

# High-Quality Display in the Preschool Classroom

Creating a Space That Reflects Relationships, Learning, and Belonging

## Why It Matters

Preschoolers are active participants in building their classroom community. Displays are more than decoration...they're mirrors and windows that reflect who children are, what they're learning, and how they belong.

High-quality displays help children:

- See themselves, their friends, and their work represented with value
- Feel connected to family, culture, and community
- Revisit experiences to deepen learning and reflection
- Develop confidence, language, and emotional security

This practice aligns with ECERS-3 Item 19: Display for Children and supports emotional development, identity, and belonging.

## Principles of High-Quality Display

### Child-Centered, Not Teacher-Decorated

Display children's experiences, thinking, and voices, not store-bought posters.

Use photos, captions, and work samples that tell the story of learning in your classroom.

Examples:

- "We mixed red and yellow paint to see what would happen. Look! It made orange!"
- "Elena counted all the blocks before they tumbled down!"

Displays should celebrate real experiences and discoveries made by this group of children, not a theme or holiday.

### Family, Identity, and Diversity Matter

Children thrive when they see their real lives reflected in the classroom.

Include:

- Family photos that are visible, accessible, and frequently used in conversation
- Images of classroom routines and community helpers
- Representation of diverse cultures, languages, abilities, and family structures

Avoid token or seasonal "diversity" displays. Instead, integrate authentic representation throughout the year.

## Show Children's Real Work

Preschool displays highlight process, growth, and creativity, not uniform products.

Feature:

- Art that shows exploration and individuality
- Photos of children engaged in learning (block towers, dramatic play, writing, gardening)
- Children's words describing their work ("I made a road for my cars!")

Avoid mass-produced or identical projects. Real work tells the story of thinking and doing.

## Accessible and Interactive

Preschoolers learn best when they can revisit and talk about their experiences.

- Place displays at child eye level (approximately 36–42 inches)
- Keep them secure and tidy but touchable and engaging
- Use bulletin boards, clip displays, or clear sleeves for easy rotation
- Include materials children can handle safely (photo books, binders, or portfolios)

Encourage children to interact with their displays: "Which one of your paintings would you like to show our visitors today?"

## Simple, Calm, and Purposeful

Use neutral backgrounds and limit visual clutter.

Keep text simple, fonts clear, and words few.

Rotate displays to stay current and meaningful.

Avoid walls overloaded with charts or unrelated print.

A calm, intentional display supports focus and comfort while highlighting children's voices and relationships.

## Display Ideas by Learning Area

Area	What to Display	Why It Matters
Block Area	Photos of children's structures with labels ("Our tall tower fell, then we made it stronger!")	Reinforces problem-solving and persistence
Dramatic Play	Photos of children pretending, menus or signs children make	Encourages literacy and imagination

Art Area	In-progress and completed art, self-portraits	Shows creativity and identity
Writing Center	Children's name practice, dictated stories	Builds print awareness and pride
Science Area	Photos of investigations, nature collections, observation drawings	Encourages curiosity and inquiry
Family Area	Family photos, classroom celebrations	Builds connection and belonging

### **Key ECERS-3 Connections**

- Item 19: Display for Children: Child-created work, diversity, and accessibility.
- Item 18: Promoting Acceptance of Diversity: Displays authentically represent all children and families.
- Item 20: Language-Reasoning: Displays used to prompt conversation and reflection.
- Item 24: Promoting Children's Learning in Art : Focus on process, not product.