

Chapter 4:

Teaching and Learning Strategies

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Guiding Principle: The Teacher

Kindergarten teachers are passionate about the opportunity to teach and learn with our youngest students and intentionally create joyful, nurturing, and engaging learning environments that welcome all children.

Kindergarten teachers develop secure, respectful relationships with children and their families and work in a collegial manner with other Early Years teachers in the school system and in the larger early childhood development (ECD) community. They are familiar with the Kindergarten curriculum and make thoughtful, informed judgments about how to maximize the many opportunities to build linkages among subject areas and to respond to the individual interests, abilities, and needs of each child in their classrooms. Kindergarten teachers enhance and extend children’s play through their interactions and provocations.

Teachers are comfortable with human diversity and are cognizant of the many ways through which children communicate and represent who they are. Teachers are aware of their own biases, remain open to new ideas, and are willing to learn from the experiences and suggestions of others, including parents and guardians. They are committed to lifelong learning and growing as professionals and ensure that their educational programming is based on current knowledge and research about child development and early childhood education.

Intentionality

Intentionality, as referred to in the *CMEC Statement on Play-Based Learning* (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada), is a hallmark of developmentally appropriate teaching. It determines many of the decisions of Early Years teachers, including how they set up their classrooms, plan curriculum implementation, select from various teaching strategies, and assess the progress or challenges faced by children in the class, and it influences the tone of their interactions with children and their families.

Ann Epstein (2007) states:

An “intentional” teacher aims at clearly defined learning objectives for children, employs instructional strategies likely to help children achieve the objectives, and continually assesses progress and adjusts the strategies based on that assessment. The teacher who can explain just *why* she is doing what she is doing is acting intentionally—whether she is using a strategy tentatively for the first time or automatically from long practice, as part of an elaborate set up or spontaneously in a teachable moment. (4)

As an intentional teacher, how do you individualize your teaching approach? You begin with the “why,” and engage in a continuous cycle of observing, reflecting, and revisiting what you think you know about each child’s play and his or her interactions with the social and physical environments (see Figure 4.1). This approach allows you to appreciate each child’s interests, abilities, and developmental progress more fully.

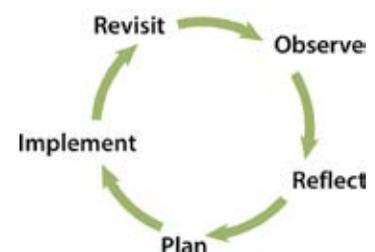


Figure 4.1:
The Intentional Teaching Cycle

Be intentional about the way you work toward addressing Manitoba's Kindergarten curriculum outcomes as you plan learning experiences and purposefully use the daily routines. Keep up to date with current and evidence-based research about early child development. As you observe, reflect, and plan, you are following children's leads, as well as leading through your teaching.

Key Dimensions of the Role of Early Years Teachers*

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) uses a five-pointed mariner's star to represent the five key dimensions of the Early Years teacher's role (Phillips and Scrinzi):



1. **Creating a caring community of learners:** Create a community in which each child feels safe and welcome, including children with exceptional learning needs. Your schedule, routines, classroom design, and teaching approach are all tools to help create the caring community. (See Chapter 5.)
2. **Teaching to enhance development and learning:** Use evidence-based teaching strategies and select the strategy that fits best for a particular child in a particular situation. Scaffold children's learning (described in more detail later in this chapter). Differentiate instruction by using various learning formats, such as large and small groups, learning centres, and routines. (See Chapter 5.)
3. **Planning curriculum to achieve important goals:** Ask several critical questions before planning your approach to addressing the curriculum:
 - What should children know at Kindergarten completion?
 - What do the children already know?
 - Which specific learning outcomes (from Manitoba's Kindergarten curriculum) are you trying to address?
 - What types of adaptations do you need to make?Manitoba's Kindergarten curriculum is based on key *big ideas*, and recommends an integrated approach to make them meaningful to children. (See Chapter 7.)
4. **Assessing children's development and learning:** Use assessment to monitor children's learning and development, guide your teaching response, allow for early identification and intervention as needed, and facilitate your communication with others (McAfee, Leong, and Bodrova, as cited in Phillips and Scrinzi 60–61). (You will read more about assessment later in this chapter.)
5. **Establishing reciprocal relationships with families:** Ask parents about their hopes and dreams for their children and their knowledge of how their children learn best. Where possible, involve families in decisions being made about their children. (See Chapter 10.)

* Source of the five categories: NAEYC. 2014. "5 Guidelines for Effective Teaching." *Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)*. Washington, DC: Author: <www.naeyc.org/dap/5-guidelines-for-effective-teaching>. Copyright © 2014 NAEYC®. Reprinted with permission.

Developmentally Appropriate Teaching Strategies



Teaching Approaches in EAL Development

For a description of appropriate teaching approaches to match each of the three stages of EAL development, refer to the Characteristics of Early Years Learners chart in Section 1 (page 46) of *Manitoba Kindergarten to Grade 12 Curriculum Framework for English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Literacy, Academics, and Language (LAL) Programming* (Manitoba Education).

Using the five-pointed star as your compass, consider the following 10 developmentally appropriate (DAP) teaching strategies (recommended by NAEYC) and intentionally select a strategy that fits your specific learning goals for individual children and for the classroom context. These strategies are not subject-specific, but rather are recommended practice for all teachers working with all age groups in any subject area or setting and reflect the fundamental beliefs and values about children emphasized throughout this document.

Effective DAP Teaching Strategies*

1. **Acknowledge:** Since all children appreciate positive attention from adults, acknowledge their personhood through regular observations and by paying attention to what they say and do. Let them know you notice through your active presence. Sometimes, the best strategy is to keep a child company, sitting close, being mindful, and caring.
2. **Encourage:** Attend to children's efforts, and encourage their perseverance and resilience. Your encouragement will help children stay on track even when the work is hard. Be cautious about value-based praise (e.g., "I like the way you are cleaning up.").
3. **Give specific feedback:** Specific feedback is more useful than a general comment such as "You are doing a good job." You might give children specific feedback such as "That's great! You touched each block only once to count them." or "You really made our guest feel welcome by finding her a chair." Many children will benefit from the time you take to clarify your expectations prior to a new experience (e.g., a field trip, the arrival of a guest to the classroom, a fire drill).
4. **Model:** Remember that you are a powerful role model in the lives of young children, so your own attitudes, the way you approach learning and problem solving, and how you treat others lead children toward vicarious learning.
5. **Demonstrate:** At times, you may need to demonstrate how to carry out a particular procedure if it should be done in a specific way. Think about this as a "show and tell" opportunity. You may show children a procedure several times,

* Source: NAEYC. 2014. "10 Effective DAP Teaching Strategies." *Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)*. Washington, DC: Author: <www.naeyc.org/dap/10-effective-dap-teaching-strategies>. Copyright © 2014 NAEYC®. Reprinted with permission.

and then carry it out together several more times, before they are ready to do it on their own—a gradual release of responsibility.

6. **Create or add challenge:** In the spirit of the zone of proximal development, be ready to scaffold by creating or adding challenge for children, gently nudging them to go a little further than where they are right now.
7. **Ask questions:** Your thoughtful questions can provoke children’s deeper thinking (e.g., “Why do you think that happened?” “What do you think will happen next?”).
8. **Give assistance:** As required, differentiate by reducing challenge slightly, or assist children with cues or hints to help them work on the edge of their current competence.
9. **Provide information:** Inform children of relevant information (e.g., facts or labels) that might deepen their learning or support their success.
10. **Give directions:** Give directions for children’s action or behaviour, especially in new situations, so that your expectations are clear.

These 10 teaching strategies build upon our knowledge base about child development, reflect our defining roles as teachers of young children, and exemplify our vision of ourselves as intentional teachers.



A teacher demonstrates letter formation during a small-group time, creating or adding challenge or giving assistance as needed by individual children.

Scaffolding

Scaffolding is a term that is much in vogue in schools influenced by the work of child development theorists such as Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner. It is epitomized in the schools of Reggio Emilia, where teachers ask many questions, summarize, clarify what they see children doing and saying, and encourage children's predictions to guide the way they learn through exploring, representing, and thinking deeply. Teachers provide scaffolding to help students develop higher-level critical and creative thinking and deeper understanding. As they support their learners, teachers believe that all students want to learn, and they provide a learning environment in which all students can gradually take on responsibility for their own learning (Manitoba Education and Youth, *Independent Together* 2.7–2.8).

Scaffolding requires a foundation based on a deep understanding of developmentally appropriate practice and of the curriculum outcomes. Your knowledge about young children's typical and unique developmental trajectories ensures that your expectations about children's competencies are realistic. Recognizing and building upon children's strengths allows you to provide better support for any areas of need. Keep your focus on the zone of proximal development (ZPD), and remember that this will be different for each child in your Kindergarten class.

When tasks are too difficult, children become frustrated and may give up not only on the task, but also on the idea of themselves as learners. This is when you may need to give some individualized assistance. When tasks are too simple, children become easily bored, and for some children, boredom leads to misbehaviours. You can then create or add challenge for those children who are ready for it by differentiating instruction.

The "sweet spot" in the ZPD (see Figure 4.2) may be a little different for each child, but your intentional teaching helps you to determine the ZPD that is just slightly ahead of where each child is at currently. With your support, and that of other children in the class who are a little more knowledgeable about the task at hand, you help children to feel successful, and learning occurs. This is the optimal zone for learning. You will likely find there are fewer classroom-management challenges because children are engaged in learning and are not feeling frustrated or bored. (You can read more about guiding children's behaviour at the end of this chapter.)

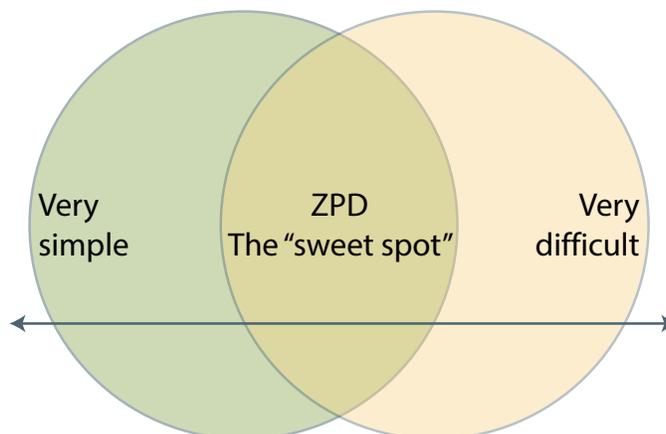


Figure 4.2:
The Zone of Proximal
Development (ZPD)

Other scaffolding strategies include *peer-to-peer supports* (a more knowledgeable or experienced child can show or demonstrate a task to another) and *corrective feedback* (such as showing a child struggling with balancing how you learned to balance on one foot by holding onto your ears). Scaffolding is a wonderfully inclusive tool for working with all children in your classroom.

To determine what kind of scaffolding is required, begin with what you know about the learners in your classroom. Through your sensitive observations and authentic assessments, you grow to appreciate children’s strengths, interests, and abilities. Consider how to scaffold in ways that engage and encourage children by adjusting your learning environment and your approach to curriculum in order to be both developmentally appropriate and flexible. Think about what kinds of supports and connections will be most helpful as you then move within a child’s learning continuum (not too easy, not too hard).



Children and their teacher created a chart of 100 stickers to demonstrate how many is 100.

For example, in one classroom where the 100th day of school was being celebrated, some children asked: “What does 100 look like?” The Kindergarten teacher knew that most of the children could easily count to 10. Together, they created a large chart, which was initially placed on the floor. Children were invited to draw circles, until they had 10 circles of somewhat different sizes. Next, children counted out 10 stickers, and placed them into one of the circles on the mural. At the end of this learning experience, they had a visual representation of 100. While counting to 100 might have been too difficult for most children, by scaffolding on what they already knew, the teacher provided the support that enabled all the children to experience success!

As you support children in their inquiries, you can scaffold your instructions to help them *solve problems* through the following steps (French, Conezio, and Boynton, as cited in Butera et al. 73-74):

- **Reflect and ask:** As you present three whole fruits (e.g., apple, banana, and orange), ask questions: What do you notice about the fruit? What do you know already?
- **Plan and predict:** What will we need to do to find out more about the fruit (e.g., peel, cut, remove seeds)? What do you think each fruit will taste like? Which will be the most popular in the class? You can chart the children’s answers using a bar graph.
- **Act and observe:** Allow the children to taste all the fruits and have them talk about the flavours and textures.
- **Report and reflect:** You can chart the children’s favourite fruits and facilitate a discussion about whether their predictions were accurate and what they learned.



A teacher models writing and self-editing prior to the class’s shared writing time.

Modelling and Demonstrating (Show and Tell)

You know that children watch you carefully and learn from your example, so show them some of the ways you enjoy using learning materials, and talk about why (show and tell). You may show a child how to use a new piece of equipment, such as an egg beater at the water table or a wrench at the carpentry centre. One teacher begins shared writing time each day with a short personal story that she scribes and illustrates on the chart. Her comfortable demonstration of how to edit her own work with the children models the whole-part-whole approach, and translates to the children's growing comfort in writing down their own ideas and then in self-editing.

Mediators

Use mediators as response prompters to remind children how to carry out a task. *Mediators* may be physical objects, photographs, charts, and familiar actions/signals that help children to focus or to recall the steps for a task, such as washing hands. Props used during circle time may help draw and hold children's attention, so try using a funny hat, a puppet, or a magic wand to engage inattentive children.

In one classroom where children were having a hard time remembering to read books carefully, the teacher offered indirect guidance by spreading a colourful tablecloth on the floor. Children sat cross-legged around the periphery of the tablecloth as the teacher placed books on it. The visual cue offered via the tablecloth was enough to

help children self-regulate as they looked at books and turned their pages carefully. In another classroom where several children had speech delays, the teacher made the shape of a sound as it is articulated to remind children of how it is formed—for example, she demonstrated how *S* is voiced as “ssssssssssssss” as she made the shape of a snake with her finger held near her mouth. Eventually, these types of mediators can be faded out.

Provocation

A *provocation* is a learning experience intentionally organized by the teacher to invite children's curiosity and desire to explore and problem solve, often in an extended way, and typically with peers in small groups where cooperation and co-construction of knowledge can be facilitated. The provocation “is a portal inviting you to enter.”

Provocation can be changes made to the environment, such as new materials added to a learning centre, but it can also be

an idea or question or action that carries the children more deeply into the subject. Provocation can move the children to a place where they see that there is more to be explored, depth they hadn't seen at first. With the right provocative language we convey them to the vicinity where the depth is, so they can explore and respond more profoundly. New languages, materials and surprises provoke new thinking. (Clemens, Gleim, and Handler 9)

Provocations

As a *provocateur* of children's learning, you have many ways to encourage them to go a little further in their thinking. You may intentionally place provocations into the classroom to invite and involve children in a learning experience. Through the intentional questions you pose, you invite children to think deeper. (See Figure 7.1 in Chapter 7 for questions that emerge from the learning landscapes.) You may coach by offering gentle clues to some children, such as “What would happen if you turned the puzzle piece this way? Would that make a difference?” During your morning class meeting, you may make the beginning sound of an important word that responds to your question, and then pause to see whether anyone responds to your cue.

As you engage with children during choice time, be aware of your role as a demonstrator, modeller, and co-player to scaffold children’s learning in play centres without taking over their activity, and help them to grow toward increasingly complex and sustained interactions and situations (New Jersey Department of Education 14). If you notice that play is stalling, you can gently nudge it back on track by adding some new materials, suggesting a role for a child who is looking on but not participating, or clarifying how someone might be feeling. You might mentor the play that is underway by joining in the scenario (e.g., as a pizza delivery person bringing food for hungry children or a courier delivering an important letter). You might add to the children’s conversation, modelling language and new vocabulary.

You can ask more questions or offer more information for those who are ready for further extensions. Consider comments and questions such as the following (Weitzman; Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care):*

- **Extend knowledge:** “That red flower is called an amaryllis.”
- **Build vocabulary:** “Your tower looks like a skyscraper.”
- **Build creative thinking:** “I wonder what we could use to make a roof for our fort.”
- **Predict:** “What will happen next?”
- **Make decisions:** “What do you think . . . ?”
- **Evaluate:** “Which story is your favourite? Why?”
- **Imagine:** “What do you think would happen if . . . ?”
- **Transform:** “How could we make bannock from all these ingredients?”
- **Reason:** “How did you decide on your plan? What will you do first?”
- **Compare:** “Which pile of buttons has more?”
- **Give information:** “She is crying because she fell down and hurt her leg.”

* Source: Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care. *Early Returns: Manitoba’s Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework for Preschool Centres and Nursery Schools*. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care, June 2011. 12. Available online at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/fs/childcare/early_returns.html> (19 Sept. 2014). Used with permission.

Observing and Documenting Children’s Learning

“Observation has always been the main method of assessing learning in the Kindergarten classroom. Educators continually and purposefully observe their children as they go about their daily routines and learning experiences—as they enter the classroom, participate in whole-class circle time, make their choices and group for learning centres . . . , eat their snacks, engage in purposeful play, prepare to leave, and so on” (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, *Listening and Speaking* 23).

In many ways, Kindergarten lays the foundation for the continuing development of children’s competencies. To plan optimal learning experiences, you need to know about each child within the classroom, so the way you appraise development is crucial. *Early identification* is an important tool in your toolbox and can be critical to a child’s successful introduction to school. The early identification process, consisting of screening, assessing, programming, and evaluating, is the same for all children. It is a way to provide continuity in programming based on children’s developmental needs. As variability in children’s development intensifies,

further resources and increased collaboration among parents, teachers, and resource and support personnel are necessary to ensure each child's success during the Early Years in school.

Observation by the classroom teacher in natural settings best aids in setting educational objectives for children experiencing learning difficulties. Observation is more appropriate for young children than standardized testing, which has severe limitations for a variety of reasons, including teachers' own lack of experience or expertise in the use and interpretation of the tests, test anxiety on the part of children, and the cultural inappropriateness or bias inherent in many tests. Young children are usually unperturbed by being observed in their natural setting, and observers can be trained to perform their task unobtrusively using either formal or informal techniques. Observers may interact with children or watch as spectators. Observing children and recording observations is already part of your daily Kindergarten routine. You will need to organize your classroom in such a way that you are free to observe.

Intentionally schedule your time for ongoing observation, assessment, and record keeping related to children's growth and development. Intentional observation is not random; instead, it is linked to specific behaviours for authentic assessment—assessment *for* instruction, *as* instruction, and *of* instruction. With young children, informal observation is the primary assessment method. At this stage, however, the rate of children's growth is too varied to allow the setting of specific learning outcomes that all children must be able to reach, without seriously limiting expectations for the older or rapidly maturing child or frustrating the younger or less mature child. Once goals and standards are stated and formalized, take care not to

confine yourself to attempting to reach these goals. Just because five-year-olds are willing to conform and are interested in trying to please adults, does not mean it is appropriate to pressure them into any intense training in order to reach predetermined learning outcomes by an evaluation-specific date, such as for the fall report card. At the same time, gifted children may become bored with educational programming that offers little challenge once a predetermined learning outcome has been reached.



Observation of EAL Children

Collect as much information from parents as you can about a child's interests, immigration experiences, home languages, adjustment issues, and so on. Using an interpreter to collect this type of information and to build and develop positive connections with the parents would be beneficial.

Observable behaviours of EAL students could include

- pre-literacy behaviours in both the child's home language and in English
- listening and speaking behaviours in both languages (e.g., Is the child able to request/negate, retell simple stories, ask questions?)
- literacy behaviours using text in both languages (e.g., Is the child able to choose books, read simple sentences, write his or her name or the names of others?)

Use naturally occurring times during the day to observe and assess. While children are engaged in play activities of their own choosing, use this time to circulate. Spend time with individual children or with small groups, noting children's interests and skill development, and making the most of play and your conversations to learn about the children in your classroom. Reflect on which specific learning outcomes you see being met and note these carefully.

The primary purpose of recording observations is to select appropriate interventions or to implement educational programming based on the child's developmental and learning needs. Consequently, comprehensive observations include assessment of all growth, development, and learning. In effect, observation informs assessment. Consider all the information you have been able to gather from your careful observations and record keeping, as well as from your consultations with resource personnel, and with families, who know their children best.

A child's behaviour may be observed by parents, teachers, and resource and support personnel in a variety of settings:

- with adults
- with another child
- during language use
- during routines and transitions
- during the use of materials
- during teacher-directed learning activities
- during child-directed activities

Observations of a child may be recorded in a variety of forms:

- **Developmental history from birth to the present**
 - specific health information
 - vision and hearing screening
 - gross motor screening
 - interests, hobbies, and activities of the child
 - information shared by early childhood educators who have worked with children in preschool settings (with informed parental consent)
- **Forms for recording classroom observations**
 - digital photographs
 - video or sound recordings
 - collections of children's work
 - anecdotal records, diaries, and logs
 - activity lists
 - learning centre records

- time or event sampling (which allow you to track a child’s behaviour during a particular time of day, such as drop-off time, or during regularly occurring events, such as daily free play, when you may note which play centres a child chooses to visit)
- checklists and rating scales
- structured tasks
- questionnaires
- criteria-referenced tasks
- **Interviews to share information**
 - with parents
 - with other school personnel
 - with the child
 - with early childhood educators (with informed parental consent)

Improving Your Observational Skills

Observation is a skill that has to be learned and practised. As part of your pre-service teacher training, you probably had help in learning how to observe; however, we all benefit from regular practice in recognizing and interpreting behaviour and withholding judgment until all the information has been gathered. Skilled observers regularly reflect on their own personal biases and are honest about the type of behaviour that pleases or irritates them. They ask themselves whether they have been conditioned to think of academic and verbal learning as the most worthwhile learning. As observers, we need to keep in mind that “no two people will see the same child in identical ways. Two open and honest teachers can be asked to observe the same child. What they see and the interpretation they make will depend on what they decide to look for and on their own particular perspectives” (Martin 23).

The behaviour of young children is often spontaneous, impulsive, and emotionally spurred. Their logic is different from that of adults, but it is right for them and should be respected; the transition to adult logic usually occurs during adolescence. From the viewpoint of the adult, children’s behaviour often appears changeable and unpredictable. It is, however, an honest expression of the children’s feelings at the time.

Children also express their feelings and thoughts in a physical manner and often react totally in terms of their physical needs. (For example, young children who are hungry may be irritable or even aggressive. If you know that some children do not eat breakfast before school, you have a context to understand “negative” behaviours in the classroom better. You may choose to serve a morning snack early in the day to address children’s hunger, or work with colleagues in your school to establish a breakfast program prior to the start of the school day.) Avoid judging behaviour in terms that imply that the child is unacceptable—while the specific behaviour may be inappropriate, the child is unconditionally accepted.

The processes by which a child copes with life's frustrations are important measures of self-regulation and emotional maturity. Some adults see younger children as helpless, and childhood as a time when children should be manipulated and controlled. These views must be set aside if parents and teachers want to see children become self-directed, self-motivated, and responsible for their actions.

You can record your observations in the classroom by jotting down quick notes on scraps of paper, sticky notes, or index cards. These quick notes are useful for recording information you do not want to forget (e.g., your observation that Cali counted 31 blocks while building with her friends). To avoid misplacing these notes, transfer them to a file folder or an envelope. Alternatively, try using a steno pad or a science notebook. Draw a line down the centre of the page and write down your observations (no inferences) in one column. Use the other column to note questions, interpretations, ideas for extending learning, links to theory, and reflections on the observation.

In addition to recording student observations on paper, try using video recorders, smart phones, tablets, or other digital media. Aim for recording short clips of about 10 to 60 seconds while children are reading, conversing, or sharing with friends. Not only do these clips provide permanent records, but they can also be used to improve the observational skills and teaching abilities of educators, parents, or resource personnel. Having two or more observers review the clips allows them to compare and discuss their observations and their interpretations. Teachers can function as spectators or participant observers. Each process yields a different kind of information.

Protecting Children's Privacy

Some teachers use various applications to store digital documentation about children. If you are using electronic storage for your recorded observations, review your school division's technology policies to be sure you are protecting children's privacy.

Regular, systematic observations and skill in using the resulting information are important tools for assessing, programming, and evaluating during Kindergarten and beyond. Observing individual children in your classroom focuses your attention on children as they learn and progress over time, and so your detailed observations also provide feedback on your own instruction. A simple observation notepad might include notes about learning strengths, areas of challenge you notice, next steps (ideas for extensions, scaffolding, and so on), and portfolio items (ideas of artifacts or photographs you plan to add). A blank template of an observation notepad is found in Appendix C: Kindergarten Play Observation Notepad.

Reflect on what you observe and use your observations to inform your teaching practices. Use your observations to individualize your approach with different children as needed, especially when children are in the delicate formative stage of new learning, such as beginning reading, writing, and mathematics (Clay, *An Observation Survey*, 2013, 4).

“As teachers begin to observe closely, they see children’s development played out in their own unique classroom contexts, always influenced by the potentially overlapping cultures of home and school lives” (Henderson, Meier, Perry, and Stremmel 2).

Remember to give careful consideration to individual and cultural factors that may have an impact on what you observe and how you interpret your observations. Since young children are easily influenced by context, it is best to conduct multiple observations and to pay careful attention to any changes you note in a child’s performance in different situations. A child may be very talkative during free playtime, but very shy to speak out in your circle time or during a more formal assessment. These observations can also help you to select which instructional supports and strategies will probably work best for the child. You may need to select an alternative assessment tool that is more open-ended. You may need to make adaptations or accommodations to make a task more interesting or culturally relevant for a child and in order to understand the child more accurately, especially one with an exceptional learning need or one who comes from an English as an additional language (EAL) family. Children often do things differently at home than in early childhood settings or other out-of-the-home settings.



A teacher notes her observations while children play.



Recording Observations of EAL Learners

Recording observations of the EAL child's use of language for learning and for interacting with others both in the child's first language and in English is beneficial for guiding you in determining specific instructional supports and for showing English language acquisition. Record observations of different kinds of talk children use, such as asking questions, getting things they need, expressing feelings, or solving problems. Note the EAL students' confidence levels and the strategies they use when communicating.

Tip: To determine observational targets, use the Early Years EAL Acquisition Continuum found in Section 4a of *Manitoba Kindergarten to Grade 12 Curriculum Framework for English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Literacy, Academics and Language (LAL) Programming* (Manitoba Education).



Vignette: Sharing a Story through Song and Dance*

In one Kindergarten class, a young First Nations boy was asked to retell a story from his own experience or a story that someone had told him, but he answered that he did not know any stories. Instead of merely noting the child is "unable to retell a story" in her assessment records, his teacher reflected on what she knew about him, his family, and their community involvement. She knew he and his siblings were members of the school-sponsored powwow club. She knew that traditional dances retell stories with deep meaning and that the songs are reminders of Indigenous traditional ways and rich cultural heritage.

The teacher asked the boy's mother for help, wondering if there was a way to support this young boy in sharing his stories with her and the other children in his Kindergarten classroom. By collaborating with the boy's mother and the facilitators of the powwow club, the teacher arranged a class visit later that month from several members of the club, who brought their big drum. The class was thrilled to welcome the group. Proudly dressed in his regalia, the First Nations boy in the class sang, danced, and drummed his story, explaining to his peers that the drum connects us to the heartbeat of Mother Earth. He shared the meaning of the song and the story behind it. He certainly did have stories to tell, but needed to tell them in his own way. Reggio Emilia-inspired teachers would recognize dancing, drumming, and singing as some of the 100 languages of children. Intentional teachers look for ways to create authentic assessment opportunities.

* This vignette was inspired by a story shared by a Kindergarten teacher during a Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning workshop and by the following video: Galileo Educational Network. "Sharing a Story through Song in Kindergarten." Online video clip. Vimeo. n.d. <<http://vimeo.com/98450960>> (7 July 2014).

Anecdotal Records

In Kindergarten, each child's learning strengths and next steps in learning can be highlighted across the developmental domains and in a variety of curricular areas. One of the easiest formats for recording observations is the *anecdotal record*, which captures a single incident with either a small group or an individual child after it has occurred. This format is often used to record a developmental or curricular outcome. Your anecdote will be most reliable if you make your record as soon as possible after an incident occurs. Keep your interpretation separate from your factual descriptions. What do you see? Remember to date your record (time, date, month, year) and locate it (e.g., Did you see the child spontaneously writing a sign while playing with the unit blocks or at the writing centre?). What do you hear? Use quotes where possible.

Anecdotal Observation (Sample)

Date/Place of Observation

October 30, 2013 (1:20 p.m.) at the dramatic play centre

Observation Notes

Belle was playing by herself with the dolls and their accessories at the dramatic play centre, quietly humming as she dressed the "babies." Fumiko approached her, hesitating at the edge of the play space, and looked at the dolls. Belle smiled and asked, "Do you want to play with me? You can be the grandma coming for a visit." Fumiko looked a little confused, but came closer and touched a doll's head with her hand. Belle handed her one doll, turning away slightly to pick up another doll, saying over her shoulder, "This baby needs to be changed."

Comments/Reflections/Interpretations

Belle shows evidence of pro-social behaviour in this incident.

Running Records

Another technique that many teachers commonly use is the *running record*, a descriptive sequence of children's activity (Martin 73). It can be used to record the behaviour of individuals or groups or specific events. (Please note that a running record of reading continuous text is a specialized form of record keeping that allows teachers to document the progress of individual children's reading skill development.)

This narrative form of observation is a systematic way to record what you actually observe. Leave inferences to your analysis of your observation, when you can reflect on what you saw, summarize, and plan accordingly.

An example of how a running record format may be used in mathematics follows. For a blank template, see Appendix D: A Running Record.

A Running Record of Mathematics Knowledge (Sample)*

Child's Name	VS
Observer	Ms ABC
Date of Observation	April 7, 2015
Time of Observation	10:30–10:50 a.m.
Location	At the art centre
Context	The children were invited to create their own page for a class counting book.

Time	Observation Notes	Comments/Reflections/ Interpretations
10:30	<p>VS chooses plastic beads for her page in the counting book. Her page is 24.</p> <p>VS begins to take beads out of the bowl, counting 1 at a time, and places them on the piece of construction paper on which she will design her page. With one-to-one correspondence, VS counts from 1 to 16, repeats "16," says "17," and then hesitates.</p> <p>She then scoops up all the beads in her hand and begins to count them out again from 1. This time she gets to 24, but continues, "24, 25, 26."</p> <p>I stop her and direct her to the number card (24) on the piece of paper. "Oh yeah!" She immediately clears all beads off the page and begins to count from 1 again. This time she slows at 20 and slowly says, "21, 22, 23, 24. It's 24!" The 24 beads are in a long meandering row around the paper.</p> <p>Me: "Will it be easy for everyone to count your beads like that or is there another way you could put them on the page so they will be easier to count?"</p> <p>VS: "Straight rows."</p> <p>Me: "OK, you could try that. How many beads will you put in the rows?"</p> <p>VS: "10."</p> <p>Me: "Do you think they will all fit?"</p> <p>VS: "Yes, see." She rearranges the beads. She counts 10 beads into a straight row along the top of the paper. Then she begins another row underneath. She counts out 10. She notices 4 remaining beads and she looks at me. She seems unsure about what to do with the remaining beads.</p>	<p>VS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ counts with one-to-one correspondence from 1 to 24 ■ builds set to match two-digit number ■ self-corrects when she senses an error in counting ■ shows perseverance ■ creates a pattern using objects (2 rows of 10) <p>Emerging:</p> <p>VS is beginning to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ subitize (determining the quantity of a small group of items without counting) ■ consider organized arrays ■ consider part-part-whole thinking ($10 + 10 + 4 = 24$) <p>Follow-up notes:</p> <p>Watch VS and her emerging numeracy skills.</p>
10:50	<p>Me: "How can you make it so that you use all 24 beads, because your page is 24?"</p> <p>VS: "I'll put these beads here." She makes a little group of 4 beads in the corner of the paper under the 2 rows of 10. "There! 10 and 10 and 4!"</p>	

Note: This is not a running record of reading continuous text, which is a specialized form of record keeping in reading.

* Used with permission of a Kindergarten teacher.

When you observe children in a variety of learning contexts over time, you learn about their strengths and any areas that need support and development. You can then use this knowledge to inform your planning and instruction. Observation ranges from noticing to keeping records of observations—that is, from passing or incidental observation to focused observation. You make numerous passing observations as you work with children throughout the day, but you may need to pause intentionally to practise your focused observations. These types of observations throughout the phases of learning (activating, acquiring, and applying knowledge) allow you to be flexible and fluid as you support children in their learning.

Of course, you are not observing all children at the same time, but are selecting children to observe over a period of time and in a variety of planned whole-class and small-group (interest, cooperative, and flexible groupings) learning contexts. Depending on children’s needs, you may select some children more frequently than others for observation.

Figure 4.3 illustrates a cycle of instruction/observation and the transitions among a variety of groupings within the daily life of a Kindergarten classroom. This learning/teaching/assessment process may occur over months, over a week, over the course of a day, or even within minutes during the activity of the busy Kindergarten classroom.

Determine targets (learning outcomes and/or developmental domains) for instruction and focused observation based on the learning needs and inquiry of children in your class. Rather than using the targets as a checklist or a means of “covering” content, identify the appropriate targets that specific children will need in order to develop enduring understandings. This process facilitates an inquiry approach for both you and the children in your class. You will gain a deeper understanding of what each learner knows and can do in order to plan next steps, and children will explore, question, construct, discover, and infer meaning to deepen their understanding of their world and to pose new questions. Targets change from the beginning of the year, to the middle of the year, and to the end of the year, as the learners move toward achieving end-of-year learning outcomes.

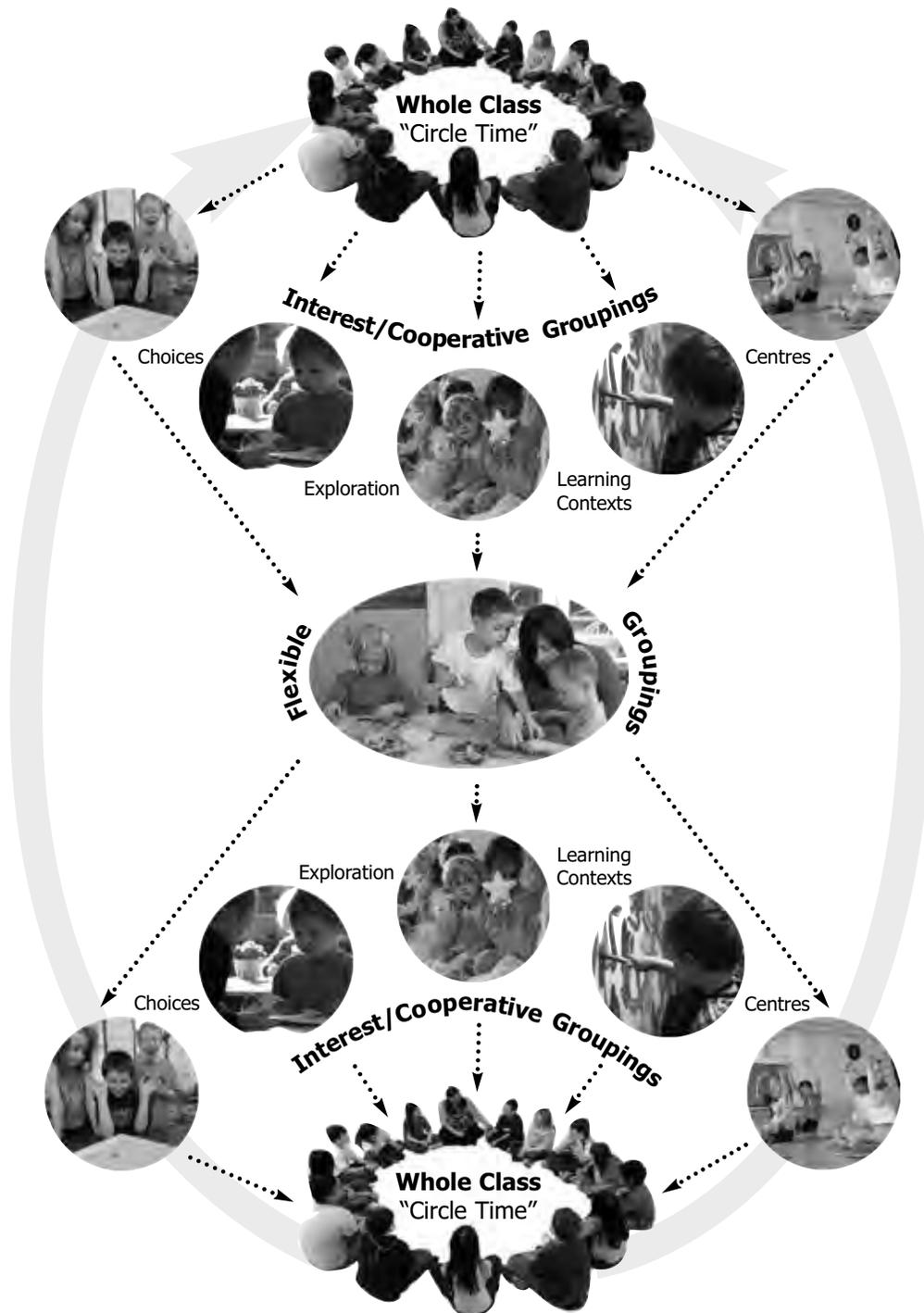


Figure 4.3:
An Environment for Classroom-Based Assessment*

* Source: Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth. *Listening and Speaking: First Steps into Literacy: A Support Document for Kindergarten Teachers and Speech-Language Pathologists*. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2008. 24. Available online at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/ela/list_speak/> (1 Dec. 2014).



Reflection: Your Observation

As you think about how and when you observe, consider the following:

- What was your purpose for your observation?
- What similarities or patterns do you notice?
- What do these observations seem to suggest?
- What else might be going on? Why did the child do it this way (and not in another way)?
- What else do you want to observe or find out?
- How does your observation fit with other things you know about the child from your previous observations?
- How will you document your interpretations?
- What is the relationship between your observations and the plans you create for learning in your classroom?

Planning for Learning

Kindergarten teachers make many types of plans for their children's learning. Some planning occurs daily. When a project idea emerges, teachers carry out short-term planning that will support the children's learning about that idea over an extended period of time. Teachers also carry out long-term planning. Later in this chapter, you can read more about individual education plans, often developed to meet the needs of specific children, and about how your assessment processes inform your planning. Chapters 5 and 6 will help you to plan how to organize your classroom, your play centres, and your schedule. Chapters 7 to 9 will help you to consider how you can plan to address specific learning outcomes identified in the Kindergarten curriculum.

Co-constructing Learning

"Teachers need to resist the mandates to standardize and dehumanize what takes place in the classroom. Spontaneous events that are pursued by bringing engaging materials, good conversation, and time for investigation into the classroom create a true learning environment that is a joyful place to be" (Pack 43).

One of the early voices for Kindergarten was John Dewey, who argued that children's most powerful learning originates in their genuine experiences (*The Child and the Curriculum* and *The School and Society*). The curricular approach described in this document is based on the perspective that emergent, child-centred instructional practices that offer optimal learning experiences for young students interested in their own inquiries are the practices that best meet children's thinking, learning, and developmental needs.

The holistic notion of young children's integrated thinking is founded on a deep appreciation for the interconnected nature of the child's learning (Franklin, as cited in Recchia and Bentley). Many Manitoba Kindergarten teachers who are inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach share this concept (see Chapter 3). When you co-construct learning *with* children in your Kindergarten, you can make the most of their own interests and respond best to their needs. You can negotiate their thinking and good ideas into your planning.

Implementing an Integrated Inquiry Approach

Kindergarten teachers engage young learners successfully using an integrated inquiry approach to connect children to the Kindergarten curricula in a real-world way. (Chapter 8 provides snapshots of the Kindergarten curricula.) In addition, important Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning priorities are infused throughout the Kindergarten day across all subject areas and with all children. (Chapter 9 discusses the integratable elements of learning across the curriculum.)

Guiding Children on the Road to Literacy*

by Susan R. Marshall

As my students and I begin our journey
On the road to learning, I must remember
Not to walk behind them or I may be tempted
to push them along in their travels,
Not to walk in front of them or I may
pull them along like a tour guide,
But to walk beside them so that our
encounters may be shared, each of us
opening the eyes of the other with our
unique observations.

* Source: Marshall, Susan R. "Guiding Children on the Road to Literacy." *The Reading Teacher* 50.7 (1997): 575. Copyright © 1997 John Wiley and Sons, Inc. Reproduced with permission through Copyright Clearance Center.

So, how and where do teachers begin? Teachers make flexible plans, and stay ready to follow the children's lead. They build an inclusive classroom community. They see themselves as co-learners and share ideas with their group. They provide the required resources and allow enough time to support children's questions, discoveries, and meaning making. They allow children to express their understanding in many forms, including writing, drawing, building, sculpting, and acting. Finally, teachers document and reflect on the learning they see unfolding in their classrooms (Board 44).

Ways to Plan

Figure 4.4 illustrates Manitoba's subject area curricula revolving around playful learning, which in Kindergarten ought to be the central construct in planning for learning that teachers undertake.

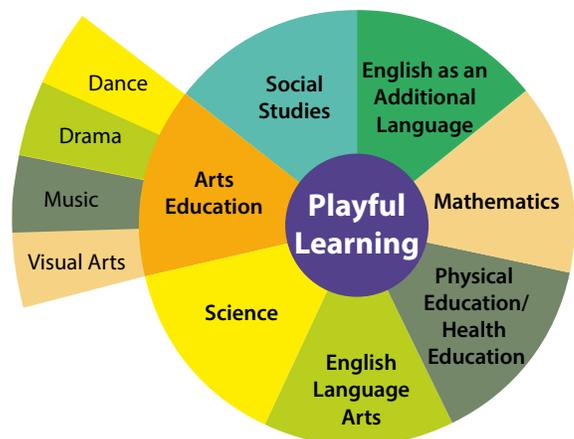


Figure 4.4:
All Subject Areas Revolve around Playful Learning

When planning for learning, do you emphasize academics or play? Some teachers struggle with the ideal of active, play-based learning, pointing to the perceived barriers posed by the standard curriculum in allowing for time and space for learning through play (Gabriel and Doiron 17). However, it is never an either/or choice!

Children’s curiosities are emergent, and that means your approach to curriculum “is not linear—it is organic, constantly growing and evolving. Sometimes it is even circular, as we observe, discuss, and examine documentation, raise questions, and observe again” (Stacey, as quoted by Gabriel and Doiron 12).

Your beliefs and views about children, your pedagogical approach to learning, and the nature of relationships in your classroom all influence your planning and the approaches you offer to the children. Planning is anchored in your observation of children and their learning, the questions or interests of children, and the Kindergarten curricular outcomes. Questions to support inquiry may be negotiated with children; however, you continue to use your professional judgment to navigate between children’s interests and curricular outcomes.

When you plan intentionally in this way, you

- preplan possible directions of learning according to curricula
- listen carefully and respectfully to negotiate children’s ideas
- develop depth of understanding of curriculum and learners
- set up the classroom environment to provide invitations for learning to motivate exploring curricular outcomes (as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6)

Wood and Attfield (as cited in Martlew, Stephen, and Ellis 73) describe curriculum-generated play (what we term *backward design*) that supports the development of specific skills and knowledge, as well as play-generated curriculum (what we term *inquiry*) that emerges from teachers’ responsiveness to children’s own interests and questions. For a visual representation of these concepts, see Figure 4.5. Needless to say, child-centred planning is supported by your observations and documentation processes.

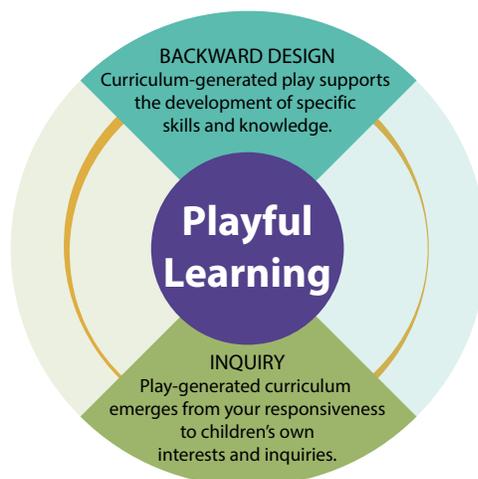


Figure 4.5:
A Playful Approach to Planning

Planning refers to long-range planning (year plan), unit/inquiry planning, and daily instructional decisions with respect to selection of materials, as well as to creating provocations or invitations for learning experiences and to rich learning contexts. Your plans for playful learning can move in at least two directions within your learning landscape: *inquiry planning* and *backward design curriculum planning*. These are two of the many processes teachers have found useful in planning for children’s learning.

“Children are problem solvers and, through curiosity, generate questions and problems. Children attempt to solve problems presented to them and they also seek novel challenges. They persist because success and understanding are motivating in their own rights” (National Research Council 234).

Inquiry Planning

Inquiry planning and learning is not a step-by-step process, but rather a cyclical process, with its various phases being revisited and rethought as a result of children’s discoveries, insights, and construction of new knowledge as they play and learn. Worthwhile inquiry questions are broad in scope and rich in possibilities.

The advantage of inquiry/project planning over theme-based planning is that it is far more responsive to the children’s interests. It enables you to be more flexible and creative in your planning and your teaching. You may choose to deliver a “mini-lesson” to a whole group or create smaller groups to help address the children’s needs as the inquiry unfolds and their questions are refined. Children are more motivated to add their suggestions and directions as a project grows and changes and as they see their ideas being incorporated. Many teachers plan for celebrations or other culminating events that bring closure to an extended inquiry for the children involved. These might include a party attended by families where documentation of the learning can be shared, models can be exhibited, performances can be enjoyed, a class book can be presented, and so on.

The inquiry-planning process is reflected in Figure 4.6. For a template to support your use of the inquiry-planning process, refer to Appendix E: Inquiry Planning.

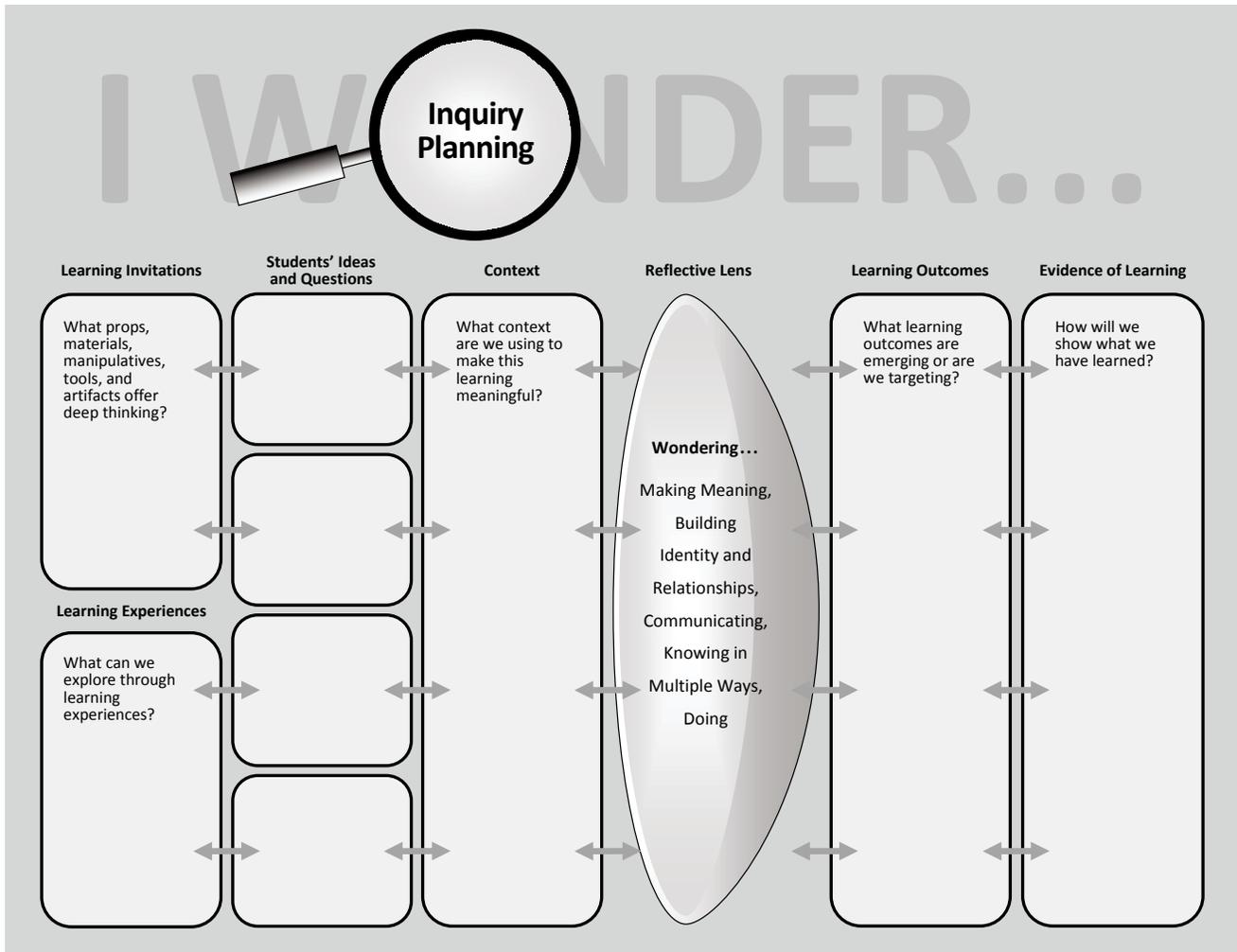


Figure 4.6: Inquiry Planning

Backward Design Curriculum Planning

Curriculum-generated planning, also referred to as backward design curriculum planning (based on the ideas of Wiggins and McTighe), is by its very nature inquiry based and student focused. The backward design process is like using a road map to plan the journey through the learning landscape to a desired destination. The questions in Figure 4.6 lead teachers and students to powerful instruction and learning in an inquiry approach, but are the same questions to consider in backward design. Backward design invites you to scaffold for the children in your class and attend to their needs through pre-assessment and formative assessment, daily feedback, and differentiated learning experiences. The planning process starts with knowing the desired destination and knowing how children will show you the evidence that they have arrived.

Backward design curriculum planning includes the following steps:

- **Beginning with the End in Mind**

Examine the Kindergarten curriculum and the identified learning outcomes through a reflective lens to clarify deep questions and big ideas for focused learning. Consider what the children in your class will come to know and be able to do as a result of the learning process so that you can provide classroom experiences and invitations to engage them in higher-level thinking that will take them to deeper understandings through these important questions (which you will revisit in Chapter 7):

- How do I perceive the world in multiple ways . . . ?
- How do I make meaning . . . ?
- How do I communicate my thinking, understanding, learning . . . ?
- How do I build my identity and my relationships with others, with my community, with Earth . . . ?
- What do I do with what I know . . . ?

This process of carefully examining learning outcomes serves to illuminate bigger, long-term instructional goals, and helps you to articulate authentic assessment criteria that support learning for today and tomorrow.

- **Evidence of Learning**

Assessment criteria are based on the breadth and depth of the learning outcomes, and children will demonstrate their learning in multiple ways. If you wish to consider externally prepared assessment criteria to assist you in your work, consult them only *after* curriculum-based criteria are determined.

- **Teaching and Learning Plan**

The learning plan flows from the assessment criteria and provides a palette of learning activities to maximize initial and sustained engagement that considers the possible differences in children's strengths, interests, prior experiences, and location in the learning landscape.

- **Reflection**

Reflection on learning is a key process for both students and the teacher to help further learning and inform next steps.

The backward design curriculum-planning process is reflected in Figure 4.7. For a template to support your use of this planning process, refer to Appendix F: Backward Design Curriculum Planning.

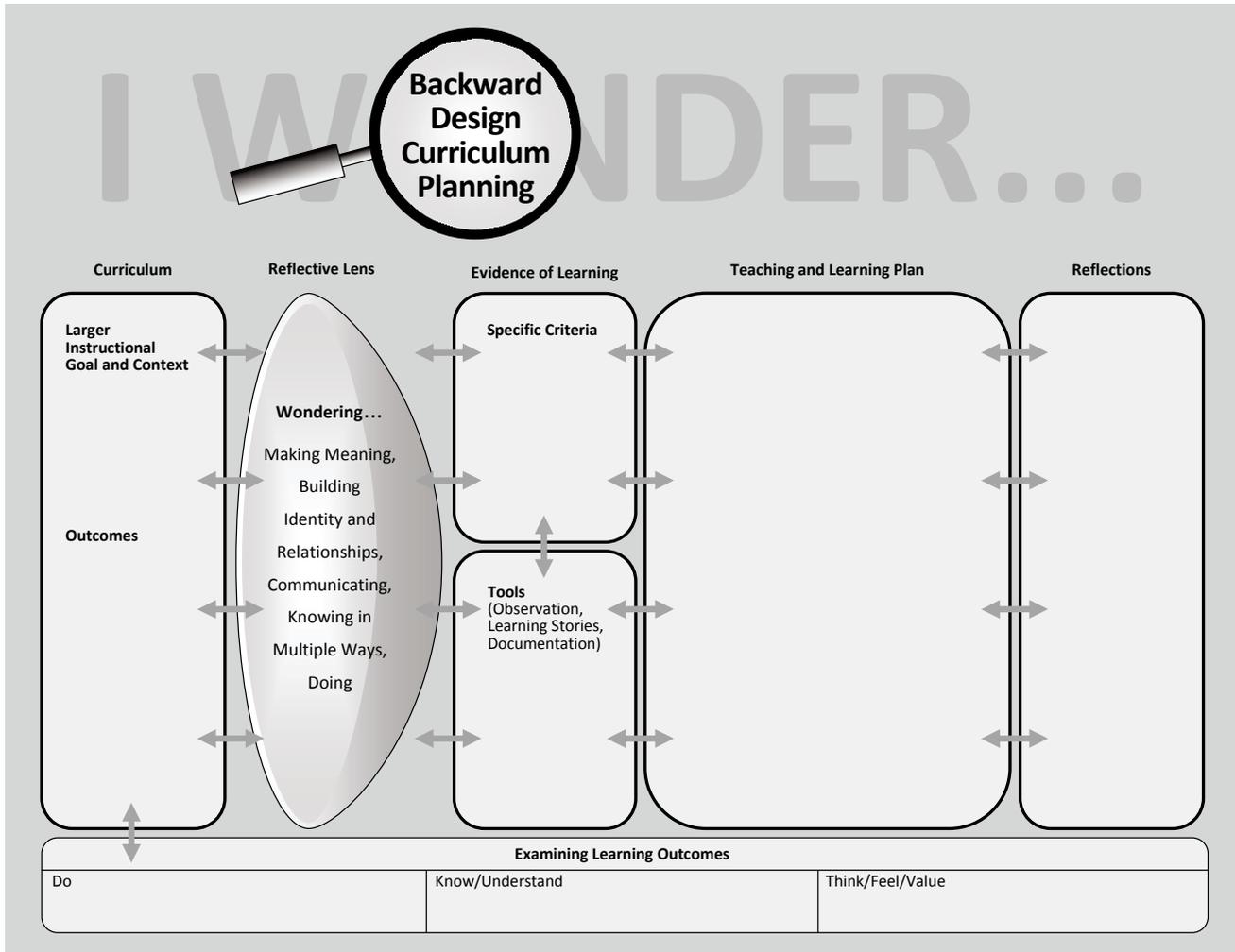


Figure 4.7: Backward Design Curriculum Planning



Reflection: Moving toward a More Child-Initiated Kindergarten Learning Program

Earlier in this chapter, you examined Figure 4.1: The Intentional Teaching Cycle, which suggests that planning occurs only after your observation and reflection of children in your classroom. What would you need to put into place to move from a more teacher-initiated to a more child-initiated Kindergarten learning program?

Documenting Children’s Learning



A documentation panel is displayed in the Kindergarten classroom.

Documentation plays a critical role in developmentally appropriate practice (NAEYC and NAECS/SDE). Pedagogical documentation has increased in importance for teachers who are inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach to learning. Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of the Reggio Emilia approach, describes how documentation informs our way of being with children and refines our methods of observation and recording so that the process of children’s learning becomes the basis of our dialogue with them. Rinaldi refers to pedagogical documentation as the “visible trace,” while Vecchi states that it makes adult eyes more sensitive and acute to what is happening in the classroom.

The purpose of documentation is to create a visual record of children’s learning for them, for you, for families, and for other school professionals through the creation of an authentic dialogue for reflection and analysis. It can help make connections between events visible for children. For example, in one classroom, children raised money for the Humane Society and

created a display of photographs and children’s writings and drawings to capture their learning. The culminating learning experience involved a special classroom visit by a representative of the Humane Society along with several pets waiting for adoption.

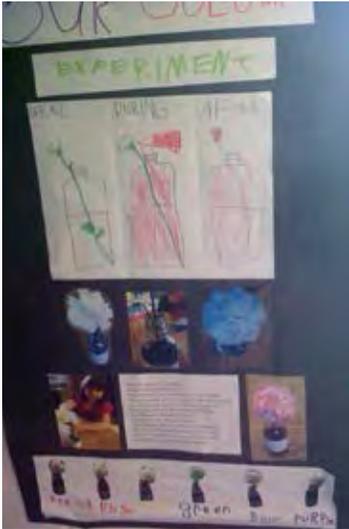
Documentation “allows for the most relevant issues to be in the forefront of . . . the educators’ minds as they create a supporting environment that allows learning through play to happen, as well as the children’s minds as they investigate and make sense of the world around them” (Zigler et al., as cited in Gabriel and Doiron 12–13).

Documentation helps children and teachers to review past experiences and to make plans for future learning. It makes learning transparent for children, as well as for their families, who may wonder about your play-based Kindergarten and what exactly their children are learning. Your careful scribing of children’s stories and conversations shows that you honour them and their families and helps create a “caring community” because children see themselves and their impact reflected in the classroom everywhere they look.

Many teachers make good use of technology to document, communicate, and reflect on children’s learning, capturing and displaying it through video recordings, the creation of PowerPoint presentations, the use of tablets, digital photo frames, audio recordings, and so on. Low-tech ways to document learning are just as valuable. These might include photo albums available for children to browse through in your book corner, framed family photos placed on shelves or walls to build continuity between home and school, child-made books on the bookshelves, and CD recordings in your listening centre of children’s voices as they play, tell stories, sing, or experiment with instruments. Create a scrapbook of the block creations children

are most proud of and place it in the block area; you will find that these “souvenir shots” of the structures children have built often help the cleanup process to be more agreeable for young builders. Many teachers develop personal portfolios for children in their class for sharing with families.

Documentation Displays



A story panel documents children's inquiry about colour and about how plants drink water.

Another type of documentation is the *Learning Story*, developed by New Zealand researcher Margaret Carr and her colleagues. Learning Stories are “documented and structured observations that take a storied approach and a non-deficit (credit) approach, and an underlying agenda of protecting and developing children’s identities as learners” (Carr et al. 29). Teachers write directly to the child or children in the Learning Story, describing for and with the child the unique experiences and impressive learning underway. (Learning Stories can also be reformatted easily and can be emailed to parents or shared in classroom newsletters you send home with the children.)

Floor books are big books filled with children’s Learning Stories. Floor books are created together with the children in a format large enough that children can work on them on the floor, and then later page through, look at, and reflect on them on the floor. Scottish nature educator Claire Warden appreciates the use of floor books to “encourage thinking skills through talking together in a group so that children are consulted and influence the learning taking place” (*Talking and Thinking Floorbooks*). Large artists’ books or portfolio wallets work well for these large-scale documentations. Children can draw in them, you can add photographs to them, you can scribe children’s own words in them, and children can add their own emerging writings, too.

By creating *story panels* for wall displays, you bring documentation into children’s environments in a much bigger way. When using story panels, you pair photographs and learning artifacts with captions and conversations, and display them at children’s height so that they can easily recall and reflect on their learning in your classroom.

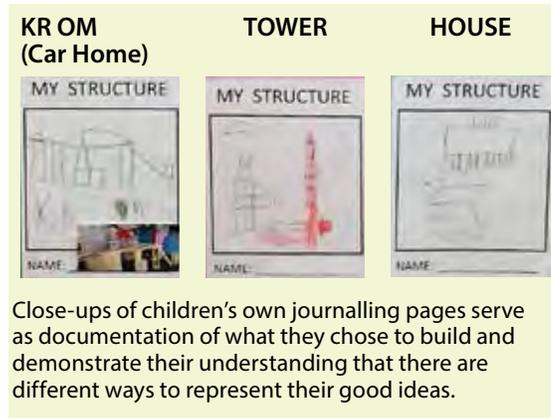
Many teachers use these and other ways to involve children in the documentation process and to provide them with multi-modal representations to show what they know and how they think. When you help children to see and reflect on their own learning, you are building their metacognition, the ability to think about their thinking. This also helps create a shared understanding among teachers, families, and children, and helps you to further your own “understanding of the concepts children are building, the theories they are constructing and the questions they are posing” (Fraser, as quoted in Ontario Ministry of Education, *Capacity Building Series K-2*, 2).

The Block Centre Learning Story (Example)*

The following is an example of how one Kindergarten teacher documented literacy learning in her block centre using the Learning Story format. You can find a sample template in Appendix G: Learning Story.



Children's learning about different types of structures is on display in the classroom.



Close-ups of children's own journaling pages serve as documentation of what they chose to build and demonstrate their understanding that there are different ways to represent their good ideas.



Children play constructively with their blocks. (Note the "igloo" children previously created over a few days using milk jugs—loose parts added to their play space.)

* Used with permission of a Kindergarten teacher.

Literacy in the Block Centre Learning Story*

Observations at (name school) _____

Observations of (name centre) Big Block Centre Date February 25, 2015

Capture **details** of what you see and hear.

What do you see? (Who, what, when, . . .)

I see three children playing at the big block centre during exploration time. They are excited about building. I have not seen these three students play together before. They are working so well together to build a structure for the cars to drive on. There are ramps and bridges. The children are cooperating and working as a team. They are talking to each other and building off one another's ideas as they work together to adjust the slope and angle of their ramps.

When we come back to the carpet as a group, those three students share with the group what they built.

Students draw the structure and do some writing about their structure.

What do you hear? What are the children saying? (Add some direct quotes.)

"My truck is driving down the street, but it isn't driving straight. It keeps falling off."

All three students laugh.

"It's falling into the lava."

"Quick, bring it to the bathtub."

"Mine drives straight, see." (lets car slide down ramp)

"Look at mine, it jump, here, there!" (EAL child)

"Uh no, it fell again." (the blocks)

"Under this, here, this, have to put it here." (straight and tight against the block). "There." (EAL child)

The three students take turns talking to the group about their structure:

"We build car home." (EAL child)

"And slides, for the cars."

"There's lava and the cars fall in lava."

"But we made a bathtub to wash the car."

What English language arts (ELA) literacy learning outcomes** are developing/developed?

- Talk about personal experiences.
- Listen to experiences and feelings shared by others.
- Wonder about and question new ideas and observations.
- Recognize environmental print, symbols, and images [such as illustrations, photographs . . .] in context; recognize own name and personally familiar words.
- Recognize that print is organized from top to bottom and left to right; recognize that letters represent sounds and match sounds with print.
- Demonstrate curiosity about and experiment with letters, sounds, words, and word patterns.
- Ask questions to satisfy personal curiosity and information needs.
- Ask and answer questions to help satisfy group curiosity and information needs.
- Identify self and others as sources of information.
- Seek information from others [such as people at school, at home, in the community . . .]; use multimedia and computers when appropriate.
- Use illustrations, photographs, video programs, objects, and auditory cues to understand ideas and information.
- Share ideas and experiences through talking, storytelling, pictures, singing, illustrations, and print.
- Talk about own and others' creations and stories.
- Form recognizable letters and use letters and directional arrow keys on the keyboard.
- Describe and enhance own drawings, stories, and writing.
- Use drawings and labels to express ideas, feelings, and information.
- Connect sounds with letters in words.
- Demonstrate active listening and viewing skills and strategies [such as showing attentive facial expression, keeping respectful silence . . .].
- Participate in cooperative group activities.
- Demonstrate attentiveness in group activities.
- Find ways to be helpful to others and use group process.

What materials did you add to meet the ELA learning outcomes?

I added many materials to the classroom to create the big block centre. I ordered hollow blocks, and I made additional big blocks by sanding and treating (using natural oil) two-by-fours. Providing a new kind of play centre brought new students together and allowed for so much cooperation and conversation.

Sharing time was added after exploration time. This allowed students to share their experiences orally with the group. It allowed others to listen, wonder, and be inspired.

I provided students with a journaling page to document their time at the big block centre (and the manipulative centre). We started to create a bulletin board display of all the kinds of structures we could make, which included photographs of famous buildings, such as the Eiffel Tower, as well as the children's drawings and writings.

How can you further enrich the literacy learning at the block centre?

Add books about famous buildings, construction, and volcanoes, as well as real blueprints, graph paper, and carpenter's pencils to the shelves near the blocks.

* Used with permission of a Kindergarten teacher.

** Source: Manitoba Education and Training. *Kindergarten to Grade 4 English Language Arts: Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes and Grade 3 Standards*. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Education and Training, 1996.

Note: The ELA curriculum is currently being renewed. You can access information and processes for reflecting on the new curriculum in the group Reflecting on and Moving Forward with a New English Language Arts Curriculum at the following website: Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning. *Manitoba Professional Learning Environment (Maple)*. <www.mapleforem.ca/> (20 Nov. 2015).

Analyzing Your Pedagogical Documentation

Documentation helps you to pause to reflect on and to celebrate the personal accomplishments of individual learners within the group. Document not only prior to parent-teacher meetings, but all year long and in all the various learning settings. Avoid using it only to assess narrow skill development or the way children use a specific learning product, such as a workbook or concept kit. Instead, use documentation to individualize and differentiate your teaching approach to fit children's emerging interests and needs.

Documentation enables you to co-construct learning experiences *for* children *with* children and to nurture their sense of wonder and joy. Teachers appreciate

an opportunity for shared reflection that supports both *assessment for learning* and *assessment as learning* practices. On the one hand, documentation provides educators with the "evidence" to provide timely, specific and descriptive feedback to move learning forward. On the other hand, it allows educators to go one step further, to help students self-assess to "become directly involved in the learning process, acting as the 'critical connector' between assessment and improvement (Earl)." (Ontario Ministry of Education, *Capacity Building Series K-2*, 3).

As you interpret the documentation you have gathered, consider the implications for your teaching:

- **What does your documentation show you about children's understanding of the topics they are discussing, the theories they hold, and the discoveries they are making?**

In the preceding Learning Story, the boys built ramps and bridges to protect their cars from lava, but reasoned that if cars fell in, that was fine, since the lava could be washed off in the bathtub. Do you have questions about the depth of their understanding of a topic (e.g., Do they understand how hot molten lava is)?

- **How will you build on (or scaffold on) ideas articulated by the children as they explore and question?**

In the Learning Story example, the teacher might choose to

- read a book about volcanoes to the children
- find video footage of a volcano exploding for children to watch on an interactive whiteboard
- make volcanoes out of baking soda and vinegar at the sensory table and allow children to drive their cars through it
- set up a water play station where cars can have their lava washed off

- **How does your own input affect where children go in their learning?**

The addition of loose parts to the play centre might have been the provocation for the children to build ramps, bridges, and roads.

- **Are other factors contributing to children’s interest in this topic?**

For example, is the interest in lava emerging from the experiences of one child’s recent family visit to the site of a volcano while on holidays in Hawaii? Major road construction adjacent to the school may excite the interest of young builders. The presence of an emerging bilingual child in the peer group may influence the direction conversation takes.

- **When you compare your current and previous documentation, do you notice any changes? Do you observe differences during various times of the day, or as time passes during the school year?**

For example, the three boys in the Learning Story have not played together before, and the EAL child has not been as outspoken during free play before as he was that day.

- **Once you have reviewed the documentation, what will you do with it? Will you undertake any investigations or research yourself? Will you make any changes to your teaching strategies? Will you introduce new materials to the learning environment? Will you select a different documentation format to capture children’s learning?**

As you review the photographs you have taken and the notes you have made, reflect on what you saw and what you understand about the children and their learning. In the Learning Story example, the teacher identified many English language arts learning outcomes that were being met through the children’s inquiries. She decided to add books and blueprints. She might also

- think about all the Kindergarten subject areas in an integrated way, noticing the many mathematics and science learning outcomes that were also met during the play
- read more about gravity, engineering, and the construction of ramps and bridges
- bring in photographs of bridges, on- and off-ramps, and roads, and post these near the block area
- invite a parent who is an engineer to visit the class to share experiences with the children
- add stopwatches so children can measure the speed of their cars going down an incline, provide a simple level to help children further explore the slope of their structures, and supply notepads and pencils for children to record their own data
- offer children the use of a smart phone or class tablet to take a video of their cars as they drive across bridges and down ramps
- encourage children to tell more about their story, and scribe it for them

- **Will you discuss the documentation with all the children during your group time?**

The teacher in the Learning Story example invited the boys to share their learning with the larger group. She might ask the other children to tell her what they know about lava, slopes, and angles.

- **How will you use your documentation to inform your authentic assessment? How will you scaffold on where children are at to support their continuing growth within their respective ZPDs?**

In this case, the teacher learned some important information about one boy's emerging language skills that would help her to see where he is on the Early Years EAL Acquisition Continuum.

Portfolios

The use of *portfolios* for documentation allows you to intentionally collect samples of children's work across multiple environments and over a period of time, in order to create a comprehensive and meaningful picture of each child. That picture shows a child engaging in tasks and routines that are personally meaningful and authentic. Because children are involved in the creation of their portfolios, you co-construct them with children as active agents, recognizing the socio-cultural nature of learning, and balancing child-initiated and adult-guided learning processes (Notari-Syverson and Losardo).

One of the most important benefits of portfolios is that they encourage children to self-reflect and self-assess. When children are involved in selecting what goes into their portfolios,



A child's portfolio.

they can review their work, talk about their thinking process that occurred during the work, discuss their interests and habits, and make choices about which pieces to include. Portfolios also offer children a way of understanding their own progress . . . [thereby providing] exactly the kinds of experiences that have been found to support the early development of metacognition—an aspect of cognition recognized as critical for learning. (Larkin, as cited in Laski 39).

The documentation process has the additional benefit of helping you to scaffold children's thinking and learning. As you review with the children themselves what questions they are investigating, which experiences they enjoy, their actual conversations, and videos or photographs of their creations and discoveries, you encourage them to reflect on what they have been learning about and what else they would like to know (Belinda 3). For example, "Yesterday you figured out how to balance the big blocks on top of the little ones. Do you think you can do that again? What discoveries will you make today?"



Reflection: “I See You!”

Consider these questions to help focus your thinking about documentation and your response to what you see children doing in your classroom.

- What do the children in your class know?
- What are their theories about the world and how it works?
- What relationships do they see (between materials, people, prior experiences, and so on)?
- What follow-up questions could you ask to help children test their theories and generate new ones?
- What are some possible next steps and provocations to support children’s thinking and research?

Assessment through Play-Based Learning in Kindergarten

In play-based Kindergarten learning programs, both instruction and assessment occur within the meaningful context of everyday learning. In this way, you will learn more about children’s strengths and challenges across their development, and how to differentiate accordingly. You will appreciate the differences and similarities between children’s various learning approaches, and discover what they already know about a topic, how they construct new knowledge, and what problem-solving strategies they use. You will make sound decisions about your own teaching strategies and identify concerns that may indicate intervention is required.

Screening and Early Identification

Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning requires school divisions to outline a process for the identification of early learning needs that includes screening for early identification from Kindergarten to Grade 4: “Early identification refers to the process used to identify students with exceptional learning needs in preschool, kindergarten, the early years, or as early as possible in students’ education before or after their entry into school” (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services* 12). School divisions determine the screening tools and assessment procedures to be used in early identification. To confirm the process in place at your own school, you may wish to consult with your principal or student services administrator. Prior to a child’s enrolment in school, or early in the school year, someone from the school division typically consults with parents to collect relevant medical and family information. This will include results of hearing and vision testing, as well as information about the child’s motor development and general health.



An initial assessment is being done with a young Kindergarten child at a school division's EAL reception centre.

Screening is often used to gather information about a child's physiological development for an introductory profile. (The term *screening* itself is somewhat of a misnomer, as the process is not used to screen readiness for school.) Screening should never be used to label children or to keep them out of school. It is just your preliminary step in the creation of a more comprehensive developmental profile.

In the first weeks of school, interact with your EAL students and document their language skills in both English and their home language whenever possible. What vocabulary words is the child using in English? Does the child respond to simple questions? Record your findings. It is also informative to learn about what the children are able to do in their first language. A simple way of doing this is to ask a child's parent to interact with the child in their home language while you observe their discourse. Can the child count in the home language? Is the child asking questions? Does the child know the names of basic items in the Kindergarten classroom? Even without being able to speak the child's language, teachers can learn much about the child's use of his or her home language by observing the discourse between a parent and a child.



Screening Considerations

Prior to any screening of an EAL child, you will need to collect information about the child's home language and cultural influences. Consider the following types of questions:

- What languages are spoken in the home?
- What is the dominant language used in the home?
- In what educational programs has the child been involved? In which language(s), where, and for how long?
- What are the English skills of the parent or other significant family members?
- Is the parent literate enough in English to fill in the parent portions of the screening tools?

The answers given in response to these types of questions should be taken into consideration when analyzing the results of screening tools (Law and Eckes).

A standardized screening instrument is sometimes used early in the school year. According to Meisels and Atkins-Burnett (63), a developmental screening instrument should

- be a brief procedure that identifies a child at risk for learning problems or disabilities
- focus on developmental tasks rather than academic readiness tasks
- sample a wide range of developmental areas
- provide data concerning the reliability and validity of the screening instrument

If this type of screening (which also measures cognitive development) occurs, the information gathered should not lead directly to programming, since by its very nature it is designed to indicate only possible variations in development.

There are various screening tools to choose from, including the following:

- **Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ):** Many early childhood partners use this questionnaire with parental input. It is considered a reliable way to screen infants and young children up to about 5.5 years of age. It is available in English, Spanish, French, Korean, Norwegian, Arabic, and Mandarin.
- **Nipissing District Developmental Screen:** This Canadian tool, completed with parental input, is used with children under the age of 6 years. It is a short checklist of some of the most critical skills that a child should master by a particular age and helps determine any areas in which a child may require extra help. It is available in English, French, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese.
- **Early Years Evaluation Direct Assessment (EYE-DA):** This Canadian screening tool is used with children aged 3 to 5 years as they prepare for and make the transition to school. It facilitates discussion between professionals and parents in goal setting for children and helps focus intervention on strengths rather than needs. In some jurisdictions, this tool is administered to all children before they enter Kindergarten as a universal screen for possible academic or developmental delays. It takes about 30 minutes per student to complete and requires teachers to be trained in its use.

Screening information is never a substitute for your own observations of the children within your Kindergarten environment. Your observations may confirm or contradict the screening information, and may become the basis for collaboration with parents and resource and support personnel in planning ongoing programming for children or in determining whether a more formal diagnostic assessment is indicated.

Manitoba school divisions regularly assess the learning of all students. Through ongoing assessment, some students may be identified as having exceptional learning needs. Classroom-based assessment is especially critical to the early identification of exceptional learning needs. As you know, school divisions must ensure that students are not missing any educational programming while assessments are underway or prior to the preparation of an individual education plan (IEP). Parents and community partners, such as early learning and child care staff, need to be aware of school division policy on early identification. They may be invited to IEP meetings as part of the transition of young children into school and welcomed to share information that is relevant to the planning and implementation of educational programming for the children.

Prior to their start in Kindergarten, some children with exceptional learning needs may already be in receipt of early intervention within their child care program or through Children's disAbility Services, Manitoba Family Services. In that case, a smooth sharing of important information from the sending program to the receiving school will likely occur, following Manitoba's *Protocol for Early Childhood Transition to School for Children with Additional Support Needs* (Healthy Child Manitoba). (You can read more about creating smooth transitions for children and families in Chapter 10.) School division policy on early identification should outline what information is required for planning and implementing a student's educational programming upon school entry, and outline the process to be followed when students are not meeting the expected learning outcomes. (*Expected learning outcomes* are identified in the regular curriculum and include social/emotional, behavioural, sensory, physical, cognitive/intellectual, communication, academic, and health outcomes.)

Kindergarten teachers have the responsibility to help all children to learn and to be full participants in the life of the classroom. This may involve working collaboratively with parents, resource teachers, and other support personnel, where appropriate, to achieve goals. Classroom teachers are committed to assisting every child to prepare for living with the highest degree of independence possible.

In any given classroom, children may demonstrate a wide range of strengths and needs. Kindergarten teachers plan educational programming that recognizes this diversity and gives children tasks and challenges that respect their particular abilities so that all children can derive the greatest possible benefit from the teaching and learning process. The use of flexible grouping for instruction and the provision of ongoing assessment are important elements that accommodate a diversity of learning needs.



Reflection: Early Identification

How do the policies of Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning and of your school division guide your own approach to early identification and early intervention?

Authentic Assessment

All personnel involved with children must be aware of the many assessment and evaluation techniques used. No single method should be used exclusively. However, the primary emphasis should be given to observations by parents, teachers, and resource personnel.

Classroom-based assessment occurs when educators gather information about what their students know and can do during authentic learning experiences in the classroom. This information, gathered over time, provides descriptive feedback to children and informs your teaching. In the Kindergarten classroom, you will gain most of this information through observation of learners in rich learning/teaching contexts. You can then differentiate your instruction to meet the diverse needs of the children in your class.

Young children tend to make-believe or play by taking various community member roles. The subject area curricula encourage students to explore their environments as writers, mathematicians, scientists, and so on. As they play, children pose questions, identify problems, and develop creative solutions in a variety of roles. For example, through play, children “do, read, say, or write” what mathematicians do, read, say, or write. These actions become observable performances or evidence of each child’s learning within the various curricular and behavioural learning areas. Children’s learning can be documented through videos (of interactions, explanations of samples, or conversations), photographs, electronic portfolios of work samples, continua, quality criteria, or peer feedback. With your support, young learners can then use this documentation to help set personalized goals for writing, reading, solving problems, creative artwork, and so on.

At times, assessing a child’s development can feel like a complex and challenging task. While you are busy observing that a child grows and changes month by month, you may struggle a little to describe this growth in terms of specific goals or objectives reached or to recognize that the child is more than those noted specifics. You may try to help a child develop self-understanding and find meaning in living and learning. At the same time, you may find it difficult to assess the success of the child at these very things.

The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children recommends that

evaluating the child within the context of play, social interactions, and care-giving routines requires that the assessment process focus on the demands and expectations of the environments where children live, learn, play, and work rather than merely children's relative standing in a normative group. This ecological perspective recognizes that physical, social, and psychological contexts are interwoven and affect performance; and that domain (e.g., communication, motor, cognitive), discipline (e.g., speech and language pathology, occupational therapy), and specific skills and behaviors (e.g., . . . personal pronouns, spatial relations) are inconsequential when assessed out of context. (Neisworth and Bagnato, as cited in DEC 14)



Authentic Assessment

During choice time, a child and his teacher enjoy a game of cards. To play “War” successfully, this boy demonstrates his understanding of underlying mathematical concepts, such as counting and “greater than” and “less than.” The boy’s card play provides the opportunity for authentic assessment, and shows his teacher something important about his mastery of the social skills required to play games with rules, and his ability to self-regulate as he takes turns and plays fairly.

(L) A boy and his teacher enjoy a game of cards.

Since each child can show learning in unique ways, quality assessment practices in Kindergarten highlight each child’s strengths and help formulate plans for next steps in learning. Each child’s best learning and growth can be observed *through* or *in* the context of meaningful engagement or play, positive relationships, and creative environments.

Young children learn through social interaction and make meaning by exploring their environment. Environments in which children can play or discover new insights and interact with others provide optimal conditions for quality assessment. As children make choices, write, read, add, measure, construct, talk to each other, identify and solve problems, reflect, and make connections with what they already know, they share knowledge and skills that are observable. Observing and documenting evidence of learning in these environments can occur quite seamlessly without assessment being seen as an additional measure or tool. As you teach, observe, and interact with your students, you assess and provide feedback for learning. While assessment practices are typically categorized in terms of *for*, *of*, and *as* learning, assessment to determine a young child’s learning happens primarily *through* or *within* the context of meaningful engagement or play. Assessment is relational in this context and requires social interaction and conversation. Establishing the conditions for meaningful interaction and play is a prerequisite to learning and quality assessment.

Observing and analyzing the gathered evidence of a young child's learning helps you to

- provide specific and constructive feedback
- plan for next steps in instruction
- engage students in monitoring their learning and setting goals
- make adjustments to the learning environment to help meet learning needs

Classroom-based assessment is a cyclic process within everyday instruction and learning that encompasses ongoing planning, observing, scaffolding, responding, and reflecting on learning and teaching to improve student learning. Classroom-based assessment is formative (assessment *for* learning). As reflected in the Learning Story earlier in this chapter, when considering the English language arts learning outcomes, for example, you create various authentic literacy-rich contexts that will expose children's thinking and learning in order to relate their observations to the intended learning targets—the listening and speaking competency descriptors and the English language arts learning outcomes. These specific learning outcomes and competency descriptors become your targets for learning, teaching, and formative assessment.

You can think about this assessment process in terms of activating, acquiring, and applying knowledge:

- **Activating:** How do you assess children's prior knowledge, or what they *already* know about the topic?
- **Acquiring:** How do children acquire knowledge, and how will you differentiate your instruction and individualize your approach accordingly?
- **Applying:** What do you see children doing differently? How do they apply their new learning in different contexts? How do you reflect upon and assess children's new understanding?

See Appendix H: Student Tracking Sheet for a simple chart you may wish to use to track how the children are doing as you observe them playing and learning at the various centres, in their journals, during circle time, and so on. Appendix H uses the English language arts practices, but a similar format can be used for each of the subject areas.

Class Profile

Developing a *class profile* is a process by which school teams meet to determine the classroom context through descriptive information collected about the students within the class. This information, which is usually recorded on a Class Profile Recording Form (for a sample, see Appendix I), assists the team in determining how they might work in meaningful ways with you as the classroom teacher. This approach provides for a more efficient and effective service delivery by determining where supports are needed the most. You describe the strengths and needs of the class as a whole, along with the goals for the year. The needs of individual students are also shared; however, the strengths and needs are seen in the context of the classroom versus in isolation. In this way, you are able to plan universally for the entire class, ensuring all the children have access to the curriculum.

Assessing learning *through* or *in* the context of meaningful engagement or play allows you to view learning through the eyes of the learner *as* a writer, reader, scientist, and so on. *Curricular verbs* (such as listen, speak, read, write, view, and represent) provide you with cues about what to include in planning and observation. Collaborative analysis of the gathered data helps your team ask important questions and plan for next steps relative to each child’s learning progress and growth.

A variety of instructional strategies (e.g., modelling, explicit instruction, guided practice, descriptive feedback) and student groupings (whole class, interest groupings, cooperative groupings, flexible groupings, and individual students) are used to provide individual children with the instruction, scaffolding, and practice they require to succeed in their learning.

Communicating Student Learning to Parents

Organizing evidence of learning according to curriculum outcomes and across developmental domains helps you to clearly communicate a child’s learning achievement, growth, and progress to parents. There is no single “best” way of reporting to parents. The nature of the child, the family, your school, your school division, and the community will influence the methods of reporting you use.

At the same time, sensitive and open discussions with parents help you to share information about the child and to invite parents to share what they know about their child with you. Although parent-teacher meetings can be time-consuming and may be difficult to schedule, families and teachers need opportunities to talk together and share what they know about each child. To make these kinds of face-to-face conversations possible, teachers may require release time during school hours, but may also need to schedule late-day or evening appointments to accommodate parents who cannot make daytime meetings due to their own work schedules.

Prior to your meetings with families, think about and review the many observations you have made about each child:

- What do they tell you about the child’s development?
- How does the child relate to peers, to adults in your classroom, and to others?
- What kinds of learning experiences most engage the child?



Reporting to Parents

Fundamental principles in reporting to parents apply to parents of EAL learners as well. Effective reporting should recognize language and cultural differences and may require a different report and multilingual documents and services (Manitoba Education, *Manitoba Kindergarten to Grade 12 Curriculum Framework for English as an Additional Language [EAL] and Literacy, Academics, and Language [LAL] Programming, June 2011 Draft, Section 1, 1.21*).

- What are some favourite activities?
- How does the child demonstrate curiosity? How does the child demonstrate perseverance?
- How does the child handle your classroom routine?
- How are transitions managed?
- What do you hope to learn about during your meeting time with the child's family?
- What do you want to know more about?

In your conversations with families, focus first on the child's strengths (what you see the child can do) and help parents to understand how significant the child's self-concept is to learning. The child's self-concept is supported through the social environment and through the acceptance the child finds both at school and at home. Thus, your careful observations are of vital importance in these discussions.

In reporting on the progress of a young child, resist the pressure to assess only academic development. Instead, report on all dimensions of the child's development: self-concept and emotional, social, communicative, creative, physical, and intellectual aspects of growth. Encourage parents to become involved in planning, implementing, and assessing the child's educational programming. In this way, the school supports the family as the primary agent of the child's development.

What you learn from families is critical and can help ensure that you do not underestimate the child's capabilities. This is why it is important for both parents and teachers to share information about children. Developmental assessment is a continuous process of recording the work children do. During your meetings with parents, you may discuss your observations of the child at work (process) and share samples of the child's work and thinking that you have documented (product). Invite parents to share what they see their child doing at home—the picture that emerges may be very different from what you see at school. For example, one little girl who never spoke out in class was very difficult to assess, as she would not name letters or count aloud when prompted by her teacher. Yet in conversation with the parents, the teacher learned that the child sang Kindergarten songs at home, “read” her books to her baby brother, and shared many of the day's happenings with her family at dinnertime. As the months went by, the child's comfort in Kindergarten grew until she began talking quietly to peers and even to her teacher.

There is no provincial mandate to issue report cards in Kindergarten, but school divisions may develop their own reports. Kindergarten report cards should be comprehensive and use plain language to ensure parents understand what the report cards tell them about their child and the Kindergarten learning program itself. See Appendices J and K for sample report cards shared by Manitoba school divisions.



Reflection: Report Cards in Kindergarten

As you think about what type of Kindergarten report card might be best suited for your school and your students' families, consider these reflective questions:

- Does the report card reflect the whole child? Does it address all five developmental domains, or does it focus primarily on academics?
- Does the report card reflect your view of the child?
 - Does it convey the child's agency within the classroom?
 - Does it convey the child's unique ways of engaging at school?
- Does the report card reflect your beliefs about learning in the Kindergarten classroom?
 - How does it describe the child's learning within a context of play?
 - Does it convey the social nature of learning?
 - Does it describe how the child manages routines and expectations in the classroom?
- How might you use photographs or other documentation to enrich the story you are telling about the child?



Guiding Principle: Inclusion and Diversity

Kindergarten experiences reflect the diversity of children, families, and colleagues, and actively promote inclusion.

Inclusion is more than the presence of a child with exceptional learning needs. All children should be valued, have friends, and feel they belong in their Kindergarten classroom.

Children reflect all aspects of human diversity and are developing their identities as human beings. They are also developing ideas, attitudes, and beliefs about other human beings they encounter in their immediate environment or through exposure to media or through adults around them.

Genuine inclusion ensures active and meaningful participation by every child in the daily educational programming and with one another. As far as possible, inclusive Kindergarten teachers ensure that children with exceptional learning needs have their needs met within the regular group activities and routines.

Through the intentional use of universal design principles, culturally embedded learning, accommodations, modifications, and extra support where necessary, all children, regardless of abilities, are full participants in the classroom community, with equal access to all play areas and all learning experiences taking place. Teachers foster school and classroom communities where all children, including those with diverse needs and abilities, have a sense of personal belonging and achievement. An individualized approach allows students with a wide range of learning needs to be taught together effectively.

Recognizing and respecting diversity is very important to early learning experiences. Such recognition and respect enhances each child's social and emotional well-being and promotes caring, cooperative, and equitable interactions with others.

Diversity in a Classroom

Jennifer Katz defines *diversity in a classroom* by referring to children with exceptional learning needs, but also to children with diverse personalities, ethnicities, languages, family structures, and learning styles. She states: “Teaching to diversity requires that teachers create a learning climate in the classroom and devise activities that allow all children to feel safe, respected, and valued for what they have to contribute” (Katz 3). Effective educators “create environments that invite young students to learn, and welcome diversity in their classrooms. Educators respond to the diverse needs of their students and ensure the success of all their students by differentiating instruction based on their observations” (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, *Listening and Speaking* 7).

Inclusionary teachers assume that children with exceptional learning needs will make progress and achieve outcomes through individualized, play-based developmental programming within the Kindergarten classroom. They ensure that children of all abilities have equal access to the various learning experiences being offered, and know that when children are together as part of the group, each child’s development is enhanced and positive social attitudes are created. Through inclusive practices, teachers help all children to participate actively in the Kindergarten curriculum, “creating or adapting certain activities or using new strategies to meet each child’s needs” (Irwin, Lero, and Brophy, as cited in Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care, *Early Returns: Manitoba’s Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework for Preschool Centres and Nursery Schools* 9).

Manitoba’s Philosophy of Inclusion

Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning is committed to a philosophy of inclusion: “Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe” (“Philosophy of Inclusion”). Meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship are key to inclusion. In the Kindergarten context, this means you include children with exceptional learning needs in all Kindergarten learning experiences, whether teacher-guided or child-initiated. (For an annotated list of provincial resources, see Appendix L: Resources Supporting Inclusion.)

Appropriate educational programming for most students consists of the expected learning outcomes in the provincial curriculum. Some children may require student-specific outcomes in addition to, or instead of, the expected learning outcomes. For example, EAL students will require EAL-specific outcomes. A child who has difficulty controlling his or her disruptive behaviour may be working on the expected learning outcomes in the curriculum and on a student-specific outcome related to behaviour management. A child with a profound cognitive disability, however, may be working only on functional student-specific outcomes, such as getting dressed independently at recess time, toileting independently, and so on.

Inclusive Schools

Manitoba supports providing all students with appropriate educational programming through a universal design lens:

Inclusive schools provide a learning environment that is accessible to all students as a place to learn, to grow, to be accepted, and to enjoy all the benefits of citizenship.

Inclusive schools should be aware of the concept of universal design, originally an architectural term referring to the process of creating systems, environments, materials, and devices that are directly and repeatedly usable by people with the widest range of abilities operating within the largest variety of situations.

When applied to the field of education, the concept of universal design means that school communities, including teachers, develop plans for the full diversity of their student population. In education, universally designed schools, classrooms, curricula, and materials provide all students with access to the resources they require, regardless of their diverse learning needs. (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services 4*)

Universal design (UD) encompasses the following seven principles: equitable use, flexibility in use, simple and intuitive use, perceptible information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and size and space for approach and use (The Center for Universal Design). See Appendix M: The Principles of Universal Design.

Inclusive teachers are aware of their students' age and of what they can expect of children developmentally. Consider a simple expectation in Kindergarten, the ability to cut with scissors. Most children are able to cut independently in Kindergarten, but if children have had no previous exposure to scissors, they may not know how to use them. For some students, fine motor challenges may make scissor cutting very difficult. Therefore, in your Kindergarten classroom, intentionally offer a variety of scissors (e.g., left- and right-handed, loop, spring-loaded, and teaching scissors). This is a UD approach.



A teacher and a child use teaching scissors together.

As you guide children's learning, you will offer a variety of cutting options to children, ranging from simple to complex. The Partnering for Change Team suggests ways to help those children whose cutting skill is not yet mature or proficient. Children may begin by cutting straight lines or short snips and corners before moving to curved and jagged lines. You might thicken or darken the cutting line, provide thicker paper or old greeting cards, or use smaller sheets of paper. Children might practise cutting straws into short pieces to make a necklace or try cutting playdough to experience success before moving to paper. You will coach and support children who need a little more help. You may use verbal reminders, such as "cut away from yourself" or "turn the page, not your scissors." You might put a sticker on the child's thumb as a visual reminder of holding the thumb up on top. You might use teaching scissors (pictured) to help the child experience the cutting motion with your physical support. As a last choice, you might provide pre-cut shapes/pictures (Partnering for Change Team).

Instructional Supports for Addressing Student Diversity

Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning has identified a range of instructional supports for addressing student diversity, including *differentiated instruction*, *adaptation*, *modification*, and *individualized programming*. This is not a continuum of supports; rather, each instructional support is intended to address specific programming needs in consideration of expected learning outcomes and/or student-specific outcomes. For comprehensive information about the student-specific planning process and the development of individual education plans (IEPs), see *Student-Specific Planning: A Handbook for Developing and Implementing Individual Education Plans* (Manitoba Education).

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction (DI) is an approach that acknowledges and responds to the differences among learners, each of whom has different strengths and needs and a unique pace and pathway to development. Think about those children in your classroom who are exceptionally gifted, as well as those who may be struggling with core Kindergarten concepts. Educators plan their Kindergarten learning program through differentiated instruction. In fact, differentiation is the life of the Kindergarten classroom and is the essence of developmentally appropriate practice.

Differentiating instruction as a method of instruction or assessment may alter the choices you make about how to address the curriculum to respond to the children's learning diversity, interests, and strengths. Teachers can differentiate curriculum in three broad areas: content, process, and product. Differentiated instruction is

an effective way to offer individually, linguistically, and culturally appropriate curriculum that helps all children meet learning goals . . . [and] is especially important in early childhood programs because the foundations of children's future learning are being constructed. It creates multiple paths by which children of different abilities, interests, and learning needs and those who come from different backgrounds may absorb, use, develop, and present concepts. (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 5–6)

Kindergarten teachers have found many ways to differentiate instruction in their classrooms, including the use of play-based learning centres, small groups, flexible groupings, teacher-guided learning experiences, and scaffolding. In the Kindergarten classroom, differentiating instruction could mean guiding certain children to the dramatic play centre to encourage conversation and the use of body language, or grouping particular children together for chanting poetry or singing songs to work on articulating certain sounds. Learning opportunities may be simple or complex, tasks may be highly structured or open-ended, and students may work independently or as part of a group. Children may show their learning by talking about what they have learned, by demonstrating a new skill, or by making something.



Selecting and Documenting Language Goals

For information on selecting language goals and recording and communicating about the EAL student's language progress, see Section 4a of *Manitoba Kindergarten to Grade 12 Curriculum Framework for English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Literacy, Academics, and Language (LAL) Programming* (Manitoba Education). It is recommended that teachers select language goals for instruction that correspond with the EAL student's stage of language proficiency. Teachers should consider documenting these selected language goals in some form of student-specific EAL language plan and using the plan to document and record the EAL student's progress in English language development.

Stages of language proficiency are described in the curriculum framework and should be used when communicating about a student's English language development.

The intent of differentiated instruction is to maximize each student's growth and individual success by meeting the child where he or she is at (in the zone of proximal development) and assisting in the learning process. Differentiated instruction can follow many avenues for reaching the expected learning outcomes, and each student requires a complex and unique mix of basic instruction and practice to reach his or her potential. Educators differentiate instruction to offer students options at various stages of the learning process.

Differentiated instruction involves the gradual release of responsibility, where the responsibility for learning gradually shifts from the educators to the students (Pearson and Gallagher). Educators introduce a learning strategy with explicit instruction and modelling, followed by guided student practice with teacher feedback, and eventually leading to independent student application of the skill or strategy. In the beginning,

instruction is educator-led, then instruction is shared/negotiated by the educator and the student, and finally, instruction is led by the child (Tell me, Show me, Let me try . . . , or Me, We, We, We, You).

Adaptation

Providing adaptations for students with exceptional learning needs should be the first option considered in planning for a child's unique needs. Instruction based on principles of universal design and differentiated instruction should include provision for adaptations to meet the diverse needs of learners in your Kindergarten class.

Adaptation refers to a change made in the teaching process, resources, assignments, or pupil products to help a child achieve the expected learning outcomes. Adaptation addresses identified child-specific needs. For example, a student with a visual impairment may require information and directions to be presented verbally as well as in writing, and may need to demonstrate his or her learning in the same ways. A student with an attention disorder may benefit from "chunked" instructions and may require a checklist to monitor task completion. The child might benefit from holding onto a "fidget toy" (a small toy that is squishy or pliable) or from periodic movement opportunities during your circle time to balance sitting and listening.

Figure 4.8 presents a conceptual model of an adaptation continuum, which may be helpful as you consider the “right” place to adapt for a student. Your goal is to use the least intrusive adaptation. If that one does not have the result you want, try the next least intrusive adaptation.

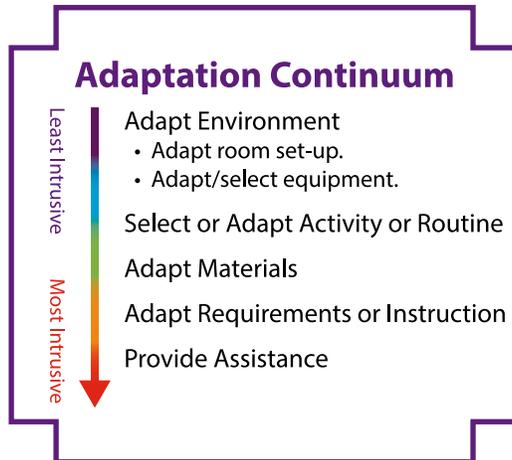


Figure 4.8: Adaptation Continuum*

* Source: Milbourne, Suzanne A., and Philippa H. Campbell. *CARA's Kit: Creating Adaptations for Routines and Activities. Consultant's Guide*. Philadelphia, PA: Child and Family Studies Research Programs, Thomas Jefferson University, 2007. 4. © Philippa H. Campbell. Reproduced with permission.

Modification

Modification is appropriate for children who have a significant cognitive disability, and refers to altering the number, essence, and content of the curricular learning outcomes that the student is expected to meet. Students receiving modification will have an IEP that details the curriculum modifications and an implementation plan.

Individualized Programming

Individualized programming is intended for students whose cognitive disabilities are so significant that they do not benefit from participating in curricula developed or approved by Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning. Individualized programming identifies highly individualized learning experiences that are functionally appropriate. Students receiving individualized programming will have an IEP that details their student-specific outcomes and implementation plan.

Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

Student-specific planning is the process through which members of student support teams, including educators and parents, collaborate to meet the unique needs of individual students. The purpose of student-specific planning is to help children attain the skills and knowledge that are the next logical step beyond their current performance levels—what Vygotsky refers to as children’s respective zones of proximal development.

Through the student-specific planning process, the student support team works to identify a student's unique learning needs and to determine, implement, and evaluate appropriate educational interventions. These interventions may range from short-term strategies applied in the classroom to comprehensive, individualized programming. The student-specific planning process is sufficiently broad-based to address, in a systematic way, a wide range of exceptional learning needs, but a student's IEP must be referred to regularly to have a real impact on his or her long-term progress and achievement.

IEPs document the student-specific planning process. While school divisions may use different terminology to describe student-specific planning processes and written plans, the intent of IEPs is to serve as customized planning, record-keeping, and communication tools developed and implemented by a team, to address the unique learning needs of students.

Most Kindergarten students achieve the expected learning outcomes of provincial curricula with the support of inclusive classroom teachers who use a variety of instructional and assessment strategies and materials. For some of your students, you may be the first to identify that they are experiencing learning challenges. However, only a small number of students enter school with undiagnosed conditions and/or unidentified learning needs.



A child who is visually impaired reads a book with raised dots, a precursor to learning to read in Braille.



While the children and their teacher learn about pumpkins during their circle time, the child who is visually impaired wears a weighted neck wrap, which helps him to self-regulate, and is provided with a pumpkin to touch and hold during the storytelling and conversation.

Guiding Children's Behaviour*

You work hard to create a caring community of learners where all children feel safe and welcome. You apply what you know about child development and developmentally appropriate practices, observe children regularly, ensure that children are neither bored nor frustrated, deepen your relationships with children as individuals, and help them learn to trust you. Yet despite your intentions, there may be times during the year when conflict arises, when aggression is used, when hurtful teasing occurs, or when children are defiant.

What are the best ways to guide the behaviour of your young students and to enhance their social and emotional well-being? The research-based strategies that follow can help you to help all children in your classroom, not only those experiencing difficulties.

Get to know each student and what may be affecting his or her behaviour. Observe children carefully and pay attention to the environment where specific behaviours are happening. For example: Do children have to wait for the whole group before leaving the snack table or using the washroom? Are they expected to stop playing without notice and change activities often? Do children and adults have to shout to hear each other over background music? These observations will help you adapt your approach and increase positive behaviours. Listen carefully, look at each situation from a child's perspective, and determine what changes you need to make.

When we are uncomfortable with a child's behaviour, it can be difficult to respond appropriately and effectively. It is important to know when we are losing control, recognize our own discomfort, and discuss it with supportive team members. Because every situation is different, behaviour guidance requires ongoing decision making. Remember to be patient, even if a strategy does not work in a particular situation. Sometimes you might need to use a strategy for some time, before you see improvement. Remain flexible and, when needed, try other strategies that may fit the situation better.

* Source: Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care. *Best Practices for Guiding Children's Behaviour*. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care, n.d. Available online at <www.gov.mb.ca/fs/childcare/pubs/behaviourguidancestrategies_web.pdf>. Adapted with permission.

What can you do to encourage positive social interactions?

Strategy	Practice
Seek many opportunities to interact with each child and give individual attention .	Snuggle up and read a book together; ask questions and begin a conversation with a quiet child; join in active play with an energetic child.
During your circle time, role play or use puppets to teach children how to succeed in social interactions.	Give children scenarios such as “What if you want a toy that someone else is using?” Discuss possibilities and help children try out their ideas. For example: “Can I use that puzzle when you’re done?”
Use words you want the children to use to model appropriate social behaviours.	Ask: “Can I play with you?” or “Can I help?” before you join children in their play.
Watch closely for positive behaviours and tell children when their language and behaviour is appropriate. Make positive comments more often than negative ones.	“I noticed you zip up your friend’s jacket. That helped her to be ready for outdoor play sooner. Thank you.”
Be specific with feedback when giving attention, so children understand what behaviour is appropriate.	Try: “The two of you were so helpful working together to bring chairs to the table.” instead of “Good job.”
Help children develop a short list of basic rules to follow during daily interactions and activities.	Ask: “How should we care for ourselves, our friends, and our toys?”
Post the list of rules with pictures to illustrate them where children can see them easily.	Include photographs of the children showing respect for themselves, for others, and for toys.

What can you do to discourage inappropriate behaviours?

Strategy	Practice
Have realistic expectations for each child. Ensure that expectations are developmentally appropriate for each child and that children respect individual social and cultural backgrounds.	Help children understand the perspective of others by asking: “How do you think hitting made him feel? How can you make him feel better?”
Break tasks into smaller steps that the children can manage.	During cleanup time, try: “Please put three toys on the shelf,” rather than “Put your toys away.”
Offer help if a child seems frustrated with a task.	Ask: “Can I help you with your zipper?”
Use positive language that focuses on the expected behaviour.	Provide a reminder: “Please walk,” instead of “Don’t run!”
Provide logical reasons when stating limits.	Try: “Please use a quieter voice so I can hear what you are saying,” instead of “Stop shouting!”
Restate the message differently, if the child does not seem to understand what is expected.	First try: “Take your things to your locker.” Then try: “Hang your snow pants and coat on your hook.”
Use a calm and encouraging tone of voice that expresses your confidence in the child’s ability to stay calm and solve a problem.	Show a positive attitude: “I know you can do it!”
Use positive body language and facial expressions to convey support.	Keep arms relaxed, rather than on hips. Smile instead of frowning.

(continued)

Strategy	Practice
Respond consistently so children have many opportunities to practise what is expected of them.	If children are expected to mop up spills at the water table, remind them each time if needed. Avoid doing it for them, even when it may be faster.
Model techniques to help children learn to calm themselves when they are upset.	Allow children to see you express and deal with different emotions. "I'm feeling frustrated. I'm going to take the time to calm down by counting to 10."
Wait until children are calm before speaking with them.	Quiet, relaxing time in a cozy area might be comforting until the children are ready to communicate and solve the problem.
Ensure strategies are consistent among all adults who work with your Kindergarten students. Review and discuss your preferred behaviour guidance approach regularly.	Review your strategies with your educational assistant, teacher candidate, teaching partners, volunteers, or other adults who spend time in your classroom.

What should you consider when planning the schedule, transition times, and daily experiences?

Strategy	Practice
Provide large blocks of time each day for uninterrupted free play. This allows children to become fully involved in meaningful experiences.	Children need at least 45 to 60 minutes of self-chosen free play indoors and outdoors throughout the day, to initiate and sustain their play.
Get to know each child and his or her interests, and then offer children play choices , based on their individual interests.	Try: "I know how much you like to explore. Would you like to hunt for treasures at the sand table?" rather than "Find a place to play."
Use visuals to communicate expectations to children.	Label toy bins with pictures or photographs of items that belong there.
Minimize the number of transitions during the day to reduce the number of times children must change activities.	Provide a teacher-guided learning experience as one of the available choices during free playtime. Allow children to come when ready and leave when finished.
Give notice before there is a change in activity. Avoid abrupt interruptions so children can prepare for the transition.	Try: "When we are finished singing, it will be time to play outside." Then try: "After this song, we will put on our sun hats for outdoor time."
Give jobs to children to help with the transition.	Children can set the snack table, sweep up the sand from the floor, or gather the discovery kits before heading out.
Make transitions consistent and fun so children know what to expect and stay interested.	Use songs, rhymes, and finger plays to signal a change in activity.
Encourage children to seek help from peers who can model useful skills and appropriate behaviours.	Provide a partner for a child who has difficulty with transitions.
Allow flexibility during planned experiences.	A child wanting extra time to finish a painting can listen to storytime from the art easel, rather than joining the group on the carpet.
Use cooperative games to encourage positive interactions rather than competition.	Play musical chairs, with a chair for each child throughout the game.

What should you consider when preparing the learning environment and materials?

Strategy	Practice
Provide enough toys and materials for the number of children that may use each area. Do not overwhelm the space with too many items.	Place four sets of dishes in the daily living area that has a table and four chairs; place three shovels at the sand table with other materials.
Have duplicates of popular toys available to reduce waiting time, especially for children who are not developmentally ready to share.	Provide two or three fire trucks in the block area; place three or four riding toys in the active play area.
Display toys and materials so children can see and use them independently.	Place items on open shelves at the children's level.
Offer many open-ended materials that have a variety of uses, to reduce children's frustration.	Provide loose parts such as wood pieces, cardboard boxes, tubes, fabric, and clay, so children can play and experiment with them.
Allow children to use toys and materials in more than one area to deepen and sustain their play.	Encourage children who are making playdough cookies in the art area to bake them in the oven in the daily living area.
Create enough space in each area for children to move around easily.	Rearrange shelving to expand the play area if children seem crowded.
Encourage small-group interaction by allowing children to form natural groups.	A small group size that is flexible and based on children's interests promotes positive, genuine social relationships.
Place furniture to define short walkways throughout the room.	Avoid large, open spaces or long, straight pathways that encourage running.
Tone down visuals so the surroundings are calm and relaxing.	Turn down the lights; reduce vibrant colours; and clear clutter from floors, shelves, and walls.
Adjust noise levels to create a peaceful atmosphere.	Occasionally, have soft music playing during quiet times (e.g., during rest time or at the end of the day).

How can you help children develop the skills to solve conflicts?

Children must be involved in resolving their own conflicts, rather than having adults do it for them. Together, children and caring adults are active partners in the learning process. This balanced approach is critical in helping children develop the skills to begin resolving conflicts on their own. When children are aware of how their own actions affect others, they are better able to make appropriate and effective choices to overcome difficulties. Knowing how to react during conflict will help children gain independence, confidence, and self-regulation. Try the steps in the following strategy. These steps are also presented in Appendix N: Strategy for Solving Conflicts. You may wish to place Appendix N in a visible location in your classroom to remind adults about your guidance approach.

Strategy for Solving Conflicts

Strategy	Practice
Approach quickly and calmly to stop hurtful or unsafe behaviour right away.	Stay nearby so children know that you are ready to offer help and support.
Acknowledge each child’s feelings with a simple description.	“You seem angry.”
Gather information from each child involved.	“Let’s talk about what happened. Janelle, you tell me first and then it will be Luke’s turn to talk.”
Identify and state the problem to the children.	“You both want to sit in the same spot at the table.”
Brainstorm solutions with the children.	“What ideas do you have to solve this problem? What else can you do?”
Allow children to develop a solution and use it.	“What idea do you choose?”
Follow up by checking back and offering assistance if needed.	“How is your idea working?”

Positive, supportive guidance strategies create a sense of belonging and increase children’s ability to make friends and resolve conflicts. They contribute to children’s development and learning and provide the foundation for success in your Kindergarten, your school, and beyond.

If you continue to have difficulty guiding children’s behaviours after using these strategies, talk to families about how similar behaviours may be handled at home or to see whether you need to be mindful of other circumstances. Consult your school’s resource teacher, your school division’s Early Years consultant, or your principal, who can assist you with these situations and identify supports and other professionals who may be available to help, as necessary. Partnerships with families and your school support team can help you to help children with these occasional challenges.

Summary

In this chapter, which focused on strategies for teaching and learning, you read about how to select and use a variety of screening and assessment tools. This chapter also addressed how your observation, reflection, and documentation strategies are the most powerful ways to help you review, support, and promote children’s learning across the continuum of early childhood development. You considered how to use inquiry-based learning and backward design as you plan learning experiences for and with children in your Kindergarten classroom. In the following chapters, you will consider how these intentional strategies can be applied through the design of your Kindergarten learning environment and through your approach to curriculum.



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For additional information about analyzing pedagogical documentation, see:

Government of Ontario, EduGAINS. "A Protocol for Analysis of Pedagogical Documentation." *2014 Spring Training and Capacity-Building Sessions*. <www.edugains.ca/resourcesKIN/PLF/DesigningOpportunities/ProtocolforAnalysisofPedagogicalDocumentation.pdf> (31 July 2014).