

Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide



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Full-Day Kindergarten
Professional Development

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Washington State Full-day Kindergarten Guide

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1. Introduction

In 2007, the Washington State Legislature began the phase-in of state-funded full-day kindergarten in recognition of the critical importance of expanding learning opportunities for children in the early years. When passing this legislation, the Legislature understood the importance of high quality classrooms and required that instruction be provided not only in key academic areas, but also asked that teachers to address the social and emotional needs of children, provide creative and hands-on experiences, and address the needs of the “whole child.”

This Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide was developed to provide kindergarten teachers, principals, and other school district administrators with common information about high-quality, full-day kindergarten in order to implement developmentally appropriate and academically rigorous kindergarten programs statewide. This guide has been created in response to school districts’ questions around what is meant by developmentally appropriate and how to ensure high-quality PreK–3rd systems. ***It is not intended to “tell” school districts how they must implement full-day kindergarten, but instead to provide information on effective practices and encourage discussions among kindergarten teachers and administrators in how to design high quality, developmentally appropriate, rigorous kindergarten classrooms.***

It is a container for the knowledge and skills that should be taught and support for planning the experiences in which learning takes place. It is founded in research and the expertise of early learning professionals from Washington State and across the country. It is intended as a tool to be used to not only improve classroom and district practices, but assess the quality of implementation and serve as a blueprint for classroom decision-making (Heroman and Copple, 2010). The intent is that this guide is a living document that will be reviewed and improved as more districts around the state implement high-quality full-day kindergarten.

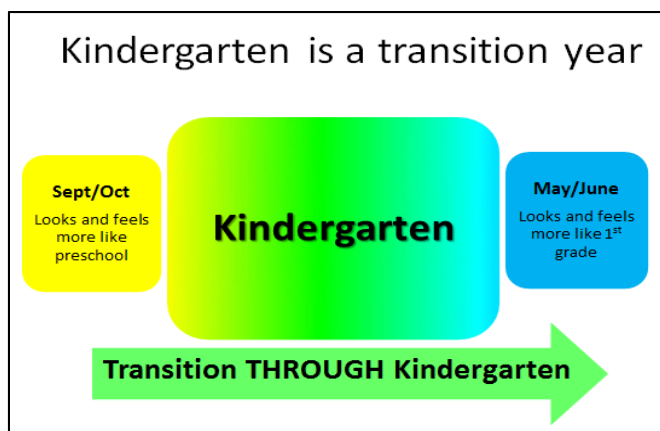
In addition to this guide, three professional development modules have been created for kindergarten teachers, including: 1) Child Development, 2) The Kindergarten Learning Environment, and 3) Learning Centers. These modules were developed by Janet Collier of Capital Region ESD 113 and Eva Phillips, author of *Basics of Developmentally Appropriate Practice: An Introduction for Teachers of Kindergartners*, and provide more in-depth information than is permitted in this guide. For additional information, go to: <http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/FullDayKindergartenResearch.aspx> .

Kindergarten has long been viewed as a special time in a child’s life. It can represent a dramatic shift in the way children are expected to learn and behave, including interacting with adults and children outside their immediate family. The transition through kindergarten is a special time in a child’s life and requires big adjustments. Some children come to kindergarten having participated in early learning settings and may make this transition more easily. For many others, kindergarten is a first experience in formal schooling. A positive transition to kindergarten has been associated with greater frustration tolerance, better social skills, fewer conduct problems, fewer learning problems, and more positive approaches to learning (LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008).

Yet often, kindergarten is misunderstood. It has been described as the “middle child” (Strickland, 2010) between the developmentally appropriate early learning years, and the more formalized system of K–12 education. Some say we have a crisis in kindergarten right now (Miller and Almon, 2009). We have the increased pressure of rigorous standards being pushed down into the earliest years of education. In

some classrooms, this has driven the play, joy, and love of learning out and pushed in testing and surface level skill and drill. Many schools also overlook the potential of kindergarten to address the opportunity gap and provide early interventions and additional learning time that can level the playing field for the years to come.

Kindergarten is a place for children to learn and grow. It is not the job of the child to be ready for kindergarten, but it is the responsibility of the system to be prepared to welcome and respond to each child in an intentional and appropriate way. Developmentally appropriate practice is defined as meeting children where they are AND helping them to achieve challenging and achievable goals (Phillips and Scrinzi, 2014). Kindergarten is a time for children to explore, make sense of the world around them, and begin to find their place within it. Children will question, wonder, and take risks every day. Instruction, environments and activities will shift throughout the year.



The beginning of the year will look and feel more like a preschool and the end of the year will look and feel more like first grade. Children are constantly making progress as they transition through the year traveling a path that takes them from the early learning world to the K–12 system.

In looking at brain research, we know that strong early learning experiences are critical in laying the foundation for a successful future for every child; therefore it is essential that

teachers know and understand the sequences in which children gain specific concepts, skills and abilities. It is also essential for educators to understand the interconnectedness of children’s social, emotional and cognitive development. Experiences shape a young child’s brain, and it’s never too late to support development, but earlier is better ([Harvard Center on the Developing Child](#)).

High-quality kindergarten programming hinges on fostering children’s development and learning in all domains; including physical, social-emotional, cognitive, and language.

Cognitively, kindergartners show more flexibility in their thinking than younger children and greater advances in reasoning and problem solving (NAEYC 2009). They retain concepts best when presented in contexts meaningful to them. As a result, active, experience-based learning, while good for all ages, is key to this period of development.

Socially and emotionally, forming and sustaining relationships with adults and other children is central to a young child’s development. Studies show that children who fail to develop minimal social skills and suffer neglect or rejection from peers are at risk for later outcomes such as school dropout, delinquency, and mental health problems (Dodge et al, 2003; McClelland, Acock & Morrison 2006).

Entering kindergartners vary in their ability to self-regulate by intentionally controlling emotions, behaviors, and thought (Tomlinson in Copple & Bredekamp 2009). It is important for their teachers to minimize sources of frustration, overstimulation, and stress in the environment that might be more than young children can handle. However, age and situation appropriate frustrations and stress are opportunities for children to develop problem-solving skills.

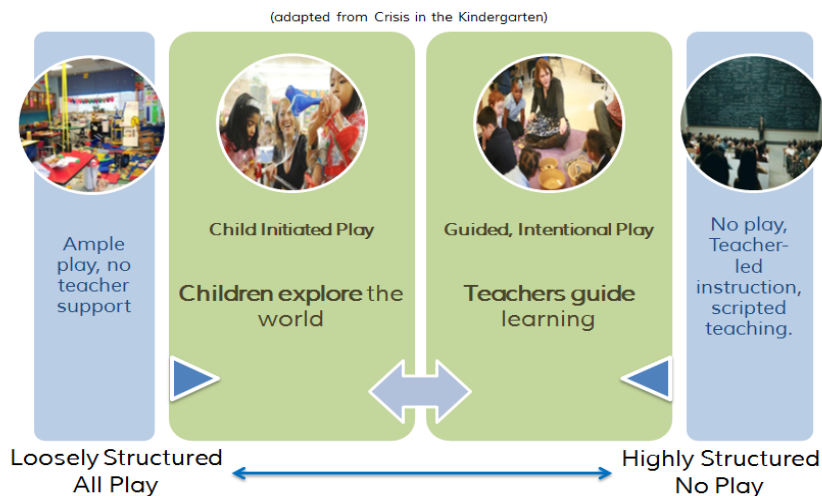
Physically, kindergartners become increasingly more competent in physical skills such as balance and eye-hand coordination. Many kindergartners initially struggle with fine motor tasks such as writing, drawing and precise cutting. Five-and-six-year-olds benefit from many opportunities to practice, including painting, working with clay, constructing with blocks, stringing beads, zipping, buttoning, using scissors, and pouring juice at snack time. They are also becoming more competent in their gross motor skills and can skip, hop and climb with ease by the end of their kindergarten year.

Language and vocabulary skills of kindergartners vary widely. Kindergartners can generally answer open-ended questions (e.g., “What would you fix for dinner if you were the cook?”) with relatively complex sentences, can retell a story or relay details about an experience or event, and can participate appropriately in conversations. Their vocabularies are growing at a fast pace and they still make frequent incorrect generalizations and grammatical errors when they speak (e.g., “Look at all of those deers.”)

Understanding *HOW* children learn is also essential in creating responsive classrooms that encourage and support children. Children learn by talking, exploring, practicing, rehearsing, approximating, and making meaning (New Jersey Department of Education). Children actively construct their understanding of the world through continuous interaction with their environment. Young children learn best when given ample opportunities to explore, practice, apply, and extend on the concepts presented in the classroom. They are eager to discover ideas, to look for patterns and relationships, and to form generalizations. Children learn through spontaneous activity, play, carefully prepared materials, and guided experiences.

In order to meet the learning and developmental needs of the kindergarten child, a high quality classroom needs to provide a balance of teacher-directed activities, child-initiated play, and focused, experiential learning with daily time for playful, intentional learning centers.

Kindergarten Continuum



Play and academics are not an “either or.” For children birth-to-eight, play is an essential element in learning. We can have high standards for math, language, literacy, social and emotional skills and provide experiences for children to reach these rigorous standards in ways that embed the love of learning in their minds. Before we can expect different outcomes for students, we need to build the capacity of the adults that work with children. It is critical that kindergarten teachers have “effective instructional strategies that weave the knowledge base about child development with

kindergarten standards and content knowledge in ways that are engaging, meaningful and relevant to children” (Heroman and Copple, 2010).

Full day kindergarten is not only about increasing the hours in a child’s day, but it is the quality of the time that matters. The child must be the main focus of the kindergarten program. Each child brings unique experiences, expectations, emotions, attitudes, and abilities to the classroom. It is essential that the individual characteristics of each child be accepted, understood, and nurtured.

