Welcome to the Early Literacy Center.

- Our space is filled with interactive structures for you and your child to explore and play in together. Every corner is filled with opportunities to develop young children’s early literacy skills and help them become lifelong readers and learners.

- You are your child’s first teacher. We hope you will play, read, sing, talk and write with your children while you are here – and after you leave.

- There are countless opportunities to pack new words and information into your child’s day. After all, the more words your child knows, the easier it will be for him or her to learn to read.
Alphabet Table—Singing

Singing helps your child hear smaller sounds in words, slows down language for better comprehension, and exposes your child to new vocabulary words.

• **Sing the alphabet song and point to the letters as you go.** Let your child point to the objects as you sing the alphabet! Or try singing the alphabet backwards.

• **How many songs can you think of that go with the table objects?** You can sing “The Ants Go Marching One by One” to go with the ants for letter A, or “Six Little Ducks” to go with the feathers for letter F.

• **Get silly.** Re-write your favorite song about a table object. “Mary Had a Little Train/ Its stack was black as soot/ And everywhere that Mary went/ the train was underfoot.” Rhyming words show how words can be broken into parts and leads to learning how letters relate to sounds and words.
Blue Tower—Reading

Children learn a lot about reading before they can ever decode words for themselves! Reading to children and pointing out text teaches them how print works and that reading opens up worlds of information and entertainment.

- Run your finger under the words as you read inside the tower. This makes children aware of the print all around us and shows how words in English run left to right. Try it with other words you see every day.

- Find the panel with the house. Look for the words in bold, point them out, and see if your child can find the right peg to go with it.

- Look under the bench for books that expand on what you’ve done.
House—Playing

Follow your child’s lead and join them in their play. Play is how children learn. Playing with you can help your child get ready to learn to read.

- Spin a story, literally. Spin the dial to create a story’s beginning, middle, and end. Be as silly as you like.

- Put on a show using our puppets and the hole in the big “p” as a stage. Act out a story you love or have read together. This helps children prepare to understand what they read. Try it at home using puppets or your child’s favorite toys.

- Pick an animal together and say the animal sound at the Animal Sound Wheel. These sounds reflect the basic sounds of a language. How does the animal say its sound when it is happy? How about when it is angry?
Pink Tower—Writing

Activities like grasping toys and tracing shapes help children develop fine motor skills, which is key in learning to write. Learning shapes and patterns also helps with forming letters. Adults also can point out ways to use writing and help children see the connections between writing and sounds.

- Explore patterns in nature by having your child use the pegs to point out the different patterns.
- Encourage children to play at being the captain of a ship and manipulate the dials to control speed and depth.
- Make a shopping list with your child. Ask them tell you what to write and let them watch you. You also can let them write in whatever style they can, drawing or scribbling, to develop eye-hand coordination.
Green Tower—Talking

Engaging children in conversation is a powerful means of getting them ready to read. Explore with your child, and talk about what you and your child notice.

- **Use open-ended questions**: What do you think will happen if we look through the blue and the red circles at the same time?

- **Repeat what your child says, and add a word or two**. If your child notices the clothespins on the bench, you can add “yes, there are five clothespins; what color clothespins do you see?” Talking about the clothespins enriches your child’s vocabulary; wet, dry, laundry, clothesline, drying rack.

- **Talk about your surroundings**: Use the maps as launching pads. Can you find the Maryland State quarter on the coin map? Find where you are on the maps inside the tower.