are you respecting their cultures, home languages, and abilities during message board?



A Peek Ahead

- Next week you will explore:
- Strategies for supporting curriculum content at message board
 - Literacy
 - Mathematics
 - Social Studies
 - Social and Emotional Development
- Strategies for creating social stories with children