We hope that this guide will not only be used as a foundation in building high quality kindergarten programs across the state of Washington, but serve as a catalyst for further learning and discussion.

Guiding Principles for High-Quality Kindergarten

In preparing this guide, the following principles were incorporated and served as guiding principles:

- Families are a child’s first and most important teachers
- Collaboration among families, schools and communities supports each child’s growth and development
- All children are capable and competent learners
- Children thrive when they have secure relationships with adults and are supported environments that are safe, positive, age-appropriate, use purposeful play, and have a balance between independence and structure
- Children learn best through active participation and when provided opportunities to learn through discovery, interaction, creativity, problem-solving, conversation, and play
- A high-quality kindergarten provides developmentally appropriate and academically rigorous learning opportunities that are balanced between child-initiated and teacher-guided
- A high-quality kindergarten recognizes and supports differences in the needs, skills and abilities of children as they develop as individuals
- Kindergarten is a transition year, a bridge between early learning experiences and the K–12 system
- Leaders of high-quality kindergarten programs have an understanding of child development and appropriate instructional practices to effectively support teachers

Outcomes of High-Quality Kindergarten

Based on research and the experience of the authors, we will see the following outcomes result from implementing a high-quality full-day kindergarten program:

- Increased student time to develop skills and concepts at their own rate
- Increased competence in social, emotional, cognitive, language, literacy and math skills
- Increased coordination in physical skills
- Increased integration of new ideas, experiences, and concepts
- Increased student engagement
- Increased positive self-concept for students
- Decrease in remediation of foundational skills

Keep in mind, however, that student outcomes only change when the adult behavior change. Implementing full day kindergarten requires a shift in thinking on the part of the system, and the adults within it. When high-quality full-day kindergarten is implemented as an integral part of an effective PreK –3rd grade learning community, these outcomes will persist and have a lasting effect on student achievement.

Statutory Requirements for State-funded Full-day Kindergarten

When creating the program for phasing in full-day kindergarten in Washington, the Legislature adopted legislation that specified critical components of a high-quality full-day kindergarten program.

These components, which are in RCW 28A.150.315, include:

1. Provide at least a one thousand-hour instructional program.
2. Provide a curriculum that offers a rich, varied set of experiences that assist students in:
 - a) Developing initial skills in the academic areas of reading, mathematics, and writing;
 - b) Developing a variety of communication skills;
 - c) Providing experiences in science, social studies, arts, health and physical education, and a world language other than English;
 - d) Acquiring large and small motor skills;
 - e) Acquiring social and emotional skills including successful participation in learning activities as an individual and as part of a group; and
 - f) Learning through hands-on experiences.
3. Establish learning environments that are developmentally appropriate and promote creativity.
4. Demonstrate strong connections and communication with early learning community providers.
5. Participate in kindergarten program readiness activities with early learning providers and parents.
6. Administer the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS).

When school districts accept state funds for full-day kindergarten, the district agrees to implement full-day kindergarten classrooms with these components.

An important purpose of this guide is to provide assistance to teachers, principals, and other district staff in how to successfully implement these components in order to create high-quality full-day kindergarten classrooms.

Additional Full-day Kindergarten Resources

OSPI Full-day Kindergarten Website:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/FullDayKindergartenResearch.aspx>

2. Child Development



RCW requirement

- Provide a curriculum that offers a rich, varied set of experiences that assist students in acquiring social and emotional skills including successful participation in learning activities as an individual and as part of a group.
- Establish learning environments that are developmentally appropriate and promote creativity.



TPEP Criteria

- Centering instruction on high expectations for student achievement.
- Recognizing individual student learning needs and developing strategies to address those needs.

“The early years in school are ones in which all children need to feel successful. This is especially true of the kindergarten year when children are undergoing significant change in their development. The care that teachers, schools and districts take in intentionally managing this change is critical to all children feeling a sense of success.”

David Matteson - *Kindergarten: A Transitional Year*

Principles of Child Development

Key principles of child development that serve as a foundation for this guide include:

- Every child is unique
- Learning occurs in predictable patterns
- Learning is most meaningful when integrated across all domains
- Young children are active learners
- Experience, knowledge, curiosity and a sense of wonder are foundations for learning
- Assessment and evaluation form the basis for educational decisions
- Development and learning are rooted in culture and supported by family
- Children learn through attitudes as well as content; therefore, attention should be given to methods, emotional climate, environment, and teacher-child interaction
- Children learn through play; therefore sensitivity to the value of play is required, for it is through play that children create their own meaning and learning schemes

Understanding Child Development

All kindergarten students are unique, yet they follow similar patterns of development. As educators, either in the classroom or in the school community, it is essential that we understand these traits and characteristics of kindergarten students in order to plan environments and experiences that best meet the needs of the students. These characteristics, competencies and needs should be the foundation for all classroom experiences, the schedule, curriculum, educational activities, and teaching practices (Berk, 2006). Kindergarten students are also in a phase of development where there is tremendous growth. This transformation between the ages of 5–7 is a critical and unique period of development.

Every child grows and develops at his or her own individual rate. There can be a dramatic variation among kindergarten students in the same classroom. Understanding the common and the individual learning needs among all students in a classroom will allow a kindergarten teacher to successfully support each child's foundation.

Building a program that is grounded in the developmental pattern of a child means that systems are creating high quality learning structures that are sustainable and will withstand the test of time. Learning begins with the child at the center.

Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines

The Washington Early Learning and Development Guidelines, which were written through the united work of early learning professionals, communities, and cultural organizations, provide information for parents and educators regarding children from birth through grade 3.

Topics in the guidelines include:

- About me and my family and culture
- Building relationships
- Touching, seeing, hearing and moving around
- Growing up healthy
- Communicating (literacy)
- Learning about my world

These guidelines, which were carefully crafted to recognize and honor the differences in children, are a helpful tool when engaging parents and for understanding the developmental stages of children. They can be downloaded at: <http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/Guidelines.aspx>

Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4–14

(Wood, Chip. Yardsticks Children in the Classroom Ages 4–14. 3rd edition Turner Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children, Inc., 2007)

The following table outlines common characteristics of kindergarten-aged students. Teachers who are attuned to these characteristics are able to tailor instruction, communicate with parents, and set up the classroom environment to best meet each student’s needs. These major milestones in all areas of development are interconnected. What happens in one area affects the others. Educators must be aware of and support this interconnectedness. These highlights will help give teachers and school leaders a frame of reference when planning for kindergarten student learning.

The Five-Year Old in the Classroom	Early Five-Year Olds: Growth Patterns	Older Five-Year Olds: Growth Patterns
Social Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Like to help; cooperate, follow rules, and be “good”; want adult approval - Need routines, along with consistent rules and discipline; respond well to clear and simple expectations - Dependent on authority; but also have trouble seeing things from another’s viewpoint - Need verbal permission from adults; before doing something, will ask, “Can I ...?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oppositional, not sure whether to be good or naughty - Insecure with feelings and tentative in actions - Complain, test authority and limits, and strike out with temper tantrums - Behave wonderful at home and terribly at school; or vice-versa - Equivocate, switching answers from “yes” to “no” and vice versa
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus visually on objects close at hand - Need lots of physical activity, including free play - Better control of running, jumping, and other large movements; still awkward with writing, handcrafts, and other small movements - Pace themselves well, resting before they’re exhausted - Often fall out of chair sideways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tend to be physically restless and to tire easily - Awkwardly perform tasks requiring fine motor skills - Vary their pencil grip - Tilt their head to their non-dominant side when writing - Complain that their hand gets tired from holding their pencil - Often stand up to work
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Literal, using and interpreting words in their usual or most basic sense: “We’re late—we’ve got to fly!” means “We’ve got to take to the air like birds!” - Express themselves in few words; “play” and “good” are favorites - Often do not talk about school happenings at home - Express fantasy more through actions and less through words than at four - Think out loud—that is, they talk their thoughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin giving more elaborate answers to questions - Tend to use more words than necessary to convey an idea - Frequently makes auditory reversals (answers first what was heard last) - Often read out loud even when asked to read silently

<p>Cognitive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Like to copy and repeat activities - Often see only one way to do things - Bound cognitively by their senses; not ready to understand abstract concepts such as “fairness” - Ascribe life and movement to inanimate objects such as stuffed animals - Learn best through active play and hands-on activities - Think intuitively rather than logically; for example, “It’s windy when the trees shake, so it must be the shaking of the trees that makes the wind” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin to try new activities more easily - Make lots of mistakes and recognizes some of them - Learn well from direct experience
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There can be significant differences in development due to a variety of influences. Parenting, home environment, and preschool experiences all play a major role in children’s learning and development. These differences are documented in the results of the “Whole Child Assessment” in WaKIDS. Although the cutoff age in Washington state is consistent (children must be 5 by August 31, unless an exception is made), other factors may play into the range of chronological and developmental “age” of students in a classroom.

Being aware of characteristics of developmentally or chronologically younger students will help teachers identify supports. Also being able to successfully challenge older students, either due to chronological age or advanced development, will help these students experience success and a joy for learning.

The kindergarten year is a magical time in a child’s development. Having a deep understanding of child development helps educators create an environment that supports engaging, meaningful and relevant learning opportunities. This knowledge base supports children having a successful kindergarten year and builds their foundation for success.

Additional Child Development Resources

Child Development Module - FDK Professional Development Training. Offered by Educational Service Districts (ESD). Contact your ESD Early Learning Coordinator for additional information see the modules on the OSPI website using the following link under Full-Day Kindergarten:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/Resources.aspx>

Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines, Birth through 3rd Grade, 2012.

<http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/Guidelines.aspx>

WaKIDS Characteristics of Entering Kindergarteners: www.k12.wa.us/wakids

Basics of Developmentally Appropriate Practice: An Introduction for Teachers of Kindergarten. Eva C. Phillips and Amy Scrinzi.

