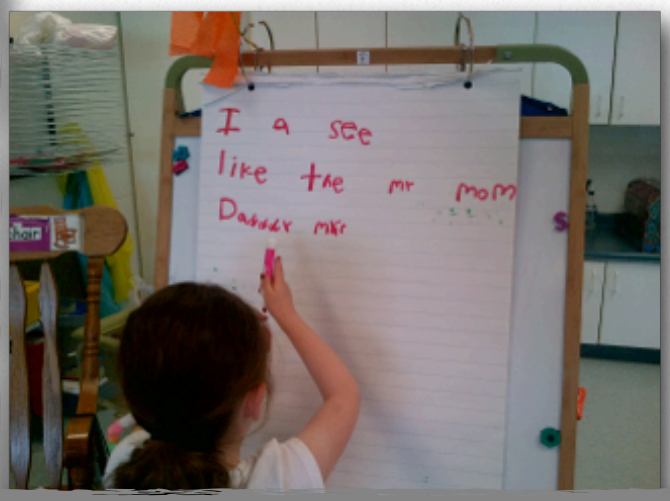
Lifting Learning

A Guide to the Full-Day Early-Learning Kindergarten Program



ONTARIO ENGLISH
Catholic Teachers
ASSOCIATION

Preface

We view children as competent, capable of complex thinking, curious and rich in potential…When we recognize children as capable and curious, we are more likely to deliver programs and services that value and build on their strengths and abilities.

The Ontario Early Years Policy Framework, 2013

Table of contents

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Foreword

This resource was developed in response to requests from teachers for material that would assist them in implementing the full-day early learning Kindergarten program (referred to as “Kindergarten” or ELKP throughout this document) that is presently being introduced with the intention of province-wide implementation by the year 2015. It concentrates on the most substantial effects that the implementation of the new program will have on student learning. For instance, it includes changes such as the prominence of play-based learning, including a renewed focus on inquiry, more explicit examples of oral language development, and an emphasis on self-regulation (cognitive, emotional, and social) throughout the program. This resource seeks to provide teachers with a balanced approach, focused on guiding children through play and developing oral language as a prerequisite and enhancement of all other KindergartenKindergarten skills. Though it does not cover all of the program’s aspects or expectations, it provides examples from across the program and a foundation for teaching through play, inquiry and oral language. By employing the strategies herein, teachers can feel confident that they are providing the best pedagogical practices as determined by current research in the field. It will provide teachers with practical approaches and strategies for meeting the more recent requirements of the curriculum policy, while recognizing and building on the strengths that already exist. Our hope is that this resource will inspire a deeper understanding of the role of play, inquiry and oral language for the early learner.

This guide is divided into eight chapters that will provide instructional guidance for teachers as they develop their program. Chapter One provides an introduction to the main components of the program. Chapter Two focuses on play and inquiry, its various forms and developmental stages. Chapter Three discusses oral language, in terms of its place as a crucial first step towards literacy, and shares various strategies. Chapter Four establishes a literacy framework consistent with a good oral language, inquiry and play-based program. Chapter Five outlines areas of the learning environment in order to demonstrate how play/inquiry and oral language/literacy can permeate across the program. Chapter Six develops a framework for instruction consistent with the intentions of a play-based program. Chapter Seven delineates steps towards establishing a positive school/home relationship. Chapter Eight, focusing on assessment, provides a framework for effective observation and pedagogical documentation.

As you move through this resource, please remain cognizant of the fact that it is in no way intended as entirely comprehensive or inclusive of all the considerations required for the creation of a full-day early learning Kindergarten program. Rather, our intent is to provide you with a set of values and strategies around play/inquiry and oral language/literacy, and a taste of how these elements can transform a program to meet the curriculum's demands and the many diverse needs of children.

1

INTRODUCTION

Research indicates a culture of play in the classroom fosters identity formation, inter and intrapersonal skills, co-operative learning, adaptive and critical thinking skills, problem solving, creativity andself-reflection

(Curtis & Carter, 2003; Kostelnick et al., 2011; Ortlieb, 2010)

Ontario has chosen to confront the economic crisis by transforming early learning and care and making a bold investment in our future. Our members view this investment as one of the wisest that could be made by any government….Full-day learning helps level the playing field for all children, because not all children have the same opportunities before they begin their formal learning experience. Early enrichment provided through the new program will help reduce social and academic problems later on.

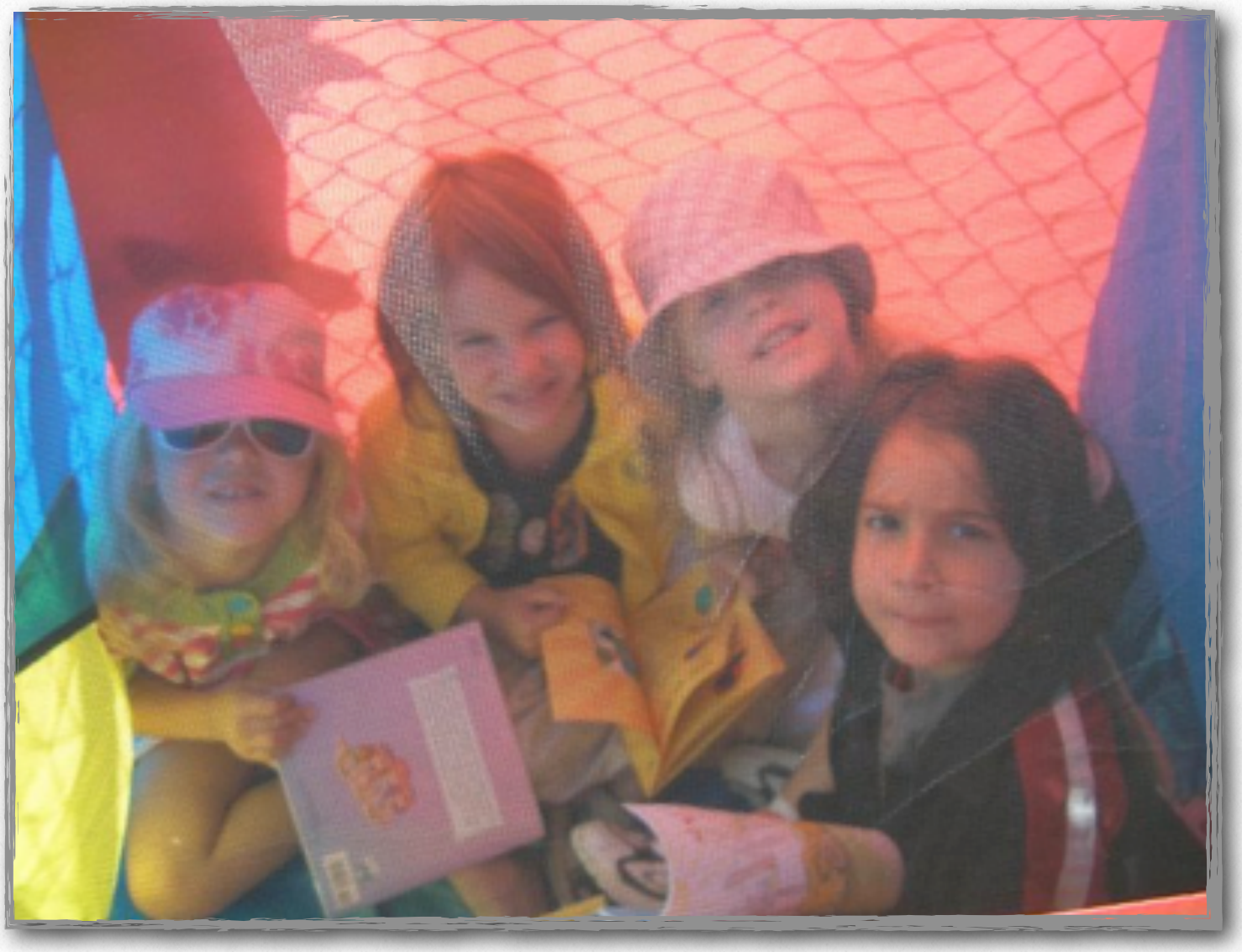
James Ryan, President, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), 2010.

Play is the means by which young children learn. Newborns enter this world with a predisposition to play that continues through the early school years. Anyone who has watched an infant grasping for a rattle or a toddler's persistence matching jars and lids has witnessed the link between learning and play. This natural learning through play should not end at the classroom door. A Kindergarten program that promotes play as the primary process for learning captures children's natural inclinations for the pursuit of inquiry and intellectual stimulation.

Although young children are natural learners, many children still come to school with a tremendous deficit in terms of the richness of their pre-school play opportunities. This can put the most disadvantaged on a long-term trajectory of academic and social underachievement. Many of those initial disadvantages can be ameliorated through a commitment to all-day learning in enriched and well-supported play-based classrooms. In the past ten years, there has been tremendous growth in research on early learning confirming this powerful impetus to learn and the economic and social benefits of encouraging and supporting such learning.

Below is an introduction to some of the most important components of the all-day Kindergarten program: play-based learning, inquiry, oral language and literacy, self-regulation and authentic assessment as well as an overview of faith development in the early years.

Play-Based Learning



Play is learning for children. Play can be experimentation or an approximation of something the child has experienced in the adult world. Play can both stimulate and be a product of the imagination. Play is the heart of childhood. It is the embodiment of learning, and it provides a time and space where children can be in control of their own lives and their own environments.

Dr. Joyce Bainbridge, qtd. in Ready to Learn, 2010

In the minds of researchers and of experienced Kindergarten teachers, there is now broad consensus regarding play as a fundamental facet of effective teaching and learning in the early years. The pedagogical promise of play does not lie in its use as a method to teach a specific set of discrete skills. Rather it is a medium through which children explore, synthesize and consolidate new learning. This renewed focus on play is integral to Full-Day Kindergarten. A manifestation of this focus is the requirement for large blocks of time for both child-initiated play and teacher-scaffolded guided play to support learning every day. Ensuring that play occurs usually requires a 'third teacher'– the environment which must be purposefully planned to ensure that opportunities for rich play, based on children's interests and the program expectations, are always available. For example, the Kindergarten team who recognizes the inherent value of blocks as learning stimuli will benefit from multiple opportunities to extend and enhance children's learning about space, shape, measurement, etc.

Inquiry

Children construct knowledge through physical activity, social interactions with others and their own active thinking. Children practice the tools of learning: how to plan, monitor, revise, reflect, investigate and solve problems; and to see and exchange points of view with others. Through observation and action, children form their own hypotheses, try them out, find out what happens and formulate their own answers.

(ELECT, 2007)

Inquiry is the engine that propels self-initiated learning. A program that values and promotes inquiry bolsters play-based learning. Teachers can capitalize on children's curiosity by provoking their interest through a rich variety of materials and providing engaging activities that encourage children to wonder, organize, clarify and express their thinking. Focusing on inquiry rather than discrete topics ensures that children get grounding in learning skills that are all-encompassing and integrative - such as habits of mind and organization of thought - that will be useful to them across all subject domains. For example, the teacher who notices children's fascination with bubbles can help them to build their own inquiry. Children who ask questions and seek answers to questions such as, "Why do bubbles float?"or "Why are bubbles rounded?" have taken the first steps to becoming lifelong learners. Inquiries like this bubble-

making example allow a natural discussion of topics such as spherical and other three-dimensional shapes, or the properties of liquids. The inquiry also forces children to organize their thoughts and think about cause and effect.

Oral Language

All young children need learning experiences that help them understand, acquire, and build on oral language. The foundations of language development and literacy begin to be established at birth and continue to be built through interaction and communication with adults and other children at home, in child care, in the community, and at school.

Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program Draft (FDELKP Draft), 2010

Oral language is important not only for acquiring effective literacy skills, it is central to growth in learning through play and inquiry. Oral language development paves the path for future growth in reading and writing. As children play and discover through inquiry, it is important that their oral language is encouraged through conversation and collaboration with their peers and the Kindergarten team. Daily interactive conversation that invites elaboration, explanation, and questioning is the most powerful tool that an educator has for building the foundation for literacy and closing the gap of opportunity that many children may have experienced before entering school. In research done by Dickinson and Tabors (2001), the conversational opportunities that children encountered at home and at school had significant impact upon literacy development immediately and in the long term.

Self-Regulation

Figure 2: Self-monitoring behaviour is one aspect of self-regulation

Self-regulation is "a cornerstone of development and a central building block of early learning."

Pascal, Every Child, Every Opportunity, 2009

The ability to regulate behaviour, emotion and attention is integral to the success of children in Kindergarten and in their future classroom functioning. Self-regulation is the use of meta-cognitive skills to deeply consider one's own behaviour. It involves being able to stop doing something when needed and to do something, even when one doesn't necessarily want to do it. Children with developing self-regulation skills (a lifetime goal even for adults) can delay gratification and curtail their immediate impulses. These skills are also strongly linked to cognitive performance and academic achievement; the patterns for which are set in the early years of schooling. Play-based environments provide a developmentally appropriate venue for the maturation of these skills. In fact research has shown that "these skills are best developed in play-based environments" *(*FDELKP *Draft, 7)*. The Kindergarten team fosters and enhances these skills by observing children, identifying their needs in this area and providing natural conduits through learning centres, story-telling, dramatic role-playing, etc. For example, children who are able to "use their words" to work through their challenges with a team member instead of resorting to acting on their frustration, are self-regulating. Children who can persist with a task through personal strategies such as taking a calming breath, walking away and then coming back or having some quiet time are self-regulating. In Every Child, Every Opportunity of 2009, Pascal indicates that "self-regulation is not about compliance with external authorities—it is about establishing one's own internal motivation for adapting to, and understanding emotional and social demands. In fact, for many children, requiring compliance undermines their own abilities to self-regulate" (Pascal, 4). He goes on to state "that self-regulation is central to a child's capacity to learn."

In his book of 2013, *Calm, Alert and Learning*, Stuart Shanker identifies that there are five domains of self-regulation. The Biological Domain refers to the amount of energy a person has for a task, either too little or not enough. The Emotional Domain involves being able to monitor, evaluate and modify emotions. The Cognitive domain refers to a person's ability to sustain attention. The Social Domain is associated with social intelligence and the ability to pick up on social cues while the Prosocial Domain is associated with empathy. Shanker states that when we help children to achieve optimal self-regulation in all these domains then they are in "a state of calm focus and alertness appropriate for learning in a classroom" (*Calm, Alert and Learning, xiii*).

Shanker has recognized that there are six critical elements to optimal self- regulation:

Six Critical Elements to Optimal Self-Regulation

When feeling calmly focused and alert, the ability to know that one is calm and alert

When one is stressed, the ability to recognize what is causing that stress

The ability to recognize stressors both within and outside the classroom

The desire to deal with those stressors

The ability to develop strategies for dealing with those stressors

The ability to recover efficiently and effectively from dealing with stressors

(*Calm, Alert and Learning, 2013, pg. xiii*).

It is outdoor playtime for John, Rajan and Elizaberta and they are playing hopscotch outside in the playground. These three children often play together and over the course of a few days the Kindergarten team has noticed that the children are have difficulty in taking turns appropriately; often argue, and quickly end the game. These behaviours demonstrate that the children are having difficulty reaching the goals of Social Development expectation 1.2 and Language expectation 1.6 (FDELKP Draft, 2010). Today the same thing seems to be happening as the children try to share one stone as a marker in the hopscotch game. The team has spoken earlier about some intentional interactions they could take to support this group of children. A team member joins in the game modelling and supporting turn-taking by asking questions, “Whose turn is it? When can I have a go?” With the team member’s support, the game lasts a few turns before the children move off to other activities. The team member notes that, following her modelling, the children tried to use the same types of questions to co-ordinate the game. The children’s ongoing self-initiated questioning serves as scaffolding for self-regulation and learning to interact well with each other.

These social interactions play themselves out every day in Kindergarten environments. The Kindergarten team provides a safe environment by allowing the children to self-regulate by

negotiating and using appropriate strategies, intervening only when necessary to model or guide.

Faith

In Catholic schools, the fostering of a child's faith development is foundational to the Kindergarten program. In the early years, this faith is nurtured by helping children grow into compassionate, loving and respectful members of the classroom. Children at this early stage of faith development are mostly influenced by what they hear, see and do. In order to integrate a child's faith into the Kindergarten program, use the "Hope Expectations" (see below) based on the Catholic Graduate Expectations as the guiding principles for what is said and done within the classroom. Infuse your classroom with the awe and wonder of God's word through stories, conversation, music and art. A prayer centre that celebrates the many ways that we care for one another, and daily prayers that include intentions for the sick, the hurt or the unhappy, help children to learn empathy. It lets them begin to feel part of a family of faith with Jesus as a special friend in that community. Instil a sense of the power of love, forgiveness and the respect for life and dignity of the person through the atmosphere of the classroom and the attitudes of its inhabitants. During science and social studies, expand their understanding of creation as a gift and the role of all of us as stewards of the earth. Age appropriate stories from a children's bible and environmental picture books that highlight the responsibility we all have to care for each other start to shape children into discerning, thoughtful Catholics. Through daily prayer and worship, let the children build a relationship with God. Throughout the program, plant and nurture the seeds for their growing discipleship.

Lastly, children model the behaviour of others, both adults and children. Models that consistently respect the unique but diverse gifts of each child help children to feel safe and secure enough to grow in their own learning at their own pace. Teachers who expect children to interact with one another in courteous and kind ways and show them how it is done will reap the reward of a caring classroom. A Kindergarten program that is suffused with a message of love, wonder and peace adds an essential spiritual dimension to the play-based learning, inquiry and oral language focus as outlined in the Kindergarten program.

ONTARIO CATHOLIC SCHOOL GRADUATE EXPECTATIONS
Adapted Wording for Elementary Students

Developed by Huron-Perth CDSB and St. Clair CDSB

1. I AM A BELIEVER!

- I believe that God is an awesome God
- I believe and have faith in God
- I believe that God is with us always
- I believe that we can talk to God anytime and anywhere, through prayer
- I believe in the stories of the Bible
- I believe in the stories of Jesus' life, death and resurrection
- I believe in the Church community, celebrating Mass, and the seven Sacraments
- I believe in forgiveness

Because I am a believer, I will live my life like Jesus.

2. I HAVE A VOICE!

- I speak, write and listen as Jesus would want me to

- I care about others and speak up for them
- I am honest
- I think carefully before I react or speak
- I respect all people and their languages
- I listen to the Word of God

Because I have a voice, I will use it lovingly, and I will live my life like Jesus.

3. I HAVE IDEAS!

- I have thoughts and opinions that matter
- I make good choices
- I have hope for the future
- I solve problems with knowledge, understanding and prayer
- I know we are all equal and special

Because I have ideas, I have a purpose, and I will live my life like Jesus.

4. I AM A LEARNER FOR LIFE!

- I use my gifts and talents given to me by God
- I always do my best
- I build on my strengths and weaknesses
- I set goals
- I accept change
- I am proud of the good things I do
- I am thankful for the gifts of others

Because I am a learner for life, I can reach for my dreams, by living my life like Jesus.

5. I AM A TEAM PLAYER!

• I co-operate with others in all that I do

• I value everyone's work

• I respect and listen to others

• I think of others before myself

• I follow rules of fair play

• I work hard in school so that I can build my community and make it a better place

Because I am a team player, I know that 'Together is Better', and we will live our lives like Jesus.

6. I CARE!

• I love God, myself and my family

• I care about and respect my 'family' at school, at Church, in the community, and the world

• I care about and respect God's creation and everything in it.

Because I care, I pray for all my families, and I will live my life like Jesus.

7. I HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES!

• I am a peace-maker

• I am fair

• I am forgiving

• I follow rules and do my share

• I help the poor and care for people in need

• I stand up for what is right

• I know that all life is precious

• I respect and protect the world and all that is in it

Because I accept my responsibilities, I can make a difference, and will live my life like Jesus.

The following sites offer an abundance of resources that root curriculum and assessment in the Graduate Expectations:

http://www.catholiccurriculumcorp.org/resources.asp

http://www.eoccc.org/Content/?documents

See Appendix B: A Glimpse into Full Day Early Learning for Ottawa Catholic District School Boards summary of the full day program.

2

PLAY-BASED LEARNING

"Children learn best by doing, by acting on the world."

John Dewey

Play is a vehicle for learning and lies at the core of innovation and creativity. It provides opportunities for learning in a context in which children are at their most receptive. Play and academic work are not distinct categories for young children, and learning and doing are inextricably linked for them.

FDELKP Draft, 2010

Kindergarten teams are the frontline advocates for play-based learning. They understand that a play-based program is the most effective way for students to demonstrate their thinking and learning through saying, doing and representing. Current research on play-based learning indicates its positive effects on a child's social, academic, moral, spiritual and emotional health.

Rather than diminishing children's learning by reducing the time devoted to academic activities, play promotes key abilities that enable children to learn successfully. In high-level dramatic play, for example, the collaborative planning of roles and scenarios and the impulse control required to stay within the play's constraints develop children's self-regulation, symbolic thinking, memory, and language—capacities critical to later learning, social competence, and school success.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), 2009

Children who learn in a more playful manner almost always achieve more than children who are subjected to more direct teaching methods. Furthermore, the data show that academic programs that emphasize more direct instruction have unintended social and emotional consequences, creating students who are less likely to get along with their peers and feel comfortable in school, and more likely to show evidence of stress-induced hyperactivity, to be hostile, and to engage in antisocial acts.

Hirsch-Pasek et al., 2003

The idea of play in Kindergarten is not new but the wording in the Kindergarten program marks a change in emphasis from an activity that is useful for social development to one that is essential for social, cognitive, spiritual and emotional learning in general.

Why is play so important?

> *The developmental literature is clear: play stimulates physical, social, emotional and cognitive development in the early years.*
>
> Jane Hewes, qtd. in ELECT, 2007

Figure 3: Sorting food for the food bank

Play is a cornerstone to building a healthy foundation for children's development. It is so important that the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, Article 31(1), 1987, states that the right to play is a basic human right required for children to develop to their fullest. For young children, play is the vehicle for learning. Research shows that children who play are healthier both physically and emotionally and have better brain and cognitive growth. A lack of play has been cited as a cause of depression and aggressive behaviour. When children are physically and emotionally healthy they learn better. However, because of how children often spend their time outside of school, many of them now lack the ability to play at the high level of complexity and engagement that affords so many cognitive, social, and emotional benefits. "As a result, it is vital for the early childhood setting to provide opportunities for sustained high-level play and for teams to actively support children's progress toward such play" *(NAEYC, 2009)*.

Play allows the child to:

- be curious, to wonder and to explore the world;
- be creative, inquire and solve problems;
- take risks and learn new things and to “approximate”:
- consider other perspectives, and ways of doing things;
- integrate various relationships between things and concepts;
- practice skills in familiar contexts;
- talk, read, write, and use literacy and numeracy skills with a purpose;
- develop balance, control, co-ordination, strength, spatial awareness, and stamina;
- be in control and self-regulate their emotions, attention span, and behaviour;
- socialize with other children and adults and build positive relationships;
- communicate thinking and listen to the ideas of others; and
- become aware of strengths and weaknesses.

What is Play-based Learning?

> Play is the platform for inquiry and exploration.
>
> ELECT, 2007

Both child-initiated free play and more structured play-based learning opportunities should be integral parts of the early learning classroom. Children are offered choices of learning activities that reflect their developmental stages. The learning activities are designed by the Early Learning-Kindergarten team to encourage the children to think creatively, to explore and investigate, to solve problems and engage in the inquiry process, and to share their learning with others.

(FDELKP, 2010)

> *A 2009 report from the Alliance for Childhood, quoted in Crisis in the Kindergarten: Why Children Need to Play in School states that, "Creative play that children can control is central to their physical, emotional, and cognitive growth. It contributes to their language development, social skills, and problem solving capacities, and lays an essential foundation for later academic learning*
>
> Miller, p. 63, 2009

Form of Play	*Skills and types of learning supported through play*	*What you might see children doing*
Pretend or pretense play	self-regulation communication thinking comparing planning investigating problem solving experimenting negotiating evaluating	trying out a variety of roles and scenarios taking the perspective of someone else making mental representations getting along
Socio-dramatic play	literacy acquisition narrative recall use of complex language development of schemas organization of mental scripts	determining tasks and goals and carrying them out creating environmental print storytelling
Constructive play	self-regulation planning use of language pretend play development of fine motor control development of ability to connect symbols and shapes with letters and numbers in print	drawing painting building planning coordinating

Successful play-based learning time relies on thoughtful planning about materials, set-up, and environment. It is intentionally planned to focus on children's interests and developmental levels, while at the same time remaining mindful of the big ideas, overall and specific expectations as set out in the program. The team observes and interacts with the children while following the natural flow of children's engagement. Teams can extend and challenge student play by intentionally adding relevant resources to learning areas. For example, adding different sized tubes to the water table could engage and challenge children in new and self-initiated directions. It is also vital that team's provoke student thinking with open-ended, rich questions.

Through observations of children's choices and actions, instructional decisions about next steps in planning can be made and assessment documentation can be gathered about children's learning and thinking in all domains. The team scaffolds learning through questioning, providing resources, listening, modelling appropriate language, and monitoring interactions and paying attention to the child and his or her learning.

The children are interested in making boats for the water table using different materials such as paper cups and plates. The team decides to add Playdoh to the water table materials. As the children explore the material, they make the surprising discovery that Playdoh that is flattened and made into a boat shape floats while Playdoh that remains in a ball shape sinks. What has begun as a play activity can be further enhanced by the questioning and interactions of the teacher or ECE who has observed their play.

Playful learning or guided play actively engages children in pleasurable and seemingly spontaneous activities that encourage academic exploration and learning. Here, teachers using guided play have a set of learning goals in mind. They are subtly directive embedding new learning into meaningful contexts that correspond with children's prior knowledge and experiences.

Hirsch-Pasek et al., 2009

Structured play may involve the team as play partners however the play continues to be playful, active and inquiry-based. Knowing children's interests helps the team to design activities that will elicit participation. Again, the purpose of play is to guide by scaffolding children's learning through conversation, questioning, modelling, and active engagement in learning opportunities, for example: reading, playing math games, developing a story to-

gether, writing a letter, inquiring about an idea, giving a specific provocation to try something or problem-solving. Using the big ideas, overall and specific expectations as a guideline, the Kindergarten team sets goals as they observe the activities of individuals or groups of children. As children work through the activity, the teacher or ECE is able to more closely observe their learning and provide support or challenge as appropriate. For example, the team wants the children to begin to understand some of the concepts of measurement. A new table has been delivered to the classroom and the ECE engages the children by challenging them with the questions, "How much space will the new table take up?" "Where do you think the table work best in our room?" With guidance, the children begin to take measurements and make estimates to determine the best location for the table. The team responds, challenges and extends the children's thinking with regards to this provocation.

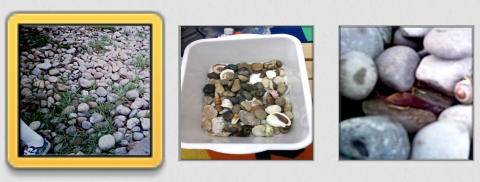
Both members of the team are responsible for participating in, observing, and documenting the evidence of learning in all the program learning areas during the large blocks of time. Careful consideration needs to be given to how the team members will work together during this time;

- Will the teacher and ECE be playing with different groups of children in different areas?
- Will one member of the team observe a small group while the other engages throughout the environment?

- Will one member of the team participate in play while the other observes the play?
- Will one member focus on specific expectations needed by a small group or individual?
- Will the team regroup and share their findings?

Play needs to be intentionally planned and co-constructed with the children themselves. Learning opportunities arise out of the free play interests of the children. The team plans from within a framework consisting of the big ideas, the overall expectations, and the specific expectations. Within this framework there is flexibility and adaptability for the developmental, social, emotional and spiritual conditions of individual students. As the Kindergarten team interacts with the children, they respond to, extend and challenge their thinking.

Gallery 2.1 Where is God?



Where is God?

The Kindergarten class is learning about what it means to be a steward of God's creatures and the world. After sharing ideas from the In God's Image units on plants and animals the team and the children decide to go outside and look for God in nature. To support the children in their inquiry the team provides a camera for groups of students to use to capture their observations of God in nature. The students and teams do this for a couple of days and photographs are shared on the Smartboard as students discuss why they chose to photograph a certain object or objects, and why it made them think of God. On the second day of photographing some children find a snail shell. This sparked a lot of discussion about what lived in the shell and where it went to. The next day the team intentionally put out some books about snails as well as some other kinds of shells. They read The Biggest House in the World by Leo Lionni and then go outside to take more photos. This time one child finds a couple of snail shells with snails in them. The class decides to bring the snails in for a couple of days to study them. They need to find out what the best habitat would be for the days that the snails will be visiting them. They do this by reading non-fiction books, going on the internet and then co-constructing the habitat. One child has a book at home about snails and brings it in to share. Soon children are engaging in the snail inquiry in all the learning areas. They are writing observations about what the snails are doing and what they eat. At the art studio children are painting large coloured swirls to replicate the shells. One student notices that when the snails are placed on the table they left a line of slime. This prompted another visit to the computer to look up snail slime. The children were interested to see, of the three snails that they had collected, which one left the longest line of slime. Then they measured the slime using small cubes and compared their data. After a while the class took the snails back outside and returned them to the spot where they had found them.

3

INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING IN THE EARLY YEARS

Inquiry-based learning is an effective and emergent process that builds on students' natural curiosity. Inquiry-based learning places students' questions and ideas rather than solely those of the teachers at the centre of the learning experience. Teams should use inquiry-based learning "to build on children's spontaneous desire for exploration and to gradually guide them to become more focused and systematic in their observations and investigations" (FDELKP Draft, 2010, p. 15).

There are numerous benefits to inquiry-based learning, these include:

- honouring students' questions increases their motivation, leading to higher levels of engagement, improved understanding and a love of learning
- inquiry stimulates students' curiosity leading to progressively deeper questions and habitual critical thinking
- inquiry builds lifelong learning skills that transcend content mastery

(Natural Curiosity, OISE, 2011)

The Ministry identifies what inquiry-based learning looks like in ELKP Classrooms in the chart below:

Elements of the child's inquiry process	When the children are engaged in the inquiry process they:	When team members are modelling or supporting the inquiry process they:
Initial Engagement noticing, wondering, playing	raise questions about objects and events around them	observe and listen
Exploration exploring, observing, questioning	- explore objects and events around them and observe the results of their explorations - make observations using all of their senses and generate questions	- act as facilitators to guide children with thoughtful, open ended questions - encourage children to observe and talk among themselves and to the team
Investigation planning, using observations, reflecting	gather, compare, sort, classify, order, interpret, describe observable characteristics and properties, notice patterns and draw conclusions, using a variety of simple tools and materials	- act as facilitators to guide children with thoughtful, open ended questions - encourage children to observe and talk among themselves and to the team
Communication sharing findings, discussing ideas	work individually and with others, share and discuss ideas and listen to ideas	listen to the children and help them make connections between prior knowledge and new discoveries

A solid understanding of the Big Ideas and specific expectations in the Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program document allows teams to offer an inquiry-based program which will not only meet but extend and challenge the needs of all students.

The 2011 *LNS Capacity Building Series Monograph* - Getting Started with Student Inquiry suggests six tips for getting started with student inquiry.

These include:

1. Make the program work for you - connect the “big ideas” to the daily questions and interests of your students.

2. Design learning opportunities that encourage students to explore authentic “real life” experiences based on the curriculum expectations.

3. Don’t take over, tune into your students, not just the topic.

4. Talk with your students about ways of learning more about the topic by asking:

What do we want to understand more deeply?

What big questions will we explore?

What is important to know about this?

5. Slow down and give your students time to explore their thinking with each other while you listen and think, "What are my students showing me? What should we do next?”

6. Talk to students and reflect every day about what, how and why learning is happening:

What are we learning about this topic?

What are we learning about ourselves?

What do we think and know now?

What does this mean for us as learners?

Teams should be cognisant of the fact that inquiries are cyclical in nature. One inquiry may lead to another. There may be numerous inquiries going on in the environment at one time. Team members can offer a provocation for an inquiry or an inquiry can be child initiated. De-

velopmentally we know that children are processing information all the time. A wondering or inquiry could be bubbling in a child's mind for a number of weeks before it is ready to become a learning experience.

Effective questioning is vital in an inquiry based classroom. Just as important is wait time, allowing students to process and gather their thoughts before answering. It should be understood that inquiry is on-going and activities are representations that can be repeated. Consolidation of skills does not happen immediately but throughout the inquiry process.

Effective questions for inquiry

Tell me about…

What if…?

I wonder…?

How do you know…?

What do you hear, see, feel and what does that tell you?

What isn't working?

What are you going to do next?

How will we learn more about…?

What is different? What is the same? How do you know?

I noticed that you…

What did you notice?

How are we going to learn more about…?

Do you have the materials you need to do that?

What materials will you need to do that?

Predict what might happen next? Why do you think that?

How did you figure that out?

How did you solve the problem?

Did you already know something about this that helped you?

Is this like anything you have done before?

Remember when we_____, does this remind you of that?

Tell me what you know about this already?

I wonder why?

What are you wondering about?

Was this challenging?

In the past, theme-based units based on predetermined, pre-planned, teacher directed topics were often used. Current practice is moving towards play-based learning supported by an inquiry/project approach.

Theme-based and inquiry-based learning approaches

Past Practise-Theme Based	Current Practise-Inquiry/Project Based
Length of learning experience is predetermined, shorter time periods such as one or two weeks.	Length of learning experience is determined by inquiry/ project progression usually several weeks, sometimes months.
Topics determined by teacher and curriculum, may or may not be of interest to students.	Topics negotiated by teacher and student, with integrated curriculum goals; children's interest a major criterion for topic selection.
Teacher plans in advance, presents topics, designs and prepares learning experiences.	Teacher observes children's investigation, uses student interest to determine the next steps of the project.
Teacher decides on objectives based on curriculum goals. Teacher may or may not include inquiry experiences to achieve objectives.	Teacher webs to assess prior knowledge, then organizes a project so students learn what they do not know.
Knowledge is gained through teacher-planned experiences, small and large group activities and events.	Knowledge is gained by finding answers to questions or investigation children are involved in determining the activities and events and how to find answers.
Resources are provided by the teacher.	Resources are brought in by students, the teacher and experts who visit the classroom or are gathered on field-site visits.
A field trip may or may not be included. If included, field trips often occur at the end of the unit to culminate the study.	Field-site visits are an important part of the inquiry process. Student may do several site visits for one project. Field site visits can occur anytime during the inquiry.
Topics often taught at specific teacher-determined times of the day.	Inquiry/project permeates the day and the classroom, involving many different curriculum areas and skills.
Activities such as making a craft or a science activity are planned by the teacher to teach specific concepts.	Activities focus on investigation, finding answers to questions and using resources. Teacher supports integration of concepts during debriefing and discussion.
Representation relates to specific activities, and can be focused on one method of representation for example paper and paper. Representation activities are usually not repeated.	Representation could include drawing, writing, building, construction, videoing and challenges children to integrate concepts. Representation documents what children are learning and are repeated to show growth in knowledge and skills as the inquiry/project progresses.

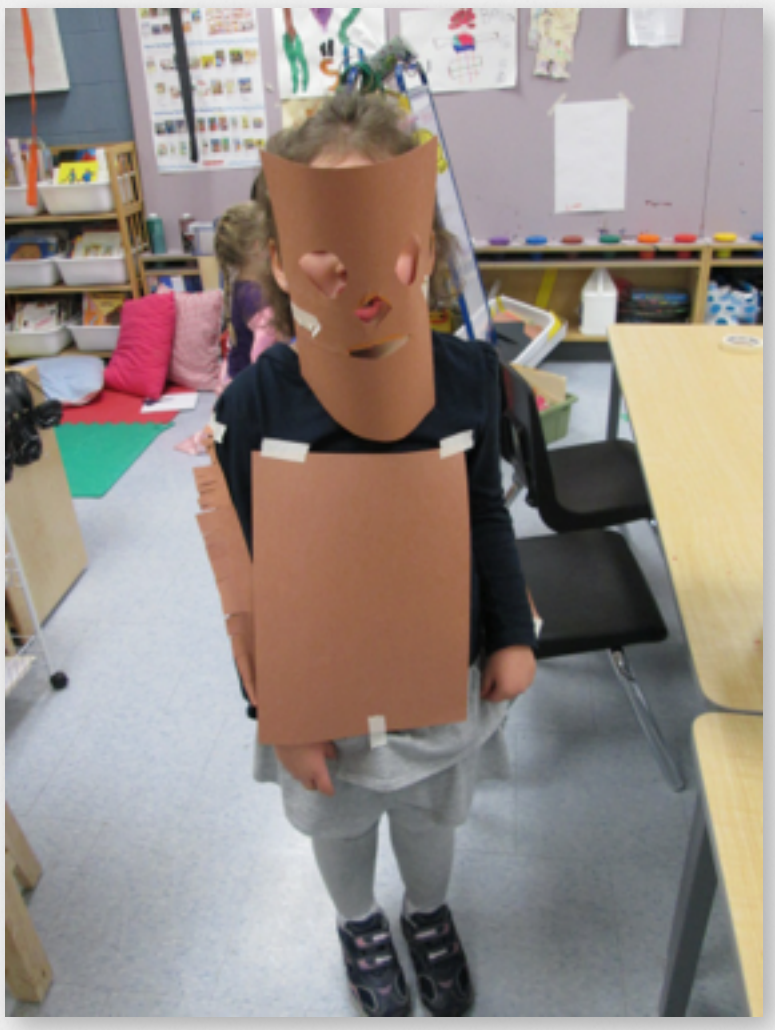
(Young Investigators-The Project Approach in the Early Years, Helm and Katz, 2011.)

Costume Inquiry Interview with the Kindergarten Team

So the interest started when one child wanted to make a costume? Yes.

What did he do and say? Lewis wanted to turn himself into a ghost. He, without suggestion, chose to cut paper into long strips and taped them to his body.

What did you do? We shared what he had done with others. Soon other children decided that they wanted to create costumes too. **Did you put out stuff that they could access?** We had paper available as well as other costumes or clothing pieces. **Where?** The paper was found in the art studio and clothing pieces were in the drama centre. **What did you tell them?** It was totally child initiated. We did talk about expanding on their characters by using voice and movement so people could get a better idea of who/what they were.



What about the makeup? We had makeup available and told the children that they could sign up to have their face done. Other children saw this and then took it upon themselves to adorn their faces. It was a great teachable moment about how we should always listen to instructions. It didn't happen again.

Did you have a chance to follow up on any of the suggestions I made, like books about costumes and makeup or Youtube videos? The children started to plan exactly how they wanted their face to look. Either showed us online or drew a picture of what they wanted. We watched videos on Youtube as well.

Interview by Deb Watters of Wellington CDSB, Co-ordinator

Mask Inquiry Experience with the Kindergarten Team

Context

When I was in Julie and Caitlin's class, Caitlin mentioned that the kids in the Drama Centre like to play animals. I said it would be a great idea to put some animal masks into the centre to see what happens. Caitlin just happened to have some in her cupboard and she pulled them out. I told Caitlin maybe some of the kids might want to make their own too. There were only 4 masks in the package and soon enough Jacob came over and said, "We need masks" Caitlin said, "Do you want to make one?" and away it went.

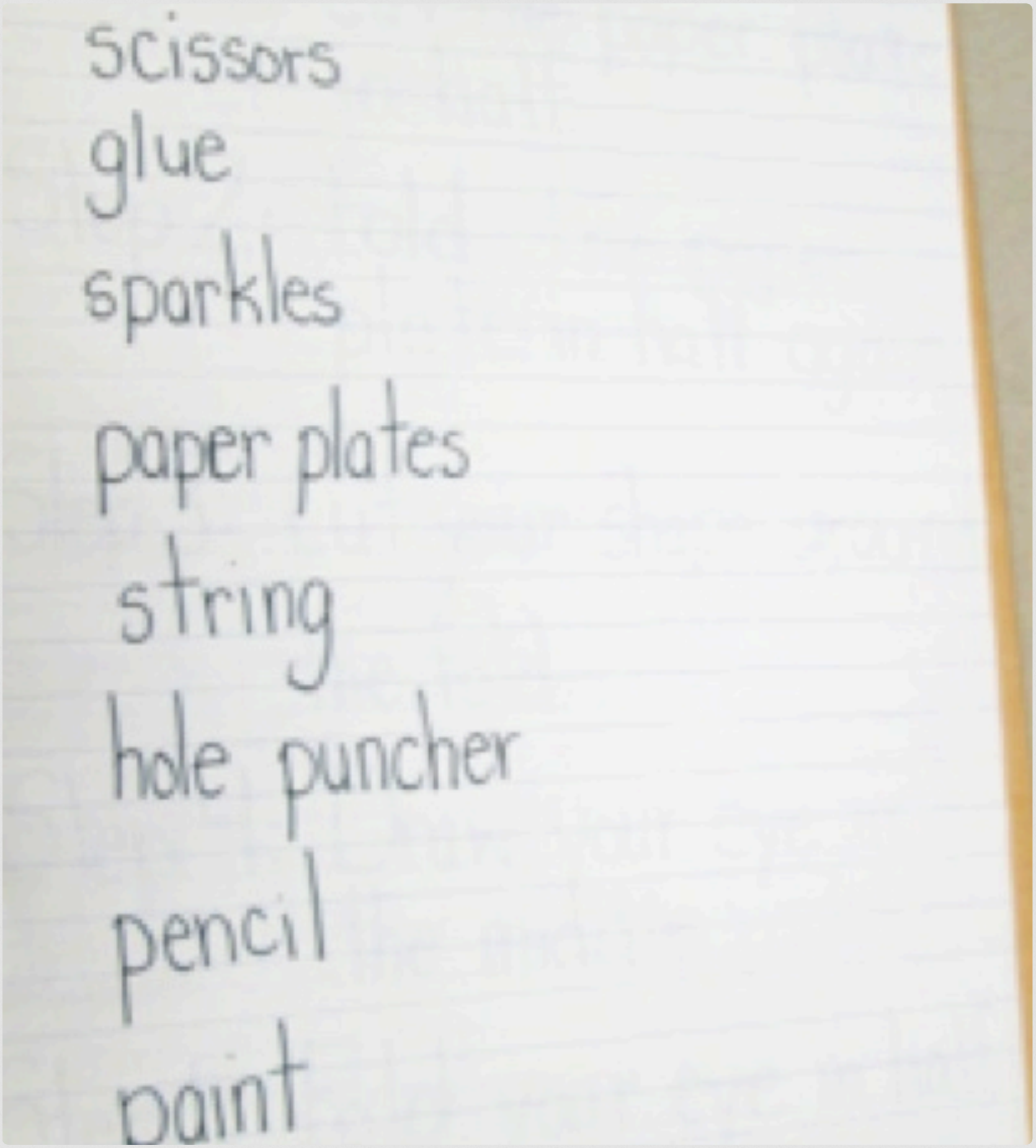
Julie and Caitlin had a basket of art materials that they were going to set out later that week and it was put on the table and the kids started in on the mask making. There was lots of amazing talk going on as I sat at the table. Tons of planning, predicting, problem-solving and fine motor practise. I talked to Caitlin and Julie about how they might extend the work with books, stories or something on the Internet about mask making.

During that week

"The masks have totally taken off. We are going to attempt to put it into a documentation panel. We took them to the Smartboard and watched a video on how to make a mask. It had no words to the video. We watched it several times and made a list of materials we needed and then wrote down the instructions that the kids told us to do. We recorded their steps on chart paper and made an example to follow. Some kids followed these steps. We are sending you a video clip of what happened in our classroom yesterday... So much fun!"

