Classroom Libraries

Classroom libraries are an essential part of all learning environments. Providing a variety of books for students to choose from can improve reading skills, foster reading for enjoyment, and enhance critical thinking skills.

- Build your library with books that range from below to above grade level. Ask community partners for donations to help build a classroom library. Students often enjoy reading books that may be considered easy for them as a quick escape into a fun story. They should also be challenged by books that are above their reading level. Books that may be considered difficult for a student can expose them to new vocabulary and content.

- Students choose which books they want to read from the classroom library. Ensure book choices include diverse cultures, races, backgrounds, languages, and topics. This is a safe space for students to explore new types of reading material without being leveled or tracked.

- While students should be given choice, teachers can encourage reluctant readers by providing books on topics that students consider interesting and engaging. Including various types of reading materials such as magazines, newspapers, and digital texts to broaden options for students. Including books previously read aloud by the teacher, decodable texts, and self-interest books can also foster excitement about reading.

- Have open conversations with students about what they are reading. Facilitate two-way conversations that are casual and informative rather than evaluative.

- Classroom libraries should be inviting and comfortable. To the extent possible, find a space in the room that is out of the way and provide a sense of privacy and peace.

- Include books in a variety of genres:
  - **Informational** texts include factual information and build background knowledge.
  - **Traditional** books such as fables, folk tales, myths, and cultural stories expand vocabulary and encourage conscientiousness.
  - **Realistic fiction** features characters, settings, and events that could be real but are make-believe.
  - **Historical fiction** books explore past events and provide interesting contexts of time periods.
  - **Biographies** and **autobiographies** inform readers about real, sometimes famous, people.
  - **Fantasy** books spark imagination through superhuman characters.

Sample Classroom Library Setups

Sorting books into baskets and labeling by topic, genre, or type (chapter books, easy readers, etc.) organizes a classroom library into an area that students can access and navigate confidently. If space and resources are available, comfortable or alternative seating options can increase enjoyment of reading. Classroom libraries can be enjoyed at any age or grade level and can be simple or creative!