K Today: Teaching and Learning in the Kindergarten Year. Dominic F. Gullo, ed.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Focus on Kindergarteners. Carol Copple, Sue Bredekamp, Derry Koralek, and Kathy Charner, editors. 2014.

Child Development Reflection/Self-Assessment

The following rubric can be used to rate your understanding and application of child development principles.

Understanding Child Development	Not evident in my school/ practice	Somewhat evident in my school/ practice	Consistently evident in my school/ practice	Consistently evident with practices that elaborate upon or exceed expectations
All kindergarten teachers have educational experience or coursework in Child Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The principal and other district early learning leaders have educational experience or coursework in child development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educators and leaders work together to further understanding of child development through professional development opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Common developmental milestones or benchmarks are a part of your classroom/school progress reports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Common developmental milestones or benchmarks are a part of your communication with families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. The Learning Environment



RCW requirement

– Establish learning environments that are developmentally appropriate and promote creativity.



TPEP Criteria

– Fostering and managing a safe, positive learning environment.

“Positive learning environments prepare students for the difficult task of learning. They open students up to the possibilities of what lies ahead. In that way, learning environments have profound implications for learners affectively and cognitively.”

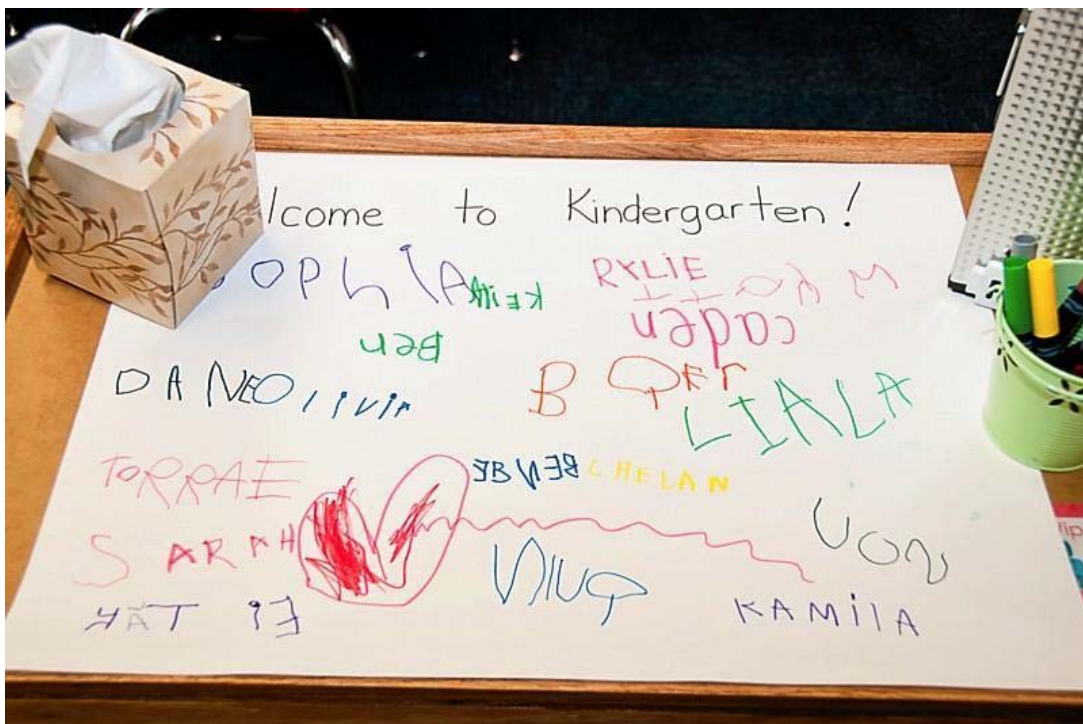
Janet Mort, *Joyful Literacy Interventions*, 2014

The “Kindergarten Environment” should be revered as the second teacher. The developmentally appropriate, rigorous classroom provides opportunities for experimentation, exploration, discovery, inquiry, challenge, and interaction. An atmosphere of understanding, concern, and compassion should surround the kindergarten child in this most important school experience.

A safe and supportive environment promotes positive self-esteem and helps children acquire and maintain the skills and attitudes necessary for personal success. A primary goal of the kindergarten year is to develop independent, confident learners who discover the excitement and challenge of learning in their school experience and throughout their lives.

When children are in environments where learning is occurring in a meaningful context, where they have choices, and where they are encouraged to follow their interests, learning takes place best (Singer, Golinkoff, & Hirsch-Pasek, 2006, p. 9). The kindergarten environment, including its physical, social, and organizational attributes, can play a critical role in a child’s learning. Children feel more secure and learn more readily in programs that:

- Are well organized
- Provide predictable routines
- Have consistent expectations
- Represent the children culturally
- Demonstrate mutual respect
- Foster positive relationships with teachers and peers



Physical Space

Classroom organization should reflect the needs of five-year olds and reflect a best practices teaching style. The classroom should be intentionally designed so that purposeful and intentional play-based activities can be supported as a vehicle for a child's learning.

A rich, well-organized classroom environment is an essential part of the curriculum. The manner in which a room is arranged can promote choices and provide direction to children using both materials and space productively. Both the room arrangement and the materials within it send an important message to the learner that affects both engagement and behavior. Teachers need to continually evaluate and monitor the environment ready to make changes and adjustments to meet the needs and interests of their students. As children grow and change, materials will change along with the needs of the children.

The classroom is organized to provide settings for large groups, small groups and individuals. The room is arranged so children can self-select materials, plan activities, and work independently. To accomplish this kind of learning, interest centers or work areas should be clearly defined. Care should be taken to arrange centers so that activities do not interfere with one another but support each other.

Considerations for activity areas are:

- Place the art area near the sink, if possible, to allow for easy cleanup
- Locate computer and listening areas next to electrical outlets
- Separate noisy and quiet areas (i.e. blocks away from the reading area)
- Locate the areas and arrange furniture to allow easy visual monitoring and movement around the classroom
- When building things, children need large spaces, so having the block area close to your large group area allows children to expand their creations

The physical arrangement of the room should allow children to see and easily move through all areas with purpose. It is important to be mindful as well as to what the arrangement is saying to children. If a teacher sets his/her classroom up like a racetrack, the children will use it as such; however, if the teacher creates dynamic spaces that allow children to question, create, and explore then that is the type of learning that will take place.

Children should have a variety of activities available to them throughout the day, providing open-ended choice that is directly aligned to development and standards. Equipment and materials should be easily accessible, in a definite location, and clearly labeled so the children know where to get the materials and where to put them away. The materials should be open to a variety of possibilities so that all children can access an area at their level of learning. When putting materials out, always be questioning if there is more than one entry point to the task? Is there enough room for ideas to grow? Are there structures in place where children know how to access new materials as the idea blooms?

At a minimum, each kindergarten classroom should include:

- Meeting Area/Large Group Space
- Block Area
- Literacy Areas
- Dramatic Play Area
- Math Area
- Art Area
- Science Area
- Privacy Area

Meeting Area/Large Group Space

In this space whole group lessons can occur such as writing demonstrations, story time, interactive writing, gross motor activities, morning routines, and music. Valuable skills and standards are taught in this space on a daily basis such as speaking, listening, reading, writing, community building, responsibility, mathematical thinking, inquiry, and problem solving.

In this space you may find:

- A rug that defines the area and provides a comfortable place for the children to learn
- A large chalkboard, whiteboard, or interactive board
- An easel and stand to hold chart paper, big books, and pocket charts
- Student instruments and devices to play music.
- Alphabet chart
- Student white boards
- Clipboards



Block Area

Block play is a critical element in a high quality learning environment. Research strongly suggests that working with blocks increases a child's spatial reasoning that leads to higher achievement in geography, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Though it is important to have conventional materials such as wooden blocks, it is also important to remember that less obvious materials open up more opportunities for pretend play (Tepyllo, Moss, & Stephenson; 2015).

In this space you may find:

- Wooden blocks of all sizes
- Cardboard blocks
- Legos
- Duplos for children developing fine motor skills
- Writing tools
- Cars and trucks
- Plastic animals and people
- Train set
- Building materials of all kinds
- Books featuring construction concepts such as castles, houses, or bridge



Literacy Areas

Literacy spaces in a high-quality kindergarten classroom should include a student library and writing area. In these spaces children will work on reading and writing skills by practicing using their growing skills as they develop into readers and writers. Here children have the opportunity to become comfortable with various genres, read or write alone or with a friend, and create stories orally or through print. Though these spaces will be filled with both fiction and nonfiction opportunities: Literacy activities will not live in these spaces alone. For example you may find the book How a House is Built (1996) by Gail Gibbons in the block area and a menu from a local restaurant in the dramatic play center. Thinking about reading and writing in terms of the whole child will allow the teacher to incorporate the concept of playing with words into every area of the room.

In this space you may find:

- Books (nonfiction, fiction, wordless, board books, leveled library)
- Listening center
- Student computers
- Magnetic letters and numbers
- Various colors and textures of paper
- Clipboards
- Letter stamps and stamp pads
- How to draw books (basic)
- Magnadoodles
- Stencils
- Student whiteboards and/or chalkboards
- Storytelling props
- Reading pointers
- Big books
- Pencils, markers, colored pencils
- Stationary



Dramatic Play Area

The obvious skills that children engage in within the dramatic play center is the use of their imagination to bring to life places in their world such as a home, store, post office, restaurant, or a pet shop. The dramatic play area also is a powerful place for teachers to intentionally scaffold social skills for children. The power of taking turns, including others, patience, and problem solving are all skills that children will engage in while using this space. Children will be making connections in math as well while they are measuring, pouring, comparing, counting, and possibly dealing with money. They will deepen their understanding around reading and writing when they take an order, read from a recipe, write a grocery list, or make a birthday invitation. The children will engage in imaginative play by exploring different roles from those of a family member, or an interpretation of a community helper. They will increase their vocabulary and orally rehearse a familiar story or create a new one that can be developed over time. It also becomes a place where children work through their feelings and emotions that they are processing from personal experiences outside of school. To maximize the value of the dramatic play area, it needs to include a mix of student-initiated and teacher-guided experiences.