Interview by Deb Watters, Wellington CDSB, Co-ordinator

Gallery 3.1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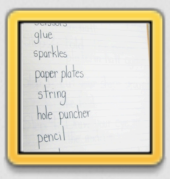

glue
sparkles
paper plates
string
hole puncher
pencil


1. Cut the paper plate in half
2. Fold the paper plate in half again
3. Cut your shape around the fold
4. Draw your eye in the middle


Step 8: Paint or colour your mask
Step 9: Glue a design on your mask
Step 10: Add sparkles
Step 11: Shake the extra sparkles off

Worm House Inquiry

A student has brought in a worm house from home. She told the class all about it and how she created it. The students were very excited about building a class worm house. They decided to make a house in the empty aquarium that a team member had brought in. They researched what a worm habitat needs and discuss this with the student that brought hers in, since she was the expert. As a class they work together in the outdoor classroom to make the worm house and then all collect a worm for the house. The team members engaged small groups of students to review and reinforce the procedure that they followed to create the worm house. They worked together with the students to create a shared procedural text about the steps they took. Team members observe student participation in small group shared writing and make anecdotal notes. They also observe and record how the students collaborate and share responsibility to feed the worms daily once the worm house has been made.

4

ORAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

All learning floats on a sea of talk

(Britton, 1970)

Figure 4: Oral Language Development through dramatic play

Although children develop skills in reading, writing and oral language (listening and speaking) from an early age, oral language must be the foundation of literacy development in the Full-Day Early Learning-Kindergarten program….. the EL-K team can guide oral language development by listening attentively to and observing children's responses and interactions, by providing models of rich responses to guide children's thinking, and by introducing new vocabulary.

FDELKP Draft, p. 68

The foundation of oral language development are laid from infancy through early childhood (ages 0-6) as children interact and communicate-first non-verbally and then verbally-with adults and other children at home, in the community and at school. (Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading K-3, 2003, 3.3).

Good oral language development is the foundation of future reading, writing and thinking in all aspects of the program. The most powerful teaching strategy lies in the conversations between co-learners in the classroom including the FDK team. Warm, caring conversations create a feeling of security and safety and build a relationship with the child in an environment where taking risks is honoured. Within these conversations, teams can introduce and model new and more complex vocabulary, sentence, and narrative structures. Special consideration and planning must be given to the significant number of English Language Learners (ELLs) who are part of our school communities.

Talk with Children

Teams' interactions are very important to the building of good oral language skills, good communication and positive relationships. It is important for teams to consider the following components of good interactions:

- There is a difference between talking with children in a two-way interaction and talking at them in a one-way direction. Two-way interactions allow children to extend their thinking, their vocabulary and language structures. Avoid only talking at children which generally involves the lowest level of conversation (e.g., put on your boots; get ready to go outside).

- Talk and questions that are rich and complex help children to expand their vocabulary and understanding of concepts (e.g., Ava says the sunshine looks like little diamonds).

- Quantity of time spent in interaction rather than just listening to adults should include a larger percentage of student speaking time.

- Team considerations for classroom interactions:

    - Who does most of the talking?
    - Whose voices are heard the most?
    - What purposes does the child use language for?
    - Is the language rich and complex?
    - Is new vocabulary introduced on a daily basis?
    - Are different sentence structures modelled?
    - Are questions asked that require children to use language to form and express abstract ideas?
    - Is wait time built in?

Figure 5: Oral Language through Discussion

- Engage in conversation with children on a regular basis. Some ideas for encouraging conversation with children are as follows:

  o Use five productive talk moves found in Maximizing Student Mathematical Learning in the Early Years from Capacity Building Series, September 2011. These include revoicing, repeating, reasoning, adding on and waiting (Chapin, O' Connor, Anderson, 2009, pg.13).

  o Let children talk about things that are familiar to them such as their family, their pets and making connections to their work and inquiry in the classroom. This helps them to organize their thinking and clarify their ideas. The team's role is to elaborate or extend the child's ideas, to model new vocabulary and sentence structure and generate more complex ideas.

- As children play, they often introduce new language to each other. As two children play in their imaginary store, they may use language such as: receipt, cost, expensive, saving, etc., or teams can model and encourage using new language. At the same time, children begin to practice using social language.

- Teams should intentionally plan to include purposeful vocabulary that is embedded in daily oral language conversations. This would be a good opportunity for teams to engage children in naming their learning.

- Use varied rich language and environmental print. Teams should include vocabulary from the children's first languages. (See Supporting English Language Learners in Kindergarten, Ministry of Education, 2007.)

- When reading texts teams should focus on vocabulary, point to pictures that explain concepts or words, ask children to make oral predictions and use questioning that requires children to analyse the text orally. Texts can be read multiple times for different purposes. Teams may choose to reuse the new vocabulary in different contexts and observe children's understanding and use of the language in play, retells and through the arts.

Promoting Oral Language through team intentionality in modelling: Monitoring and enriching language usage everyday

FDK team prompts to promote oral language could include:
Acknowledge/reinforce use of vocabulary or language patterns. *“Yes that is a rectangular prism, I like the way you are using math talk.”*
Introduce new vocabulary. *“This is called a funnel.”* *“What is this part of the body called?”*
Guide students to make connections. *“Remember when…”* *”You built a structure just like in the book”*
Encourage students to reflect on an experience, guide them to wonder, predict, question and Infer. *“What do you think will happen if you added water to the dirt?”* *“I am going to stop the story here, what do you think will happen next?”* *“What can you tell about this character from the picture?”*
Ask students for clarification, elaboration or justification. *“Tell me about how you made this, Genesia.”* *“What makes you think that?” “How do you know?”*
Stimulate retelling and descriptive language. *“What would that story sound like in your words?”* *“What does the snow feel like?”*
Engage students in critical thinking. *“What is it about this cartoon that makes you want to watch it?”*
Use descriptive language rather than praise when interacting. Instead of saying, *“Good work,” say, “Jamal you made an interesting pattern with those buttons.”*
Extending children’s thinking through asking rich questions and engaging dialogue. Nhan- *“I made a bridge.”* Team- *“Nhan, tell me about your bridge, how did you make it stable?”*

Chart adapted from Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading, K-3, 2003.

Oral Language Development Checklist

The checklist below provides a general guideline to assist teachers in determining children's oral language proficiency. As teams interact with children, they can keep in mind the specific oral language skills a child is displaying and use that as the starting point to enhance children's language (e.g., if a child does not seem to understand word meanings, the team may make pictures or other materials available when new vocabulary is introduced). Knowing the level of language development is important for assessment and evaluation purposes.

Oral Language Skills
Speaking Skills Produces the sounds of language Understands word meanings Makes connections among words (e.g., he is big and she is small) Uses words conventionally (e.g., uses words in the right order) Uses conventional forms (e.g., “I went to the store yesterday,” not “I wented to the store.”); Uses language for different purposes: to express feelings, to negotiate in social situations
Phonological Awareness Skills Able to participate in word play, rhyming, onset and rime (consonant followed by a phonogram such as “fit, bit, sit”) Notices the different auditory aspects of language (e.g., sounds of phonemes)
Listening Skills Understands what people are saying Enjoys listening to others and stories Follows oral instructions Follows a short list of instructions
Communication Skills – for talking and listening Understands the social rule of conversation – taking turns Understands and use the rules of grammar Asks questions to get information Engages peers and adults
Vocabulary Skills – for talking, listening and conversation Understands a large collection of words and their meanings Understands the relations among words (e.g., elephants and giraffes are both forms of animals) Extends own vocabulary to create new meaning

(Adapted from Learning to Talk and Listen, National Institute for Literacy, 2009.)

The Nipissing District Developmental Screen is a checklist designed for parents to help monitor their child’s development at each stage of early childhood. To access a copy of the checklist at various age stages, go to:

http://www.nddswebsvcs.ca/ndds/download/197355.pdf.

It is free of charge for all residents of Ontario. It also includes follow-up activities that parents can do at home.

5

LITERACY

Before going to school, children have already had a wide range of lived experiences with spoken, written, and visual communication, and have used language in familiar contexts. They have also developed ways of using language that are specific to their cultural and linguistic contexts. By building on the language development and the understandings that children bring to school the EL-K team can provide children with the learning experiences they need, as well as support can guidance in their learning. (FDELKP Draft, 2010)

Figure 6 Authentic writing during play.

Learning to read and write is closely linked to a child's success in school and later life. Firm foundations for these literacy skills lies in the depth and breadth of early oral language development and is nourished by rich play experiences as described in the previous chapters. The second most important contribution to literacy is having models of reading and writing to emulate. Educators who ensure continuous exposure to a wide variety of kinds of texts, rich conversation, and dramatic play will set the stage for children's own reading and writing. Children who see the team, family and community members reading a variety of texts, writing stories, messages, lists, etc. in purposeful and interesting ways encounter literacy in a naturally infused manner. Thirdly, a classroom culture that nurtures a climate of curiosity and wonderment will plant the seeds for children to want to read and write about their experiences.

Supports to Encourage Reading in the Classroom

At the beginning of the year, co-creating labels, containing both a picture and text for various objects in the classroom such as shelf labels and coat hooks introduces children to printed text. Posting or creating a book with environmental print so that children can read, share and talk about print that is familiar to them. Use visuals materials that are co-created with students as this is another form of text.

Gallery 5.1 Co-created visuals.

Post learning stories or learning panels about specific inquires and explorations children have been engaged in so that children can revisit the experience and share and explain the exploration to visitors or other children. Encourage children to “read” them and tell the story. Learning stories and panels should be child created, team created and co-created

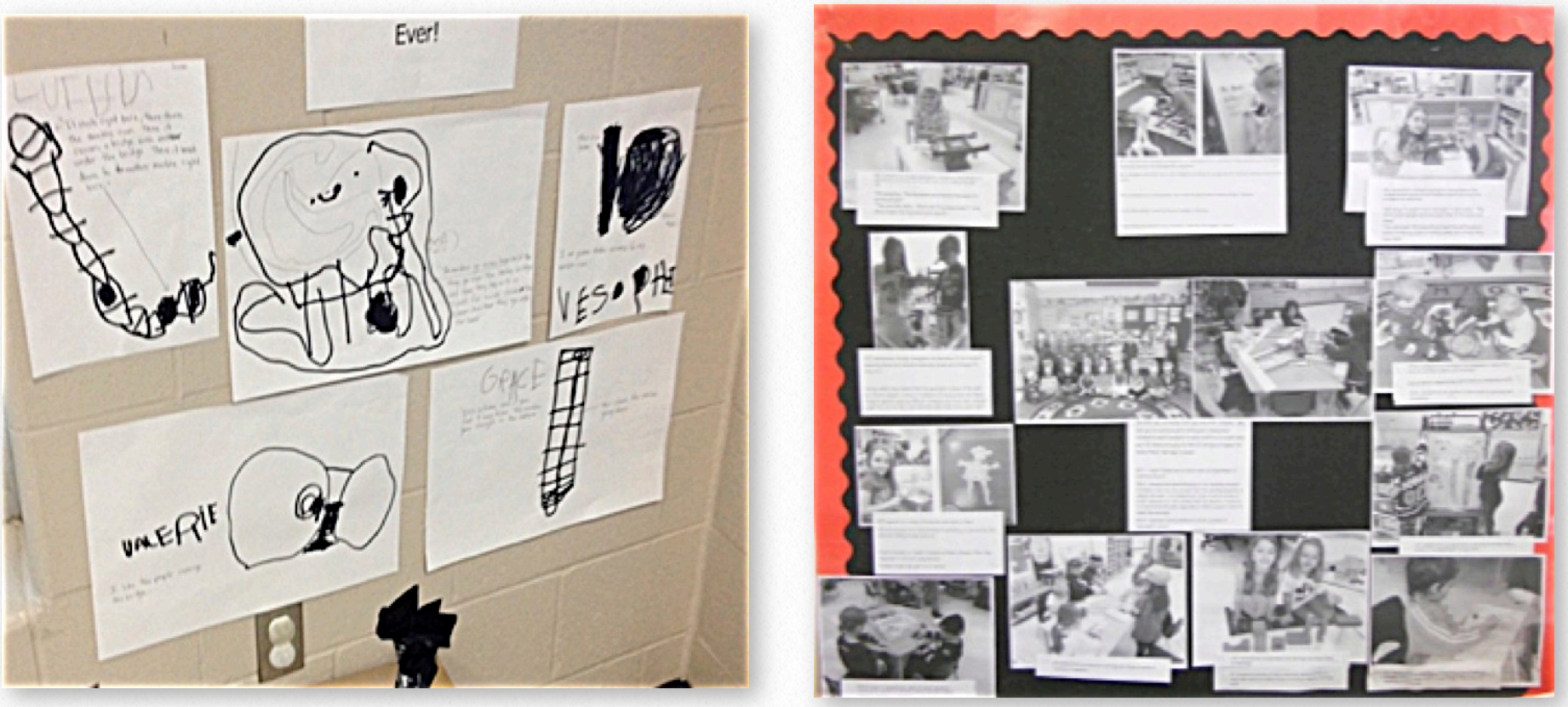


Figure 8b: Learning stories/panels can be created and displayed in numerous ways.

Literacy Throughout the Day in a Play-based Learning Program

Play at co-created and team developed learning areas allows students to apply their knowledge independently or while working with their peers. FDK teams can facilitate the authentic practice of literacy skills by equipping learning areas (which could be anywhere in the environment) with intentional, purposeful materials and resources as well as providing provocations and questions that extend and challenge student learning. Teams should make every effort to embed literacy into the learning areas throughout the day and to encourage and engage children as they make their learning visible to themselves, their peers, educators in the environment and their families. An example of this could be engaging students in making grocery lists, drawing and labeling plans for a structure or orally retelling the steps a child took to create something at the art studio. FDK teams need to engage with children as they play so that they can observe and document their literacy skills within their play. Having a solid understanding of the overarching concepts and Big Ideas with regards to literacy in Kindergarten assists teams in understanding where students are in their acquisition of literacy skills and allows them to plan next steps for guided instruction and learning areas.

“Children are always becoming readers and writers. They are born to learn about literacy and continue to grow in their literacy understanding throughout life. This concept implies the work we do around children’s literacy development is critical and consequential. The magic age is now.” Marie Clay, 1993

Teams can support literacy learning in Kindergarten in numerous ways:

• Communicate by talking, listening and speaking to others for a variety of purposes and in a variety of contexts.

• Use reading strategies that are appropriate for beginning readers in order to make sense of a variety of written materials.

• Communicate in writing using strategies that are appropriate for beginners.

• Sharing a variety of written materials that engage children in developing critical awareness of text including media.

• Interaction with knowledgeable educators who are responsive.

• Asking open-ended questions and presenting provocations.

• Engaging in children's literacy play providing guidance and modeling where needed.

Gallery 5.2

The team can plan brief, focused daily experiences that build on a particular concept of set of ideas. They also need to plan intentional and engaging literacy instruction throughout the day. They can ensure that significant literacy learning is included in play, daily routines and classroom experiences. (FDELKP Draft, 2010, p. 19)

Children will be involved in small-group, whole-class, and individual learning experiences that address their needs, ideas, and interests and that are within the range of things they can do with and without guidance (in their zone of proximal development). (FDELKP Draft, 2010, p. 69)

Basic Understandings about Reading

The 2003 Ministry Guide to Effective Instruction in Reading K-3 identifies three goals of reading instruction:

Comprehension, which is the ability to understand, reflect on, and learn from text.

Fluency, which is the ability to identify words accurately and to read text with ease, pace and automaticity.

Motivation to read is the essential element for actively engaging students in the reading process.

The Guide identifies three stages in Reading Development:

EMERGENT READERS:

Imitate and practice the reading process by acting out beginning reading behaviours and by pretending to read

Become familiar with words and letters, and learn that some words rhyme or sound the same at the beginning or the end

Begin to understand concepts of print

Learn that spoken words can be written down in a way that allows the words to be read and understood by others

EARLY READERS:

Begin to pay attention to the details of print and know that printed letters and words represent the sounds and words of oral language

Begin to understand how the forty-four sounds in the English language translate into letters and letter clusters

Understand most concepts of print and learn how to substitute letters to make new words and how to break words into individual letters or sounds

Develop basic decoding and problem-solving skills and use high-frequency words to give meaning to their early reading efforts and support the development of fluency

Rely on pictures, initial consonants, and other cues to support their reading and comprehension

FLUENT READERS:

Identify words with greater skill and ease, and begin to apply more complex comprehension strategies

Have a more extensive “bank” of sight words

Have refined their decoding skills so that they can focus more on meaning and less on deciphering words

Have learned to integrate the three cueing systems to make sense of text

High Yield Instructional Reading Strategies

Children develop knowledge and skills in the various areas of language learning at different rates and in different ways. (FDELKP Draft, 2010, p. 69)

Read-Alouds (Whole/small group experiences)

• share rich literacy experiences and foster a love of reading

• expose children to texts of different genres

• allow children to engage in talk before, during, and after the reading

• help to build vocabulary with familiar and new words in different contexts

• enhance imagination, creativity and innovate thinking

• build concept knowledge, and listening skills

• engage children in learning the structure and linguistic features of text

• model fluency and expression of oral reading

Shared Reading (Whole/small/individual group experiences)

• models effective reading behaviours

• fosters a love of reading

• develops an understanding of story structures and literary elements

• demonstrates the application of reading strategies while thinking aloud

• articulates what these strategies are and how they can help readers access print

• supports children in learning, practicing and consolidating the reading strategies

Subsequent readings of the text may focus on:

- book and print conventions (through looking at the cover, reading the title, talking about the pictures, turning the pages, noticing letters, and identifying words)
- letter and letter-sound relationships, phonemes
- syntax and semantics
- building vocabulary
- building and extending comprehension skills

Guided Reading (Small/individual group experiences)

<u>Before</u> the guided reading lesson, the team:

- Selects an appropriate text for a specific group
- Prepares an introduction to the story
- Provides explicit vocabulary instruction
- Briefly introduces the story
- Reviews and reminds students of one or two reading strategies that have already been taught
- Leaves some questions to be answered through reading

<u>During</u> the guided reading lesson, the team member:

- Listens in as each student reads the text
- Observes the behaviours of each child
- Notes reading behaviours and attempts at problem-solving
- Provides support and encourages active problem-solving

After the guided reading lesson, the team member:

- Engages children in a discussion about the text
- Invites children's oral responses
- Returns children to the text for one or two teaching points
- Assesses children's understanding of what they have read
- When appropriate engages children in extending the story through other activities (paint ing, role playing)

Guided Reading in Kindergarten

Since guided reading involves students reading a text with a minimal amount of teacher support, a decision about whether to use guided reading in Kindergarten should be based on the learning behaviours, strengths, and needs of individual students. This evidence would be gathered through observation and documentation. When students are able to demonstrate an understanding of print concepts and knowledge of letters and sounds, and recognize some sight words, they are ready to participate in guided reading groups. Therefore, guided reading may not be appropriate for emergent readers, who are still developing these skills. These learners could work in small groupings to review concepts of print and letter/sound knowledge. Emergent readers require many shared reading opportunities where they can learn reading strategies in context. Guided reading lessons, when taught in Kindergarten, should be shorter in duration than those taught in later primary grades. **Suggested timeline: 5-7 minutes**. They could be conducted on a one-to-one basis or with two or more children. Guided

reading sessions could occur at any time of day and anywhere in the Kindergarten environment (adapted from Early Reading Strategies, Ministry Training, 2003)

Independent Reading (throughout the day, anywhere in the environment)

It may be too much to expect Kindergarten children to focus on one book for an extended period of time. Research has found that the most common activities amongst Kindergarten children during independent reading time were browsing and flipping through books, rather than concentrating on one story.

It is unrealistic to expect silence during independent reading time in Kindergarten. Most children prefer to connect with others as they interact with books, and even those who read alone are likely to read aloud.

Teams need to take the time to explicitly teach children to engage independently with books. Model and demonstrate the different ways to read a book in Kindergarten to acknowledge the various stages at which students will be functioning:

- Look at the pictures
- Make up a story by reading the pictures
- Read the words that you know
- Class created books, social stories and poems can be offered for independent reading.

Gallery 5.3


HAPPY BIRTHDAY
Love somebody,
Yes, I do.
Love somebody,
Yes, I do.
Love somebody,
Group Time
Activities





horses

Basic Understandings about Writing

The Ministry's Guide to Effective Writing K-3 (2005) identifies four goals for writing instruction. They are as follows:

1. To write clearly and creatively to convey a message

2. To communicate ideas, thoughts, feelings, and experiences

3. To understand that writing is a reflective and interactive process

4. To understand the different purposes, audiences, and forms for writing

The Guide Identifies Three Stages in Writing Development:

Emergent Stage:
Understands that writing records a personal message
Understands that writing is a form of communication and conveys a meaningful message
Progresses to writing a simple message using a combination of pictures, symbols and words
Begins to use the conventions of oral language (often with a tendency to over apply newly learned conventions) while progression from simple descriptions to retelling event and explaining ideas
Begins to use the conventions of oral language (often with a tendency to over apply newly learned conventions) while progressing from simple descriptions to retelling events and explaining ideas
Demonstrates an interest in playing at “writing” and willingness to do so
Develops the understanding that illustration and writing are different, and progresses from scribble writing to letter approximations to conventional letters and spaces, with few or no attempts a punctuation
Progresses from demonstrating beginning awareness of directionality using left to right, top to bottom (i.e., concepts of print)
Progresses from using symbols representing print to spelling words with one or more letters, with a focus on letters representing the sounds of consonants (e.g. his/her own name, and high frequency words such as “mom”, “I” and “to”)

Early Stage:
Understands that writing is a way to preserve thoughts and information
Demonstrates awareness that oral language needs to be grammatically accurate, and is able to self-correct, using specific vocabulary to suit different purposes (e.g., for description, comparison, and higher order thinking
Demonstrates enjoyment and continued interest in writing
Represents words with conventional letters and spaces in simple sentences, and attempts to use some punctuation in written language
Progresses from demonstrating awareness of basic print concepts to first steps in planning, revising and editing
Understands some purposes and forms of writing, and uses basic sentence structures to communicate ideas
Chooses letters to represent all dominant sounds in a word often using invented spelling as well as conventional spelling of some high frequency words

Developing Fluency stage:
Understands that writing is an essential part of one’s life in order to communicate and satisfy personal and academic needs
Recognizes that oral language needs to be adapted for specific purposes and communicates messages for a variety of activities and events
Continues to enjoy writing, understands that writing can be used for a variety of purposes
Writes a variety of sentences and paragraphs, using appropriate punctuation
Uses a range of strategies for planning, revising, editing and publishing written text
Uses appropriate vocabulary and a range of text forms to suit purpose and audience
Writes a variety of simple and complex sentences grouped into paragraphs
Uses letters to represent all sounds and begins to use a variety of spelling strategies

High Yield Instructional Writing Strategies

Modeled Writing (Whole/small group experiences)

- to model and demonstrate the writing process
- to “think aloud” so that children have the opportunity to hear and experience writers thoughts as they write
- to highlight strategies that effective writers use
- to expose children to a variety of text types
- to produce a readable text so that children make a connection between writing and read ing.

Shared Writing (Whole/small/individual group experiences)

- to support the connection between oral language and the writing process
- to allow children to negotiate a common text that arises from a shared experience and share the pencil
- to allow children to share their thought processes as writers
- to have children discuss one another’s thoughts about writing
- to highlight writing concepts/strategies
- to produce a text so that children make a connection between writing and reading

Independent Writing (Small/individual group experiences)

- to give children opportunities to explore writing on their own
- to encourage children to integrate instruction from Modeled, and Shared writing and apply new concepts to their own writing

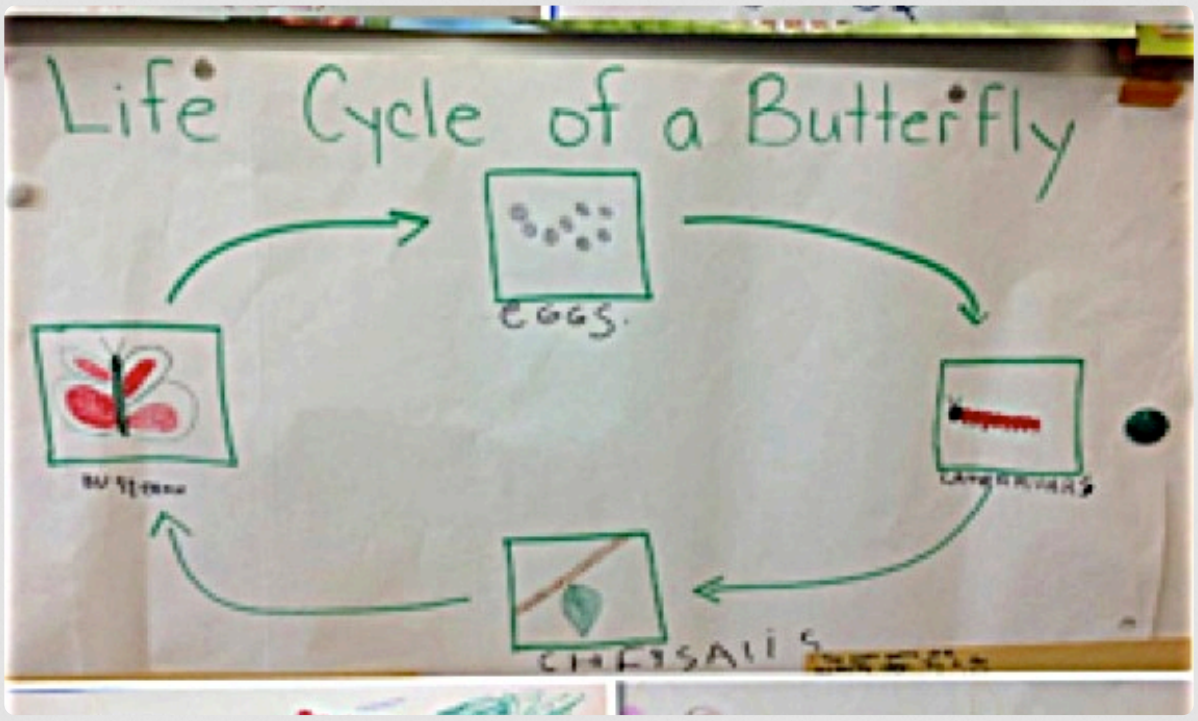
• to assist in the formation of flexible Guided writing groups or confer with individual students

Guided Writing (Small/individual group experiences)

• to provide scaffolded support to children who need assistance with any step in the writ ing process

• to focus instruction on specific concepts

Gallery 5.4 Writing strategies



Shared Writing Sample

The Kindergarten – Developmentally Appropriate Planning Resource (writing stages deconstructed) is attached as Appendix G (Catholic Curriculum Co-operative Writing Resource, 2011)

6

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The true object of all human life is play.

G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936)

Presenting the environment well is the teacher's greatest curricular asset

Hirsh, 2004 (Early Childhood Curriculum, qtd. in Balanced Curriculum for Young Children, 2008)

The Early Learning-Kindergarten team comprises a Kindergarten teacher and one or more early childhood educators (ECEs) as well as planning time teachers. The third source of learning in the classroom is the environment itself. Intentionally setting up the environment to provoke and promote interest and curiosity provides a subtle but powerful source of new learning.

Developmentally Appropriate Early Learning Kindergarten Classrooms

In creating an effective early learning programme, the Kindergarten team needs to consider the whole environment. The classroom and outdoor spaces themselves have been referred to as “the third teacher”. The materials the children have to explore; the indoor and outdoor space they move around in, and the people they interact with all impact their learning. In planning for learning, the Early Learning-Kindergarten team including the planning time teacher needs to consider:

- The physical space, both indoor and outdoor, time and resources
- Learning areas
- Program components

> *It is within the early childhood classroom environment that curriculum comes to life, as the environment surrounds and enfolds those who participate. Young children are profoundly affected by their environment, so it is essential that educators understand the complexity and interconnectedness between the environment and a balanced curriculum.*
>
> Marcus, 2008

The physical space and resources that make up the classroom provide the foundation for building an active, engaging and developmentally appropriate learning environment. Children in the all-day Kindergarten program spend the majority of their time in school and deserve a well-designed learning space. Try to create an atmosphere that is welcoming and

Figure 8: Space to play

relaxed, aesthetically pleasing and peaceful. As much as possible, try to control the selection of furnishings, lighting, noise, space and materials. Create space that invites interaction and co-operation and ensure safety.

One of the best ways to rethink the space is to create a map of the environment and then analyse it in terms of noise, movement, use of space, ease of learning, safety, etc. This provides a platform for discussing inventive ways to make minor or major changes to align the environment so it models a view of children as autonomous and engaged learners and allows for co-creation with the children so they have ownership of their space.

One simple, but powerful, change is to declutter space using only materials that are necessary for learning at the time. Re-think excessive use of colour and simplify surfaces. Neutralize the background so the focus is on the learning. Once the environment is modified, it opens the door to further exploration of the intentionality of the space and all the possibilities that exist for enhancing children's engagement.

Figure 9: Space for exploration

Physical Space

- Is the space uncluttered and organized?
- Is there a calming affect generated by the use of natural light and avoidance of over-stimulating colour schemes?
- Is there sufficient space to move safely between learning areas?
- Are there clear lines of sight for safe observation?
- Are learners enticed by engaging and interesting resources and set-up?
- Are natural materials used wherever possible?
- Is the layout flexible so that there are many ways to use the space and materials?
- Are there areas that promote self-regulation?
- Is there a place for quiet reflection such as the prayer centre?
- Do indoor and outdoor spaces allow for differentiated instruction?
- Is the outdoor space an extension of the children's learning?
- Does the outdoor space engage children in exploring their role as stewards of God's world?
- Are there materials provided in the outdoor space to support learning in all domains?
- Have considerations been made to make the space inclusive?
- Does the environment invite children to engage in play based learning and inquiry?
- Is there a comfortable open group space?
- Is all the furniture necessary?
- Are there defined spaces for learning areas in the classroom with a balance between active and quiet areas?
- Are learning areas designed to promote interaction and socialization?
- Do children have easy access to all materials?

- Are visuals used for routines and prompts at a child's eye level?
- Are experiences from all learning domains embedded throughout the learning environment?
- Is child selected work displayed in the environment so that their learning is visible?
- Has the environment been co-constructed with the children? Does it belong to them?
- Do children have personal labeled space for their items?
- Is there a space provided for children to place finished and /or work in progress?

Gallery 6.1



Gallery 6.2 **Examples of student created and natural, non-commercial materials**

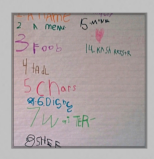
Shared Ownership of Learning Environment

Gallery 6.3 **Shared Ownership of Learning Environment**

Student-created classroom mural to welcome spring

Gallery 6.4 **Play-based Learning Environment Supports a Restaurant Inquiry**

Co-created sandwich shop

Gallery 6.5 Play-based Learning Environment Supports a Camping Inquiry

Student-created campsite




Time

- Are there large blocks of time for children to engage in their choice of learning areas?
- Is the time spent in large group gathering kept to a minimum? Is there maximum focus for minimum time?
- Does the schedule include a time for children to share their thinking and learning in small groups and one on one?
- Does the flow of the day allow for routines as well as being flexible in meeting the needs of the children?
- Is our time used in a purposeful way that allows us to learn something about our children and the next steps we need to take?
- Have we co-constructed a visual schedule that reflects the flow of the day that includes children’s photos, symbols and words?
- Do we provide time and opportunity for children to make decisions and choices?
- Is there time allowed for revisiting or extending a learning experience?
- Does the plan include a balance of team-initiated and child-initiated learning experiences?
- Do we ensure that there is sufficient time for children to get involved in their learning in depth as well as time for them to organize their material?
- Have we considered the developmental stages of our children so the amount of verbal instruction meets the children’s needs?

Materials

- Are the materials developmentally appropriate, open-ended and safe?
- Do the materials reflect the diversity of the community and are not stereotypical?
- Do children have access to engaging materials to support their learning?
- Do the children have access to a range of materials at the arts studio/design studio that will allow for exploration and open ended responses rather than product-oriented crafts?
- Are the materials organized in intentional and purposeful ways (e.g., materials at learning areas are added and/or removed based on the children's ideas or instructional purpose)?
- Does the team offer a balance of open ended materials? Of commercial materials? Of natural materials? For children to access throughout the day?
- Have we considered and chosen literacy materials that reflect our children's real life contexts?
- Have the materials, resources and equipment been organized and labeled to ensure that children can access and put them away safely and easily? (e.g., use team and child created symbols, photo labels, and word labels to indicate where things go)
- Have a variety of materials and resources (familiar, novel, simple, complex) for children to explore, manipulate, and use in learning experiences and in imaginative play been provided?
- Are there meaningful and inclusive literacy and numeracy materials throughout the environment?
- Do parent and/or community volunteers/clergy and older students, where possible, assist and interact with the children?

- Are visual prompts provided for the children to access for dressing and undressing as well as additional guidelines for entering and exiting the environment?
- Has the team ensured that tables and chairs are at an appropriate height to meet the needs of the learners?

Learning Areas

Teams spend time modeling and teaching children routines for the centres. Teams also observe children at the learning centres and gather assessment information on individual children in order to plan instruction and determine appropriate materials for teaching.

FDELKP Draft, 2010

Suggestions are provided for each of the learning areas described on the following pages. However, it is important to think of learning areas as flexible, ever-changing environments that will be reviewed many times over the school year and re-designed, as needed, to adapt to the interests and needs of the children. In designing the space, also remember to consider how to promote the intentional learning of concepts under the umbrella of the big ideas and overall expectations of the Kindergarten program. It is important for the children to co-create the experiences for play and how interaction occurs.

- Do our learning areas offer open-ended, purposeful and intentional with materials based on children's developmental needs, interests and potential for exploration and learning?
- Do our learning areas support process vs. product?
- Does the team spend time engaging with children at the learning areas?
- Do we observe and document at learning areas?
- Have we modeled and practiced the expectations and routines at the learning areas?
- Do our learning areas allow children to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in an authentic way?
- Do our learning areas make authentic and meaningful connections to children's prior knowledge?

- Do our learning areas allow children to practice and apply new learning independently and with co-learners?
- Do our learning areas foster the development of oral language, social skills, literacy ad mathematic skills, sensory learning, problem solving, inquiry, higher order thinking skills and the development of gross and fine motor skills?
- Can children make choices at the learning areas?
- Are our learning areas co-constructed with our children?
- Do our learning areas evolve throughout the year to meet the changing needs/interests of the children?
- Are we cognizant of the social implications of the materials being used at the learning areas (e.g., rice, pasta, oats could be perceived as wasteful and could be substituted with leaves, shredded paper and other non-food items)

Stacking blocks and mixing sand and water encourages logical- mathematical thinking, scientific reasoning and cognitive problem-solving.…the learning that occurs is a by-product of play.

Paul Cappon, The Canadian Council on Learning

Learning areas are a central feature of an early learning classroom. They provide natural opportunities for learning that connect to children's developing cognitive, social and emotional self-regulation. Some areas will remain central to the program at all times while other centres will be flexible, coming and going depending on children's interest (e.g., the block area will usually be a permanent feature; a store created by the children may be a short term inquiry). As children play, teams have the opportunity to observe children interacting with the materials and each other; to introduce new language and to support inquiry learning. Teams will be active participants and provoke the learning through responding, chal-

lenging and extending. They will also observe and document the learning and make decisions about next steps. Types of materials and the way that they are organized can shape how the learning is demonstrated through saying, doing and representing.

Below is a description of some of the areas that may be set up in a classroom together with a list of possible resources. However, over the course of the year, the team will respond to the naturally occurring inquiries of the children, re-engage interest in a centre by adding novel materials (e.g., piping and bubble material added to the water table) or introduce an important concept (e.g., adding writing materials to the block centre). Consider how to embed literacy and mathematics in the learning areas.

Faith/Prayer Table

Play Experiences	***Possible Materials***
Using the liturgical calendar children feel connected with God. At the beginning of the year the prayer table can be used to build a community of caring.The prayer table can be co-created with students throughout the year based on Jesus' journey. During advent and Christmas time nativity materials for role playing the Christmas story could be provided. The Easter story with a focus on new life would also be appropriate. The table can be used for gathering children to say prayers (birthday prayer, The Lord's prayer and children created prayers) and could also be used as a quiet, reflective space. Our faith is reflected in all that we say and do in all areas of the Kindergarten program. 	The prayer centre should be at the children's eye level when they are sitting. It is the centrepiece of the classroom and should be co-created with the children. We commit to treating each other with kindness and respect and each day, the prayer centre serves as a stable reminder of our commitment. It doesn't have to be large, just easily visible from most places. Depending upon the time of the year it should be covered with a certain colour: Ordinary Time – green; Advent and Lent – violet or purple; Christmas and Easter – white. The prayer centre should contain some symbols of faith e.g., a crucifix, a children's bible, children's prayer book and other picture books about faith-based values will help entice children to use the centre on a regular basis. A space for displaying prayer intentions. **Catholic Graduate Expectations (Elementary)** I am a believer: I believe and have faith in God. I have a voice: I care about others and speak up for them. I have ideas: I make good choices. I am a learner for life: I use my gifts and talents given to me by God. I am a team player: I respect and listen to others. I care: I love God, myself, and my family. I have responsibilities: I am a peacemaker.

Home/Drama Area

Play Experiences	*Possible Materials*
Many children naturally gravitate to the dramatic area. They role play experiences in their lives and re-enact familiar stories or experiences. The materials at the area will encourage their imaginary play. Consideration needs to be made about how the materials will support their learning. An example to support their play would be the introduction of a variety of writing tools. Development of oral language, vocabulary, social skills, self - regulation, problem solving and creativity are all evident in this learning area. Teams can engage with children at this area by being play partners, asking open ended, rich questions and prompts and provoking their learning by extending and challenging their play.	This is a multi-function centre and will have different materials in it depending upon the use. Dress-up clothes and found materials (cereal boxes, wood, old mobile phones) – different types of clothing and materials can prompt children to make believe different situations Toy furniture, appliances, dishes and food for a house Cash register, food from different cultures, a shopping cart and paper Puppets/masks, puppet theatre Doll bed, dolls and clothes, stroller, blankets A full-length mirror Dress Up hats, shoes, purses, suitcases, clothes, shoes, gloves Props to support the inquiry of Doctor's Office, Hairdressers, Post Office, Hospital, Vet, Restaurant, Store, Fire or Police Station **Other materials:** message board, chalk board, chalk, telephone book, message pads, envelopes, magazines, newspapers, books, pens, pencils, paper, cash register, play money, calculator, clock, grocery store flyers

Construction

Play Experiences	***Possible Materials***
At the construction area children develop gross and fine motor skills while building and exploring structures and stability. They develop and apply numeracy skills including estimating, measuring, counting, comparing, sorting and classifying. They also develop and apply inquiry skills through experimenting, investigating, predicting, observing and hypothesizing. There is development of spatial concepts and perceptual skills along with the application of social skills including communication, sharing, problem solving, negotiating and self-regulating. Children develop oral language and social skill through role playing and cooperative play. By introducing books, old blueprints, pictures of specific buildings and locations, children's interest in building will be further engaged. Placing paper and pencils in the construction area can prompt children to represent their learning on paper as drawings and text as they pretend to be builders, engineers and architects. Teams can encourage the learning of geometry concepts by posing problems for children to explore such as how to make a building stronger or guiding their learning by using the proper terms for the 3D-figures they are building with. By introducing photographs of their local community, they can prompt discussion about what buildings exist and their function.	There is a wide range of materials that are appropriate for construction. Large/small wooden, foam and cardboard blocks Found items such as ranches, logs, rocks, boxes, paper tubes, sticks, small pebbles, Popsicle sticks, paper, card, glue, and modelling clay Commercial items such as Lego™, Meccano™, snap cubes, K'Nex™ connector straws, giant tubes, pattern blocks etc Trucks, cars, vehicles, people etc Props for construction play A variety of writing tools, hardware flyers, clipboards 

Sand and Water

Play Experiences	***Possible Materials***
Children love to have their hands in sand or water and will experiment with how sand and water flow and often find comfort using these natural materials. Experiences at these areas allow for development of sensory exploration, to explore properties of water and sand, and expansion of oral language and vocabulary. There is development of fine motor skills and eye-hand co-ordination. Children develop and apply inquiry skills (experiment, investigate, predict, observe, hypothesize), social skills (communication, sharing, problem solving, negotiating) and mathematical skills (estimate, measure, count, compare) Teachers can help children develop an understanding of capacity by leading an investigation into which container holds the most water and then extending this into writing as they support the children in recording the results. Children can explore structures by investigating how wet sand needs to be in order to build the strongest sandcastle or use the wet sand to create sculptures. 	This is a very extendable learning area that changes with children's interests. Here is a possible list of resources **Water** Mild soap for bubbles Funnels and tubes Objects that float and sink; mop, bucket, Items for creating water environments-plastic toys and animals, balls, coins, corks, wooden blocks, plastic blocks, erasers, plastercine, shells, stones, plastic plants Pumps, beakers, tubing, PVC pipe, waterwheels, measuring cups, colanders, small containers, clear, opaque and solid containers, plastic test tubes, eyedroppers, basters, funnels, sponges, clothes, towels, paper, sieves, magnifying glasses, watering cans Recording Tools-paper, clipboards, chart paper for sharing findings, whiteboards writing tools Topic specific books, magazines, posters

Sensory

Play Experiences	***Possible Materials***
Experiences at this area allows for development of sensory exploration and brain development. Children explore properties of materials, and can expand their oral language and vocabulary. There is development of fine motor skills and eye-hand co-ordination. Children develop and apply inquiry skills (experiment, investigate, predict, observe, hypothesize), social skills (communication, sharing, problem solving, negotiating) and mathematical skills (estimate, measure, count, compare) *After a child shares a fossil with the class the team puts soil from their garden inquiry into the sensory bin. They also bury shells, rocks and fossils in the soil. The team intentionally places gloves and different types of brushes at the area so the children can dig for and discover the buried items.* 	Consider the following materials for the sensory area. - Snow, coloured snow, ice - Leaves, rocks, shells, - Packing foam, bubble wrap - Magnetic letters, shredded paper, - Different paper textures for children to cut - Dirt, mud, grass, Easter grass, moss - Pinecones, mini pumpkins, gourds, - Pompoms, cotton balls, moon sand - Coloured beads or jewels, marbles - Cut up pipe cleaners and magnets - Shaving cream, cut up straws - Wood shavings, seeds, feathers - Fabric

Science/Discovery

Play Experiences	***Possible Materials***
These areas promote inquiry, curiosity, interest, discovery and wonder. The experiences will engage children in exploring and developing respect for God's living world. It allows them to observe, question, compare, predict, connect and problem solve. Children also extend oral language and vocabulary and represent their inquiries and discoveries in a variety of ways (write, draw, label, design, paint, etc.). This area allows for children to be investigators. By following children's interests and helping to develop those interests through books and experiences many science concepts will become the focus of intense learning by young children. Children participate in inquiries such as growing plants, caring for animals, exploring bubbles or gears and levers. Opportunities for learning outdoors such as going on a walk and discovering insects, designing, building and flying a kite and conducting child-initiated experiments all encourage scientific habits of mind.	The science and discovery area is an ever-changing one. Items that promote inquiry may include: - Magnifying glasses, microscopes, insect magnifiers, thermometers, tape measures, - Magnets, scent or sound bottles, - Weights, balance scales, binoculars, flashlights, measuring devices, nails, funnels, mirrors, shovels, building tools - Objects from nature, found materials rocks, shells, feathers, seeds, bones, bark, twigs, logs, seeds, leaves, apples, pinecones, acorns, chestnuts, flowers, bugs, snow, ice, nests, bulbs, soil, - Musical instruments, - Balls, ramps, fabric - Plastic animals, skeletons - Objects brought in by the children - Topic specific books, magazines, posters based on inquiry interests - Writing tools, clips boards, chart paper

Art and Design Studio

Play Experiences	***Possible Materials***
Through art children activate creativity and self-expression and express thoughts, feelings and represent their ideas. They can develop hand-eye coordination, small muscles (fine-motor control) and large muscles (gross-motor control) as well as explore processes and apply techniques. They develop problem solving skills and experiment with the elements of visual art-colour, shape, form, space, line, balance, texture. Experiences allow them to express thoughts and represent their ideas in 2D and 3D form.	- Painting easels, drying racks, - Variety of paint types (tempera, blocks, water colour), - Pots or trays to store paint/brushes - Paint brushes of various sizes, feathers, straws, toothbrushes, string, Q-tips, sponges, string, stamps, marbles, cars - Mixing pallets (lids, egg cartons, muffin tins) - Glue sticks, glue, tape, paper clips, scissors, paper fasteners - Variety of paper in assorted textures, colours, sizes, coloured paper, wrapping paper, waxed paper, magazines, canvas - Mirrors, sponges - Found materials- stamps, ink, stickers, trays, paper towels, - Paper plates, pipe cleaners, buttons, cotton balls, paper rolls, fabric, yarn, beads, corks, sticks, pine cones, ribbon, pie plates, styrofoam, twigs, wire, jewels, food colouring - Crayons, markers, Sharpies, pencils, pens, chalk, pastels, pencil crayons - Playdough, clay, plastercine, goop, flubber - Sticks, blunt knives, rolling pins, spatulas, textured items, cookie cutters, toothpicks, straws - Pipe cleaners, twigs, popsicle sticks, dowels, rocks - Lego, plastic animals, little people

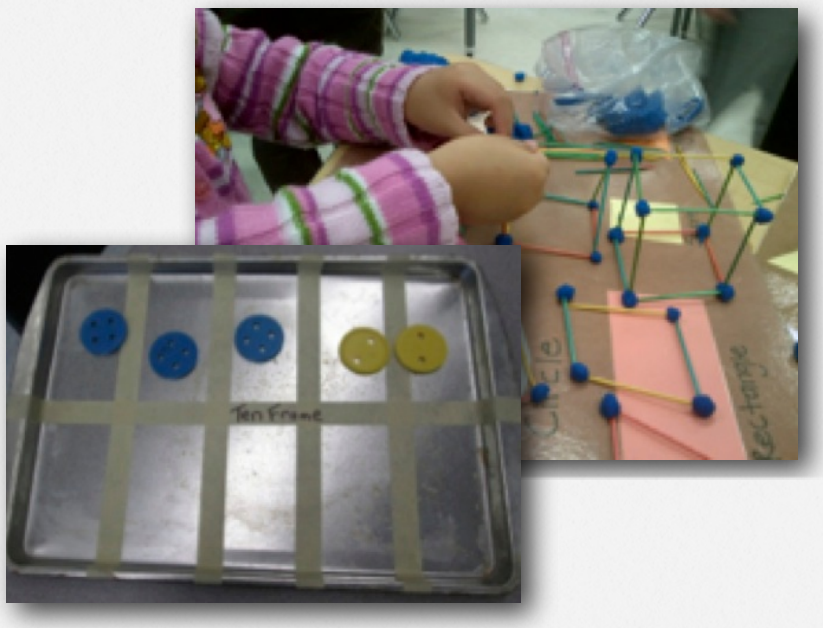
Literacy

Play Experiences	*Possible Materials*
Throughout the environment there should be evidence of literacy learning that fosters positive attitudes and beliefs about learning and literacy development. Literacy experiences should support children in developing an interest in texts of all genres including environmental print as well as facilitating their skills in communicating ideas through words, symbols and pictures. Children explore and develop print concepts and practice **developmentally appropriate** reading and writing strategies. They will explore and apply knowledge of letter/sound relationships and build a sight word bank. Guided experiences will allow them to extend comprehension and background knowledge, and write for a variety of purposes and genres. All experiences will also extend oral language, speaking and listening skills, and will assist children in building confidence about themselves as readers, writers, listeners and speakers. A play-based literacy rich environment engages children in practicing literacy skills in an authentic way. 	A variety of books both fiction and non-fiction, picture books, board books, big books, pop-up books, pattern books, class books, reference books, magazines chart stories, environmental print and newspapers - Felt board/ cookie sheets, felt figures/shapes and/or magnetic graphics for story retelling, re-enacting - Pointers, reading wands, swatters, reading glasses, - Book bins, pillows, child-sized comfy chairs CD player with microphone - Earphones/ headphones - Books on tape/CDs and copy of book for each listener - Music and poem tapes/CDs - Class made recordings - Reading wands - Visual instructions on using tape/CD player - iPad, iPod, Playbooks - Clear bins or trays to hold writing tools such as pencils of all different sizes, markers, pencil crayons, pens, scissors, hole punch, tape, date stamp - Paper in a variety of sizes, textures, thickness, unlined and lined, premade booklets, cards, envelopes, chart paper, sticky notes - Word wall (can be portable or use Velcro so the children can remove the words they need to copy) - Magnetic boards/ letters - White boards/ markers/erasers - Small chalkboards /chalk /erasers - Alphabet stamps, alphabet cards, name cards, word books, picture dictionaries - Clip boards

Technology

Play Experiences	*Possible Materials*
Tools for technology develop children's confidence and skills in using technology and develop 21rst century skills The team guided integration of technological tools is a natural extension for children to develop and apply skills and knowledge from the six learning domains. Using these types of tools can foster eye/hand coordination and fine motor skills and engages children in following directions and turn taking. Children can be part of co-creating documentation of their learning by using technology. Teams members need to guide and support children as they explore digital information so that they become critical creators and consumers.	- Computers suitable for children to use - Headphones - Co-created posters/anchor charts about steps for usage of tools - Digital cameras, flip cameras - Smartboard - Developmentally appropriate Smartboard activties iPads, iPods, Playbooks - Access to developmentally appropriate activities and apps

Mathematics

Play Experiences	*Possible Materials*
Children use math intuitively and have existing conceptual mathematical knowledge that should be valued. Engaging math experiences allow children to explore, discover, observe, estimate, count, match, sort, graph, pattern, group, add, subtract, predict, interpret, measure, identify, collect data, compare and order. They explore the seven mathematical processes- problem solving, reasoning and proving, reflecting, selecting tools and strategies, connecting, representing and communicating. Children develop inquiry skills and mathematical knowledge in an authentic way, explore mathematical relationships, concepts, properties and build math vocabulary. Mathematical problem solving fosters cooperative and collaborative work. 	**Possible Materials** Number Sense and Numeration-Magnetic, plastic, foam, felt numbers, number puzzles, number tracers, shake and spill counters, coins, 5 and 10 frames, Cubealinks, dominoes, two colour counters, base ten blocks, number lines **Geometry** - Tangrams, 2D and 3D shapes and figures commercial and found, geometric blocks, geo boards with elastics, blocks, balls, ramps **Measurement** - Non-standard tools (straws, sticks, pencils, string, ribbons, classroom items) standard tools (tape measures), balance scales, items of different sizes, mass and density, weights, funnels, scoops, spoons, cups, measuring cups, cylinders, egg timers, sand timers, clocks, thermometer **Patterning -** items to pattern with shells, beads, bread tags, stones, keys, toys, clothes pattern blocks, attribute blocks, buttons **Data Management** - sorting tray, sorting cookie sheet, plastic graphing mat, items to sort Learning carpet Clipboards, writing tools, paper Math Word Wall, Math related texts

The Program Components

A central focus of a Catholic Kindergarten program is the whole child with all the spiritual, emotional, physical, cognitive, and social implications that that entails. This is best sustained in an environment designed to encourage learning through play, oral language, story, creative thinking, and moving. Learning opportunities should be hands-on, developmentally appropriate and driven by children's own interests. As Piaget (1962) found, play is children's work and to do their work they need the tools of the trade and an amenable working site.

Into Practice

The Kindergarten team are meeting at the start of the year to plan. As suggested in the Ministry of Education's training, they are using the '3 Rs' (rethink, repeat, remove) to make program modifications. In previous years, their best readers have participated in a daily formal guided reading lesson. In reviewing what is developmentally appropriate for four and five year-olds they decide to rethink their practice. They make the decision to look at each child individually and decide upon the type of reading experience that would be most suitable based on the social, cognitive and emotional maturity of the child. Reading time will include a mix of one-on-one time with one member of the Kindergarten team; whole group short lessons, small group shared reading, and free-choice reading.

The program components consist of the big ideas, the overall expectations and the specific expectations. Teams who are new to the program will need to become familiar with each of these components. Over time, once that knowledge is consolidated, the overall and specific expectations will become a well-understood subtext that flows out of big ideas and the big ideas can become the primary focus of program planning.

The seven program areas are: Religion and Personal and Social Development, Language, Mathematics, Science & Technology, Health & Physical Activity and The Arts (FDELKP, 2010). Each program area contains a "big idea." The big idea connects the learning to a common core of values in that subject area. The links between the program areas and big ideas are shown below.

The Big Ideas of Kindergarten

Program Area	Big Idea
Religion	Children are believers, they have a voice, they have ideas, they are learners for life, they are team players, they care, and they have responsibilities. (Catholic Graduate Expectations, Elementary Language)
Personal and Social Development	
Social Development	Children are connected to others and contribute to their world.
Emotional Development	Children have a strong sense of identity and well-being.
Language	Children are effective communicators.
Mathematics	Young children have a conceptual understanding of mathematics and of mathematical thinking and reasoning.
Science & Technology	Children are curious and connect prior knowledge to new contexts in order to understand the world around them.
Health & Physical Activity	Children make healthy choices and develop physical skills.
The Arts	Young children have an innate openness to artistic activities.

The Catholic Graduate Expectations are an integral part of the classroom environment and are infused throughout the day and across the program. Decisions that are made about planning to meet Ontario Curriculum expectations are vetted in terms of how they reflect Catholic values and beliefs. To build lifelong learners with a Catholic lens, it is important that teachers keep those values and beliefs as the underpinning of all learning.

Each program area has a number of overall and specific expectations. The overall expectations constitute the core learning, and are demonstrated through the skills and behaviours identified in the specific expectations. Specific expectations are used to plan for teaching - creating both learning and assessment opportunities. Teachers then take the evidence from these activities and evaluate the child with respect to their progress towards achieving the overall expectations through the two years of Kindergarten.

The expectations span the level of growth that would be expected by children over the course of the two-year Kindergarten program. This means children have two years to develop their abilities in all of the expectations. The Kindergarten team makes decisions about when to introduce and how often to repeat the teaching of any given concepts, but children are not expected to achieve at the full level of the expectations before the end of the second year.

Working Together

The teacher and ECE within the Kindergarten team both bring unique skill sets to the education of young children. The teacher brings a deep understanding of how to evaluate children's progress through academic expectations and to develop learning experiences that link their grades' expectations to the next. The ECE brings a deep understanding of the developmental progress a young child can be expected to make through the developmental domains. Together, using their unique and common skill sets, the team programs, plans and instructs the children. The complementary skills of the teacher and the ECE are best utilised in a collaborative manner: sharing the duties of teaching, facilitating, observing and assessing in all program areas. The Planning Time teacher is also a part of this team.

Each program area (other than Religion) has the same elements:

- A Big Idea
- Overall Expectations
- Specific Expectations
- Saying, Doing and/or Representing are how children demonstrate their learning
- Responding, Challenging and Extending are the team's intentional interactions when children demonstrate their learning

The Big Idea

The Big Idea connects the learning to a common core of values that contribute to lifelong learning and critical thinking. This is the focus of learning for the program area. It indicates the core abilities a child might be expected to exhibit rather than a discrete set of isolated skills. In the case of the mathematics, the Big Idea involves recognizing relationships across patterns and concepts. In other words, it encourages children to think like mathematicians or authors or scientists. In teaching this Big Idea, it is important to provide opportunities for children to ask questions, to solve problems and talk about how they solved them.

Overall Expectations

These are the key learnings that children are expected to achieve by the end of Kindergarten. They are the foundation for learning in future grades and it is children's demonstration of learning in the overall expectations that the teacher in the Kindergarten team will evaluate and report to parents.

Specific Expectations

The specific expectations outline the skills and behaviours that are taught and assessed multiple times in a variety of ways over the two-years of the program. They are listed as discrete units but are meant to be taught in an integrated fashion that includes clusters of expectations from different subject areas. Specific expectations were developed as scaffolding for teaching and learning of the overall expectations.

Saying, Doing and/or Representing

Children's learning can be described in three ways: saying, doing and/or representing. These are not strictly hierarchical (although representing tends to be more abstract than doing or saying) and a child does not have to demonstrate learning in all three ways. Each is equally valid. For instance a child may show their understanding of quantity by: talking about the number of blocks they are building with, moving their body along a hundred squares, or labelling parts of a number line. When planning an effective program, teams need to create activities and play experiences that allow children to demonstrate their learning in different ways and that allow for responding, extending and challenging learning.

Responding, Challenging and/or Extending

Teams' intentional interactions with children should include responding, challenging and extending. Teams need to act as facilitators in guiding children with thoughtful open-ended questions. They will also provide children with a variety of rich materials and resources to extend the children's thinking. The team will facilitate the children in making connections to prior knowledge and new discoveries.

Students are co-constructing a store front. One team member is listening and observing the children in their play. The team member could be jotting down an-ecdotal notes, capturing the play on video or with a camera.

How are these children demonstrating their thinking through saying, doing and representing?
Prompts that might be considered;
Tell me about your set up?
How are customers paying?
What is the message on your sign for?

Once children have responded to these prompts, team members make decisions on how to challenge and extend the learning further.

Children saying, doing and representing

7

A FRAMEWORK FOR INSTRUCTION

Children's early learning experiences have a profound effect on their development. These early interactions directly affect the way connections are made in the brain.

FDELKP Draft, 2010

Four- and five-year-old children arrive at school as unique individuals shaped by their particular cultural and social backgrounds and day-to-day experiences, and at different stages of development. Their early experiences of school are of paramount importance.

FDELKP Draft, 2010

The Structure of the Child's Day

Early child development sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health (ELECT, 2007).

A sense of routine and structure is very important for young children. Children need the safety and reassurance that predictability provides. However, if the day is too structured, there is little time for children to develop self-regulation skills and to allow for the gradual release of responsibility that is important to children's learning and behaviour. There are no hard-and-fast rules dictating how much time should be spent in each mode of instruction, effective practice would indicate that young children need large blocks of time to play throughout the day. This allows for inquiry to develop, expand and flow naturally. The flow of the day allows children to be engaged in small groups, individually or as a whole class. Developmentally, young children can find time spent in large group difficult, it is best to limit whole class time to small blocks of time and to design the time so all children are engaged and interested. It is important to incorporate large blocks of play-time with multiple opportunities to support children's inquiry learning. The concept of the flow of the day needs to adapt to these needs.

Sample of a Visual Schedule Outlining the Flow of the Day

The flow of the day will need to be flexible and may look different from this depending on other factors such as planning time schedules, gym time availability, etc. Nonetheless, to encourage thinking about how your own day may run, the following is suggested:

1. Time spent in large groups is kept to a minimum

In a developmentally appropriate day the class meets as a whole group for minimum time and maximum focus. The most productive learning for children is in small group or individual groupings.

Effective use of large group time may include:

- read-aloud
- oral storytelling
- prayer
- songs
- think-pair-share
- talking to one another
- group games
- sharing instructions
- shared writing
- shared reading
- demonstrations

2. Children have large blocks of time to play

When exploring a concept as part of an inquiry, children need lots of time. A child has to: process what they are going to do, gather the materials required, complete the activity, and bring it to a natural end. By providing large blocks of time for play and exploration, teams allow children the time to demonstrate their learning.

These extended blocks of time for play give educators time to:

- work with groups and individuals on specific aspects of the program;
- work with groups and individuals to develop their own inquiries;
- observe groups and individuals;
- document learning;
- ask open-ended questions;
- be a play partner;
- intentionally engage with children where learning is happening;
- communicate with team partners to discuss, plan and record the children's learning.

In small group guided experiences, the following might be occurring:

- A member of the Kindergarten team might be at the reading area or a drama area reading books with children while simultaneously scaffolding the children's letter recognition or word decoding skills.

- The children may be creating artwork and then discussing their ideas with other children or adults.

- The children at the discovery area might be using a variety of different sized containers.

- The team responds by asking questions such as "How many small containers will it take to fill that bucket."

- The children may use the dramatic play area to make a vet office while members of the team observe or participate with them as they continue their inquiry. During these large blocks of time there are times when educators will be conducting explicit instruction with individual children and small groups based on the expectations of the program.

3. There are fewer transitions for children to work through

Children have difficulty with too many transitions. Young children need to process many steps in order to make a smooth transition from one activity to another. This assists with their development of self-regulation skills. A child needs to:

- realise they have been asked to stop the current activity;
- physically stop doing what they are doing;
- possibly tidy up the current activity;
- stop thinking about the current activity;
- process any instructions given;
- move to the location of the next activity; and
- start thinking about the new activity.

Developing a good transition routine is helpful. A consistent transition routine helps children become familiar with the steps needed to move from one experience to another. Young children need to have the routine demonstrated to them in different contexts, and then need time to practice it many times for it to become a natural part of their day.

When children have the choice to move from activities on their own, this allows for self-regulation and transitions are smoother.

A good transition routine will include:

- Warning time: announcement that the current activity is going to change (e.g. five minutes, in one minute).
- A clear indication that it is time to stop (e.g., music, a clapping routine, a physical action, soft chimes).
- Adequate time for the transition to take place.

4. Snack and breaks can be taken when the child feels they need it (self-regulation)

Children need to learn to respond to their own body's need for food and rejuvenation. There will be children who have to be reminded that snack is an option.

Having children choose when to have a snack or choose a quiet activity helps children develop self-regulation.

5. Outdoor time becomes an integral part of the flow of the day.

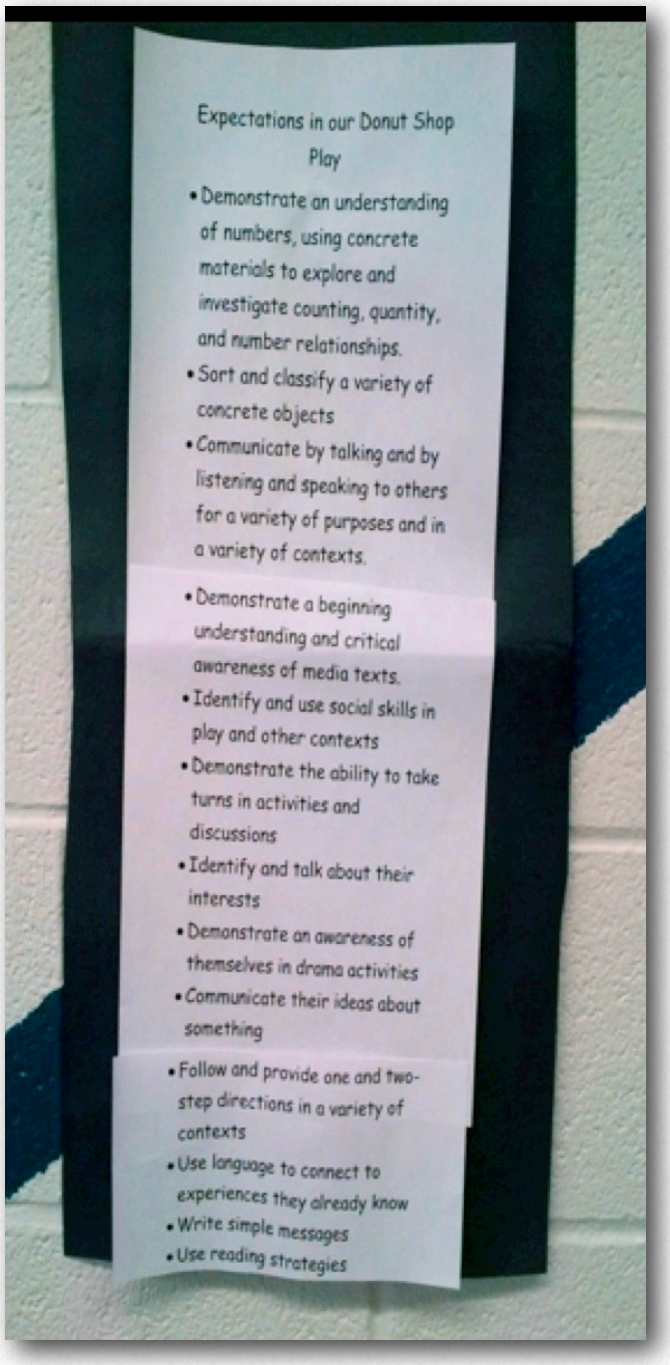
Time outdoors is essential for children's emotional and physical development. The outdoor space is used as an extension of the classroom, and not only for gross-motor play activities. Placing the discovery areas outside during an inquiry can make the learning more contextually relevant for children. There is opportunity to explore all seven learning domains outdoors when teams intentionally place materials from the classroom outside or integrate the use of natural outdoor materials into the play.

6. Integrate Learning

Young children learn best when their learning is integrated and they are explained a concept within its real-life context, rather than being isolated as a single subject or skill. A play-

based program allows for learning in all the domains throughout the day. For instance, rather than having children echo ‘t –t –t’ or s-s-s and complete a worksheet based on phonemics they could talk about the t-t-trees s stump as they t- t- take the s s soil from it.

Integrated Inquiry on Setting up a Donut Shop:



This Kindergarten class was engaged in an inquiry into setting up a donut shop. The team posted the overall expectations in the learning area. The expectations demonstrate an integrated learning experience. Expectations from all learning areas were uncovered and revisited many times throughout this inquiry.

Planning for Play

Team members provide children with opportunities to plan, observe, and gather information, and then to compare, sort, classify, and interpret their observations. They provide a rich variety of materials and resources, and interact with children to clarify, expand, or help articulate the children's thinking (FDELKP Draft, 2010).

When planning for the Full Day Kindergarten program your key planning tool is the FDELP Kindergarten Program as well as your board Kindergarten resources. Play-based environments allow educators to move into the areas and assess the children spontaneously. They can make day to day decisions about where a certain child is and where they need to go next on their learning journey. Play-based environments allow for differentiated instruction and this means being responsive to individual and small group needs. Learning goals are set with the children on a daily basis. Learning through inquiry allows educators to observe children in their natural setting and play contexts. They gather interests and discoveries made by the children. The educators capitalize on student interest and combine those with their developmental stages and needs. (See Appendix A for *Developmentally Appropriate Planning Guides* charts for each learning area.)

Long range planning

This approach does not allow for mapping out specific topics/themes or narrow skills on a monthly basis. Teams can map out the liturgical and calendar seasons but where that inquiry goes, comes from the children. For example, in the winter – one class inquiry may lead children to explore hibernation and nesting and how plants and animals survive the winter and another class may explore the solar system and space. This approach allows educators to select key skills and concepts that authentically link to the inquiry. It's not possible to map these out in in a long range plan for the year. Planning is constantly evolving and may look different from room to room. The format used should be comfortable for both team members.

Big Idea Focus: Children are effective communicators

Week of: May 28 - June 1

Science/Discovery

Growth Inquiry → Amaryllis Plants

L 1.8 Math M 2.2
S 1.1, 2.2, 2.4

- transperency amaryllis drawings

Building 2.1

Castle Inquiry

- non-fiction and fiction texts
- explore with blocks, tiles, and mirror pieces

Literacy 4.1, 4.3, 4.4

- sentences with pictures from how-to-draw books
- focus on adding more detail to their writing and sentences

Inquiry Snails SC: 2.1, 2.3, L: 1.8

- observe snail eggs
- clay snails
- research more about snails

Math Community Math Problem

P.S. 3.1, 3.2

- community map
- plan what we will include in our community number line

* complete 2D/3D assessments

Inquiry Sky

V 1.1
V 2.1

- plan for painting on canvas
- review Monet's brush technique
- practice with acrylics
- paint outside

Students' wondering and interests based on observations/group discussions:

- dragons and dungeons
- princesses, dresses, purses and dress-up

Dramatic Play D. 3.1

Flower shop and outdoor garden centre

- create a real garden
- create signs & flyers • labels

Inquiry Flowers

- what do you see?
- what do you think?
- what do you wonder?

→ observe flowers as they change
→ culminating flower creations

Creative Crafts V 2.1

- creative use of materials (recycled items)
- create 3D masterpieces

Sensory

Sand: G. 3.4 (math)

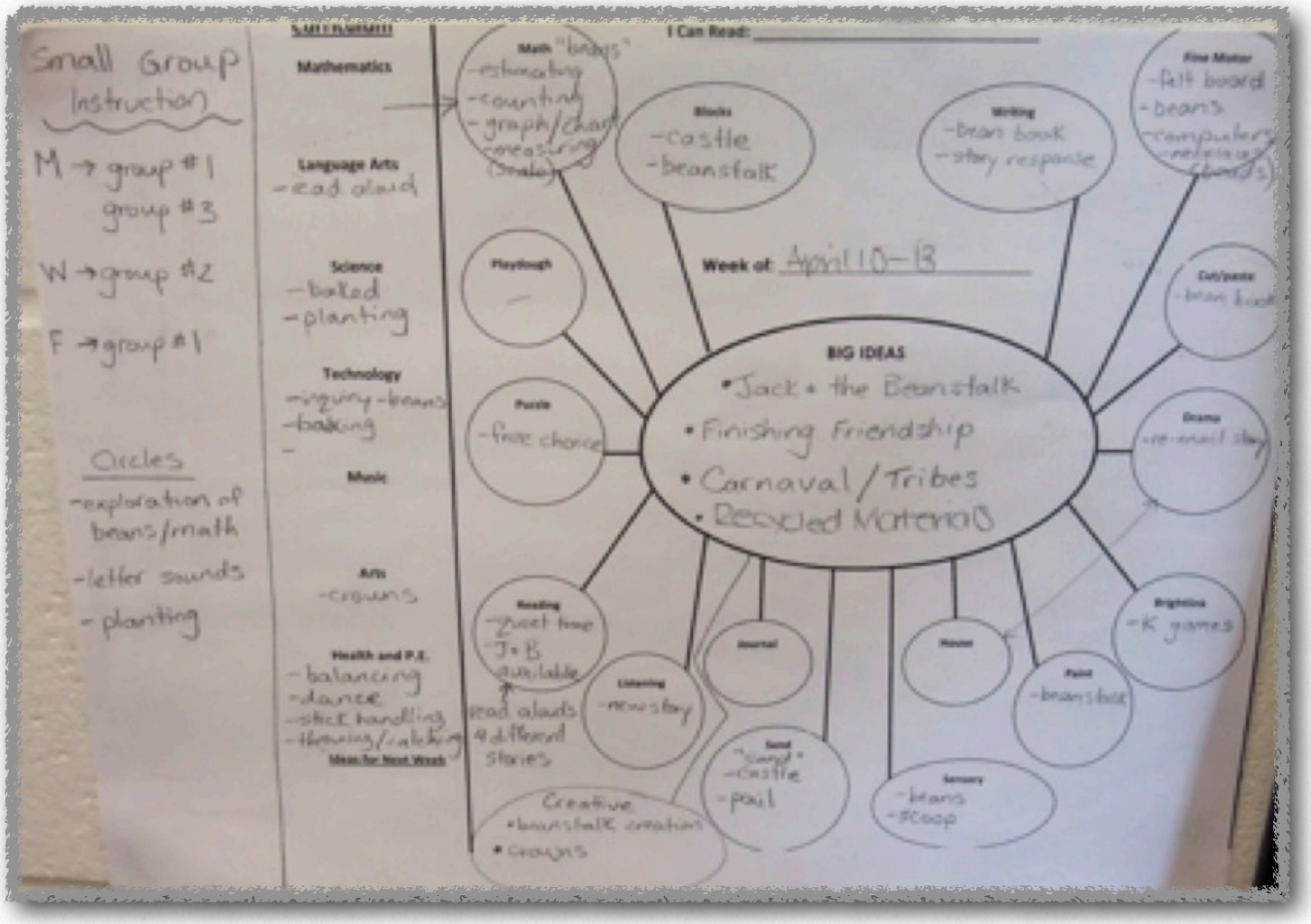
- natural materials
- construction books
- building homes

Water:

- capacity
- tubes
- measuring cans

Next Steps:

- oral language around tree contest for documentation
- paint welcome on door



Play, exploration and inquiry (independent and with a member of the team) is the essential work of Kindergarten, a chance for children to demonstrate their learning. Some suggestions for instructional strategies are as follows:

Play, exploration and inquiry	Are you…	Example
Play is always the child's choice. There are no expectations placed on the child, other than by the play itself, but the team may be using this time to observe the learning that children are demonstrating independently or they may interact with the child to support the play. The child's autonomy is very high.	Allowing children to choose what they want to do? Observing the children without necessarily interacting with them? Participating in a game with the children but allowing them to lead?	A child is playing with a tub of dinosaurs. He's using one of them to chase another. One of the team observes this play and asks what he is doing. The boy replies that the meat eater is chasing the vegetarian and points to a pile he has made and explains he has put all the meat eaters in one pile and all the vegetarians in another. The boy is able to sort objects by one attribute (FDELKP Mathematics Specific Expectation DM5.1).
A member of the team guides the children's learning by posing questions and responding to questions the children ask. The child still has autonomy, but the guidance is more direct.	Sitting with a small group, listening to them and asking questions for clarification? Playing a game with a child and posing questions to help them solve a problem? Taking turns with a small group of children, modelling how you would do something and listening to how they would do the same thing (e.g., reading a picture book)?	A child is writing a letter to his parents, inviting them to the class Spring tea party. He wants to spell "party" but can't find the word in the room (FDELKP Language Specific Expectations 4.2 and 4.3). He approaches the teacher who responds with, "What sound do you think it begins with?" He replies 'p' and the teacher responds with, "How do you write that?" The teacher continues to encourage the child's attempts to take the risk of writing the word while ensuring that she gives just the right amount of support to ensure the child does not become frustrated.
The team observe how the children go about completing a self-initiated activity or solving problem. The team poses questions to scaffold the children in their learning.	Demonstrating a process step by step so a child can replicate it? Explaining the learning intention behind an activity? Modelling how to play a game with a group of children?	The class is playing a game of Swamp, where the aim of the game is to complete an obstacle course. One obstacle is a low balance beam. Before the game begins the teacher demonstrates how to balance (FDELKP Health & Physical Activity Specific Expectations 3.2 and 3.3) using outstretched arms and careful placement of feet so they will be successful in this portion of the game.

Children will learn naturally in a play-based classroom. A play-based classroom that is conducive to oral language development, self-regulation, and inquiry-based learning depends on the intentional and purposeful planning and organization of the classroom by the Kindergarten team. Effective teams engage children in co-constructing the learning opportunities and the environment. Through careful planning and the use of observation and documentation, teams can extend and challenge children's learning. (See Appendix G - Developmentally Appropriate Planning Resource)

When planning for a play-based program, has the team made sure to do the following...?

Planned for Catholic Graduate Expectations (CGE)?

- Do gospel values such as sharing, kindness and co-operation underpin the learning activities, teaching strategies and interactions between children?
- Are there many opportunities to for prayer and reflection?
- Are the CGE infused across the program: "I am a believer; I have a voice; I have ideas; I am a learner for life; I am a team player; I care; I have responsibilities.

Planned for Inquiry?

- Are there opportunities or encouragement for higher level thinking?
- Are there natural and authentic connections across concepts?
- Are experiences co-constructed with children? Are we responding to children's enduring interests?
- Are opportunities to integrate gospel values inserted explicitly into the planning?

Planned with the end in mind while remaining true to the children's interests?

- What are their interests?
- What are the overall expectation and big ideas?

- Do activities and resources allow a child to demonstrate learning by saying, doing and representing?
- Are there multiple opportunities for the team to extend, challenge and respond to children's learning in different ways?
- Are all areas of the program reflected in the play areas?
- Are literacy and numeracy integrated throughout the day?
- Is there a balance among the seven learning areas?
- Is learning scaffolded to ascertain prior knowledge and introduce new concepts and skills?

Created procedures that will allow observations and documentation of learning while children play?

- Are there processes in place for teams to document learning? (For example: photos, portfolios, anecdotal record-keeping, checklists of key learning)?
- Is there portfolio/ note book/folder/computer file for each child?
- Have we considered and planned how to ensure that all children are observed equitably? Are children involved in documenting their own learning

Created a balance of play opportunities that allows for investigation, exploration and where appropriate, explicit instruction?

- Are there large blocks of time for play-based learning and for educator interactions with children?

- Do educator document what is purposeful as well as spend time getting to know the child?

Created routines and procedures that support children playing?

- Are transitions well-planned and kept to a minimum?
- Do the routines support children's self-regulation?
- Do the children know what to do if: they need a snack, they need more materials, they want to do something different or they need to go to the washroom?

Allowed for different levels of support?

- Are large group activities kept to short periods of time?
- Is small group instruction included, where appropriate, in learning opportunities and supported by either team member?
- Are interactions and experiences differentiated to allow educators to respond, challenge or extend individual's learning?

Organised the inside and outside space to allow for play?

- Are the materials easily accessible?
- Do the materials allow for imagination, creativity and innovation?
- Are there enough materials?
- Is the layout flexible so there are many ways to use the space?
- Is the outdoor space being used effectively?
- Are materials provided for child led inquiry?

(See Appendix B for: *At a Glimpse-What a Day in Kindergarten might like*)

Instructional Practices for Facilitating Learning

“In play, the child always behaves beyond his average age and above his daily behaviour; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself’ (Vygotsky, 1933).

Teams are powerful observers and facilitators of the thinking that occurs during play. Teams are challenged to make children’s thinking and learning visible and to name the learning. As teams plan what they are going to do in their daily interactions, it helps to consider the following:

1. **Explicitly introducing new language:**

When will we introduce new language (i.e., vocabulary, naming learning, questioning)

Is the language we are introducing supporting the learning?

Is the language developmentally appropriate?

2. **Modelling actions and interactions:**

Are our actions supporting the social outcomes of play (turn-taking, sharing etc.)?

Is it appropriate to model a possible solution to a problem?

Will we change the nature of the play with our modelling?

3. **Posing questions:**

Are our questions open-ended?

How are our questions extending the play and learning?

Are our questions changing the nature of the play?

4. **Nurturing a risk free environment** through encouragement:

Are we leading the play?

Are we allowing the child enough time to think of a next step themselves?

5. Supporting metacognitive skills

Are we encouraging children to name their learning/

Are we modelling thinking aloud?

Are we allowing children to hypothesize, plan, take action, rethink and plan again?

8

BUILDING A POSITIVE SCHOOL/ HOME RELATIONSHIP

Child sharing what he did at school

An important part of designing a developmentally appropriate learning environment for young children is fostering links between school, home and church. Research shows that children whose families are meaningfully connected with school and their learning do much

better. “Family involvement in schools is associated with academic success across all socio-economic groups” *(ELECT, 2007)*. Children whose families are involved also display better attendance and more positive dispositions towards school.

> *Families bring with them rich knowledge and varied viewpoints about child-rearing practices, childhood and development. Mutual respect and reciprocal learning between parents and team members can only benefit the children in the program.*
>
> Pascal, 2009, p. 5

Developing Positive Parent-Teacher Relationships

Developing positive parent-team relationships will result in many benefits over the course of the Kindergarten years. Parents can provide vital support for teams if they are able to nurture the spiritual, emotional, social and cognitive growth needed for a successful home to school transition. When teams pursue a more meaningful home-school relationship, they have an opportunity to make a significant impact on the child’s development. Some suggestions are:

The 2010 FDELKP Draft document presents many suggestions for inviting parent involvement. For instance, this segment on page 10:

- Invite parents to share information about available community resources.
- Talk with parents informally on the playground.
- Establish a parent network for newcomers at the school.
- Post a sign on the door to indicate drop-in times.
- Invite parents to come to the classroom to tell or read stories in their first language.
- Invite parents to create dual-language books for the children.
- Invite parents or community members to participate in a classroom experience, (e.g., cooking or planting a garden).
- Invite parents or community members to talk about their careers.

- Invite parents to volunteer in the classroom.
- Ask parents to bring in objects from home for the classroom, such as food containers, boxes, and newspapers or magazines in their first language (for the dramatic play centre, or wherever they come in handy).
- Encourage parents to serve on the School Council.
- Invite family and community members (e.g., Elders, grandparents, retired volunteers) to come in and share their stories.
- Plan a picnic with parents and family members on the school grounds or at a nearby park.
- Invite parents to join the class on visits to areas of interest in the community – for example, visit the local market, take photographs, and bring back various kinds of produce to use in vocabulary development

The Kindergarten team are interested in developing more meaningful contact with the parents of the children in their class. After some discussion, the team decide to host a class visit. In preparation for the class visit the team have sent a note home explaining what parents may observe and posted the time and date on the class website calendar. Parents visited during the day and participated in the experiences that occur during the flow of the day. Parents were invited to post their thoughts and observations on a sharing bulletin board. Discussing the class visit afterwards both team members feel it was a great success. They had many parents attend and believe most of them left with a better understanding of what learning happens in a Kindergarten classroom. They also learned a lot about some of the children from conversations with their parents.

The benefits of more meaningful interactions between home and school are not only for the parents. As parents become more comfortable with the team, they begin to share more information about their children, giving greater insight into their development and helping the team to do what is best for the child.

9

ASSESSING AND DOCUMENTING

You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.

Plato

Young children show their understanding by doing, showing and telling. Early Learning Kindergarten teams need to use assessment strategies of observing, listening, and asking probing questions in order to assess and evaluate children's achievement.

FDELKP 2010

Children enter school with a range of experiences, abilities and dispositions. Good assessment helps teachers to identify achievement gaps and overlaps and implement experiences that will compensate for or extend and enrich prior learning. It does not mean making things easier or harder for children, it means identifying goals and activities that will promote their progress and interest. Some children enter school with significant learning gaps (NAEYC, 2009). These gaps can have serious implications for children's future learning possibilities.

Working Together

Observing, documenting and assessing children are a shared responsibility of the Early Learning Team. The team works together to observe students at play, interact with them, record information and assess and interpret these interactions to assist in planning an appropriate program. Evaluation and reporting are the responsibility of the teacher. The teacher uses the information gathered by the team over time to determine the strengths of the child in terms of the overall expectations in the program. Then next steps can be formulated.

FDELKP Draft, 2010

Types of Assessment

Assessment is the on-going, strategic, and purposeful gathering and interpretation of information over time through observing what a child can do, say, and apply. The primary purpose of assessment is to improve a child's learning, to communicate with the child's family, and to inform the team's instructional decisions. There are two types of assessment that are most relevant to Kindergarten: **formative** assessment (also called assessment **for** learning; or assessment **as** learning when it includes metacognitive strategies) and **diagnostic** assessment (also called assessment **of** learning).

Formative assessment is the on-going assessment that supports learning and informs instructional decisions on a daily basis. Formative assessment takes place in the context of a child's learning in a large group, small group, or independently. Important components of good formative assessment are using questioning, collecting artifacts of learning (e.g., pictures of child's block structures), recording children's responses, and giving descriptive feedback when appropriate.

Diagnostic assessment can be both formal or informal. Teachers and ECE's may record observations while a child reads, writes, or plays in centres and keep anecdotal notes about specifically diagnostic attributes (e.g., is the child able to identify words on a page). More formal diagnostic assessment may include tools that are standardized (e.g., PM Benchmarks). More formal diagnostic tools are not usually necessary for all children in a Kindergarten classroom. It is up to the teacher's discretion to choose an appropriate tool from the Board approved list of tools if she/he thinks it is necessary to use a formal diagnostic tool in order to improve a child's learning.

Principles for Assessment

For assessment to be fair, equitable, and effective, it needs to be informed by the following principles:

- Assessment should always be centred on the child's learning. It is designed and carried out in order to promote the child's development within the six areas of the Kindergarten and the Religion Program.
- Assessment should be appropriate to the developmental stage of the young child, informal in nature(e.g., observations, interviews, work samples, performance on interesting tasks), and primarily based on observing and documenting children as they play, talk, and interact in their everyday surroundings.
- Assessment should always include recognition of both independent and supported levels of performance (e.g., what a child can do on his/her own but also what they can do when working with other children or a team member).
- Assessment should include input and feedback from parents or other care-givers as they are important sources of contextual information. When assessing children, teams are hoping to see them use skills and knowledge independently or in a different context.
- Assessment should include opportunities for and encouragement of self-assessment and metacognition skills.
- Children should play an integral part in documenting and making their own learning visible.
- Assessment should be purposeful and intentional in design and use so that it captures a complete picture of the whole child.
- Assessment should include multiple sources of information with different opportunities for

- demonstration of understanding (e.g., oral, pictures, written, concrete representations, etc.).

How to assess

Assessing a young child's learning is a complex task. Far more is learned by participating in an activity with the child than by relying on the products of learning, such as writing samples, which do not fully demonstrate the breadth and depth of a child's thinking in Kindergarten. Teams need a shared understanding of child development and the program expectations so that on-going authentic assessment can occur.

Teachers have an opportunity to assess children's learning when they:

- work beside a child to offer descriptive feedback about an activity the child is engaged in;
- play with a group of children and ask probing questions to extend their thinking;
- observe children at play and document it through notes, photographs or video to be discussed later;
- create portfolios of a child's learning by collecting images, representations, notes and checklists about an individual child;
- adapt or design new activities/experiences for the children to take part in;
- gather information from parents and other professionals involved in the child's learning;
- lead a large group activity such as singing and then noting children's' engagement; or
- work with a small group and prompt the children to try new ways to solve a problems

See Appendices D, F and L for samples of checklists.

When teams put materials in a learning area, support a play activity, choose a song to sing as a large group, or invite a child to participate in a read-aloud or shared read, they are making an instructional and therefore an assessment decision. As they assess the children, they need to consider the program expectations and the developmental stage of the child.

When we gather assessment data, have we considered...

What we are looking for…

Which social, emotional, cognitive and physical learning expectation(s) are we likely to observe in this activity?

Why we are looking for it…

How will the assessment of this activity support the child's learning?

How to embed assessment in the learning opportunities…

Does the assessment naturally flow from the learning activity?

Is the assessment developmentally and culturally appropriate for the children…

Are the expectations appropriate for this child at this time of year in the two year programme? Is the activity culturally sensitive?

How it will be documented…

What type of documentation is most appropriate? How will we record the learning?

How will it be carried out…

Is this activity developmentally/culturally appropriate for the child?

Assessment in an Authentic Setting

The children want to build a city in the classroom.

Molly says, “We need a sign, and then people will know what our city is called.”
Nigel says, “Yeah and we need a map too so visitors will know how to get around.

The team member takes a picture of the sign and records anecdotal notes about Molly and Nigel’s conversation. The team member’s notes include the phonemic spelling on the signs, the geometric shapes on the maps, a description of the structure that was created and the robust conversation and rich vocabulary the children were using.

What Big Ideas and Overall Expectations could be reported on?

Strategies for Assessment

Assessment is based on observation and documentation of what children's experiences are and how they illustrate emerging developmental skills. (ELECT, 2007)

There are two main strategies for assessment: observation and documentation. These strategies have a reciprocal relationship. Observation provides teams with the information that needs to be documented. Documentation informs the teams of the next steps in observation.

An understanding of child development frames the process and guides the focus of observation and monitoring. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010)

9.3.1 Observation

Observation is the purposeful gathering of information about what child/children can do by closely listening to, watching, and interacting with them at different times and in different situations throughout their daily activities. Plans for observations are intentionally developed to include the what, when, and how of the observation. Sometimes the team acts as a silent observer; at other times there is a pre-determined interaction that may include playing with the child and interacting through effective questioning relevant to the child's learning. The team observes and assesses a child's overall development, such as a cluster of expectations in a subject area or across subject areas. They do not focus on close measurement of discrete skills. For example, a child might be working at the art studio on a painting. The observation could be used as evidence of fine-motor skill development. But it would be important to also note the overall disposition of the child while painting, their interactions with those around them, their level of confidence and frustration, not just the ability to control the brush. It would also form only part of an on-going assessment of the child's fine-motor, cognitive, social and emotional development that takes place over time rather than from one isolated incident such as in this case.

Having a clear understanding of the learning goals linked to clusters of program expectations, in addition to a knowledge of the developmental stage of the child, allows teachers to design a repertoire of open-ended prompts that elicit the kinds of information that lead to a more comprehensive profile of the child.

Capacity Building Series, Primary Assessment, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010

Some strategies for effective observation:

- Choose a focus (e.g., a new learning area experience, a new game)
- Choose a cluster of expectations to observe (e.g., patterning in mathematics)
- Choose a group of children to observe and develop a system to ensure that all children are observed over the course of the week (e.g., checklist of groups of children)
- Observe children's connection to the materials (e.g., are they able to manipulate the materials, do they use them appropriately and effectively)
- Observe the children interactions with other children (e.g., are they confident in approaching other children, are they shy or outgoing)
- Note the child's interactions with team members (e.g., can they explain what they are doing; can they express their ideas)
- Observe how children explain the process of their learning. Can they articulate it in a developmentally appropriate way?
- Observe how they use language (e.g., what is the tone, do they converse, what kind of vocabulary do they use; are they using appropriate sentence structure)

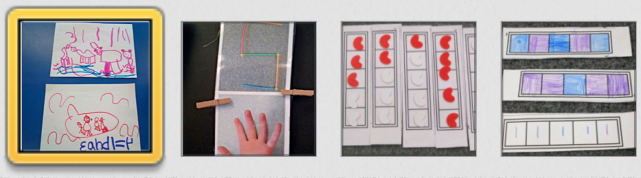
See Appendices K,D,H and I for templates for observations.

On-going collection of photographs and videos may provide a revealing portrait of how the children are grouping themselves, who is left out of the group and the learning areas that are of most interest. This will be valuable evidence when making assessment decisions. Often observations may not provide the whole picture of the child's interests or the extent of their learning and understanding by themselves. Teams must ensure that they are asking probing, open questions so that children fully demonstrate their thinking and learning. (See Chapter 3 for Tips on Asking Effective Questions and a list of purposeful questions)

9.3.2 Documentation

Documentation provides an accurate and detailed record of the on-going evidence of a child's efforts and learning. The observations are captured through anecdotal notes, pictures, and videos and supplemented by the child's representations. The documentation of a child's learning about numbers might for example include notes about interactions with and observations of the child at learning areas; pictures of the child's own representations of numbers, videos of the child solving problems or a checklist of counting skills (FDELKP Draft, 2010).

Gallery 9.1



Documentation typically includes samples of a child's work at several different stages of completion: photographs showing work in progress, comments written by the team or other adults working with the children, transcriptions of children's discussions, comments, and explanations of intentions about the activity, and comments made by parents (Katz and Chard 1996, qtd. in The Power of Documentation in the Early Childhood Classroom). See Appendices C, E, G, I and J for examples of documentation (learning stories).

Documentation can become a natural part of a team's repertoire of assessment strategies. The Ministry monograph on Pedagogical Documentation (2013) identifies how this strategy makes learning visible:

Creates Shared Understanding Documentation makes learning and thinking visible to all stakeholders, students, educators and parents. As these stakeholders dialogue about and reflect on learning, thinking and teaching a share understanding is created.
Celebrates the Rights of Individual Learners Since documentation takes place within the natural flow of the day the evidence that teams gather relates to student's ongoing thinking and learning. Closely documenting student learning allows team members to deeply understand student strengths, plan for next steps that meet all student needs. Student chosen thinking and learning should be part of the documentation.
Recognize Student's Ownership of their Learning Sharing and reflecting on documentation with students allows for shared reflection and supports formative assessment. Documentation provides descriptive feedback to move forward and also allows for opportunities for self-assessment. Students focus on their learning throughout the process. Students can select artefacts for their portfolios or to share/display.
Actualizes Share Accountability The collaboration that can come from team documentation learning leads to a sense of shared accountability for all stakeholders. Krechevsky, Rivard and Burton (2009) identify that documentation supports accountability to self, to each other and to the larger community. Authentic engagement in documentation and sharing documentation enhances professional judgement and personal accountability.
Provides Voice in Learning for Everyone Pedagogical documentation helps educators and students to become co-learners and co-creators of learning.

In the early stages, though, it may seem time-consuming and complex. The following chart will give some ideas for the steps of documentation but each team need to make decisions about how much (maybe do one or two things the first time) or when (how many times a day, a week, a month). In all cases, it is a task that lends itself to one or more collaborators. *Teachers and ECE's can work together to gather the documentation.*

Documentation Steps Adapted from The Power of Documentation in the Early Childhood Classroom by Hilary Seitz, Young Children, 2008.

Stages of Experience		
Stage	Experience	Value
1.Deciding to Document	The team wondering what to document. They collect some artwork created by children and post it on a bulletin board with too much information. They want to be fair and put up every child's piece without being selective or asking the children.	The team is showing pride in the student work.
2. Exploring technology use	The team explores how to use cameras and videos. They photograph various events and experiences. Most of the photos are displayed on bulletin boards or in photo albums. The video clips are used in slideshows or videos and shown to parents and children.	The team works to learn about the technology. They take pride in the actions of the children and their work.
3.Focusing on children's engagement	The team learns to photograph specific experiences and event with the intent of capturing a piece of the story of children engaged in learning.	The team becomes technologically competent and able to focus on important learn events and experiences.
4.Gathering information	The team title the photographs, events and experiences and begin to write descriptions that tell the story of the children's learning.	The team begin to connect children's actions and experiences.
5.Connecting and telling stories	The team combines work samples, photographs, descriptions and other information in support of the entire learning event. They tell the whole story with a beginning, middle and end using supporting artifacts.	The team continue to use documentation artifacts to connect children's actions and experiences to big ideas and expectations in the program.
6.Documenting decision making	The team frame questions, reflect, assesses, builds theories and uncovers curriculum expectations all with the support of documentation.	The team become reflective practitioners who document meaningful actions/events.

Documentation opportunities that other teams have used:

- Developmental growth in all seven domains
- Processes of an inquiry journey from start to finish
- Special investigations (e.g., a field trip around the community)
- Faith journeys (e.g., exploration throughout the liturgical year)
- Evidence of student learning and thinking linked to the big ideas, overall expectations including Catholic Graduate Expectations (e.g., concrete samples, photographs of learning moments, transcribed descriptions from children)

An important point to remember is that there is no one right way to document. Keeping the children's learning at the centre of the documentation is the consistent point about all documentation samples. It is a very effective form of assessment when growth can be captured through photographs, video, work samples or transcribed conversations. An example of this is below;

The top photo was taken early in the year. The child was using manipulatives to create patterns. The child has created a linear pattern using orange squares in two rows beside each other. Later in the year the team captured another photo. The same child has created a pattern that is much more complex. It is a vertical structure with a number of attributes. This is an explicit example of how photographs can capture children's growth. It enables all stakeholders including the children to see the thinking and learning in a tangible way. For both learning experiences, team members would engage in responding, extending and challenging the child's work with patterns.

The Four Keys

When in doubt about your assessment, these four key questions may help.

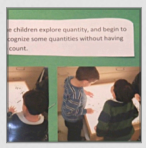
What is purpose for the assessment?
What are you learning about the child?
What big idea or overall expectation is being uncovered?
What are your next steps based on your observations and are you going to do with this information?

Gathering Evidence

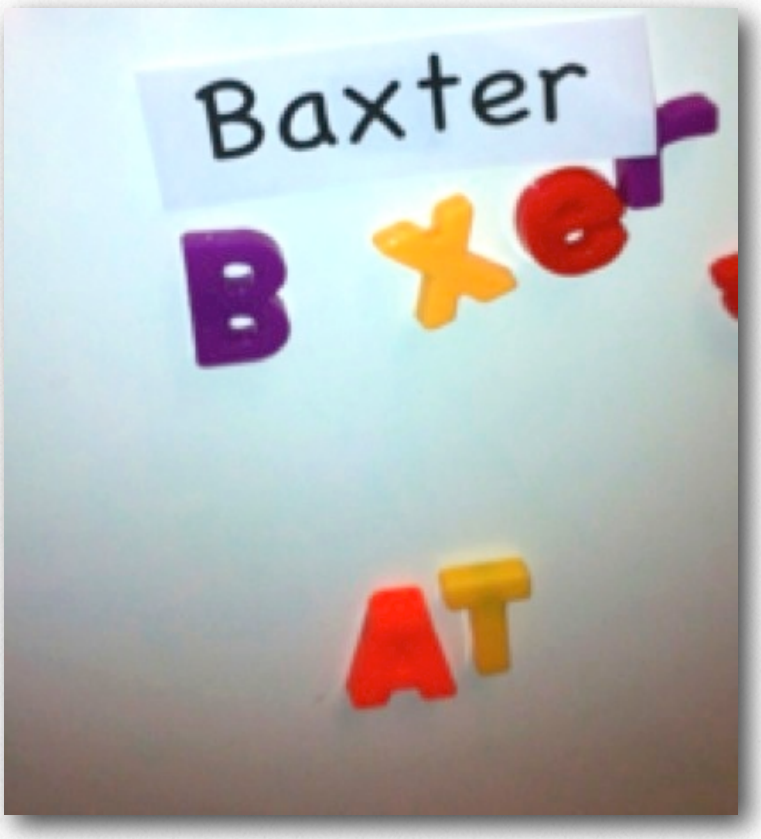
Gathering and keeping evidence is an essential part of the teaching and learning process. Keeping track of different types of assessment (for, as, and of learning) requires a system in place to collect, make sense of and use assessment information. There are many ways to record evidence of a child's progress through the expectations of the Kindergarten program but, broadly speaking, they can be defined by several categories: checklists, anecdotal notes, learning stories, learning panels, representations and portfolios. No method of recording is mutually exclusive of any of the others. Many of the strategies below overlap with one another and with the general strategy of documentation and observation described above. A look-for list might allow space to write an anecdotal comment. A piece of children's writing might have a sticky note with a comment stuck to the back of it. A tracking sheet may have a photograph attached to it. A portfolio or learning story might include anecdotal comments, photos and checklists. It is important to note that the assessment process should include the children documenting their own learning by drawing about it, writing about it, taking photos, etc. (See Appendices D, E, G, H).

There are multiple ways to gather evidence of a child's learning. Collecting evidence should be on-going in a variety of contexts so that children have multiple opportunities to make their learning and thinking visible.

Gallery 9.2 Collecting evidence



Planned Observation	Spontaneous Observation
Baxter was fishing for magnetic letters that had been intentionally placed in a bin beside a magnetic white board. A team member was observing Baxter's learning as he put up the letters of his name. He spelled his name correctly using upper letters for the first 3 letters of his name. The team member got Baxter's name card from the name wall and put it above the magnetic letters. The team member gave him wait time to look at both names. Baxter said, "Hey wait that does not look the same." He took the capital A and T and moved them down and fished for lower case letters. He put the lower case a and t in his name and said, "now that's better, and I spelt AT with the capital letters." From the intentional placement of the letters and the white board team members have collected data on Baxter's understanding of letters and words.	The students were using a cloth divider at the puppet theatre to block the audience from seeing the performers. They moved the divider in front of the window. It was a very sunny day and one child found that as they moved the divider a shadow was formed. The students were amazed and a shadow puppet show was performed. This spontaneous observation led in to a discussion about shadows and how they are created. This inquiry about shadows came from a spontaneous experience and observation.
	

Checklists

A checklist is a predetermined set of skills or behaviours for any given activity or play area that teachers create in advance of the activity happening. The checklist might be a list of expectations directly related to (and cut-and-pasted from) the FDELKP, a developmental continuum (e.g., First Steps™ writing continuum as found in the Ministry of Education Effective Guides for Instruction in Writing, K-3), or a self-created list of look-fors. Look-for lists, developmental continua, tracking sheets, etc., are all part of a repertoire of documentation artefacts. Please see Appendices D, F, and H for checklist examples.

As teachers notice the skill or behaviour they record it on the checklist with a simple checkmark, a date, and a brief description of context and/or a rating scale. It needs to describe skills or behaviours related to overall expectations from the Kindergarten document but doesn't have to use that language. In fact, it is recommended that the language of the expectation be changed to an open-ended type question. **This way, it encourages description of what the child can do rather than what they cannot do.** It also helps if each item of the checklist is clearly distinct from the others and if there is a logical sequence to the items.

Into Practice: Checklists

A group of children are conducting an inquiry on water flow and movement in the sand box. The team notes that a lot of measurement activity has been taking place. They devise the following checklist to help focus their observations about learning related to measurement.

Guiding Questions	Ava	Anna	Mia	Jaad	Colin
How do they use the language of measurement?					
In what ways do they use the language of measurement to describe their measuring?					
How effectively are they able to compare 2 items in terms of capacity?					
How do they use everyday objects to measure?					
How efficiently are they able to use standard measuring devices (scales, cups)?					
How well do they measure? Is it in a systematic manner?					

Anecdotal notes

Anecdotal notes are recordings of skills and behaviours recorded as the Kindergarten team witnesses them. These may include jot notes, journals, annotated photographs, videos, conference notes, running records etc. It is important that behaviours/actions are described as well as notes made of what children have said. The observation can be for an extended time or it might record a very brief episode. However, in order to be effective the anecdote should record the complete behaviour episode, though not necessarily the complete activity. The anecdotal note might be in the form of a bulleted list or narrative retelling. They need to be collected over time on a particular focus in order to have valid evaluations made from them. The team would confer to decide upon the focus of observations for the day. Anecdotal notes may be accompanied by a photograph or a sample of children’s work.

Into Practice: Anecdotal Notes

The team has observed children doing measurement type activities. One of them watches the children playing and makes these observations:

October 20th

- Sam and Michael are playing with the plastic bears.
- Sorting tray out but instead of sorting, measuring with the bears
- Michael lies down and Sam lines the bears upbeside him.
- He counts up the bears andMichael says, ”Use the bigger bears.”
- When Sam uses bigger bears, he finds that the number is smaller
- The boys are both wondering why.
- T. asks, ***“Boys, tell me about what you are doing.”***
- Sam, “The number is smaller but the bears are bigger.”
- T. asks, ***“Which number is smaller?”***
- Mike, “The number of how long I am?”
- T. asks, ***“So you are saying that with the bigger bears the number is smaller and with the smaller bears the number is bigger?”***
- Boys, “Yup.”
- Discussion about why, boys discuss the fact that the bigger bears take up more “space” so there aren’t as many.
- Continue to explore non- standard measurement units with both boys.- Arielle, Sascha and Maddy need more experience with this as well.

Learning Stories and Learning Panels

Learning stories and learning panels are natural ways to document learning. Learning stories and learning panels are often used in early learning settings to document both development and learning, and look like a more visual version of an anecdotal observation. Like an anecdotal observation, it is used to describe an actual, unique experience. However there are some differences. A learning story may describe a very short interaction or be a summary of a longer experience. It is written in a narrative form and covers both the event and the educator's reflections about it. The learning story describes the child or children's actions and those of one of the Kindergarten team; including interpretation of the learning being demonstrated and next steps for the team and families to promote further learning and development.

Typically these sections are titled:

- What they did/observations
- What it means/reflections
- Opportunities and possibilities/next steps

Learning stories and panels relate the narrative of an event, experience, or development. They help the audience to understand the purpose and effect of activities that children were engaged in. There are several different formats to share learning stories in.

Learning stories and panels relate the narrative of an event, experience, or development. They help the audience to understand the purpose and effect of activities that children were engaged in. There are several different formats to share learning stories in.

- a bulletin board
- presentation board, also called document panels
- class books
- collected learning stories in a video

- slide shows
- one page collage
- voice threads
- or any other method that suits the purposes of the team.

Please see Appendices C, E, G, I and J for format examples, templates and additional ideas.

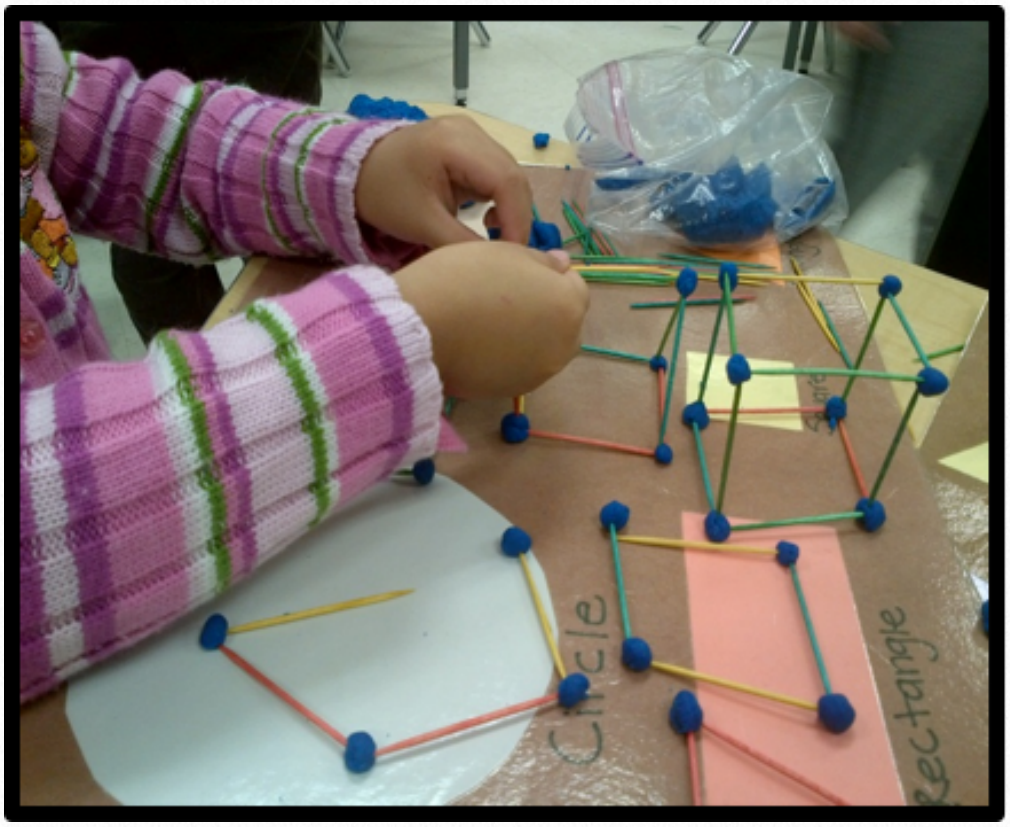
Most importantly they concisely explain the processes that have taken place and make the learning visible to all. They should also reflect the audience. Determine ahead of time who comprises the audience: other teachers, administrators, parents or the children themselves. The learning story might be about one child and their movement through levels of oral language or other expectations, or it might be about a group of children as they conduct an inquiry. Consideration must be given to how learning stories or documentation panels are shared with parents. (Check board policy for guidelines)

The following two learning stories came out of a video capture of SM and IZ working on building 3D structures. Notice that the formats are different but both effectively make the child's learning visible. Iz is a child who shared her thinking orally and SM said very few words but still represented her learning.

Collecting Conversations

Date	Educator
Context- Learning Centre with a variety of materials for making shapes and figures Iz and SM were working on cubes to show the class.	
Conversation with Iz	Reflections/Interpretation
T: Oh, so tell me again about what you are doing, sweetie? You are making a cube… **Iz: Out of a square** T: Can I watch how you do it? How are you going to do it? **Iz: Like this, I put a stick on top and then a ball on top and then you just put a stick here and you make a cube** T: So are you saying that there is a square inside the cube? **WAIT TIME** T: So are you saying that there is a square inside the cube? **Iz: Noooo, I am making a square here and then I put this on top. (picking up square)** T: Oh I see **Iz: Cause this looks like a square** T: It does look like a square. So you've got one square on top of the other square and that makes what? **Iz: A cube.** **My brother just learned it from Transformers.** T: Oh he learned it from Transformers, how did he do that? **Iz: Um we have a movie of it..** T: And it showed you how to make a cube out of squares? **Iz: No, ho, ho, the Transformers not out of squares, the Transformers wanted the cube to look for it.** T: Oh I see, so they used the word cube in the Transformers movie? **Iz: Yeah cause it's a cube.**	Iz is sharing her knowledge of 3D shapes She is exploring the relationship between 2D shapes and 3D shapes and comparing them She is connecting to prior knowledge with a movie that she saw (G3.1-G3.5) (7 Mathematical Processes) Communicating her ideas orally in an effective way (L 1.2, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.9) Demonstrating self-motivation, initiative and confidence (SE 2.1, 2.3)
Possible Extensions/Challenges/Next Steps Continue exploring the relationship between 2 and 3D shapes Provide other materials to build shapes with Go on a shape scavenger hunt to find shapes in her environment	

Problem Solving with SM



Observations

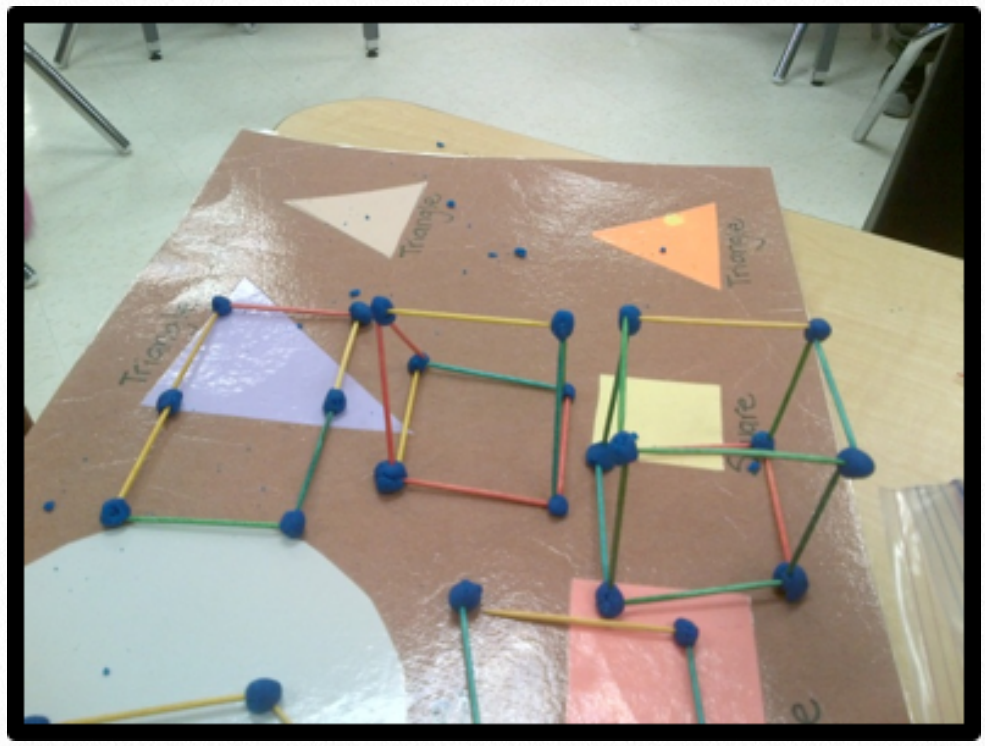
SM and Iz were working together at a learning centre. I went over and asked them what they were doing. They said they were building shapes to show the class. SM and Iz were using tooth-picks and plastercine to build cubes. I asked the girls how they were getting the cubes to not fall over. Iz was finding it challenging to get the cube to stand up, she was using big balls of plas-tercine.

I heard SM say to Iz, "You have to make small pieces if you didn't want it to fall."

Reflection/Analysis

SM I saw and heard that you were solving the prob-lem of the cube not standing up. I heard you share your solution with Iz.
I watched you feeling confident in how you solved the problem. I saw you continue with your building even though Iz did not agree with your solution. You were showing perseverance.
I saw the smile on your face and how proud you were when the cube was done! You named the shape too.
I saw how you bravely shared your solution when I asked you about it when you were sharing your shapes with your classmates.

I heard SM say to Iz, "You have to make small pieces if you didn't want it to fall."



Extensions/Challenges/Next Steps

Ask SM what other materials she could use to build 3D shapes and provide the materials.Further discussions about the relationship between 2D and 3D shapes
Have SM teach her classmates how to build shapes.
Provide opportunities for SM to orally share her learning to further build confidence.

The learning story or learning panels should include some variation of the following:

- The teacher's explanation of where the learning began and where it was intended to go (e.g., It may have begun with children's interests in trains and it may have turned into an inquiry about trains in their town.);
- complete story (include a beginning, middle, end);
- a focus (start with the children's interest while at the same time pulling out the appropriate cluster of expectations);
- a spark to generate children's interest in a topic. Introduce a novel idea or artefact into the classroom (e.g., a plant, a pet, an interesting story);
- a narrative flow: select only one topic and explore it to the fullest (e.g., document only one aspect of the children's learning. Don't try to do it all.);
- a web or other visual summary to record children's ideas and to help them formulate questions to include in the story; and/or
- developmental progress. As learning stories are put together over the course of the year, the developmental progress of the children's learning will become apparent.

> A learning story might have its genesis in the enthusiasm of a group of children as they begin collecting rocks from the school yard. The team would begin to document their curiosity, their inter-group conversations and take photographs of the intensity of their search for more and different rocks. They will photograph or make notes of how they sort the rocks (e.g., into white, black and other or into large and small). They ask questions to determine what it is they are wondering about and where the interest comes from. Without taking over, they scaffold the children's inquiry into rocks. They continue to document and reflect on the learning. Throughout the process and at the end of it, they share the documentation with the children so that they can also reflect and comment on the experience.

Representations

Representations are artefacts children create when they are engaged in play or completing an activity (e.g., building a fort in the large block centre). Some examples are photographs and originals of student artefacts, videos of students playing, writing samples.

Into Practice

The Kindergarten team noticed that a group of children have spent each outdoor session during the day collecting leaves from the trees and sorting them. They participate in the collecting and sorting, asking the children about their sorted piles. The children respond, “We are putting the green ones here, the red ones here and the brown ones here” pointing to the appropriate piles. To create a representation of the child’s thinking the teacher encourages the child to take a photograph of it. The next day the photograph is printed and the children write about their learning experience.

Portfolios

The portfolio shows the development that a child is making through the Kindergarten expectations and can be a conversation starter for the team to have with the child, the child’s family, each other, or other professionals involved in the child’s learning. A portfolio is particularly helpful in displaying the whole range of a child’s learning, not just in the cognitive domain but also socially, emotionally and spiritually. The child can also share their learning journey with their family or classroom visitors when they come to the classroom.

Final Word

***When teachers take the child's perspective, they engage in what Hart and Risley called the social dance of learning, weaving back and forth to the child's tune as the child's learning advances*. (Diamond et al. 2007)**

This resource was developed to assist Kindergarten teams continue the very valuable work that they do every day. Effective Kindergarten teams create harmonious, learning-friendly environments that generate interesting and engaging ideas and experiences. They work together in the 'social dance of learning' stepping in time to the rhythm of the children's social, emotional, spiritual and cognitive needs. This resource cannot substitute for the knowledge and experience teachers and ECE's bring to their partnership but we hope that it will provide some ideas that will be useful as they take on the important role of leading children onto the path of lifelong learning.

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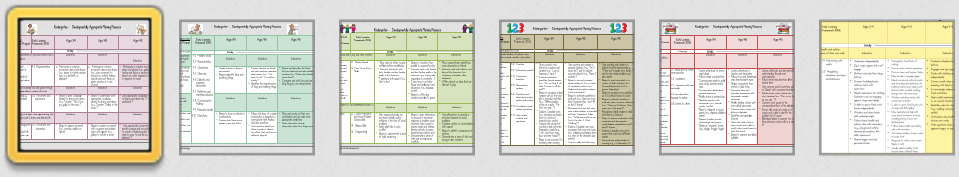
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Developmentally Appropriate Planning Guides (Health, Language, Math, Personal, Science, Arts, Technology) (Courtesy of Deb Watters, Wellington CDSB)

an awareness of personal interests and a l dance		Indicators	Indicators	Indicators
ersonal lishment in naterials of a and dance	4.3 Representation	o Participate in creative movement, dance and drama (e.g., begins to imitate animals such as a butterfly or elephant)	o Participate in creative movement, dance and drama (e.g., uses movement to interpret or imitate feelings, animals and such things as plants growing or a rain storm)	° Participates in creative movement, dance and drama (e.g., galloping, twirling and flying or performing almost any other imagined movement in response to music)
basic knowledge and skills gained through ama– and dance related activities		Indicators	Indicators	Indicators
rama *(e.g.,* *ucture)* and *e)*	5.3 Movement and expression	° Begins to learn vocabulary related to drama and dance (e.g., Teacher "This is how you gallop to the music.")	° Begins to understand some appropriate vocabulary related to drama and dance (e.g., Teacher "Gallop to the music.")	° Uses appropriate vocabulary related to drama and dance (e.g., "I can twirl and bend.")
solving strategies when experimenting with hniques used in drama and dance both		Indicators	Indicators	Indicators

Guides for Language, Mathematics, Personal, Science, Technology



Click here to go back to p. 108

Appendix B

At a glimpse

Enroll in our Kindergarten Blackboard Organization to share ideas, resources, join book clubs, etc.

OTTAWA CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD

Ottawa Catholic School Board
570 West Hunt Club
Nepean, Ontario
K2G 3R4

OTTAWA CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD

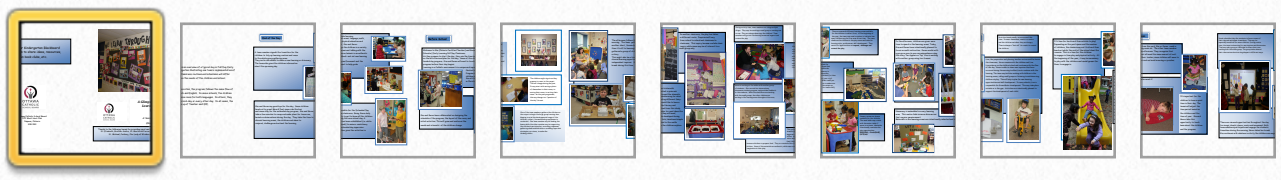
A Glimpse into Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten (Immersion)

A team approach to play-based

Educational programming

Thanks to the following teams for providing input and pictures for this document.
St. Elizabeth, Brother Andre, St. Martin de Porres, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel,
St. Michael, Corkery, Our Lady of Wisdom and St. Stephen.

14



Click here to go back to p. 20

Click here to go back to p. 114

Appendix C

Learning Story Template #1
The Curriculum in Action

	As children progress through the Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program, they:
Next Steps:	

Click here to go back to p. 131

Click here to go back to p. 143

Appendix D

Language: Reading → Book Sense

	Author	Illustrator	Front Cover	Back Cover	Inside/Pages	Spine

Click here to go back to p. 125

Click here to go back to p. 136

Click here to go back to p. 139

Math → Number Sense

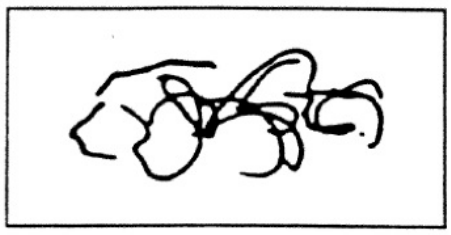
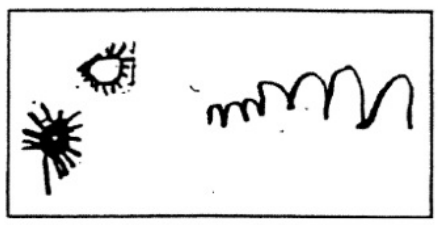
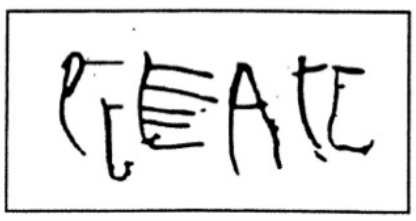
	One-One Correspondence	ID Numbers 0-5	ID Numbers 6-10	Write Numbers 0-5	Write Numbers 6-10

Appendix E

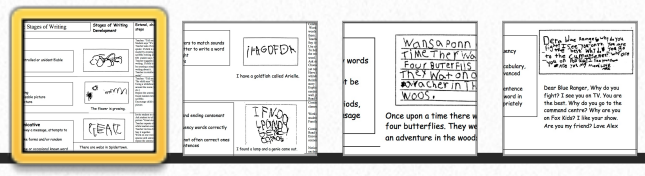
LEARNING STORIES CHECKLIST

Student Name	PERSONAL & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT		LANGUAGE				MATHEMATICS					SCIENCE	ARTS			HEALTH AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	
	Children are connected to others and contribute to their world	Children have a strong sense of identity and well being	Children are effective communicators				Young children have a conceptual understanding of mathematics and mathematical thinking and reasoning					Children are curious and connect prior knowledge to new contexts in order to understand the world around them	Young children have an innate openness to artistic activities			Children make healthy choices and develop physical skills	
			R	W	O	M	NS	M	GS	PA	DM		VA	M	DD	HEALTH	PHYSED

Appendix F

Stages of Writing	Stages of Writing Development	Extend, challenge, next steps
Deconstructed		
Emerging Creates uncontrolled or unidentifiable scribbling		Teacher: "Tell me about your work." Student says "It's my spider". Teacher asks if student can write about the spider. If child is unsure or reluctant to write, model by creating a simple drawing and scribble writing about it. OR student says "I wrote about a spider" Teacher suggests a picture to support the writing. If child is unsure or reluctant, model by creating a simple drawing and scribble writing about it. Teacher is reinforcing "What I say, I can write"
Pictorial Imitates writing Draws recognizable picture Tells about picture	 The flower is growing.	Teacher: "Tell me about your work." The child says "The flower is growing." Using a whiteboard, model finding letters around the room (word wall, name wall, charts, etc.) Repeat the sentence and show child how you found random letters to stand in for the child's scribble. Encourage child to try this with the next picture.
Precommunicative Writes to convey a message, attempts to read it back Uses letter-like forms and/or random letter strings Prints own name or occasional known word	 There are webs in Spidertown.	Invite student to draw a picture. Ask student to tell you one thing about the picture "Great story! Let's write about it." Teacher repeats child's utterance verbatim, while teacher counts the words. Teacher invites child to repeat the process. Say it together. Work on one word at a time, teacher inserting spaces until sentence is done. Continue to repeat the sentence to prompt the next word.

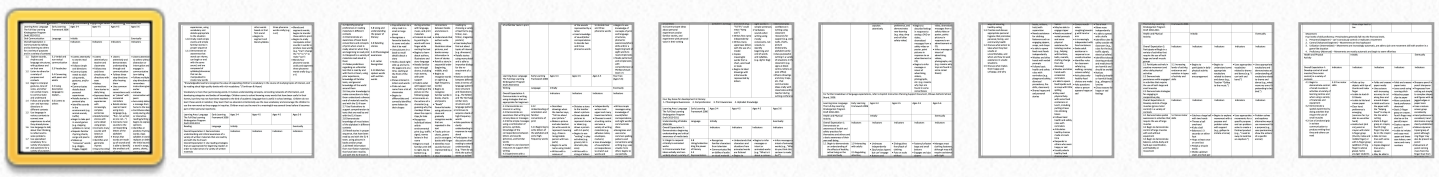
K-1 Writing Approaches to Text Forms - Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board



Appendix G

Developmentally Appropriate Planning Resource

Kindergarten – Developmentally Appropriate Planning Resource					
Learning Area: Language The Full-Day Learning Kindergarten Program Draft 2010-2011	Early Learning Framework 2006	Ages 3-4	Ages 4-5	Ages 4-5	Ages 5-6
Oral Communication	Language	Initially			Eventually
Overall Expectation 1: Communicate by talking and by listening to others for a variety of purposes and in a variety of contexts		Indicators	Indicators	Indicators	Indicators
1.1 Explore sounds, rhythms and language structures, with guidance and on their own 1.2 Listen to others for a variety of purposes and contexts 1.3 Begin to interpret gestures, tone of voice, and other non-verbal means to communicate and understand 1.4 Follow and provide one- and two-step directions in different contexts 1.5 Use language in various contexts to connect new experiences to what they already know 1.6 Use language to talk about their thinking, to reflect and to solve problems 1.7 Use specialized vocabulary for a variety of purposes 1.8 Ask questions for a variety of purposes and in different contexts 1.9 Describe personal	3.1 Verbal and non-verbal communication 3.3 Vocabulary 3.4 Conversing with peers and adults 3.5 Using descriptive language to explain… 3.6 Listens to others	• Listens attentively to stories read aloud • Follows simple oral directions • Communicates needs to adult using words, gestures, and/or signs • Communicates details about personal experiences • Retells stories in pretend play • Identifies sounds in the environment (e.g. animal sounds, traffic) • Begin to take part in sound games (e.g. clapping syllables in name) • Repeats familiar rhyming chants, songs and poems • Makes up "nonsense" words (e.g. doggie, froggie, toggie)	• Listens attentively to teacher and classmates • Follows two and three simple step directions with ease • Makes connections from stories to daily living • Expresses ideas and describes experiences with increasingly complex sentences • Retells familiar stories with some detail using props • Connects many sounds with letters in alphabet • Identifies and generates rhymes • Hears the initial sounds in many words and is able to match	• Listens attentively and demonstrates understanding through oral communication • Follows three step directions after hearing them • Uses common social conventions such as "please" with occasional reminders • Retells stories read or heard using story language (e.g., "Run, run as fast as you can…") • Connects most sounds to the corresponding letters of the alphabet • Knows that words are made up of sounds and is able to identify the smallest unit of sound • Blends and begins to segment two and	• Listens attentively to others without distraction or interruption and engages in communicative turn-taking • Follows multiple step directions and remembers instructions given earlier • Initiates conversation with peers • Accurately delivers a message from home to the teacher • Contributes ideas orally during shared or interactive reading/writing and begins to express opinions • Identifies or predicts rhyming words; claps syllables in words, replaces or deletes the initial sounds in a word in songs, poems, chants, name games • Names the word left when you take away the "b" from "bat"

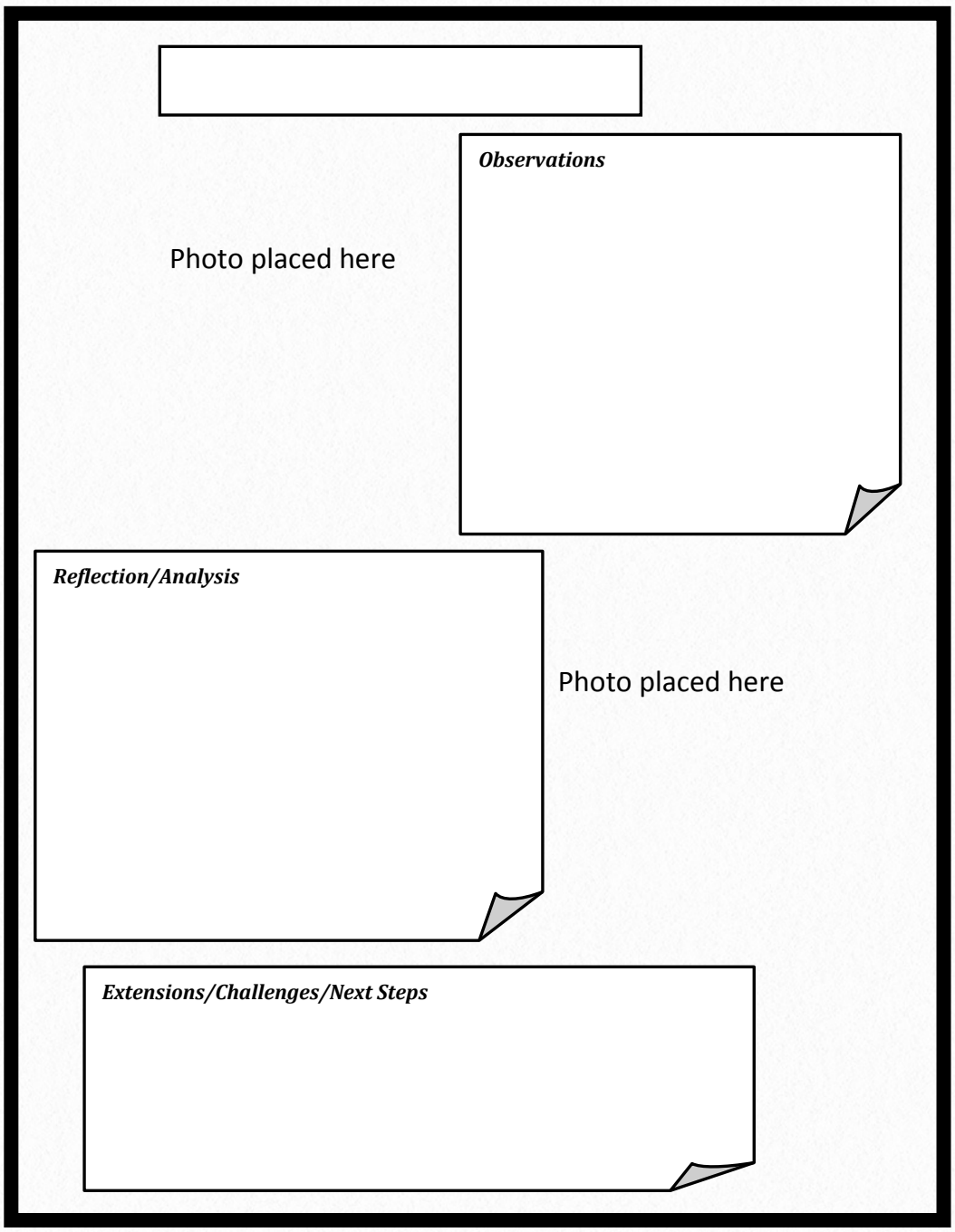


Click here to go back to p. 67

Click here to go back to p. 112

Appendix H

Sticky Note Learning Story Template



Click here to go back to p. 68

Click here o g back to p. 114

Appendix I

Collecting Conversations

Date-	Educator-
Context-	
Title	Reflections/Interpretation
Possible Extensions/Challenges/Next Steps	

Appendix J

Large Photo Learning Story

Learning Area:
The Big Idea:
Overall Expectation:
Specific Expectation:
Photo goes here
The Story:

Appendix K

Observation Template

Observation Record for:

DATE	OBSERVATION	CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT (Curriculum Expectations)	POSSIBLE EXTENSIONS (Next Steps)

Click here to go back to page 129

Appendix L

Reading Strategies Checklist

Language: Reading > Strategies

	Beginning letter	Picture = Word	Sound/letter Chunking	Punctuation	Plural	Repetition