

Taipei County 2010
English Teachers Training Trip
To California U.S.A.

Hacienda La Puente United School District Observation Report on Successful Learning

- The Meaningful Linguistic Environment for Language Acquisition -

Presenter:

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Introduction

This training program offers trainees a chance to explore the latest innovations in teaching methods and in practical application adopted by local American teachers in public elementary/ middle school classroom. For the first week, we are offered some regular training courses conducted by Hacienda La Puente Unified School District Language Arts Program specialists whom first put their excellent teaching experiences and techniques in our very hands, and then, we are sent to local public schools, the very frontline of education, for classroom observation in the second week which brings us more empirical information from school sites.

There is one common message that both the training courses and the classroom observation try to convey that is **for teachers to run a meaningful linguistic environment for students' language learning**. Listed below you will find how and why educators should put efforts on operating an effective learning classroom.

Successful Language Learning

- Teachers always dedicate themselves to providing a successful learning environment for their students. Somehow, for language acquisition, **it is the learner's role that weighs the most.**
- **Active participation in interaction** and **developmental level of our students** should be considered the most in their learning process.
- Listed below are three crucial elements that can reinforce our students' language learning and some implications for educators adapted from **Marica Brechtel, *Bring It All Together* (2001).**

1. A low affective filter:

- Develop a classroom where high self-esteem, low anxiety, and inclusion for student are the norm (Krashen, Cummins, Baron, Sagor, and Wink).

● Implications for teachers:

- Promoting a safe and comfortable learning environment for all learners, including those with special needs by posting messages we want learners to receive.
- There must be mutual respect and trust between the teacher and the student for optimal learning to take place. A friendly first impression can make learners feel comfortable when they have no understanding of the teaching.
- A time for students to motivate, focus, and stress the joy and purpose of learning.
- Providing a classroom that encourages risk-taking in language, limit overcorrecting.
- As a result, children are helped to become independent and confident learners.

2. Comprehensible input:

- Do not assume that what you say, repeat, or write on the board is understood. Check that you are understood (Krashen, Cummins).

● Implications for teachers:

- The learning environment should meet students' developmental needs.
- Use graphic organizers, such as the pictorial input chart, that imprint information in a pattern that makes learning retrievable over a long period of time.
- Strategies that utilize music, art, and chants, linked to the content, can assist students with learning.

3. Learning is essentially mental process

- Language is acquired by meaningful immersion, demonstration, and opportunities to practice (Krashen, Cambourne).

- Implications for teachers:

- Ensure that language is used interactively - vary the groupings for scaffolding.
- Offer a lot of modeling and a chance to practice new skills and concepts.

Meaningful Linguistic Environment

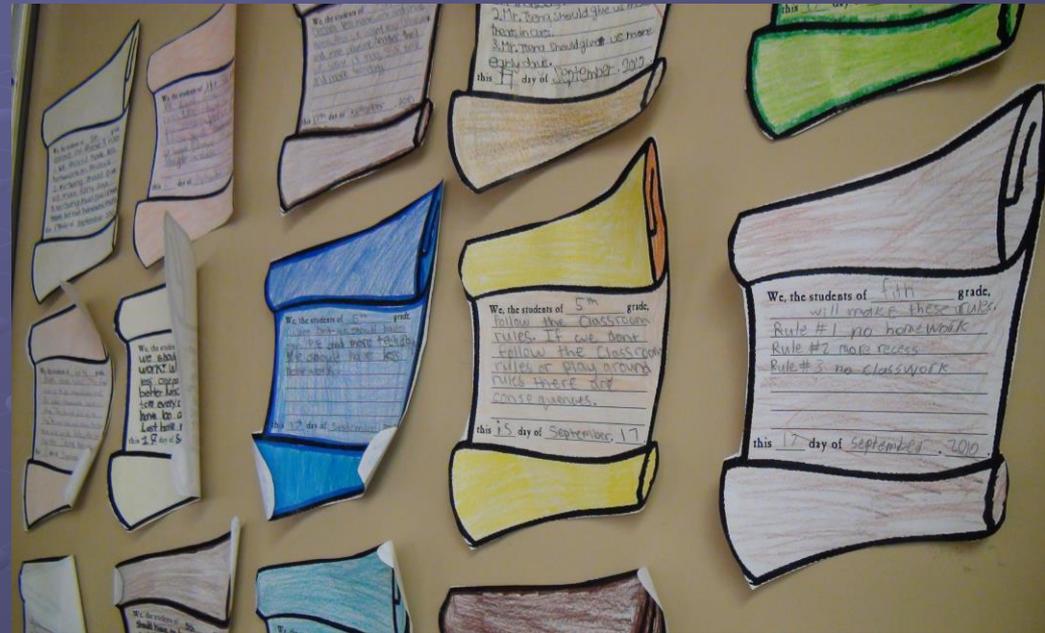
- It is **the use and organization of the space in your classroom**, the daily schedule and routines, and the social and emotional atmosphere.
- We have seen researchers putting efforts on studying the role of environmental factors in language acquisition and the result of this study **confirms the positive contribution of meaningful linguistic environment.**
- Research findings indicate that language learners make remarkable progress when immersing in **a language functional classroom.**
- What makes your classroom environment functional? Details are listed as following:

◆ A living wall in the classroom:



- Wall decorations should consist mostly of students' art displayed attractively at their eye level.