In this space you may find:

- Puppets
- Fabric
- Dolls (multicultural)
- Doll bed
- Pretend food (multicultural)
- Kitchen items
- Wooden dollhouse
- Dress-up items
- Kitchen set
- Child sized table/chairs
- Stuffed animals
- Writing tools
- Office supplies



Math Area

Though the area is called the math center, it also is filled with opportunities for fine motor work, language development, and social skills. In this space children will engage in learning opportunities where they will be reasoning, sorting, classifying, sequencing, comparing, counting, measuring, inquiring, joining and separating sets, recording, defining, estimating, and solving meaningful problems at their own level of development and interest. By engaging with the children while in this area, the teacher is able to extend a student's thinking and guide the further development of the child's vocabulary. By incorporating games, puzzles, and open-ended materials for engagement in this space, the children will be able to strengthen not only their ability to work with others in a small group setting, but also their oral language, cognitive development, and fine motor skills as well.

In this space you may find:

- Basic math manipulatives
- 100 chart
- Number line 1–100
- Dice
- Cards
- Puzzles
- Games
- Items for sorting (buttons, shells, junk items)
- Beads and stringing materials
- Tweezers
- Containers of all size
- Lacing cards
- Dominos
- Materials for recording or drawing
- Materials that promote fine motor skills



Art Area

Whether a child has had an early learning experience prior to entering kindergarten, or if this is his/her first structured environment, art tends to be an equalizer where all children can find a level of success. In the art area children are able to explore a variety of materials and express their experiences and feelings while using their imagination to plan and create. While increasing their vocabulary and developing their fine motor skills, the child is able to deepen their understandings around technique, two and three-dimensional studies, and learn to persist at the open-ended task that lies before them. They will quickly learn mathematical concepts around shape while revisiting a project over and over through choice. Soon child-made puppets will fill the dramatic play area, the block area will be filled with trees and people made of paper, and the walls will represent the budding artists in the classroom.

In this space you may find:

- Painting easel
- Paint brushes and pots
- Play dough
- Tools: cookie cutters, rolling pins, plastic forks
- Scissors
- Staplers
- Hole punches
- Paper: various colors, sizes, textures
- Consumables: paper cups, paper plates, straws, sequins, magazines, cotton balls, paper bags, craft sticks, toothpicks, craft buttons, pipe cleaners, fabric, toilet paper tubes, stickers, glue, glue sticks
- Tape and tape dispensers
- Sensory table and items for exploring such as containers of various sizes, measuring cups, turkey baster, spray bottles, spoons, items to pour, scoop and measure
- Crayons
- Markers
- Colored pencils



Science Area

Children are naturally inquisitive and full of wonder. Providing a space where they can ask questions, search for answers, and observe the world they live in provides opportunities for children to make meaningful connections. Providing both living and non-living items for students to observe, explore, compare, and classify encourages children to not only ask deeper-level questions but empowers them to research the answers as well. Using the interests of the children and units of inquiry, the science area creates a space in the room for children to go and further develop their understandings. Here children will investigate



problems, compare findings with classmates, research theories, ask questions, and make predictions. It also is another opportunity for a teacher to build in meaningful vocabulary to a child's day.

In this space you may find:

- Collections of natural materials: rocks, shells, bird nests, hive, bark
- Simple machines: gears, pulleys, and wheels
- Living things: plants and animals
- Notebooks
- Clipboards
- Scale
- Magnifying glasses
- Natural materials to observe, sort, and classify
- Student computer



Privacy Area

Aside from the intentional areas of activity, a teacher should also think about where a child can go for a bit of privacy. This is a place where a child who needs a break or to be alone can go and still feel part of the classroom community. This space should have different opportunities for the child to self-select this area throughout the day to think, self-reflect, relax, or problem-solve in private. Thinking about the sensory needs of the students also can help the teacher to make choices about what should or should not be in this space. Depending on the needs of the students, this can change overtime.

In this space you may find:

- Soft furnishings such as pillows of various sizes
- Calming colors
- Lamp
- Plants
- Clawfoot bathtub
- Child-size camping chairs
- Quiet activities for up to two children
- Weighted blankets
- Child size rocking chair
- Squishy toys
- Books



Suggestions for Equipping a Best Practices Kindergarten Classroom

The ideal classroom would have all items listed. The **highlighted items** are essential and considered basic standards for every kindergarten classroom. The non-highlighted items would be considered as nice to have. (Adapted from Bellingham School District's Kindergarten Guide)

Block Area

- Lincoln Logs
- Small cars and trucks
- Cardboard blocks
- Legos
- Train set (trains and tracks)
- Wood blocks
- Plastic animals (various themes: water, farm....)
- People (both for Legos and wood blocks)
- Would be best to have at least one set of large hollow blocks per building

Home Area

- Puppet stage
- Kitchen set
- Dolls (multicultural)
- Doll bed
- Pretend food
- Kitchen items (plates, silverware, pots, pans....)
- Child sized table/chairs for pretend play
- Puppets
- Stuffed animals
- Wood dollhouse with furnishings/people
- Dress-up items (multicultural)
- Literacy materials: cookbooks, pads of paper, writing utensils, menus

Toy Area

- Basic Math manipulatives: Unifix cubes, pattern blocks, geoblocks, 2-sided counters, buttons, sorting items such as bears, colored tiles, 1" wood cubes,
- 100 chart
- Number Line 1–100
- Dice
- Cards
- Puzzles (from basic to 100 piece puzzles)
- Games
- Items for sorting (buttons, shells, junk items)
- Scale
- Magnifying glasses
- Beads and stringing materials
- Lacing cards
- Dominos

Writing Area

- Handwriting without Tears Materials: chalkboards (at least enough for ½ class), HWT chalk, wood pieces, magnetic boards with magnetic wood pieces (6), abc/number chart, student books(class set), teacher book, HWT cd (first one)
- Magna Doodles
- Stencils
- How to Drawing books (basic)
- Magnetic Letters/Numbers
- Magnetic Whiteboards (student use)

- Various colors, textures of paper
- Clip boards (at least ½ class set)
- Letter stamps and stamp pads

Library Area

- Listening Center (tape or cd player/ headphones/books on tape or cd)
- Student Computers
- Books (non-fiction, fiction, wordless books, board books, leveled library)
- Basic big book set
- Storytelling props (story boards, flannel board and story characters)
- Reading pointers

Art Area

- Paint brushes/pots
- Painting Easel
- Storage
- Play dough and tools: cookie cutters, rolling pins....
- Scissors (class set)
- Staplers (at least 8)
- Hole punches
- Tape dispensers (at least 8)
- Consumables: paper cups, paper plates, straws, sequins, magazines, cotton balls, toothpicks, craft sticks, craft buttons, pipe cleaners, toilet paper tubes, fabric (large and small pieces), stickers, elmer's glue/glue sticks
- Sensory Table

Furniture

1. Small tables/chairs
2. Appropriate storage for math supplies/art supplies/blocks/writing area/ library/toy area (at least one shelf unit per area in room and should be appropriate size)

3. (Kidney table is a personal preference and not a need)

4. Coat Hooks

Circle area

1. Active board/projector
2. Large carpet rug
3. Document camera
4. Large
5. Easel (needs to hold a big book as well as chart paper)
6. 2 pocket charts
7. ABC chart (handwriting without tears set)
8. Pocket chart stand
9. CD player
10. Teacher computer
11. Correction tape
12. Highlighter tape

Conclusion

When the physical environment is planned with children’s self-initiated learning in mind, children encounter places where they can freely explore what things are and how things work. The environment should be considered to be part of the kindergarten curriculum and given explicit attention to the needs of the students. It serves as the second teacher. In such an environment, children investigate, invent, and experiment. To support children’s self-initiated play and integrated learning, teachers create environments with a network of interest areas. Each area has a distinct focus and a predictable inventory of materials. (California Preschool Framework, Vol. 1)

Additional Learning Environment Resources

Learning Environment and Learning Centers Modules, WA State FDK Professional Development Training: <http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/ProfDevModule.aspx>

Joyful Literacy Interventions, Janet Mort, 2014.

Highline School District K Guide: <http://www.highlineschools.org/earlylearning>

Adult-Child Interactions

(Adapted from *New Jersey Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines*)

“Positive teacher-child relationships promote children’s learning and achievement, as well as social competence and emotional development.”

*- Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Settings
Serving Children Birth through 8, Position Statement, NAEYC 2009, p. 13.*

A key factor in the quality of a learning environment in kindergarten is the quality of the adult-child interactions. The emotional support that teachers give to students provides a solid foundation for developing the motivation and cognitive skills critical to positive long-term academic outcomes (Crosnoe et. al. 2004). High-quality teacher-child relationships foster social development. Indicators of social adjustment in school settings include self-control, emotional regulation, getting along with peers, and enjoyment of school (Birch and Ladd 1997; Wentzel 1996).

It is the role of the teacher to be responsive to the needs of his/her students in a caring and respectful manner. Validating a child’s feelings and interests, showing children daily that they are cared for, and scaffolding a child’s ability to self-regulate will support a teacher in establishing positive relationships with his/her students.

Social activities are an on-going part of a kindergartener’s day. Through coaching and encouragement the teacher can play a significant role in providing opportunities for a child to engage with others in social problem solving. Children need time and a safe environment to work cooperatively with others.

By demonstrating the skills the teacher wishes for his/her students to emulate, a teacher can support a child in identifying his/her emotions and expressing them in an appropriate manner. While some children require coaching to work in a group situation, problem solve, or enter into a task with peers, other children may need more direct instruction. Knowing the learners allows the teacher to be intentional in the strategy he/she chooses to use.

