

### *Chapter 3*

#### **New Teacher Spotlight: Organizing Your Library**

Consider how to organize reading materials in your classroom library to best meet the needs of your students. Consider putting the books in bins by author, theme, genre, or format/purpose (e.g., predictable books, guided reading books). Each bin should be carefully labeled so children have easy access to them. There should also be magazines, recipe books, and newspapers along with a technology center with computers, tablets, and audio texts. All of the bins can be labeled in the multiple languages of children.

Ask yourself if it makes sense to separate books by language or to color code them with a colored decal (e.g., purple for Mandarin, red for English). If you work in a dual-language bilingual classroom, make sure your library has a balance of books in English and your students' languages other than English. When there are mostly English books and few books in the students' home languages, it sends a message that books in their home languages are not as important. Even in monolingual classrooms, where students are taught entirely in English, having texts in languages other than English is powerful. You can get books from publishers that specialize in languages other than English. You can also ask parents to donate or suggest texts that will help make your library multilingual.

Make sure children have choices that offer a broad view of what is available to them. Offer them ample opportunities to engage in authentic reading experiences where they explore what readers do, reasons for reading, and purposes for reading. They also need opportunities to talk with others about their reading, so they hear multiple points of view. In a recent study, Lerner-Quam, West, and Espinosa (2020) found that the most familiar children's books to education students were written by Eric Carle or Dr. Seuss. While those books have a lot to offer, all children have a right to see themselves and their lives represented in the books that are read to them and those they read on their own. As teachers of emergent bilingual students, we have a responsibility to examine our collection of books critically. Be sure to put culturally and linguistically diverse books front and center—this sends a message to children that who they are is important!

## **New Teacher Spotlight: Using Nursery Rhymes to Develop Phonemic Awareness and Support Understanding of Phonics**

Teachers have often relied on nursery rhymes and poetry that contains rhymes to help children develop phonemic awareness and learn about phonics. When children are repeatedly exposed to rhymes, they become keenly aware of the sounds in words and how those sounds connect to other words. They also learn that the ultimate purpose of developing phonemic awareness and understanding phonics is it to eventually navigate authentic texts on their own. Other texts to consider are songs, finger plays, chants, riddles, and jokes.

You can start by printing the text of a chosen nursery rhyme, song, or the like on chart paper or displaying it on the smartboard. Begin by reading aloud the whole text. Then read it a second time, inviting the children to join in chorally, and to use their hands to clap and reinforce patterns in sounds using rhythm. Next, draw the children's attention to key rhyming words in the song, chant, or nursery rhyme. Ask them to describe what they notice about the sounds in some of the words. Focus on syllables and phonemes, and help the children develop an understanding of onsets (the initial phonological unit of a word) and rimes (the string of letters that follow, which often start with a vowel). For example, in the word *pack*, *p* is the onset and *ack* is the rime. From there, help children begin to study common patterns (e.g., *ight*, *it*, *at*) in word families (e.g., *fight*, *light*, *might*). Finally, return to the text and read it together so children know that the purpose of these experiences is to be able to read the whole text.

Additionally, on another day, using this same text, you can select a word and study its phonemes, for example by selecting the word *cat*, you can help the children examine the phonemes (sounds) that make up this word /c/, /a/, and /t/. You can help the children examine how blending letter sounds together, you make the word *cat*. Another time you can explore how *cat* rhymes with *hat* and *bat*. You can follow this type of lesson with further guided and independent reading practice.

If you're taking a translanguaging stance, you can start with nursery rhymes in the languages that students use with their families. Students may listen for instances of rhyming and then connect the concept of rhyming in more playful and natural ways.