

Support Translanguaging With Environmental Print

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As a community space, our classrooms offer us opportunities to showcase our students' cultures through the print on display. Environmental print is an essential tool for supporting students, who begin to read through their lived experiences in the classroom. Environmental print works best when it's multilingual, capturing the languages of all your students. This builds a strong, diverse "language ecology" that welcomes both students and their families to your class—and to school! As you consider the environmental print you'll use, ask this key question: "What message do I want to send the children and their families through the language we use and environment we create in this classroom?"

Here are some questions to consider when you think about environmental print and your students' languages and social resources:

- Do the labels in your classroom reflect all the languages your students speak, including English?
- In dual language, bilingual classrooms, is the print in your students' home languages just as prevalent as the print in English?
- In monolingual classrooms, is there print in languages other than English?
- Do the items posted reflect the languages of the students in your classroom and the broader school community?

As you consider these questions, take an inventory using the Multilingual Analysis of Classroom Environmental Print Chart (downloadable from this website).

If your instruction is mainly on a video platform:

- Your background is your classroom! Referring to your notes on the Multilingual Analysis of Classroom Environmental Print Chart, consider the supports multilingual students may need and try to re-create some *essential* elements from your classroom to virtual background. Be creative. Pick key Classroom Features listed on the chart, try to come up with an alternative in the space from where you teach online. These choices to feature multilingualism in your virtual space set the tone and show that you value your students' and their families' language practices. For example:
 - If you had a Welcome sign on your classroom door, you might hang a Welcome sign in a prominent place so that it's the first piece of print students see each day. You could include the word in English and the languages your students use. This Welcome sign can be used in the wall space your students see

but also in virtual spaces such as Power Points and other presentations.

- If your students were used to seeing your name written on the board, consider wearing a name tag. You might even “label” yourself as “teacher,” maestra,” and “profesora.”
- If your students were used to seeing multilingual books on display in your classroom library, be sure they see them on display in your online teaching space.



NIKKI LAUGIER

Pre-K teacher Nikki Laugier displays bilingual print in her virtual classroom.

Be intentional about how you use print in your virtual practice. You might make a highly visible attendance chart with your students’ names. Focus on the pronunciation of each name and how the letter sounds vary depending on the language in which you’re speaking. You can do this through song, if you are working with young children. You can create different print charts for different purposes—reading, writing, science—but be mindful to use the charts in a purposeful and focused way.

- Provide students with a project that they engage in with families that focuses on gathering artifacts that reflect their environmental print: packaged food labels, books, daily mail, grocery lists, or other artifacts created by a family

member. Have students assemble their print on a poster board, which they can prop up or hang behind their desk. Provide students with an opportunity to share and help them to see we are all readers.

- Another assignment you can ask them to do is a self-portrait or a family portrait labeled with names to display in their area. Always be on the lookout for ways you and your students can examine the print that surrounds them. And always allow time for each student to showcase the print they have on display, so that all students can benefit from the rich array of multiple languages.

If your students have limited or no online access:

- Write a letter to the students explaining that you want to create a class collage of all students' environmental print. Either mail or drop off a letter and a model of the project. Ask students to collect print from their homes and/or neighborhoods. Have them photograph the print, draw it, or cut out examples of meaningful print from newspaper and magazines. Then ask them to mail the print to you, text or email digital versions, or prepare it for pickup from their home. Once you have collected print from each student, add your own and create a collage or booklet. Send a copy or drop off to all your students so that they can enjoy with their families and keep in their home workspace.
- Prepare packets of print yourself and send them home for students to enjoy with their families and keep in their workspace. Packets could include photographs of signs from around your neighborhood, cut-outs of food package labels other than English (or the same product in both English and another language), and take-out menus in different languages. Be sure to include examples in all of the languages that your students and their families know. What is important is that children have the experience of being readers of the print that surrounds them.