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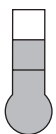
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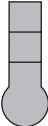

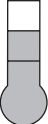

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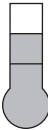
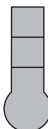
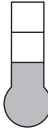
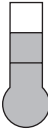
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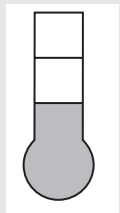
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Simple Things to Do

Learning Language by Using It

Whole language is a way of thinking, a way of living and learning with children in classrooms.

—Lois Bird

Background

Trish Pollack teaches year four students at a government school in Melbourne. When her students finish a book, they write the title and author on a paper flower and staple it to their own streamer. Twenty-six brightly coloured streamers covered with flowers are suspended from the classroom ceiling. Students who fill up their streamers on both sides are honoured at a monthly luncheon. The walls of the classroom are filled with students' writing. Large discovery charts across one wall display students' new knowledge about the Arctic. Each sentence frame reads, 'I was surprised to discover that _____'. Each chart holds about 30 interesting pieces of information about the Arctic gleaned from the children's reading and class discussions.

The maths corner is filled with manipulatives and other materials, all labelled in Spanish. The directions for activities and behaviour guides at that centre are printed in Spanish as well. Much of the maths lessons are taught completely in Spanish by bilingual partner—and the teacher is learning a second language along with her students.

Two important conditions for literacy learning in the learner-centred classroom are immersion in print and modelling the conventions of language use. The teacher's students see her as a learning model, struggling every day with the challenge of learning something new. Students have the opportunity to develop language literacy by being immersed in print, both in English and in Spanish.

Did You Know?

- Children spend approximately 7,500 hours in a classroom during their primary years.
- A key characteristic of effective classrooms is the teacher's genuine belief that all children can learn to read.
- Young children are able to express themselves in writing from the very beginning of their school experience.