

# **Assessment Techniques and Tools for Documentation**

## **Assessing the Kindergarten Student's Learning**

Assessment and evaluation are fundamental components of teaching and learning. Assessment is the process of collecting and documenting information on individual student learning, while evaluation is the process of analyzing, reflecting, summarizing and making decisions based on this information. The purpose of assessment is to inform teaching and improve learning. Hence, assessment of learning and assessment for learning are integral parts of the teaching and learning process in the kindergarten classroom.

Teachers should recognize that many factors influence learning and achievement. A student's success in demonstrating what he/she knows or is able to do may vary. His/her level of success may depend on such factors as the time of day, the situation, the type of questions asked, familiarity with the content and child's willingness to perform at any one time. Children require ample time to demonstrate their achievements through varied learning opportunities that are developmentally appropriate and within the range of things that they can do independently. The rate and depth which individual students will engage in the kindergarten curriculum will vary from beginning to end.

Learning is active in the kindergarten classroom. Therefore, assessing the process of learning is critical and it should occur while the learning is happening rather than assessing the final product. Ongoing assessment informs the approach needed to design and deliver developmentally appropriate instructional activities. The best opportunities to assess student learning occur within natural classroom instructional encounters with students working individually and in small and whole groups. Assessment is frequent, well planned, and well organized so that teachers are able to assist each child in progressing towards meeting the kindergarten curriculum outcomes.

## Assessment Tools

A variety of strategies and tools should be used to assess children's learning on an ongoing basis in the context of everyday classroom experiences. Assessment strategies should encourage children to show what they know and what they can do, rather than focusing on what they do not know or cannot do. Focusing on children's thinking rather than a particular answer or solution provides valuable information about a child's learning. Sometimes their thinking is evident through their dialogue or it can be demonstrated through their behaviors. The kindergarten teacher's greatest assessment tool is a continual process of observation and documentation of learning because young children show their understanding by doing, showing and telling. Therefore, teachers need to use the assessment strategies of observing, listening and asking probing questions to assess children's achievement. In addition to documented observations, other assessment tools include anecdotal records, photographs, videotapes or tape recordings, checklists, work samples and portfolios, conferencing and language arts student profiles.

The assessment tools used should be consistent with beliefs about curriculum and classroom practices. They should clearly reflect student progress towards the attainment of curriculum outcomes outlined in the kindergarten program. Best assessment practices occur frequently and they are planned to fit throughout the organization of the kindergarten day.

### *Documenting Observations in the Classroom*

Documentation is an essential element of reflective practice. It makes children's play and learning experiences visible...to children, parents and teachers. It is a way to visibly demonstrate the competence of the child.

Observations of student interactions and engagements with materials and other students within the classroom is a valuable means of assessing student learning. Documentation of these observations provides an authentic account of a student's learning and it shows accountability when planning and communicating each student's progress.

Documentation simply means keeping a record of what is observed while students are engaged in a learning experience while playing and exploring. Records might include teacher observations which focus on specific skills, concepts, or characteristics outlined in the kindergarten curriculum. Daily observations may be both planned and spontaneous to ensure that all learning experiences that may emerge from a particular activity are included.

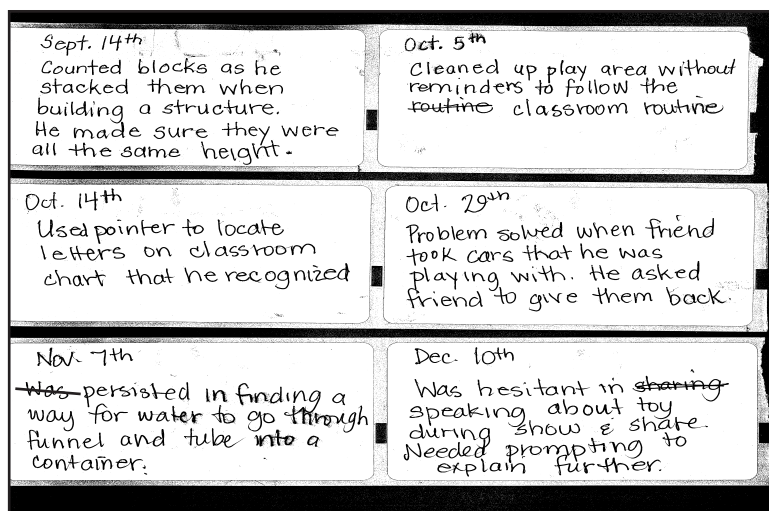
There are various forms of documenting a student's learning experiences. It might include the use of student's artwork and writing, photographs, videotapes and/or tape-recordings. Documentation can be as simple as an attractive display of children's work on a wall or it can be a more elaborately crafted display board that tells the story of an experience of a child or a group of children. Various types of documentation may include display boards, scrap books, photo albums, web sites (accessible only to parents), and emails to parents, bulletin board displays and newsletters to parents. All types of documentation should include a title, photos or sketches of children's work with written captions, children's illustrations of the experience and additional written descriptions of the learning.

Documentation pulls it all together for the students, teachers, and the parents. It provides students with the opportunity to revisit their work which, in turn, provides teachers with the opportunity to discuss with them their interests, their ideas and their plans. By becoming involved in the documentation of their own learning experiences, students become more reflective and more engaged in the learning that is happening all around them.



### *Anecdotal Notes*

Anecdotal notes are short narrative descriptions of observations in the classroom. Teachers may choose to write their comments on adhesive labels or Post It Notes® for each child. This allows the teacher to jot down quick notes about the children who are being observed as he/she moves about the room throughout the day. These notes are later transferred and organized into a binder or exercise book containing pages for individual students. It is important to date each note so that progress can be tracked over a period of time. Anecdotal forms may be included in some teacher resources and teacher preference will determine the format used for anecdotal reporting. It is impossible to include anecdotal notes for each student daily but a conscious effort to observe all students over a period of time is necessary.



### *Photographs, Videotapes and Audio Recordings*

Photographs, videotapes or audio recordings of learning experiences are great forms of documentation and are very useful when assessing student learning. They may include pictures of students at a block centre during the construction process, a recording of them talking with peers as they use materials at a water table, or a recording of a student reading a story with a friend.



### *Self-Assessment*

Students learn about themselves as learners and also about their learning through self-assessment. The statements made by students themselves are an indication of their knowledge and feelings when they are engaged in a learning experience. Opportunities for students to reflect on their learning should be provided by the teacher. Student reflections may include audio, video or printed recordings and work samples. Often, students model the teacher by giving them samples of their best work. This allows teachers to help students to set goals for themselves by reflecting on their own work. Providing a special place to store work samples encourages self-reflection. Students should be encouraged to select work samples from their collections to share with others in the class. Through the sharing and reflection, many things can be learned about the student's engagement in the learning experience and possibilities for future learning.

### *Checklists*

Checklists are most effective and efficient as an assessment tool when they assess specific curriculum outcomes pertaining to a topic. They are not a replacement for anecdotal records. They help teachers to focus their observations and to clarify thinking about what behaviors are indicative for successful learning. The teacher-made checklist for alphabet recognition and letter sound correspondence in Figure 1 is an example of an effective and efficient tool to assess a student's learning of letters and sounds of the alphabet. Checklists to assess outcomes may also be included in teacher resources and curriculum guides. See Figure 2 for an example of a checklist included in *Math Makes Sense K*.

### *Work Samples and Portfolios*

Portfolios show a progression of growth in a child's development during a period of time through a collection of student work samples. The things children make, do or create are vital pieces of assessment data. Looking at samples of children's work reveal patterns of growth and change over time. Portfolios allow teachers and parents/guardians to focus on children's work samples to see what the student is able to do rather than what he/she is not doing. Work samples can include written work, drawings, or documentation of manipulative representations such as a picture of a pattern made with beads, art projects, records of books read by the student, and writing samples. Engaging children in the selection process is an important experience for children as they are encouraged to value the presentation of their work while recognizing the growth in their learning. Dated work samples document individual student growth and progress over a period of time and it is important to share this with both parents and students.

## Figure 2

**Unit 4: Numbers to 10**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessment Master 3.1

## Ongoing Observations Checklist:

### Numbers to 10 (Lessons 1 & 2)

	Lesson 1			Lesson 2		
Name	Create a set with 6 objects	Count sets of 6 to determine how many	Match the numeral 6 to a set with 6 objects	Move objects in a set and realize that this has no effect on the number of objects	Show the number 6 in 2 parts	Name the parts that make 6  Recognize that there are different ways to arrange 6 objects into 2 sets, but that there are still 6

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### *Conferencing*

Periods of time assigned for planned conversations with individual children or small groups are valuable in providing insight on children's thinking processes. Dialogue between the student and the teacher provides valuable information about the child's learning. Besides the incidental observations that are carried out as students work and play, there are times when formal and in-depth observations and conferences are required for gathering specific information. Conferencing with students provides reliable evidence of their development. A conference may occur while engaging in conversations with a student about the sequence of events in a story which they have read, playing a game with a student using counters to gather information about their number sense, or asking probing questions as students tell you about their discoveries during water play. As the child and teacher are engaged in these situations, anecdotal notes may be recorded for assessment and evaluation purposes.

### *Language Arts Student Profiles*



Since 2005-06, the Evaluation and Research Division of the Department of Education has an expectation for each kindergarten teacher to complete a Language Arts Student Profile for each kindergarten student. The profile includes indicators for speaking and listening, reading and viewing and writing and representing. These indicators are necessary skills and strategies for literacy development in kindergarten and they should be used for both formative and summative assessment. The indicators represent the general curriculum outcomes outlined in the *English Language Arts Primary Curriculum Guide*.

Throughout the year, student profiles should be kept in a convenient location for the teacher to access regularly. Assessment data for each student is collected by the kindergarten teacher on an on-going basis and it informs instruction throughout the year. Two spaces are provided on the profile to record dates and comments beside each indicator at two different recording times within the school year. Any indicator which is not achieved prior to May/June of the school year should be assessed and the information entered on the second line of the profile. The assessment column lists possibilities for assessing each indicator. The reading and viewing section of the profile should include an attached year end reading record. A May/June writing sample should also be attached to the writing and representing section of the profile. Profiles should be inserted in each student's cumulative record at the end of the kindergarten school year. If a grade one student has not achieved all of the indicators in the kindergarten year, it must be recorded by the grade level teacher once the indicator is achieved during a subsequent year. See Figure 3 for a sample of the literacy profile used in kindergarten. Reproducible copies can be made from the full size copies available in Appendix 12 of the *English Language Arts Primary Curriculum Guide*.



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<b>STUDENT:</b> _____		<b>SCHOOL NAME:</b> _____	
<b>SCHOOL NUMBER:</b> _____		<b>SCHOOL YEAR:</b> _____	
READING AND VIEWING			
Indicator	Date	Comment	Assessment
Recognizes and recalls upper case letters (M)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual checklist for recognition</li> <li>- Individual/group worksheet for recall</li> <li>- Shared writing, individual writing</li> </ul>
Recognizes and recalls lower case letters (M)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual checklist for recognition</li> <li>- Individual/group worksheet for recall</li> <li>- Shared writing, individual writing</li> </ul>
Understands concept of letter (M)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concepts About Print</li> <li>- Sound boxes</li> </ul>
Understands concept of word (C)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concepts About Print</li> <li>- Fingerprinting, shared writing, individual writing</li> </ul>
Understands concept of first and last letter of a word (C)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concepts About Print</li> <li>- Shared writing, individual writing</li> <li>- Reading record analysis</li> </ul>
Understands directionality (C) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- left to right</li> <li>- front and back of book</li> <li>- top to bottom</li> <li>- return sweep</li> <li>- beginning to end</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concepts About Print</li> <li>- Picture walk of a book without reading, emphasizing these concepts</li> </ul>
Recognizes first and last name (M)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Observation</li> </ul>
Recognizes some personally significant words in context (e.g., mom, dad, love, pet names, names of siblings) (C)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shared reading</li> <li>- Daily observation</li> </ul>
Year End Reading Record (not necessary for all students)	<b>Instructional Level</b>		<b>Accuracy Rate</b>
	_____		_____

LANGUAGE ARTS STUDENT PROFILE			
Kindergarten			
STUDENT: _____	SCHOOL NAME: _____		
SCHOOL NUMBER: _____	SCHOOL YEAR: _____		
SPEAKING AND LISTENING			
Indicator	Date	Comment	Assessment
Expresses feelings and gives examples of experiences (M)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classroom observation</li> <li>- Show-and-Tell (scheduled)</li> <li>- Newstelling (p. 60-62 First Steps Oral Language Resource Book)</li> </ul>
Begins to ask and respond to questions (M)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Small group discussion (p. 29-32 FS Oral Language Resource Book)</li> <li>- Classroom Observation (p. 152-153 FS Oral Language Resource Book)</li> </ul>
Expresses opinions (e.g., "I like" ... "I don't like" ...) (M)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classroom Observation</li> <li>- Show-and-Tell</li> </ul>
Listens to ideas and opinions of others (M)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classroom observation</li> <li>- Small group discussion (p. 29-32 FS Oral Language Resource Book)</li> </ul>
Responds to simple directions and instructions (M)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classroom observation</li> <li>- Barrier Games (p.110 FS Oral Language Resource Book)</li> <li>- Teacher-dictated patterns (e.g., multi-link cubes)</li> </ul>
Gives simple directions and instructions (C)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classroom observation</li> <li>- Barrier Games (p.110 FS Oral Language Resource Book)</li> <li>- Group Barrier Games (p.115-117 FS Oral Language Resource Book)</li> </ul>
Demonstrates awareness of social conventions in group work and co-operative play (M)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classroom observation</li> <li>- Social Conventions (p. 61-62 FS Oral Language Resource Book)</li> <li>- Me Working with a Group (Discovery Links Social Studies)</li> </ul>
Engages in simple oral presentations (C)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Show-and-Tell</li> <li>- Newstelling (p. 60-62 FS Oral Language Resource Book)</li> <li>- Oral Report Assessment Master (Discovery Links Social Studies, p. 34)</li> </ul>