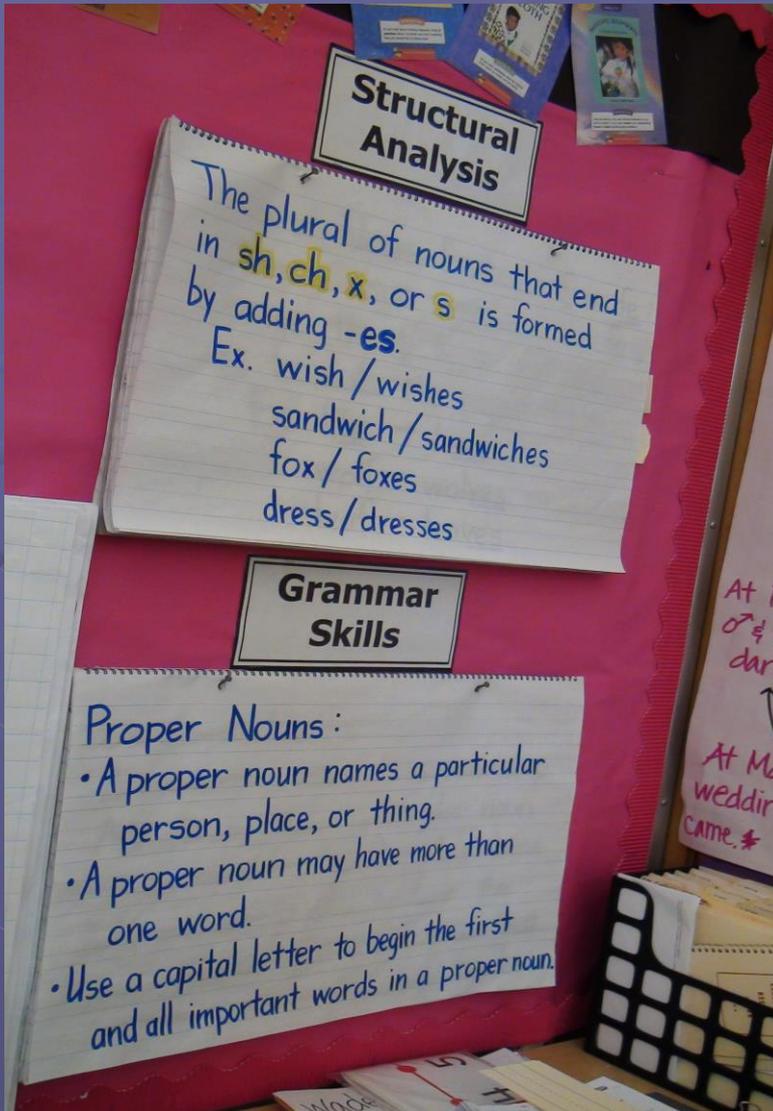
◆ A living wall in the classroom



● Walls should be dripping with the language of the students.

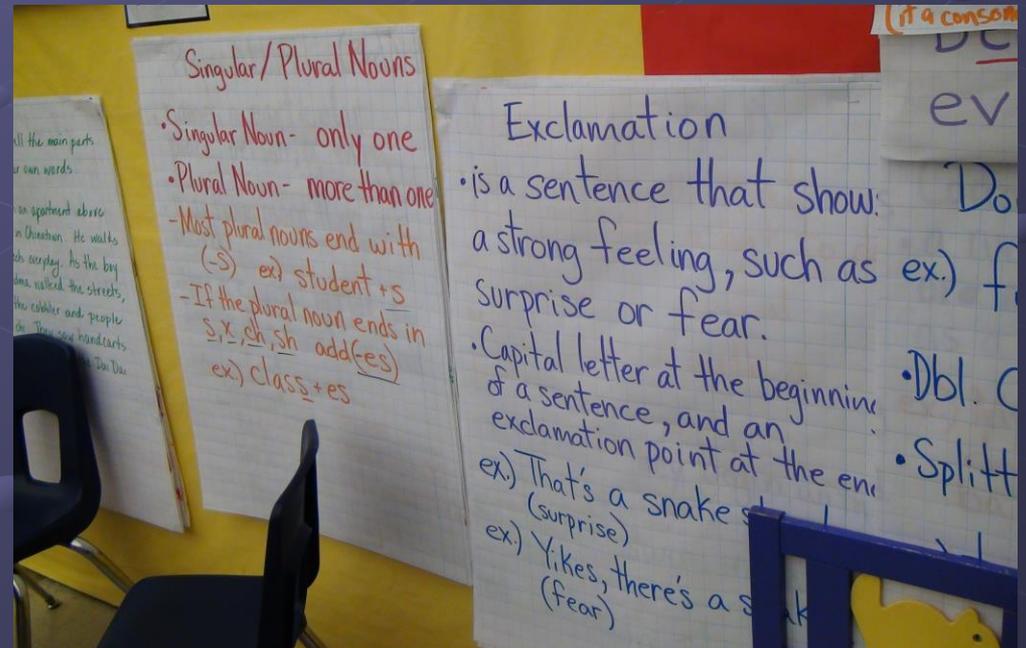
Walls are not bulletin boards that only display the ten perfect works.

◆ A living wall in the classroom



- Walls should be dripping with the content the students are learning.

Walls with the language of academics can be used by students to help with reading and writing.



◆ A living wall in the classroom

Insert Quotation Marks
Li said, I wish I had a horse.

Insert a Comma
Juli's dog likes dog toys treats, and going for walks.

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- Print rich is meaningless if the students are not using the print. Walls shouldn't be seen as merely art bulletin boards.

A meaningful linguistic environment should have many visual props that can be used to enhance teaching.

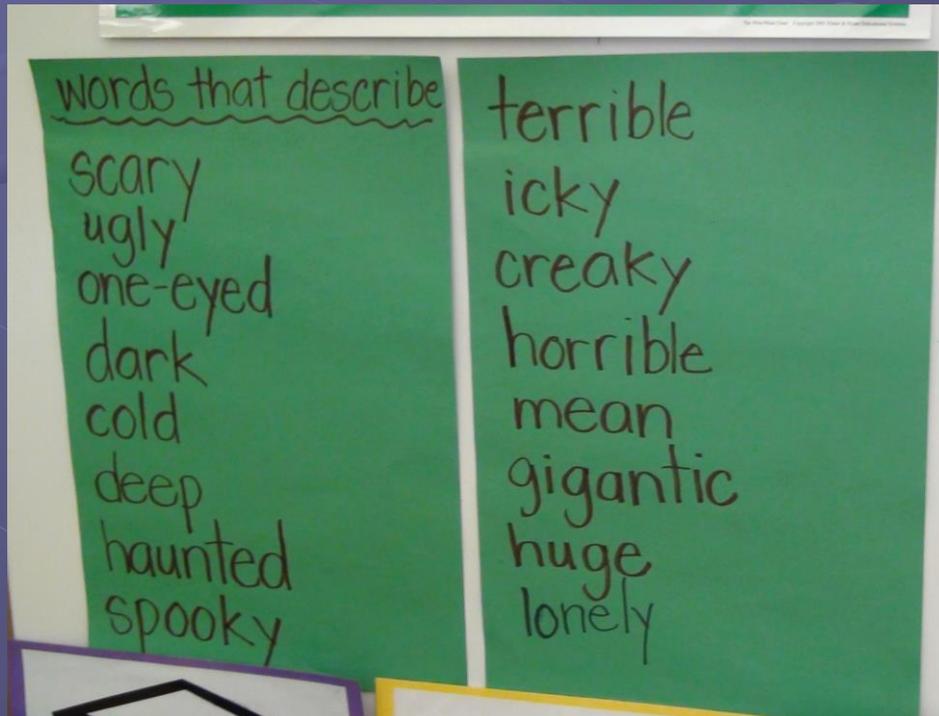
Proofreading Marks

- New Paragraph**: Clean the cage. After cleaning the cage, remember to feed the bird.
- Close Up**: Amrit built a new dog house.
- Insert Space**: Mia does not have a house for her dog.
- Transpose**: Do you think dogs or cats make pets better?
- Spell Out**: I have 2 cats.
- Capitalize**: Juan's cat is named banjo.
- Lowercase**: Abby's cat is named Frisky.
- Delete or Take Out**: Lawanda doesn't have any pets.
- Insert Word(s)**: Derek likes to take his cat for walks.
- Insert Quotation Marks**: Li said, I wish I had a horse.
- Insert a Period**: Curtis just got a new puppy.
- Insert a Comma**: Juli's dog likes dog toys treats, and going for walks.

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◆ A living wall in the classroom

- Word walls which teachers do not have students interact with on a daily basis, they are nothing but decoration (Teachers must design strategies that promote students to use this resource).



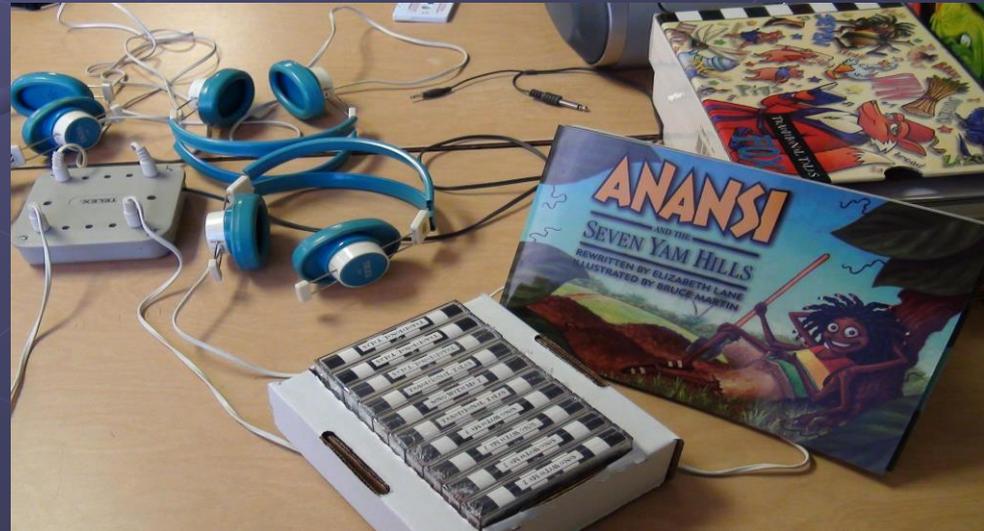
◆ A library in the classroom

- Many students are in so call “silent period” at the beginning of their language acquisition process.

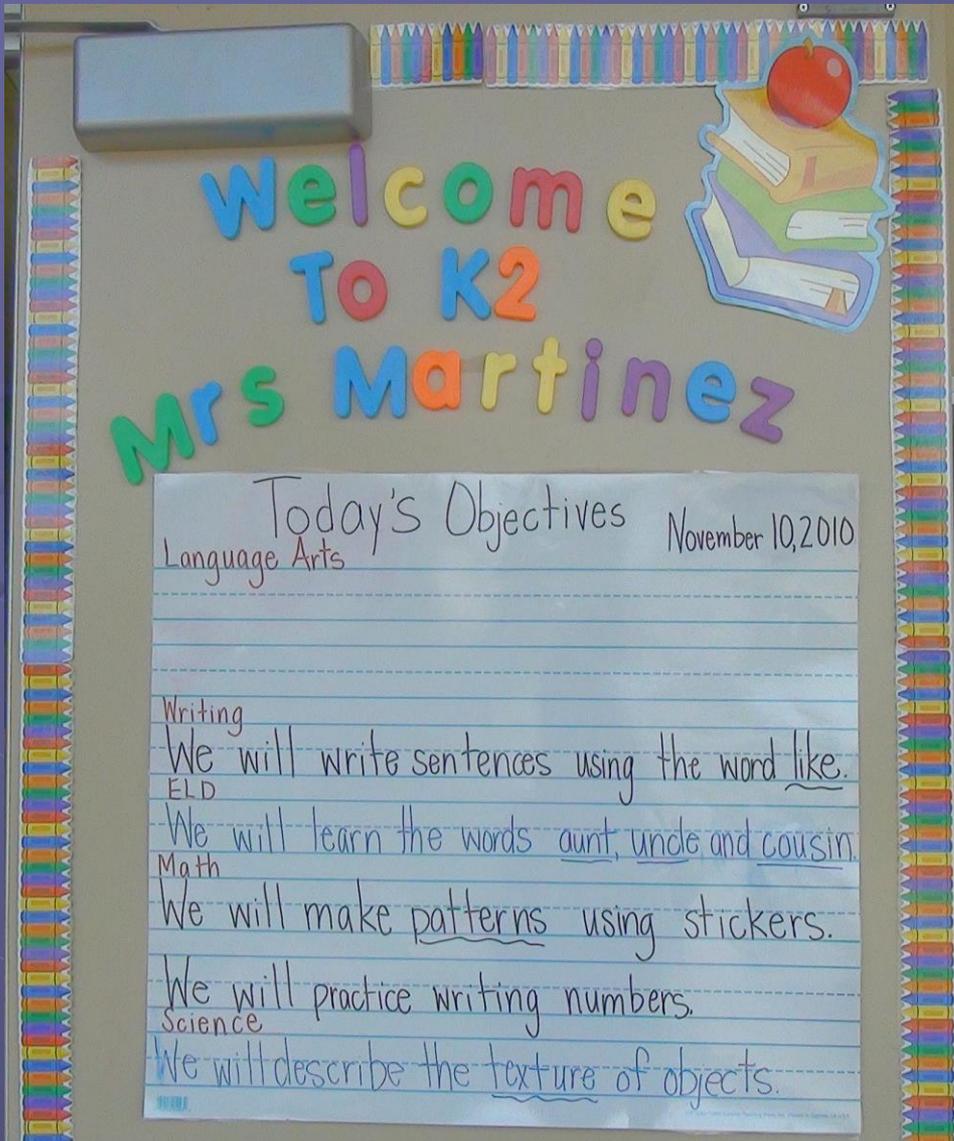
Sharing the story and illustration in the book can get their attention and build their receiving language.



- The classroom should also have books on tape or e-books for computer-based use that can be used by individual students.



◆ Clear progress schedule and objective in the classroom



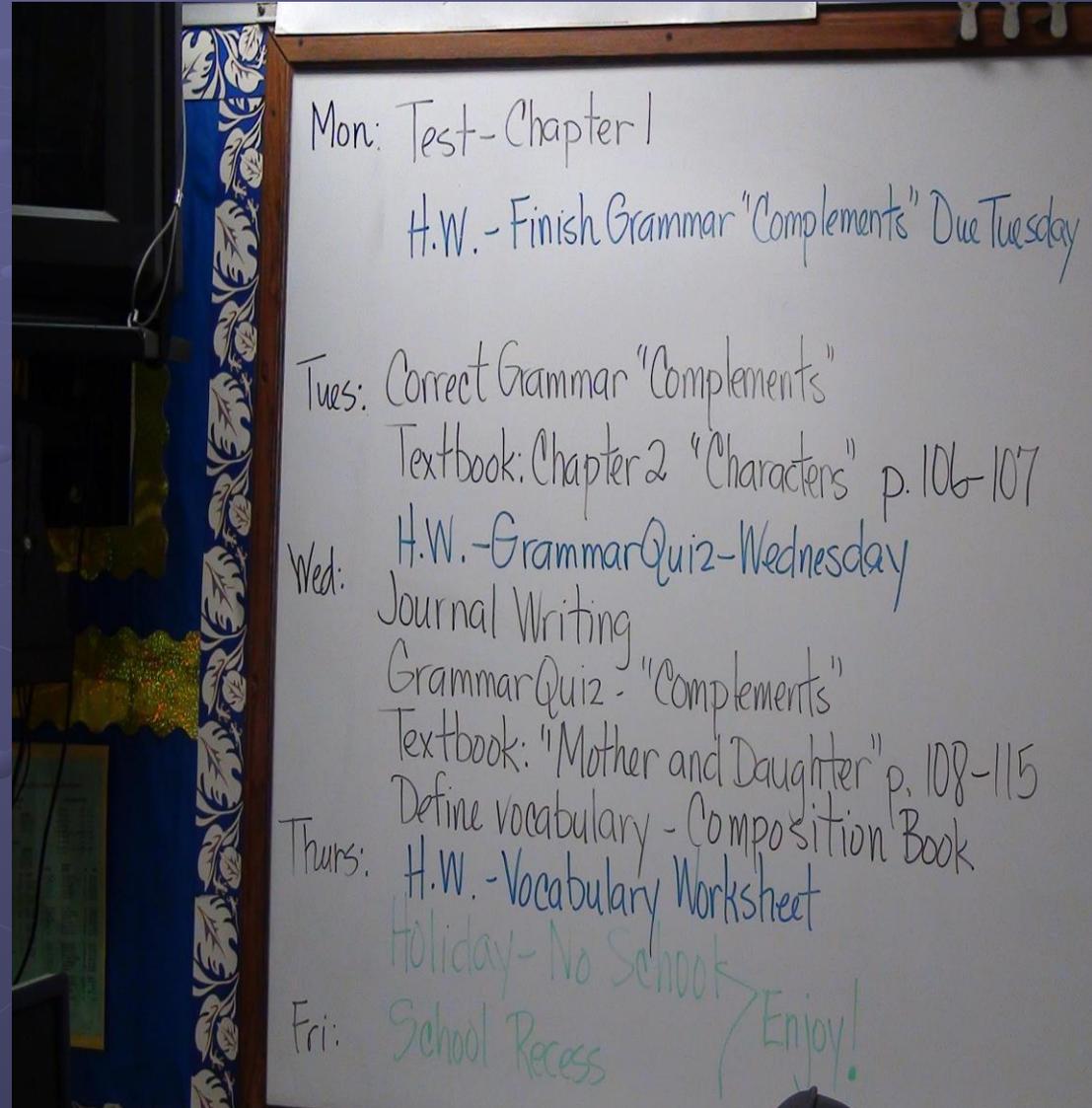
- Establish a structure for each day by displaying the daily routines and schedule that present the sense of order in your curriculum.

By doing so, students know what to expect, and understand what is expected of them.

◆ Clear progress schedule and objective in the classroom

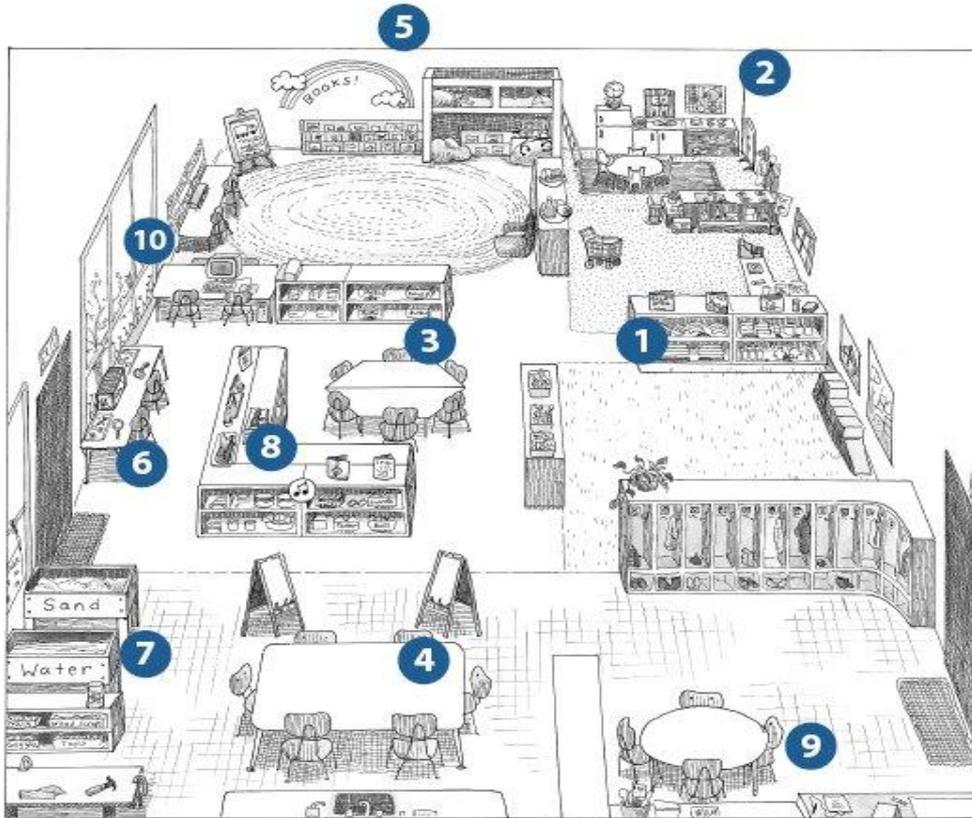
When learners are aware that their learning environment is predictable, they would be able to settle into learning.

By giving a sense of order in your teaching, creates a sense of order inside students' learning.



◆ Setting in the classroom

Interest Areas



- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Blocks | 6. Discovery |
| 2. Dramatic Play | 7. Sand and Water |
| 3. Toys and Games | 8. Music and Movement |
| 4. Art | 9. Cooking |
| 5. Library | 10. Computers |

- A meaningful learning classroom should be organized into different interest areas in order to offer multiple opportunities for students to explore, discover, and grow.

Separate interest areas setting is viewed as an ideal setting for preschool children. And we also see similar settings in K-1 classrooms at Mesa Robles School.

◆ Setting in the classroom



- A setting that is safe, comfortable, attractive, and well-designed helps learners engage in the activities you offer.



- Bright colors are used selectively on walls to highlight focus areas or mark surroundings on surface.

◆ Setting in the classroom



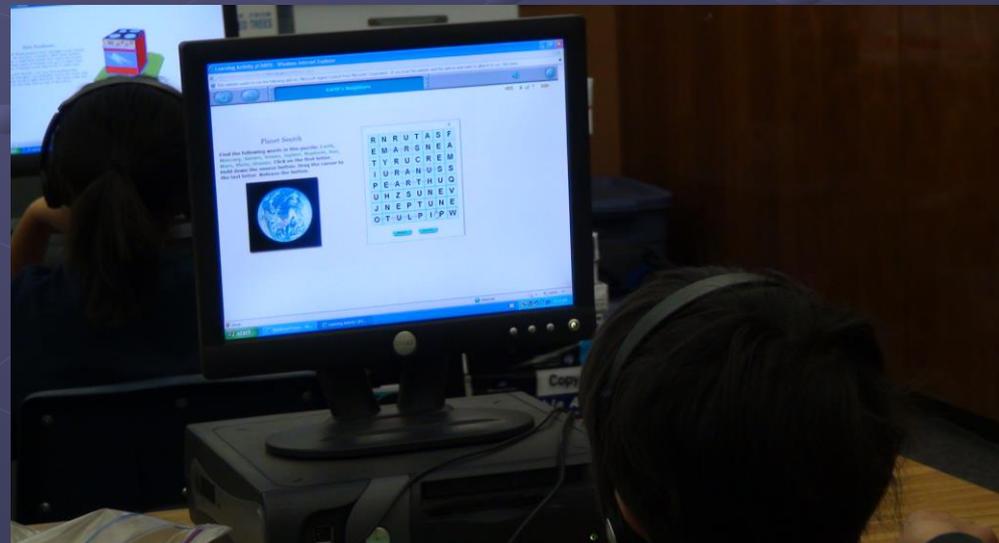
- Teachers can observe and interact with students in positive ways in such environment where supports the academic goals you set for learners.

◆ Multimedia learning in the classroom

1. The Blackboard e-Education Platform

<http://www.hlpusd.k12.ca.us/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>

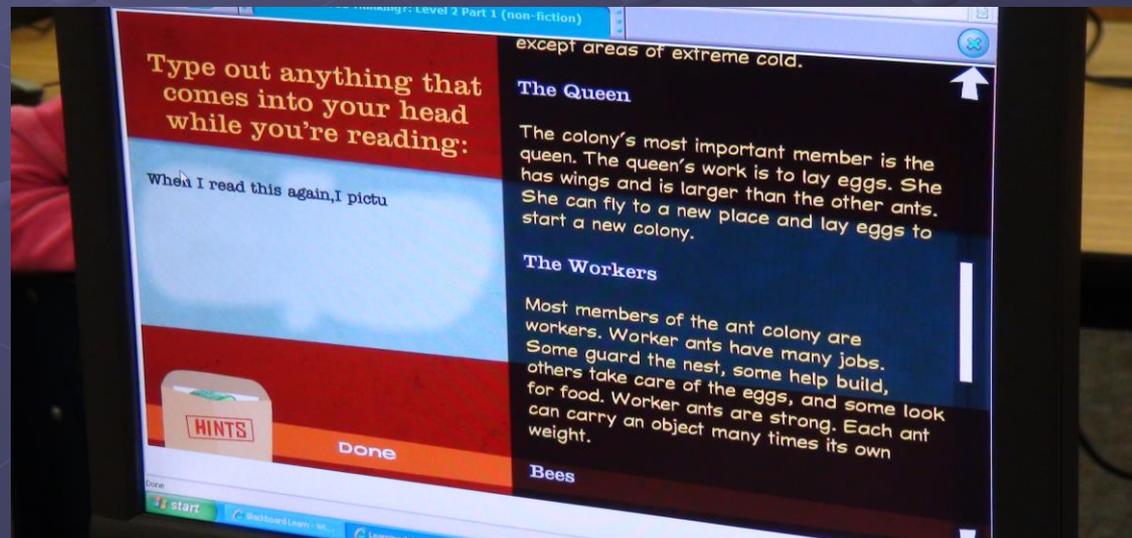
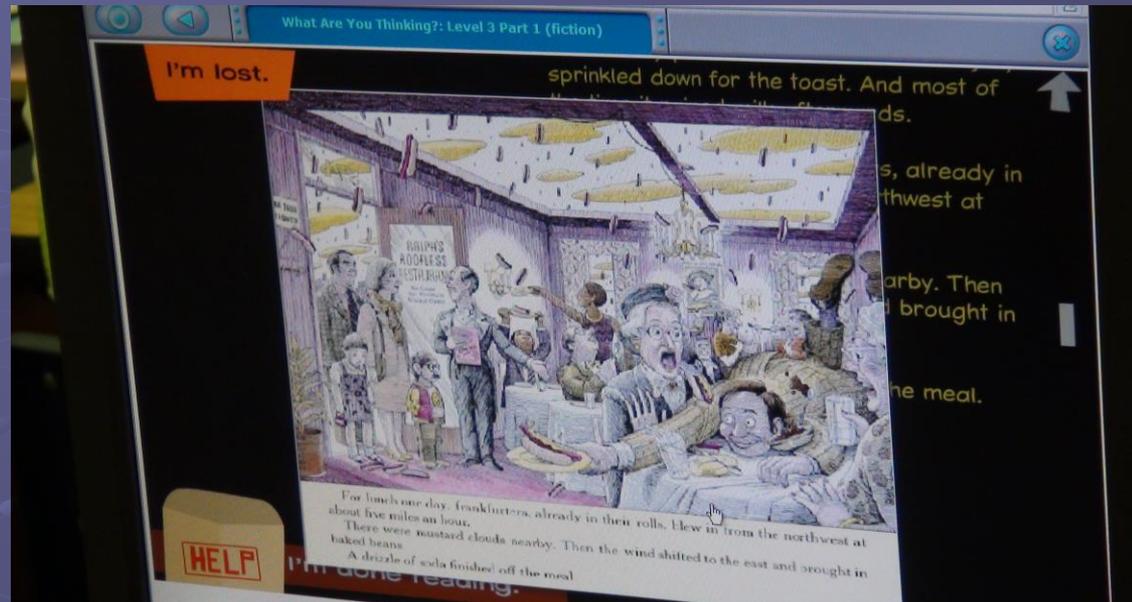
In the computer lab at Mesa Robles School, Mr. Xiong is leading his G3 students reviewing subjects that are already been taught for the past week by using the built-in mutual interactive learning software on Blackboard Learn Site.



◆ Multimedia learning in the classroom

The Blackboard e-Education platform is designed to transform the Internet into a powerful environment for the educational experience.

Students can also access this learn site from home by logging in the system.

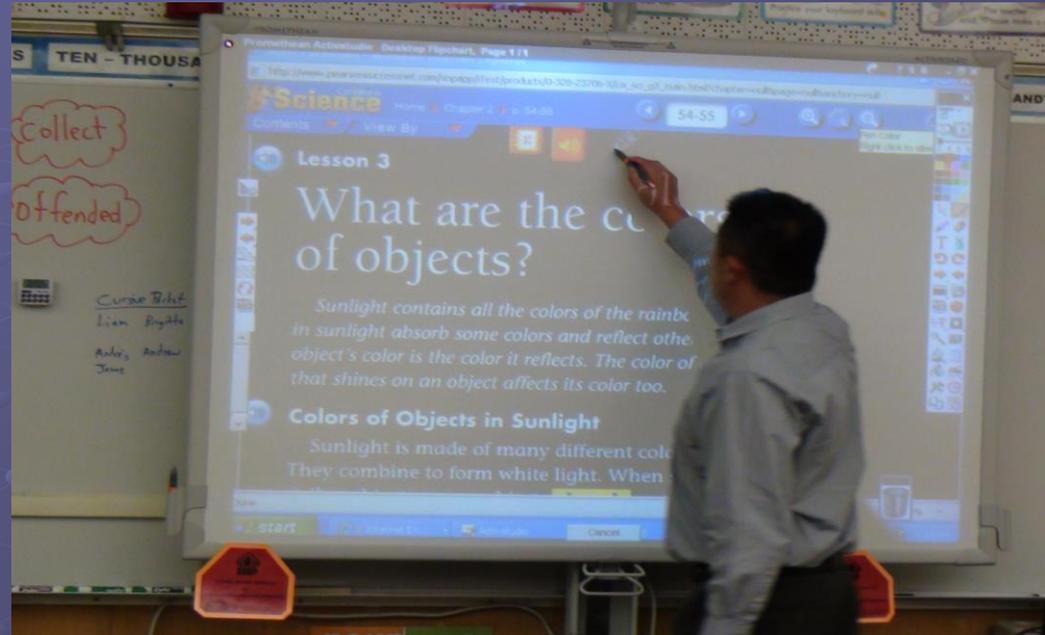


◆ Multimedia learning in the classroom

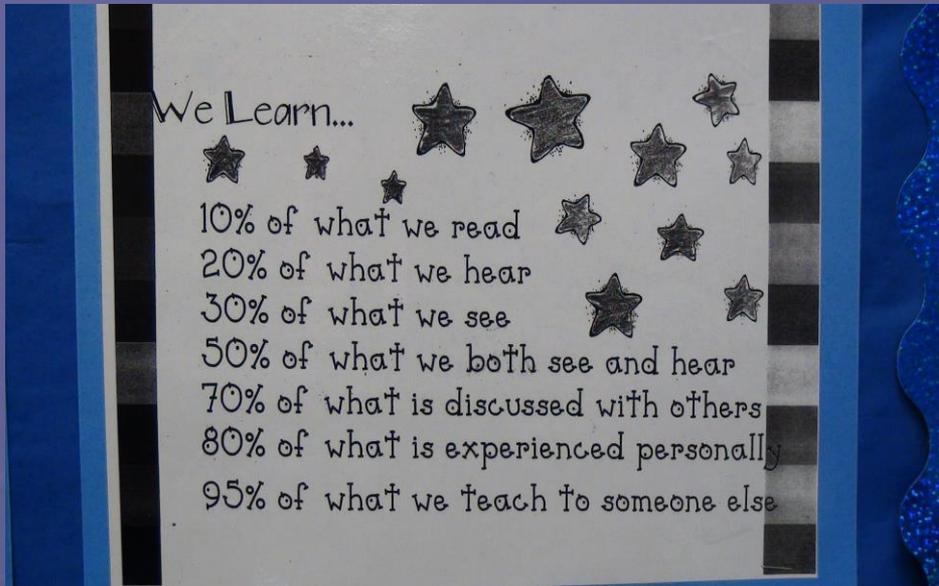
2. The Interactive Whiteboard

Electronic whiteboard is great for teaching and presentation. The touch screen and data capturing features make them useful in multiple applications.

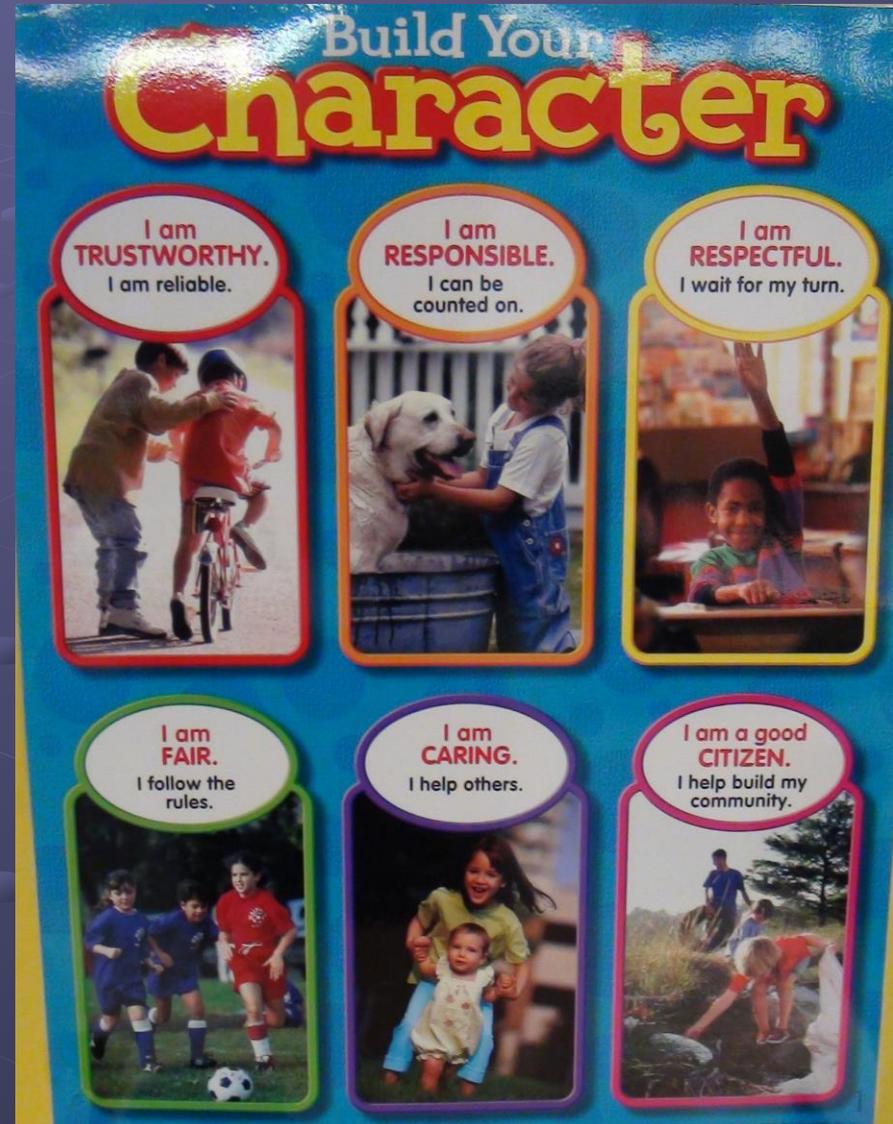
Teacher can use it to write notes with a stylus or finger. When teaching grammar skills, students can interact with the software on the electronic whiteboard and use the “highlighter tool” to highlight the nouns, verbs, or objective words.



◆ A community in the classroom



- Creating a socio-emotional environment in a community classroom by treating learners in positive ways and encourage learners to do the same for others.

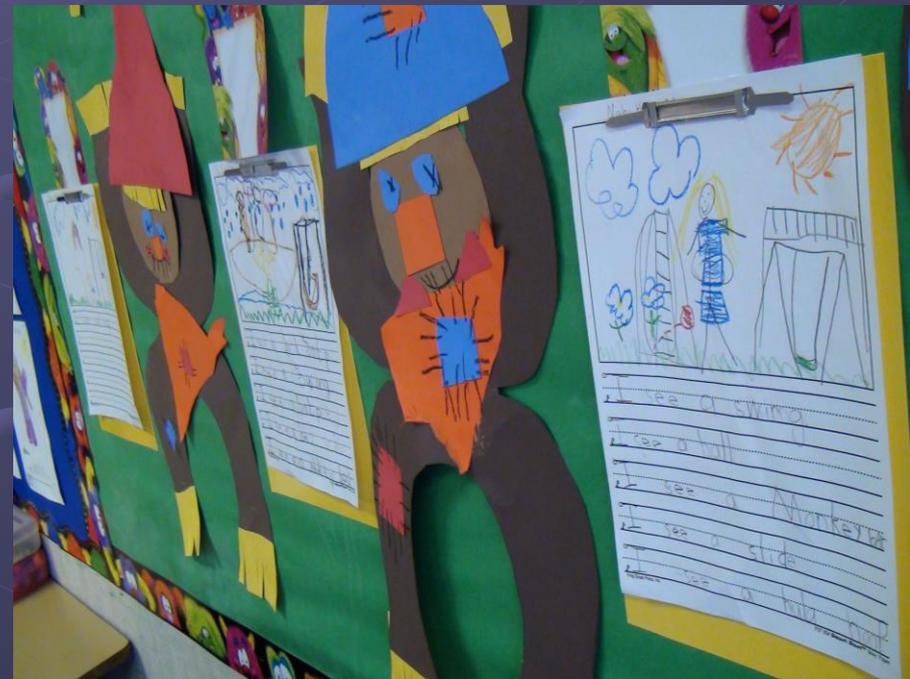


◆ A community in the classroom



Each student's work is displayed and protected.

- Walls are not bulletin boards that only display the ten perfect works.



◆ A community in the classroom



- Each student has a cubby or a basket marked with his/her name or picture for keeping personal belongings.

- On the surfaced of their working tables can be label and print with relative linguistic elements that students are learning.



◆ A community in the classroom

The positive social climate in the classroom helps learners feel good about this learning environment.

By feeling so, students can learn to the best of their ability.



Summary

- The meaningful linguistic environment should be **a rich combination of events that engage students in learning.**

Learning is no longer considered merely an accumulation of knowledge **but an understanding and ability to construct knowledge in meaningful ways.**

With the recent emphasis on teaching approaches that **view students as the center of their learning process,** and on curricula involving many kinds of objects and projects that are promoting learner's progress, building the meaningful learning environment should **consider mostly the needs of learners** than a form of mass instruction.