Guidelines to consider when interacting with children:

- Teachers foster children’s trust, security and social development through warmth, caring, and responsiveness to individual children’s interests and feelings
- Teachers recognize that academic learning occurs in a social context
- Teachers use space and materials, encouragement for socio-dramatic play, cooperative work experiences, problem-solving activities, conversations, and group discussions as ongoing opportunities for children to practice social skills
- Teachers accentuate children’s pro-social behaviors while actively supporting self-regulation and learning
- Teachers maximize positive behavior and social interactions through careful design of schedules, activities, and classroom space
- Teachers who are present, connect, and extend children’s learning create powerful interactions

A child’s ability to self-regulate happens gradually through strong adult-child interaction and opportunities for learning. It is important that the teacher understands child development and sets appropriate goals for his/her students. True acceptance of all students is the first step in creating a safe

learning environment where children can learn to manage their emotions and behaviors. General strategies that a teacher can engage in that will support all students may include:

- Focus on the strengths of all children every day
- Make sure that when talking with children you are at their eye-level. (Try getting down on your knees and looking at the world from their level)
- Model social skills (not interrupting, saying "please" and "thank you", etc.)
- Stating directives in a positive way (instead of saying, "No running," instead say "Walking feet." Or instead of "Be quiet" say "Inside voices")
- Acknowledging children as unique individuals (every child has something to offer to the class)
- Enjoying and appreciating the children (smiling and laughing sharing in their discoveries and milestones. The classroom should be filled with joy)
- Offering choices and respecting their choices. If you need a child to write his/her name, provide them power over the tool they use or the type of paper
- Always greet children every day with a warm smile and genuine care that his/she is there.
- Talking with the children about what is of interest to them, and incorporate that into the classroom environment, and curriculum
- Awareness of the impact of the tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language and utilizing these as a teaching tool
- As the teacher model making mistakes and how to respond, it is all part of the learning process

Effective adult-child interactions are an essential ingredient for children's social and academic development. Changes in how adults interact with children do not happen overnight. Quality improvement efforts that focus explicitly on teacher-child interactions maximize impacts for children. Carefully designed and implemented professional development support can improve the quality of teacher-child interactions.

Additional Resources

Powerful Interactions: How to Connect with Children to Extend their Learning. 2011. Washington, D.C.: NAEYC.

Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS™) Implementation Guide (Hamre, Goffin, & Kraft-Sayre, 2009).

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. (2003). *Promoting the social-emotional competence of children. Training modules [Online]*. Champaign, IL: Author. Available: <http://csefel.uiuc.edu/modules/facilitatorguide/facilitators-guide1.pdf> [August 12, 2003].

Classroom Management

“When kindergarten teachers offer a child-centered classroom climate, students are often on-task and engaged in learning.”

Pianta et, al., 2002

Developing Behavior Patterns

Establishing a pattern of working within a group as a positive member is the educational focus during the first months of kindergarten. Learning this pattern teaches the child a set of group work skills such as:

- Individual decision-making
- Independent problem-solving
- Responsible group membership behavior

These skills are transferred to other large or small group or individual learning situations, thus providing a foundation for future schooling. For this reason it is particularly important to provide each child with time for developing these skills and practice.

Listed below is a sample pattern routine that will fit many of the learning situations provided in a typical kindergarten day.

- Choose a job/activity/center and work at it appropriately
- Work for a reasonable period of time
- Clean up when your work is completed
- Choose another job and go to work

Establishing the routines, structures, and expectations begins the very first day of school and the materials you have available will influence your success in teaching these elements. Begin by putting out toys that are familiar and easy to clean-up (i.e., playdough, paper and crayons, simple puzzles—no scissors or glue yet!). Slowly introduce new materials and/or work areas and their use when you feel the children demonstrate understanding of appropriate classroom behaviors. In the beginning of the year, use shorter blocks of time for the components of the day. Transitions from job-to-job will take time. Allow time to “re-do,” to practice, and to have a short review. Following the whole group review, take time to read a story, sing a few songs, and then send the children back to work again.

It is up to the teacher to set the tone of the classroom. A teacher who is relaxed, happy, and speaks softly, is more likely to draw similar responses. The use of positive reinforcement is better than dwelling on misbehavior. For example, “I see you are being very careful to put the blocks back in their proper places. That will make it really easy for the next person to find the ones they are looking for.” Notice and comment on specific behaviors and respond with encouragement rather than praise.

Establishing Classroom Rules and Procedures

It is important for the students to understand the teacher’s expectations. The student needs to know what behaviors are acceptable in the classroom and what behaviors are not. Children need to be taught how to:

- Use classroom materials
- Work with classmates
- Make appropriate choices

- Move about the classroom (including using the restroom)
- Use an appropriate voice level
- Sit on the rug in a group

In best practices classroom there is shared control. Teachers consciously give students some control and decision-making opportunities (e.g., self-selected projects during work time, daily classroom job).

Classroom agreements (rules) are clear, concise, and consistent. Students have age-appropriate choices and non-negotiables are known to all. Every classroom has non-negotiables. Non-negotiables will always include health and safety rules, but also will include school and teacher standards and expectations.

In addition to introducing classroom patterns, it is important to establish building rules and procedures. Rules should be discussed, demonstrations given, and time provided for practice.

Positive Discipline Classroom Management Tools - Fostering Cooperation and Mutual Respect

A teacher can create a positive classroom environment by incorporating the following into his or her instruction:

- **Limited Choices:** Help students succeed by offering an appropriate choice between at least two acceptable options.
- **Classroom Jobs:** Assigning classroom jobs gives students opportunities to contribute in meaningful ways, which builds their self-esteem and sense of belonging.
- **Problem Solving:** Actively teach the problem-solving process so students have the skills to negotiate and solve problems independently.
- **Follow Through with Dignity and Respect:** When you say something, mean it and follow through with kindness and firmness holding students accountable for their part in an agreement.
- **Redirection Questions:** Ask questions related to the behavior you would like to change to invite students to think about their behavior and what needs to be done to help students become aware of what is needed.

Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution Strategies

(Adapted from *Bringing The High/Scope Approach to Your Early Years Practice*. Nicky Hott, Routledge, New York, NY. 2007, pg. 49.)

- Approach Calmly
- **STOP** hurtful behavior, get to calm
 - Stay neutral if a toy or object is involved, neutralize it by holding on to it
- Acknowledge Feelings
 - This is essential...enables moving on to the solution process (i.e. "Sarah you sound angry," or "Peter, you look sad")
- Gather Information
 - Stay in the now and use "What" questions to get the facts and details
- Restate the Problem
 - Briefly and clearly focus on the problem and not the person (i.e., "You both want the stapler." NOT who had it first, etc.)
- Ask for Solutions and Choose One Together
 - Support the children in coming up with a solution and accept the agreed upon solution
- Be Prepared to Give Follow-Up Support
 - Check in as activity resumes or stay in proximity
 - Encourage children to see themselves as problem solvers

Elements of the Day

High-quality kindergarten classrooms will have a healthy balance of child-initiated and teacher-led learning opportunities throughout the day. Offering choices to young learners provides deeper engagement in learning. However, a heavy emphasis on child-initiated activities also is not a free for all. It is in the intentional planning on the part of the teacher in the materials, room arrangement, adult-child interactions, and structure in how the children engage with peers. Teachers need to plan their daily schedule to keep that 'just right' balance of child-initiated and teacher-led activities for each group of children.

In a best practices classroom, the daily schedule includes a mix of whole-group activities, small-group workshops, and independent area/centers.

Whole-group times are used to:

- Build community and common experiences; do group problem solving
- Introduce and teach skills and concepts
- Practice and review skills not yet mastered
- Perform—sing, dance, play acting

Small-group times are used to:

- Reinforce skills
- Provide corrective feedback during guided practice
- Provide differentiated instruction

Centers/areas are used to:

- Provide independent practice of familiar skills
- Provide connecting and extending activities
- Build independence and self-reliance skills

The interactive learning style of kindergartners must be reflected in the structure of the schedule. Key considerations include:

- Sedentary components of the day must be separated by the more active elements
- Whole group times should be limited to 20–30 minutes (at the beginning of the year, much shorter)
- There must be a balance of teacher directed and student initiated activities
- A suggested recess schedule may include a 15-minute am or pm recess plus a 20-minute lunch recess
- There should be 60–70 minutes of uninterrupted student directed learning/center time daily
- As the year progresses, the kindergarten schedule should evolve along a continuum of looking like a preschool classroom to a first grade room

A balanced daily schedule that accommodates play-based learning across content areas is a key element of a high-quality kindergarten program. A balanced schedule allows children to fully engage in planned activity without interruption for extended periods of time. The schedule includes time for content area-specific experiences, but teachers should anticipate that literacy, math, science, and social studies will be blended across segments of the day. Content learning does not happen in silos. The schedule is based on the premise that children spend most of their time in activity that is not sedentary. Rather, experiential, hands-on experience dominates a day that asks each child to explore, apply, and extend concepts and ideas from each content area through investigations and projects. Quieter and more active moments are balanced throughout the day. The earlier portion of the day is scheduled with activities that require more focus. Specialists intentionally happen in the latter part of the day to eliminate the number of transitions. *The sample schedules provided are meant to be utilized flexibly with the needs of the students serving as the driver.*

Sample Schedule: Full-Day Kindergarten

Beginning of Year	End of Year
8:30 – Table Jobs 8:50 – Morning Meeting 9:20 – Small Groups: Literacy Stations/Reading 10:15 – Large Group/Small Group: Writing Instruction 11:00 – Read Aloud 11:25 – Lunch 11:50 – Recess 12:15 – Learning Centers 1:20 – Recess 1:35 – Math 2:15 – Specialists (PE/Music/Library) 3:00 – Dismissal	8:30 – Entry task 8:45 – Morning Meeting 9:10 – Literacy Block – mini lesson, literacy stations, guided reading 10:10 – Brain Break/Movement 10:15 – Math Workshop – mini lesson, math stations/games 11:00 – Read aloud 11:20 – Lunch/Recess 12:20 – Writers Workshop – modeled writing lesson, student planning, small group guided writing, sharing 1:20 – Recess 1:35 – Learning Centers 2:15 – Specialists 3:00 – Dismissal

A Model of Play-Based Learning with Intentional Choice, Action, and Reflection

When children embark on self-selected projects based on interest, they are able to make meaning of skills that have been presented to them throughout the day and week. The process of “Plan-Do-Reflect” allows children to cement the skills and extend them by making meaningful connections to their own life. When a student is in charge of his/her own learning the highest level of engagement is achieved. The role of the teacher is to create a rich learning environment where taking risks is a value and the students do all the hard work of learning, while the teacher merely serves as a facilitator.

The “Plan-Do-Reflect” model is a **60–70 minute uninterrupted component of the day**. It is a time when the teacher is intentionally engaged with children, working alongside them, extending their thinking, coaching them through both social and academic scenarios, and modeling the highest level of learning and engagement. In thinking about the process, many essential elements of development are foundational.

Planning: “Choice with Intention”

The process of planning encourages children to articulate his/her ideas, intentions, and decisions. He/she is able to increase not only their self-confidence but it establishes a sense of control as well. It begins the process of engagement in the learning leading to concentrated play that allows a child to move along a continuum with increasing complexity.

Do: “Develops Competent Thinkers, Decision-Makers, and Problem Solvers”

Through the process of ‘do’ children are able to carry out his/her own ideas with the guided support of a trained adult. Children are able to construct meaning as they engage in key experiences by manipulating appropriate familiar and unfamiliar materials as well as interact with peers and adults. In a risk-taking environment the children are able to explore and extend their ideas while also process new information. The adults are then able to observe, support, and scaffold the students’ play leading to a deeper-level of learning.

Reflect: “Remembering and Reflecting with Analysis”

By using language and/or props a child is able to share his/her thinking and learning process with his/her peers. In doing so a child is able to describe and review from mental images. The child is able to engage in a conversation beyond the present and evaluate the process in which his/her learning went through. In sharing personal reflections the child is able to enlighten others, pose problems needing collaborative solutions, inspire others, or be inspired him/herself.

Plan-Do-Reflect in Motion

	What it IS	What it ISN'T
Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults provide opportunities to have children plan thinking of the student's development Children are provided the time to individually plan and share their plan with an adult or peer Children are able to communicate their plan using pictures, print, or words Each child plans and then gets right to work! Children have the freedom to move between areas during the work period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are assigned areas to play in or the areas are structured so that there is only one entry point Children are all asked the same rote sentence: "Where are you going to play today?" The adult closes certain areas in the classroom not allowing for them to be used
Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The "DO" immediately follows the plan Children are able to carry out their plan by self-selecting the materials they need and choosing whom to work with Children are free to invent and create since the materials are all open ended The role of the adult is to interact, play, extend a child's thinking by always being at the same physical level. It is a 'with' process The adult-child interactions sound like a conversation and the adults support a child's ideas/learning Student supports are scheduled outside of this block of time Adults attend to the child's social-emotional needs addressing them through problem solving issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The centers are filled with pre-set activities for the children to complete Only a certain number of children are allowed to be in an area at any given time Children are directed how and when to use materials by the adult in the classroom Adults in the classroom are doing paperwork, packing students up, answering email, directing The adults are only supervising the children and passively observe them at work Adults give their ideas of what the children should be doing Adults children how to solve their problem without taking in the child's view or voice
Reflect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflection follows the plan Adults provide opportunities to have children reflection thinking of the student's development Children are able to share their work using props, words, pictures, writing, and/or re-enactment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflection happens as a detached part of the sequence, for example at the end of the day Children are asked to reflect in a rote fashion: "Where did you work today?"

Here is an example of the ideal amount of time for the process to reach its highest level of development. During this time it is not the question of whether or not children are engaged in play or rigor. During this time children are actively engaged with **play with rigor!**

As the year progresses the process of Plan-Do-Reflect will become more complex as the children mature in the skills. With that, however, as the children become more independent in their ability to move about the room and between tasks, cleanup will take less time.

Plan	5–10 Minutes
Do	45–50 Minutes (In the beginning clean-up will take more time, but once proficient can be as fast as five minutes)
Reflect	5–15 Minutes

Additional Resources

Dramatic Play Kit Resource Guide – Sumner School District:

<http://www.sumner.wednet.edu/>

Kindergarten: A Transitional Year – DMA & Associates Inc.:

http://foundationsinliteracy.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=34&Itemid=53

Boston K2 Curriculum Guide:

<http://bpsearlychildhood.weebly.com/kindergarten-k2.html>

Learning Environment Self-Assessment/Reflection

Source: *Questions to Guide the Arrangement of the Classroom to Support Access for All Children*, Sadao and Robinson 2010.

Overall Environment

- Are there any large physical barriers that obstruct movement between learning areas?
- Are the pathways from the entrances to the learning areas and other seat locations wide enough?
- Does each table have room for adapted furniture, seats, and wheelchairs?
- Can a child with visual or motor issues navigate the classroom environment with minimal teacher assistance?
- Does each learning area have picture labels and directions to guide students about what to do in that area?
- Are storage containers labeled so that toys and games can be used and put away easily?

Student Cubbies

- Does each cubby have a student's picture and name on it?
- Do students have easy access to hooks for clothes and backpacks?
- Does each cubby have a small shelf or additional box to hold the student's work and journal?

Areas

- Is there appropriate storage space for blocks?
- Do some blocks have self-sticking fabric strips for added balance during stacking and building activities?
- Is the art area stocked with a variety of adapted scissors, pencil and paintbrush grips, and colored tape?
- Are the materials in the room open ended, allowing for extensions?

Whole Group Lesson Area

- Is a schedule posted with picture cues?
- Are individual schedules posted for students who need further individualization?
- Are pointers and flashlights available for pointing out and highlighting important information presented during large-group activities?
- Is a rain stick or timer available for providing an auditory cue when transitions occur?
- Is there a defined space for large-group activities identified by a large carpet or carpet squares?
- Are there a variety of props and other instructional materials to actively engage students in large-group learning?

Does the environment:

- Encourage and support purposeful play?
- Engage the senses and children's interests?
- Foster curiosity and intellectual engagement?
- Encourage a variety of ways of representing and reflect on learning?
- Support the worldviews of children?

Are the conversations:

- Authentic and meaningful?
- Supporting language development and learning?
- Inviting and encouraging children to think deeply about ideas?
- Providing information enabling educators to scaffold children's learning?
- Exploring connections?
- Sharing stories about culture to develop an understanding and appreciation of diversity?

Do the relationships:

- Support the development of strong, positive and trusting relationships?
- Foster a personal connectedness to nature and one another?

Does the play:

- Reflect, reinforce and result in children's development?
- Stimulate inquiry?
- Contribute to the achievement of curricular outcomes?
- Promotes self-expression and identity?

4. Curriculum and Instruction



RCW requirement

- Curriculum that offers a rich, varied set of experiences that assist students in developing skills through experiences that assists students in:
 - (i) Developing initial skills in the academic areas of reading, mathematics, and writing;
 - (ii) Developing a variety of communication skills;
 - (iii) Providing experiences in science, social studies, arts, health and physical education, and a world language other than English;
 - (iv) Acquiring large and small motor skills;
 - (v) Acquiring social and emotional skills including successful participation in learning activities as an individual and as part of a group; and
 - (vi) Learning through hands–on experiences.



TPEP Criteria

- Centering instruction on high expectations for student achievement.
- Demonstrating effective teaching practices.
- Providing clear and intentional focus on subject matter content and curriculum.

“Teachers provide experiences, materials and interactions to enable children to engage in play that allows them to stretch their boundaries to the fullest in their imagination, language, interaction, and self-regulation as well as practice their newly acquired skills.”

NAEYC Statement on DAP, Guideline #2.E.4, Copple and Bredekamp, 2009, p. 18

Overview

“What will my child learn in kindergarten?”

“I’ve been teaching fifth grade, and this year I’ve been reassigned to kindergarten. What does the kindergarten curriculum look like?”

“I’m the principal of a small, private elementary school, and I want to be sure my students are meeting the state’s standards. How can I find out what students are expected to learn at each grade?”

“In August 2010, the state adopted the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and mathematics. How will the new standards enhance kindergarten curriculum?”

The following section of the Washington State Full-day Kindergarten Guide is a compilation of resources to help teachers plan and implement the kindergarten curriculum. The questions above have been pondered by teachers, principals and parents as school transition to full-day kindergarten. Defining the kindergarten curriculum is a difficult process. It incorporates so much more than a published curriculum kit or a set of reading materials. Decisions are made at the local level to choose, implement, analyze and purchase instructional materials. However, the curriculum is more than just instructional materials. It is a dynamic and cyclical process of planning, implementing, observing and reflecting as indicated in the graphic. The standards for what kindergarten students should know and be able to do are the focus of the curriculum process. Without this focus, the content will not be appropriate or rigorous enough to meet the needs of the students. Teachers and administrators also need the knowledge and skills to implement the instructional practices as well as engage students in the learning process.



The following six elements will help teachers think about child development, observe how the children in their classroom are learning and growing, and make hundreds of decisions about the best ways to help students reach their full potential. (Gronlund, 2013, p. 31)

- A rich, well-organized classroom environment
- Ample time for play and investigation with children making choices

- Teachers scaffolding and assisting children as they play
- A healthy balance of child-initiated and teacher-led activities
- Respectful, caring relationships with children and families
- Integration of curriculum and authentic, observational assessments

In addition to the information provided in this section, the Washington State Learning Standards for kindergarten for each content area can be found at:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/default.aspx>

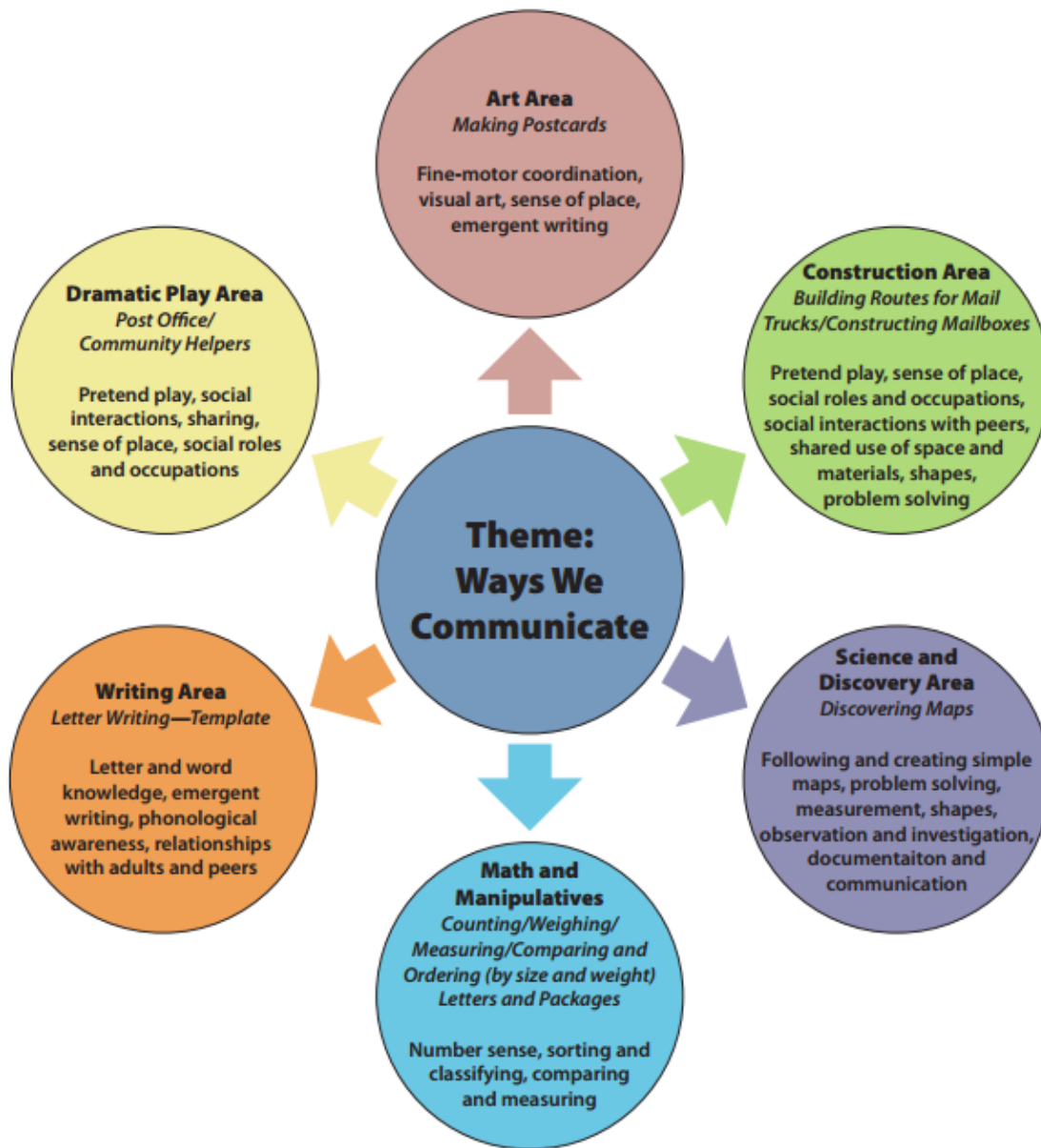
In addition, a useful source of information about the standards, especially for parents, are the *Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines: Birth through 3rd Grade*. They can be downloaded at: <http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/Guidelines.aspx>

Integrating Content Areas in Kindergarten

Students learn best when teachers promote meaningful connections across subjects and content. In kindergarten the core concepts of reading, writing, math, and social/emotional skills should be integrated across all curriculum areas. These skills are integral to instruction in other areas. “Teachers integrate ideas and content from multiple domains and disciplines through themes, projects, play opportunities and other learning experiences so that children are able to develop an understanding of concepts and make connections across content areas.” (Copple and Bredekamp 2009, 161)

Experiences in the content areas of science, social studies, health, fitness, world language and art can be integrated into the daily aspects of the kindergarten program through literature, informational text, activities, materials, discovery, and conversations. Content should be relevant to students. This is an important part of helping students to value learning and should be emphasized. Content and the core concepts are naturally interrelated for students. The emphasis on process and product will make learning meaningful and engage all students. Integrated learning centers designed around thematic studies can be engaging for students as well as allow time for them to deeply approach multiple content areas. A project approach that integrates multiple content areas can serve as a vehicle for learning in multiple domains.

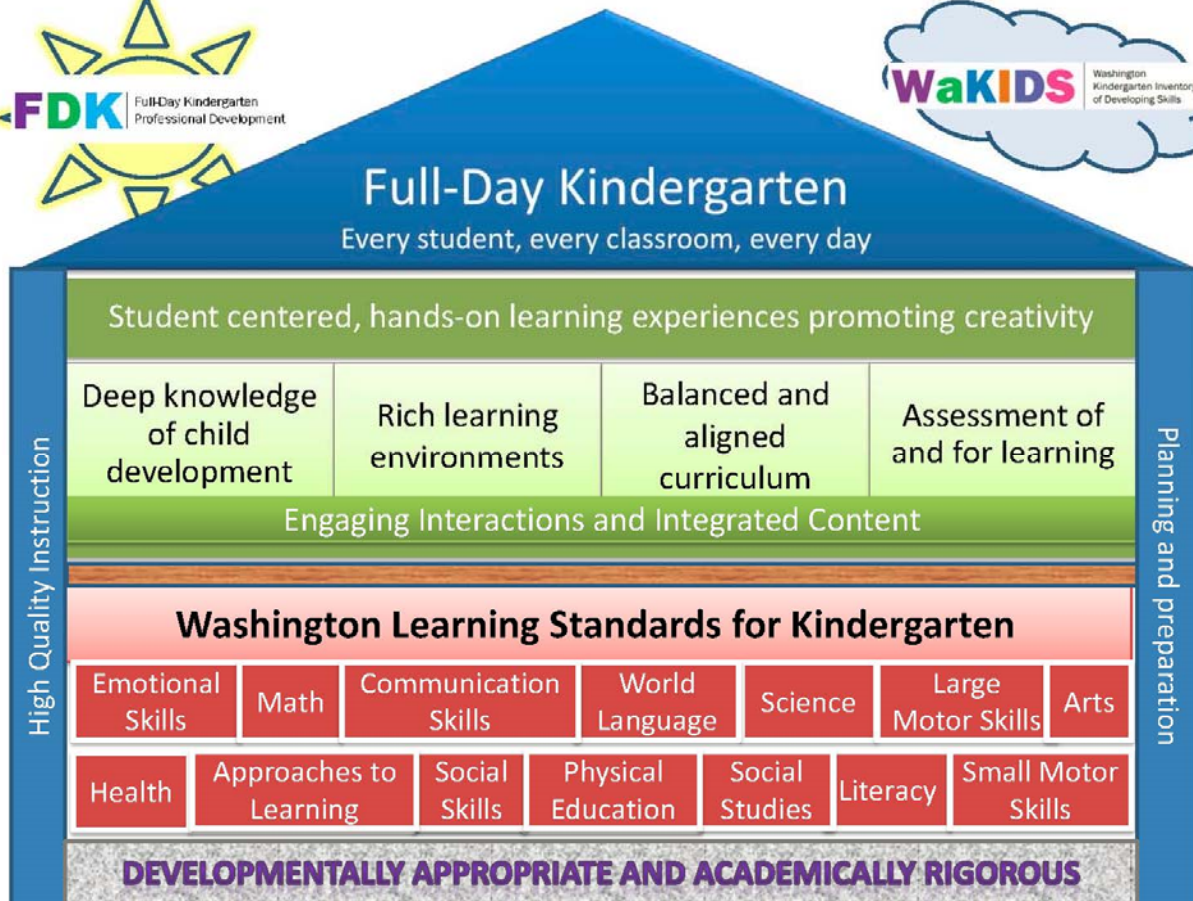
Sample: Integrated Unit Lesson Planning



Graphic from: *California Transitional Kindergarten Implementation Guide*. State Advisory Council on Early Learning and Care. Sacramento, CA. 2013.

Washington State Learning Standards: Kindergarten

English/Language Arts (Includes the Common Core Standards)	Reading: Literature Reading: Informational Text Reading: Foundational Skills Writing Speaking and Listening Language
Mathematics (Includes the Common Core Standards)	Mathematical Practices Counting and Cardinality Operations and Algebraic Thinking Number and Operations in Base Ten Measurement and Data Geometry
Science Standards (Includes the Next Generation Science Standards)	Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions Energy From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes Earth's Systems Earth and Human Activity Engineering Design Science and Engineering Practices Crosscutting Concepts
Social Studies	Civics Social Studies Skills History
Health and Physical Education	Healthy Lifestyle Motor skills and Movement Concepts Physical activity and fitness Responsible personal and social behavior.
Arts	Dance Music Theatre Visual Arts



Full-Day Kindergarten Concept Map

English Language Arts (Excerpt from: *Parent Roadmaps to Common Core Standards*, Council of the Great City Schools)

In kindergarten, students will learn the alphabet and the basic features of letters and words. They will break down spoken and written words into syllables and letters and identify the sounds each letter makes. These important skills will enable them to learn new words and to read and understand simple books and stories. Students will also learn to write and share information in a variety of ways, including drawing, writing letters and words, listening to others, and speaking aloud. Activities in these areas will include:

- Naming and writing upper-and lowercase letters
- Matching letters to sounds and using other methods to figure out unfamiliar words when reading and writing
- Learning and using new words
- Identifying words that rhyme
- Reading common words such as the, of, you, are, she, and my
- Asking and answering questions about a story the teacher reads out loud
- Identifying characters, settings, and major events in a story
- Recognizing the person, place, thing, or idea that an illustration shows
- Participating in discussions by listening and taking turns speaking

- Using a combination of drawing, speaking, and writing to describe an event, give information about a topic, or share an opinion
- Taking part in shared reading, writing, and research projects
- Expressing thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly

Mathematics (Excerpt from: *Parent Roadmaps to Common Core Standards*, Council of the Great City Schools)

In kindergarten, students will focus primarily on two important areas. The first is learning numbers and what numbers represent. The second is addition and subtraction. Students will also learn to identify and work with shapes. Activities in these areas include:

- Counting how many objects are in a group and comparing the quantities of two groups of objects
- Comparing two numbers to identify which is greater or less than the other
- Understanding addition as putting together and subtraction as taking away from
- Adding and subtracting very small numbers quickly and accurately
- Breaking up numbers less than or equal to 10 in more than one way (for example, $9=6+3$, $9=5+4$)
- For any number from 1 to 9, finding the missing quantity that is needed to reach 10
- Representing addition and subtraction word problems using objects or by drawing pictures
- Solving addition and subtraction word problems involving numbers that add up to 10 or less or by subtracting from a number 10 or less

OSPI has created a document, *Learning Pathways in Numeracy: Addressing Early Numeracy Skills*, which provides early numeracy learning progressions for children as they learn mathematics and links the *GOLD™* by Teaching Strategies® mathematics objectives, the *Early Learning Guidelines*, and the State Learning Standards in mathematics. It can be downloaded at:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/pubdocs/LearningPathwaysInNumeracy.pdf>

Science (Source: NGSS Lead States. 2013. *Next Generation Science Standards: For States, By States*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press)

The performance expectations in kindergarten help students formulate answers to questions such as: “What happens if you push or pull an object harder? Where do animals live and why do they live there? What is the weather like today and how is it different from yesterday?” Students are expected to develop understanding of patterns and variations in local weather and the purpose of weather forecasting to prepare for, and respond to, severe weather. Students are able to apply an understanding of the effects of different strengths or different directions of pushes and pulls on the motion of an object to analyze a design solution. Students are also expected to develop understanding of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive and the relationship between their needs and where they live. The crosscutting concepts of patterns; cause and effect; systems and system models; interdependence of science, engineering, and technology; and influence of engineering, technology, and science on society and the natural world are called out as organizing concepts for these disciplinary core ideas. In the kindergarten performance expectations, students are expected to demonstrate grade-appropriate proficiency in asking questions, developing and using models, planning and carrying out investigations, analyzing and interpreting data, designing solutions, engaging in argument from evidence, and obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information. Students are expected to use these practices to demonstrate understanding of the core ideas.

Washington state has specific Environmental and Sustainability Education (ESE) learning standards that can be integrated across the curriculum. The “environment” is broadly defined as the physical world, including living and nonliving components, ranging from pristine natural places to those heavily influenced by humans. The environment provides a perfect context of learning for kindergarten students, who are by nature inquisitive about the world around them. There are especially clear connections between science and ESE, which includes three learning standards for kindergarten. First, students develop knowledge of the interconnections and interdependency of ecological, social, and economic systems, especially focusing on natural and human communities at the local (school, neighborhood, and town/city) level. Second, students engage in inquiry and systems thinking and use information gained through learning experiences in, about, and for the environment to understand the structure, components, and processes of natural and human-built environments. Third, students develop and apply the knowledge, perspective, vision, skills, and habits of mind necessary to make personal and collective decisions and take actions that promote sustainability.

Social Studies

In kindergarten, students begin their investigation of the world using perspectives, concepts, and skills from the social studies. The context for social studies learning in kindergarten is the student’s interaction with classroom and school. The classroom serves as a microcosm of society in which decisions are made with respect to rights, rules, and responsibilities. They begin to learn the basic concepts of fairness and respect for the rights and opinions of others

Arts

The arts in Washington state have been defined by OSPI and the State Board of Education as dance, music, theatre, and visual arts. The K–12 arts learning standards describe a connected series, or a continuum, of essential learnings necessary to create students who are proficient in dance, music, theatre, and visual arts.

Health and Physical Education

Kindergarten students will build a foundation for knowledge acquisition, skill development, and health-enhancing behaviors. Students recognize basic facts and concepts about their bodies and begin to acquire skills and practices that keep them safe and healthy. Developing fundamental movement patterns is the focus of the kindergarten physical education curriculum. While children at this level vary in maturity across all movement skills, they should demonstrate continuous improvement in movement under very simple conditions. They understand how to make good decisions about simple health issues, to respect others, follow school safety rules, and be responsible.

World Language Experience

Washington schools that receive state funding for full-day kindergarten are required to provide experiences in a world language other than English. Young children are like sponges when it comes to languages. They soak up the sounds they hear, and their brains and mouths are more receptive to distinguishing and pronouncing new sounds than our adult brains and mouths are. At the same time, we need to be thoughtful about how we introduce new languages into a young learner’s environment because language is so connected to culture and identity. Additional information regarding strategies to provide world language experiences may be found at:

http://www.k12.wa.us/WorldLanguages/pubdocs/Kindergarten_World_Language_Experience_HO.pdf

Fine Motor Skills

The development of fine motor skills is an important part of every kindergartener's growth and competency. A child's attention span usually lengthens during kindergarten, and this can lead to a greater enjoyment of and involvement in fine motor activities. In kindergarten many students do not have the fine motor skills needed for handwriting instruction. Many young children struggle with tasks that require detail, patience, steadiness and small-muscle coordination, such as writing, drawing and cutting with precision. Children's upper body strength develops through play. Playground equipment such as monkey bars and swings will help children develop the strength and coordination they need for fine motor control. Utilize specialists such as occupational therapists in your school or district for additional resources and support.

Being aware of student's fine motor skills will help teachers provide the appropriate supports for handwriting instruction. Handwriting develops along a skills continuum. Emergent writers should have ample opportunities to practice writing their name. Demonstrating and modeling correct techniques and letter formation will assist students in moving along the continuum. Allow students to use a variety of different writing tools and activities for developing small motor skills. If children do not have the fine motor control for writing letters, they can draw pictures. Have them work on using basic shapes (circle, square, triangles, etc.) in their pictures. Write their dictation of the picture or story they drew below using correct letter formation. This approach not only supports their fine motor skills, but also their oral language development. Students who are supported along the handwriting continuum will be able to write legibly by the end of kindergarten.

Social-Emotional Development (Excerpted from: *GOLD™* by Teaching Strategies® *Objectives for Development and Learning Birth Through Kindergarten*. Heroman, Burts, Berke, Bickart. 2010. p. 1)

Young children's social-emotional development involves learning how to understand their own and other's feelings, regulate and express their emotions appropriately, build relationships with others, and interact in groups (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998). Social-emotional development flourishes when children have close, supportive, and trusting relationships with adults (Howes & James, 2002). When adults are responsive, when they express pleasure about children's accomplishments and discoveries, and when they create an environment in which children can participate actively in daily routines and experiences, children know that adults consider them to be important, interesting and competent.

Children's interactions with others are crucial to their learning. Problematic childhood relationships with adults and peers have been linked to negative outcomes such as emotional and mental health problems, lower school achievement, higher dropout rates, peer rejection, and delinquency. When their interactions are positive, young children are more likely to have positive short- and long-term outcomes (Rubin et al., 1998; Smith & Hart, 2002). The strong connection between early relationships and later behavior and learning makes it especially important for teachers to assess children's social-emotional development accurately and to support their growth and competence in this area.

Cognitive Development (Excerpted from: *GOLD™* by Teaching Strategies® *Objectives for Development and Learning Birth Through Kindergarten*. Heroman, Burts, Berke, Bickart. 2010. p. 57)

Cognitive development, also called intellectual development, is influenced by the child's approaches to learning as well as his or her biological makeup and the environment. A child's background knowledge, or knowledge base, also affects the way a child thinks. This background knowledge influences the child's information processing, memory, classification, problem solving, language acquisition, and reading and

mathematics learning (Bjorklund, 2005; McAfee & Leong, 1994). What and how children learn often varies considerably from culture to culture, and minor variations exist in the ways children within a cultural group perform specific cognitive tasks (Trawick-Smith, 2006). Some children have disabilities that interfere with the development of their conceptual and reasoning skills (Cook, Klein, & Tessier, 2004).

Children who have positive approaches to learning are more likely to succeed academically and to have more positive interactions with peers (Fantuzzo, Perry, & McDermott, 2004; Hyson, 2005, 2008; McWayne, Fantuzzo, & McDermott, 2004; Yen, Konold, & McDermott, 2004). These dispositions and behaviors must be nurtured by effective curriculum and intentional teaching methods (Hyson, 2005, 2008; Hyson, Buch, Fantuzzo, & Scott-Little, 2006).

The physical environment of the classroom and the kinds of interactions children have with adults and other children influence the way children approach learning and influence other aspects of their cognitive development. Play is important for learning; researchers have found many connections between cognitive competence and play, particularly high-quality dramatic play. The benefits of play include self-regulation; memory development; divergent thinking; problem solving; language development; and academic skill development in literacy, math, social studies, and science (Bergen, 2002; Bodrova & Leong, 2004; Charlesworth, 2007; Krafft & Berk, 1998; