

# **Program Design and Components**

## Understanding the Kindergarten Child

*“Young children learn best through active participation and experience when helped, allowed, and encouraged to follow an interest and construct a plan to learn more, children are empowered and become intrinsically motivated. They fully engage in the experience when it is their own” (Seitz, 2006).*

Children come to school as active thinkers, possessing a natural curiosity and eagerness to learn. A major goal of education is to develop independent, creative and critical thinkers. Teachers support this development through capitalizing on children’s natural desire to explore, manipulate and discover. Children who are engaged in a child-centred classroom develop problem-solving abilities which aid them in becoming competent and independent learners. The kindergarten classroom encourages children to think, to use their imagination and creative powers and to experience the joy of learning. Young children need to experience the world through their senses to maximize their learning.

Play is the foundation of all learning in kindergarten and is the most appropriate means by which children can work through scenarios, take risks, and solve problems while recognizing their preferred learning modalities and styles. The flexibility that is offered through play allows children to increase comfort and security in their environment while giving teachers a broader understanding of individual child’s development. It is through play that children can exhibit a degree of control that reflects their developmental needs. Allowing children the opportunity to have this control in play is essential to build self-confidence and security in their learning.

In any group of kindergarten children there will be a wide range of developmental levels. While students may be chronologically the same age, they may differ greatly in their levels of social and emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual and moral development. The subtle differences, common characteristics, and varying rates of growth and development inherent in kindergarten children determine how the teaching and learning environment is set.

In addition to the varying levels of development, children can learn in very different ways. Learning modalities and styles inform the different ways which individuals learn best. For example, the visual learner benefits from learning experiences which involve the use of visual images and watching. The kinesthetic learner prefers to be involved and active while the auditory learner responds well to verbal instructions.

Teachers who have a strong knowledge of child development will be better prepared to offer a child-centred classroom which supports all learners.

## Developmental Domains

Children's interactions and experiences are interrelated. When progress is noted in one developmental domain, it is likely to impact other domains. Although the developmental domains are separated in this document, it is important to be cognizant of their holistic nature.

## Social and Emotional Development

*“Play is the leading source of development in the early years and is essential for optimal development. Play allows children to make sense of their experiences and discover the intimacy and joy of friendship. When it is self-directed, play leads to feelings of competence and self confidence”*  
(Dr. Jane Hewes, 2007).

Young children entering kindergarten have an enormous capacity to learn and they arrive with unique strengths, needs, and interests, necessitating careful consideration when program planning. Kindergarten children need to build social knowledge and emotional competence. It is crucial that teachers help children distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour through modeling, supporting and praising. Teachers help children develop their capacity to relate well with others and work cooperatively in a variety of group settings.

Children enter the school system with different early learning experiences stemming from home, regulated child care settings, library story times, family resource programs and other community involvement. These early learning experiences profoundly affect all components of their development. Therefore, it is imperative that the kindergarten environment is nurturing, respectful and secure. Decades of research has consistently verified that all developmental areas impact one another. Undoubtedly, creating a supportive atmosphere that generates social and emotional growth will correlate with similar positive gains being attained in intellectual, physical and spiritual and moral development.

What social and emotional skills does a kindergarten child possess? What expectations should teachers have as children move to the structured school system? Additionally, what teaching and learning experiences most effectively foster optimal social and emotional development for each individual learner? Answers to these pertinent questions can be formulated from acquiring an understanding of child development, examining best instructional practices and interacting with kindergarten children in a meaningful way.

Kindergarten children are beginning to extend focus beyond their own needs and interests. They need social contact with their peers to develop the capacity to interact appropriately with one another. As children attempt to make appropriate choices and learn to accept limits inherent in group settings they will learn to express their feelings appropriately through actions and words while beginning to identify acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. Throughout the year, self-image, self-concept, self control, self-regulation and self-confidence are developed through social engagement. Ensuring that kindergarten children are affirmed as unique individuals helps them become more socially-oriented members of a diverse community of learners.

*“[Children’s] bodies, minds, emotions and spirits come to us as a package all wrapped up in an ever-accumulating set of experiences, relationships and connections that shape learning. [Teachers] must act with intentions to make our beliefs about the value of children, childhood, family, community and the learning and teaching process visible in the environment we create in children’s programs”* (Carter & Curtis, 2003).

Healthy social and emotional development is a process that develops over time. With exposure to a variety of social attitudes, behaviours, and relationships, children learn socially appropriate ways to express their emotions and feelings. The kindergarten program should help children attain the emotional maturity to develop initiative, independence and effective decision-making skills. Learning activities that promote such values as being fair, taking turns, giving and receiving help, handling conflicts and adjusting to unfamiliar situations enhance social and emotional development.

Activities in the classroom should provide kindergarten children with an opportunity to express their personal opinions and ideas; taking on more responsibility, and expressing oneself creatively. Through teacher’s guidance and facilitation, children are encouraged to take appropriate risks and learn the important social rules of working and playing together.

A successful kindergarten program actively acknowledges that parents and teachers are partners in the child’s development. When the social and emotional needs of the kindergarten child are acknowledged and supported both at home and at school, the child’s overall development benefits.



## Cognitive and Language Development

*“Play is serious business for the development of young learners. This is such an important understanding. ...research and best practice indicate clearly that a deliberate and effective play-based approach supports young children’s cognitive development” (Charles Pascal, 2009).*

Kindergarten children are inquisitive and eager to learn. They learn best from concrete, meaningful experiences found in rich learning environments. Young children continuously develop in all domains in a holistic way. As they listen attentively to directions, experiment with materials, and carry out their ideas from one day to the next, their capacity to focus and engage in the learning process is evident. With an eagerness to explore, think and solve problems, kindergarten children strive to make sense of their world.

Kindergarten children learn most effectively through a “hands-on, mind-on” approach. They are active contributors and assimilators keenly interested in what makes things work. They will spend long periods of time experimenting and creating while using a variety of learning materials.

Language plays a major role in intellectual development and in stimulating cognitive and expressive/receptive abilities. The kindergarten program should include diverse language experiences. Throughout the kindergarten year, children will demonstrate a rapid growth in language development as they interact with new information, peers, and teachers. Children begin to construct and experiment with their own understanding of how oral and written language works.

Oral language is a means by which children can clarify concepts, ask questions and build relationships and it is essential for literacy development in kindergarten. Learning is enabled in a risk-free environment where opportunities are provided for children to practise, discuss, reflect, question and share. Students need frequent opportunities to interact in authentic language situations to hear and use language, learn new vocabulary and structures and to actively participate in dialogue, sharing and discussion.

Expanding upon children’s experiences through meaningful language activities is strongly encouraged to develop the desired linguistic skills and the language which are necessary for communicating their knowledge and learning. Oral language helps build and maintain relationships with daily literacy skills such as sense of story, rhyme, rhythm, reading, speaking, listening and viewing. Kindergarten teachers support oral language development across the curriculum by incorporating a range of techniques and strategies. Daily routines and classroom structures are established to support language development. Oral texts such as songs, rhymes, poems, and chants may be accompanied by music and activities with accompanying movements and gestures. A variety of flexible groupings may include pairs and large and small groups to promote dialogue, sharing and discussions. Within groups, students develop questioning skills, reflect, clarify to meet basic

needs, solve problems and collaborate with others using oral language skills. Groupings allow for personal and critical responses to texts. The sharing of experiences, feelings, opinions and reactions within groups promotes the overall development of oral language skills.

Providing opportunities to enhance early literacy and numeracy skills supports cognitive development. Intentional teaching practices that adhere to the principles of differentiated instruction and inclusion help address the diversity originating from varying early literacy and numeracy experiences. A continuity of progressive literacy and numeracy experiences will allow kindergarten children to link new learning with prior knowledge.

Teachers who design rich play experiences that are meaningful, engaging, challenging and inviting support children's cognitive and language development. In an attempt to meet the prescribed learning outcomes, it is necessary for the kindergarten teacher to create an environment which incorporates the subject content through a combination of child-initiated and teacher-initiated instruction. Purposeful play is an important mode of learning for children and an integral part of the kindergarten program.

Play is essential to healthy child development. It is rooted in the curriculum and provides the context in which learning occurs. Children at play are highly motivated and capable of intense concentration. They learn to clarify and integrate information and concepts from previous experiences. Allowing some degree of student autonomy and self-direction adds to the benefits accrued. Planning meaningful play experiences which include observation, documentation and assessment helps to stimulate the imagination, encourage expression and foster creative thinking so that students feel valued and view themselves as capable and competent learners.





## Physical Development

*“Play has to be reframed and seen not as an opposite to work but rather as a complement. Curiosity, imagination, and creativity are like muscles: if you don’t use them, you lose them” (David Elkind, 2007).*

Kindergarten children have an inherent need to move and they learn by doing. When child-centred learning experiences are intertwined with active participation, significant physical development and intellectual gains are made.

An understanding of the nature of the kindergarten child is extremely important for optimal physical development. The direction of children’s physical development is consistent in that it tends to progress from general to specific, from gross motor control toward fine motor control, and from dependence toward independence and interdependence.

The kindergarten child is full of energy, tires easily, but recovers quickly. Physical activity is necessary for a child’s overall health and well-being. Finding a balance between active and quiet experiences is part of planning for children’s physical development. Personal health and safety experiences can be planned as they can occur naturally as children experience their environment.

The positive influence of physical development on the social and emotional, intellectual, and spiritual and moral development of the kindergarten child is generally acknowledged and should not be undervalued. It provides a strong foundation for future holistic development that positively impacts on all life situations.



## Spiritual and Moral Development

*“Young children learn the most important things not by being told but by constructing knowledge for themselves in interaction with the physical world and with other children – and the way they do this is by playing.” (E. Jones and G. Reynolds, 1992).*

Kindergarten children, because of their curiosity, excitement and wonder, can experience the natural wonder of the world in their relationships with others and in their personal development. As they come to know themselves and others, children explore, question and investigate the world around them.

From a young age, children set out on a lifelong quest for complex answers relating to the profound questions of life.

Teachers of kindergarten children will support children’s spiritual and moral development by providing opportunities to explore and discuss questions through the examination of various living belief systems. Teachers do this by providing quiet time for reflection, moments of celebration of life’s special times, occasions for children to share, help others and by allowing them to become totally immersed in the learning process.

Kindergarten children’s emerging sense of morality is influenced by their relationships and their responsibilities. Through these relationships young children can come to respect the things around them, explore the connectedness of all creation, relate to others in their lives and be guided in their sense of right and wrong.

Kindergarten teachers support children’s moral development through appropriate role modelling. They can challenge the children in developing a personal code of conduct for their actions and provide opportunities for them to reflect on moral questions and issues. Teachers can do this by providing opportunities for children to connect with literature, engage in experiential learning activities and question perceptions.

The spiritual and moral development of children is very closely interwoven with their intellectual, physical, social and emotional development. Spiritual values are values shared with those traditions, communities and individuals, who have helped shape us into the people we are (Wright, 2000).

Children develop as self-assured learners and critical thinkers when programming meets their developmental needs. When children are engaged in activities that reflect their interests, learning becomes enjoyable and connected. They become thoughtful learners who apply thinking strategies to real life situations. Teachers encourage children to approach challenges and new or difficult situations through the problem-solving process. Through this process, they will come to realize that there may be many ways to solve a particular problem and frequently there are a number of solutions or answers. In the kindergarten environment mistakes are accepted as a natural part of learning. They encourage each child to take risks and develop confidence and an inquiring voice. Opportunities for explorations followed by reflection help children clarify their thinking, reconsider ideas, and make new connections.



## Understanding the Importance of Play

Children play for the simple fact that they really enjoy it. It is a necessary part of healthy child development. Through play, children learn about their world and how to practise newly acquired skills, build relationships and understand the world around them. Play creates opportunities to be successful as well as to become challenged. Through engagement with materials and with others, children learn how to experiment, imitate, manipulate and test their environment. Children become problem solvers acquiring cooperative learning skills that prepare them for lifelong learning.

Play and active involvement are fundamental to a kindergarten program. Through the process of play, children learn to represent their real and imagined worlds using listening, speaking, reading, writing, role playing, painting, drawing, building, measuring, estimating and exploring. The kindergarten teacher uses play as an essential learning experience which supports, sustains, facilitates, extends, enhances and enriches the child's learning. Play promotes the development of the whole child.

In addition to large group, small group and individual learning experiences, a child-centred kindergarten classroom has blocks of sustained time for play. This includes teacher-directed play and child-initiated play where children pursue their own interests and explore new learning opportunities. Both types of play are necessary in order for children to achieve the curriculum outcomes.

Opportunities to learn through play are highlighted in column two under the subject specific tabs of the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide, *Completely Kindergarten* as seen in the example below.

### Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1989) declares that, *“children have a right to play and their education should aim for holistic growth and development.”*



### Play-Based Learning

The kindergarten teacher is a facilitator of children's play, expanding learning, extending activities and designing the environment to support children's development. Acknowledging children's independence to choose what to play and how to play will support children as they try to make sense of their world. While the element of choice is critical to the kindergarten child's development, a teacher can monitor the child's progress and achievement during play. The teacher must recognize when it is best to intervene with appropriate suggestions to scaffold learning experiences and respond to the teachable moments.

### *Functions of Play*

When a teacher becomes actively engaged in preparing the learning environment for play opportunities, children feel safe experimenting with language, exploring role-playing and using creative approaches to solving problems. A teacher who values play will be better able to recognize the learning that takes place.

Play enables children to:

- make sense of their world
- expand social and cultural understandings
- express personal thoughts and feelings
- practise flexible and divergent thinking
- encounter and solve real problems
- learn to consider other people's perspectives
- negotiate play roles and plans
- develop self-control
- extend language and literacy skills
- enhance brain and motor development

### *Play in the Classroom*

A centre approach is an effective way to incorporate play throughout the kindergarten day. Centres may be designed to meet outcomes through a cross-curricular approach to learning. Students may explore learning activities independently or in small groups using a hands-on approach to learning. Activities and materials may be open-ended to meet the interests of all students.

Play will look differently as the school year progresses. Start small to achieve optimal success. Avoid placing a large number of materials in a learning area at one time. A gradual introduction to materials will provide different learning experiences throughout the year. The use of prop boxes, games and manipulatives provide opportunities to observe students engaged in their play. It also provides an opportunity to encourage students to document their own learning.

### *Levels of Social Play*

Understanding the stages of social play will guide teachers when program planning. Kindergarten teachers will observe that, generally, a child's play becomes increasingly more complex. Parten (1932) observed children's social behaviour as they played. Six categories of social play were identified and grouped under two headings. The passive approach recognizes children's need to observe play and make decisions on whether or not to become part of the play. It can be an opportunity for the teacher to offer support and build understanding of the play that is ongoing. It is acceptable that children go in and out of passive play. A child's active involvement in play can be viewed as the child's commitment to a play experience either alone or with others. It is important to remember that these levels are not linear and children often engage appropriately in all levels of play.

### *Passive Approach to Play*

**Unoccupied behaviour** involves a child who moves about the room but does not become involved in play. Teachers see this type of behaviour in many children early in the year as a transition phase until they become comfortable with their new environment. Once the comfort level is established it is typical for children to move throughout the other stages with ease. Children who remain in this level of passivity should be observed closely. Teacher observation is critical here for the child that is reluctant to move out of this level.

**Onlooker play** is quite common with children new to a group and often identified when a child stands nearby watching or even speaking with others at play. The child does not become directly involved with the play. The teacher can take on the role of a play partner to ease the transition to play with others.

### *Active Involvement in Play*

**Solitary play** happens when the child chooses to play alone, uninvolved with other children nearby. Children of all ages engage in this type of play.

**Parallel play** can be seen when a child plays beside or near another child using similar materials or toys in similar ways, but does not interact with the other child.

**Associative play** occurs when children interact and share some of his/her materials but is not engaged in a common activity. The purpose of the play may not be the same for either child.

**Cooperative play** is the most social complex form of play and involves children playing together in a shared activity. Negotiations, sharing, turn-taking, and rule-making can be a part of this type of play.

## The Role of the Kindergarten Teacher

Once children enter the formal school system, adults assume that this is the place where the “direct teaching” takes place and therefore, the real learning begins. In fact, real learning takes place every day of a child’s life in everything he/she does and long before school entry. Teachers who create a developmentally appropriate classroom where many activities are presented for children to play and learn, recognize the value of observation, guidance and importance of the structure in the learning environment to support the learning needs of their students. Play should be seen as a means for curriculum delivery rather than being used as a break from the curriculum or a reward for good behaviour.

Teachers recognize that children may enter kindergarten having rich pre-school experiences in group settings, exposure to organized events, social gatherings with peers and adults and cultural events. On the other hand, it is important to recognize that some children enter kindergarten having limited experiences or exposure to events outside the home. The kindergarten teacher must be cognizant of the diverse backgrounds and learning experiences that each child brings to the kindergarten classroom.

In addition to direct teaching, the teacher’s role has expanded to include such skills as observing, documenting children’s learning, creating a rich classroom environment, facilitating children’s play and partnering with parents. In order to provide an environment that is sensitive to the varying needs of children, teachers need to view children as capable, active participants in the delivery of the curriculum. Decision-making can be shared and the direction taken can be collective. Using a collaborative approach to learning helps meet everyone’s needs while supporting the development of multiple intelligences. By doing this, children experience meaningful activities and choices while kindergarten teachers meet curriculum outcomes through innovative ways.

The role of the kindergarten teacher is unique and the effect that the teacher has on the life of a kindergarten child and his/her family cannot be underestimated. It is during this first year of formal schooling that children begin to see themselves as successful and active participants in the school community. Kindergarten teachers who create caring, respectful and nurturing environments where children and their families are valued play an integral role in supporting children to reach their full potential.

## Planning for Curriculum Integration

An integrated curriculum approach is consistent with the philosophy of how children learn. While the specific curriculum outcomes are organized separately in this document, an integrated delivery model is encouraged. Given the structure of the kindergarten day, it is natural to combine similar curriculum outcomes across subject areas. This helps to manage time efficiently to meet curriculum outcomes across all subject areas. To integrate effectively, it is paramount that teachers have a thorough understanding of all kindergarten curriculum outcomes. Cross-curricular links between specific curriculum outcomes are referenced in column one of the four-column spread for each subject area. Many of these links are natural connections for learning experiences.

Children are always making connections with the world around them. Living and learning are inseparable. Delivering subjects in isolation opposes the natural way that children learn. Integration is the process of combining separate curriculum areas into natural connective topics. It allows learners to develop skills and knowledge which support holistic growth. Educators choose a variety of teaching strategies that support integration.

As an educator, it is important to involve children in the planning process to encourage the teacher and the children to become co-constructors of knowledge and partners in the learning process. When an integrated child-centered curriculum is designed in a collaborative approach by the teacher and children, activities and topics are more likely to be developmentally appropriate and meet the needs of all children. It is important to determine the knowledge that children possess, the knowledge they need to know and the knowledge they want to know. This ensures a balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated activities which provide learning experiences that are inclusive of children's ideas.

Planning for curriculum integration may incorporate many different approaches to teaching and learning. Teachers may feel comfortable incorporating ones which reflect their teaching style and the needs of the children within their classrooms. The following three strategies are often used in kindergarten classrooms:

### *The Literature-Based Approach*

The Literature-Based Approach uses children's literature as a springboard for learning and instruction. Children's literature naturally engages the imagination and interest of a child. Concepts explored through literature may focus on one main idea for exploration, while others provide opportunities for cross-curricular connections.

*Jessica* by Kevin Henkes and *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn are books that explore apprehension about starting school. These literature selections provide opportunities for discussions with children about feelings related to starting school and how to be a good friend. These selections also complement some of the outcomes in the health curriculum.

*Grumpy Cat* by Britta Teckentrup explores the idea of social groups and inclusion. While this is the main focus of the text, other ideas naturally emerge from reading and revisiting the story. The following cross-curricular activities may evolve after sharing this book:

- Grumpy Cat walks through his neighbourhood throughout the story. Children may want to take a walk around school grounds and create a map of visited areas.
- Grumpy Cat has a grumpy face throughout most of the story. Children may want to explore other emotions and take digital photos of their different facial expressions.
- Grumpy is one word used to describe how Grumpy Cat is feeling. Create a web with the children using words to describe different emotions. Children can then write descriptive words to express facial expressions depicted in a variety of photographs.
- Grumpy Cat does not know how to join in play with others. Children can become problem solvers by sharing their experiences and role playing different social scenarios.
- Grumpy Cat becomes soaking wet from the rain. Children can explore the senses through discussion of the text. A water play area with different materials for children to explore textures of wet and dry can help children feel these sensations.
- Grumpy Cat lives in a multi-dimensional world. Children may take a walk around the classroom or school and sketch 3D objects in their world.



### *The Project Approach*

The Project Approach to teaching kindergarten is a means by which you can make your curriculum come alive. This approach identifies teaching strategies that allow teachers to lead children through in-depth exploration of a topic or a theme. The topic chosen may be real-life or conceptual, part of their community or beyond, present day or past. What is central to this approach is children are involved directly as investigators who gather research to answer questions that they have prepared themselves with their teacher as well as new questions that occur as the investigation proceeds.

This approach may reflect what has been considered a theme approach to learning. In fact, there are important differences. Most notably, a project comes from the interest of children and not a predetermined theme that has already been prepared. Themes often suggest a teacher-directed approach with limitations to specific outcomes. Recognizing that this approach has a place in classrooms, it may limit our teaching to preset topics that may or may not be of interest to the group when other approaches can reach many more outcomes in more engaging ways. See Appendix A for specific examples of the Project Approach.

### *Emerging Curriculum*

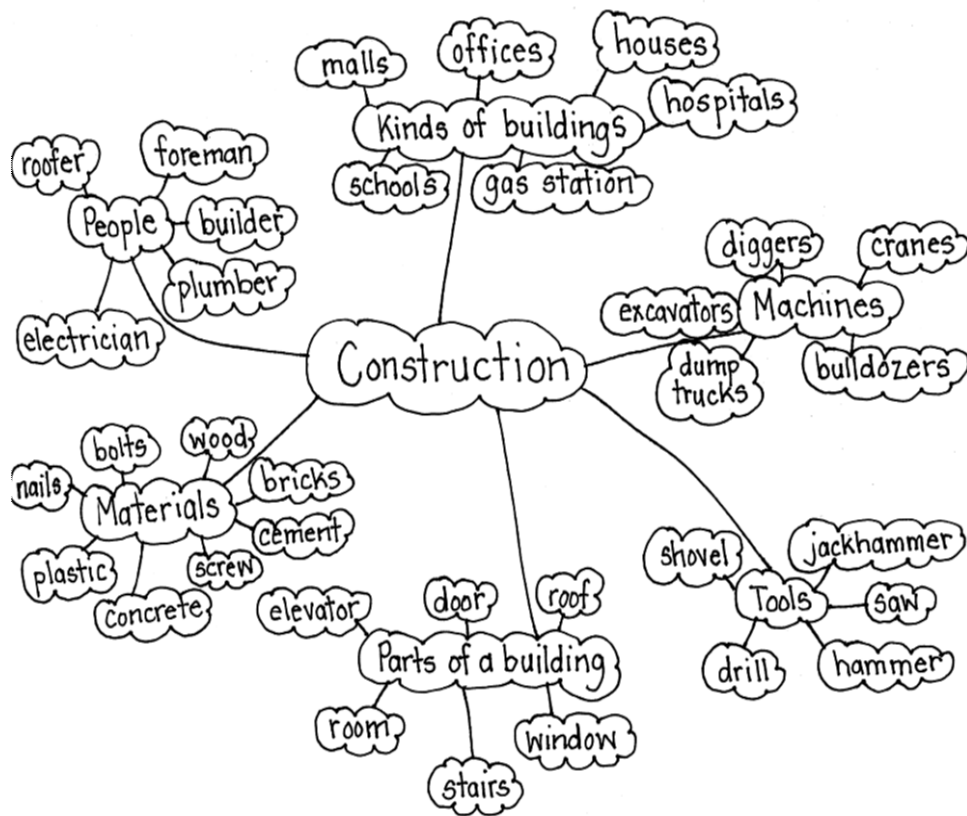
Emergent Curriculum begins with the basic belief that children are competent learners who are eager and able to explore the world around them. The teacher who develops an emergent curriculum works collaboratively with the children to generate a program that meets curricular outcomes while at the same time engages children by capitalizing on their interests, talents and unique learning styles. In this approach, the teacher becomes a co-constructor of knowledge along with the children. The teacher recognizes that it is not his/her role to have all the answers but rather, to facilitate learning and discovery by encouraging an atmosphere of exploration, curiosity and problem-solving.

Teachers who use this approach start by observing the children and specifically, noticing what they do during play. The teacher takes note of what they are saying, what questions they ask, what draws their interest and what types of problems they are trying to solve through play. These observations become the basis for the teacher's planning. Emergent curriculum is a responsive approach to teaching. The teacher incorporates what is learned about the children's needs and interests into an overall plan to meet curricular outcomes. Using an emergent curriculum approach is quite similar to both the Project Approach and K-W-L. All three of these approaches explore interests relevant to the children and each one integrates a variety of methods to meet curricular outcomes. In these particular approaches, the teacher acts as a co-learner while at the same time facilitating and extending the children's learning experiences.

## Tools for Integration

### Webbing

Organizing ideas in a topic web is a useful method for curriculum integration. This allows the kindergarten teacher to determine at a glance the interests of the children, the subject areas involved, the learning outcomes expected, and the learning processes to be emphasized. The teacher and the class collaboratively work on a main topic web in the early stages of the project. New thoughts and ideas are added as they emerge from children's discoveries. The web is a beneficial tool, however, it should be flexible and ever changing to accommodate children's ideas and growth. The following is an example of a web created around the topic of construction.



*K-W-L-S Chart*

A K-W-L-S Chart is another tool to discover what students know, want to know, learned and still want to learn about a topic. This is another means to record students' ideas relating to a topic of interest. The following is an example of a K-W-L-S chart developed around the topic of construction.

K <i>What I Know</i>	W <i>What I Want To Know</i>	L <i>What I Learned</i>	S <i>What I Still Want To Learn</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Machines build things</li> <li>• You need tools and stuff to build things</li> <li>• People work in construction.</li> <li>• People wear hats</li> <li>• People hold signs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does an excavator do?</li> <li>• What is the foreman's job?</li> <li>• How long does it take to build a house/school?</li> <li>• How do they know where to put the pipes?</li> <li>• How do they get the toilets and sinks to work?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An excavator digs foundations</li> <li>• A foreman makes sure everyone is working together</li> <li>• It takes a long time to build a house/school</li> <li>• Construction workers need plans</li> <li>• People wear hats and other equipment to be safe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who designs the plans?</li> <li>• How do they know where to build things?</li> <li>• What are inspectors and what do they do?</li> </ul>

### *Theory of Multiple Intelligencies*

Howard Gardiner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences may be considered when planning learning experiences for Kindergarten children. In consideration of all children's learning styles, characteristics of each of the following eight intelligences may be integrated whenever possible:

Intelligence	Children with this intelligence ...
<b>Musical</b> – sensitivity to pitch, melody, rhythm, and tone.	listen to and play music, sing, hum, move to the rhythm, and create and replicate tunes.
<b>Logical/Mathematical</b> – the ability to handle chains of reasoning and to recognize patterns and order.	enjoy working with numbers, want to know how things work, ask lots of questions, collect items, and keep track of their collections.
<b>Interpersonal</b> – the ability to get along with, work with, and interact with others.	have many friends, tend to negotiate between them and to be excellent team players.
<b>Intrapersonal</b> – the ability to understand and express one's own emotions and those of others.	control their feelings and moods and often observe and listen. They are aware of their personal abilities and often do best when working alone.
<b>Bodily/Kinesthetic</b> – the ability to use the body to solve problems, as in playing a ball game, dancing, or making things.	play sports and love to be physically active. They tend to use body language and like dancing, acting, or other movement activities.
<b>Spatial</b> – the ability to see in pictures and images, to understand the order of things (particularly objects and images), and to take what is learned and create something new.	excel at art. They doodle, paint, draw, and build with blocks. They enjoy looking at maps, doing puzzles and mazes. They can take things apart and put them back together again in new and creative ways.
<b>Naturalist</b> – the ability to recognize and classify the various plants and animals of our environment.	spend time outdoors observing plants, collecting rocks, and catching insects. They are attuned to relationships in nature.
<b>Verbal/Linguistic</b> – sensitivity to the meaning and order of words.	tend to use an expanded vocabulary and usually like to tell jokes, riddles, or puns. They like to read, write, tell stories, and play word games.

### *Technology Education*

Technology is best learned through activities, projects and problems that replicate real life situations. It is not intended to stand alone, but rather to be integrated within all subject areas. Although technology is often complex, it is simply “a way of doing things.”

In the context of other subject areas, students will learn:

- about the impact of technologies on daily life
- how to determine which processes, tools and techniques to use, and when to use them
- how to use and apply a variety of information and communication technologies for problem solving, decision making, inquiring and researching

Technology has an increasingly significant impact and broad implications for everyone, including the kindergarten child. Students need to be prepared to understand, use and apply technology in effective, efficient and ethical ways. Technology will serve today's students well. It will enable them to further their studies through lifelong learning as inquisitive, reflective, discerning and caring citizens.

## **Inclusive Education**

Inclusive education starts from the premise that everyone in the school community – students, educators, administrators, support staff and parents – feels that he/she belongs, realizes his/her potential, and contributes to the life of the school.

In an inclusive education, diversity is embraced, learning supports are available and properly utilized, and flexible learning experiences focus on each individual student.

Inclusive education aims to substantially alter general education classrooms to make them more responsive to heterogeneous groups of learners. Differences amongst students exist in a myriad of ways including race, ethnicity, gender, family background, language, sexual orientation, and religion—as well as differences in ability/performance, readiness and interests. Barry McDonald explores gender and learning in his book, *Boy Smarts: Mentoring Boys for Success at School*. It provides parents and teachers with a conceptual framework of one hundred practical guidelines to address the varied learning needs of boys. Within inclusive classrooms, differences such as gender are not dismissed but rather embraced and embedded within the curriculum.

Diversity exists amongst the students within a kindergarten classroom. It is possible that some students may enter kindergarten reading while some may not recognize the letters of the alphabet. Obvious differences in the development of fine motor skills and basic gross motor movements may also exist. A teacher in an inclusive kindergarten classroom responds to the diverse needs of all students within the classroom environment.

Differentiated instruction provides optimal learning experiences for all students. Differentiated instruction is a method of teaching that respects the uniqueness of each student by creating opportunities within the classroom for each one of them to demonstrate their abilities, learning styles, readiness, talents and intelligences. Teachers establish environments where all learners work towards essential understandings and outcomes realizing that the content, processes, and products used will not look the same for each student.

When students enter inclusive classrooms in kindergarten, they learn to value diversity amongst individuals early in their development. The creation of an inclusive classroom and school may nurture and influence the larger community.

### *Multi-Age/Multi-Grade Learners*

The multi-grade classroom where two or more grades are combined has a long history in Newfoundland and Labrador. Traditionally it was assumed that children in multi-grade classrooms would be separated by grade levels and the teacher would attempt to implement the prescribed curriculum for each grade separately.

While combining grades out of necessity has been and will remain to be a reality, there are some school districts in this province that have been involved in organizing multi-age classrooms by choice. Philosophically, it is believed that a multi-age classroom is child-centered and utilizes a curriculum that is holistic and integrated rather than grade-level and subject-centred. The diversity of needs and abilities are celebrated in a multi-age classroom as a means of strengthening and enriching the learning environment for all.

Teachers in a multi-age setting work with the curriculum focusing on the key-stage outcomes in their initial planning, but take care to understand the specific curriculum outcomes that lead to the achievement of the key-stage outcome. Particular structures that support “best practice” are put into practice as they encourage students of all ages to work together in a collaborative way. Flexible grouping is used as a means of facilitating the learning. Open ended activities and tasks across grade levels are planned as a means to include all learners. Because the class is built on a strong foundation of celebrating diversity, teachers understand the importance of differentiating instruction as a means of meeting the needs of all learners in the one classroom community.



### Aboriginal Learners

Aboriginal learners live in communities throughout our province. An awareness of the subtle differences which their culture presents must be considered in the delivery of curriculum outcomes. The kindergarten curriculum supports the connection between the student's home environment and community. To that effect, the teacher must have a considerable understanding of these cultural differences to engage the aboriginal learner with appropriate materials and activities while still reflecting the prescribed curriculum outcomes.

### English Second Language (ESL) Learners

English second language learners are from homes in which English is not the first language of conversation. Children from ESL homes may begin kindergarten with limited experience in the English language. The challenge for kindergarten teachers is to meet the language development needs of these children in a child-centred program.

*“Imaginative, interactive, and collaborative play situations and scenarios are ideal for children who are learning English as another language. They can provide a safe and engaging way for them to practice and use a new language” (Anne Burke, 2010).*

All children begin language acquisition in the home whether it is in English or another language. The value of oral language in any culture is the foundation for later reading success. If the home experiences have developed the child's abilities to speak and listen, the child will be equipped to apply the understanding about how language works when acquiring a second language. Children who have been read to in their first language may understand the purpose of an alphabet and print directionality. They may already understand that print conveys meaning and that reading is a meaning seeking process.

Kindergarten children trying to develop competency in a second language will experiment with language if they perceive that they are in a supportive environment that encourages risk-taking and collaboration among children. However, teachers may observe that ESL children are hesitant to communicate orally. This is normal; at the beginning stages of learning a second language the learner develops receptive language abilities and gradually gains the vocabulary knowledge and confidence to speak the language.

It is essential that teachers immerse ESL children in a language-rich environment to promote language development and confidence.

*French Second Language  
(Immersion) Learners*

French immersion is a program developed for non-Francophone children. In the majority of cases, children who take part in the French Immersion program come from non-French speaking homes. The immersion program offers these children the opportunity to learn the French language and appreciate the culture. In the French immersion kindergarten classroom, children learn to listen, imitate, speak and play in French. They use their prior knowledge and their individual language learning styles to learn a new language. Learning activities based on the knowledge and interests of the children support the acquisition of the new language. These activities relate readily to the child's day-to-day experiences and are not presented in isolation. Learning activities are presented in a positive, safe, stimulating, fun and secure environment for students.

*Completely Kindergarten, Kindergarten Curriculum Guide*, is available in French for French Immersion teachers. French Immersion teachers teach the same prescribed outcomes of the kindergarten program as the English kindergarten teachers with the exception of English Language Arts. French Immersion teachers and students teach and learn Français. Kindergarten French Immersion students develop language and literacy skills in the French language.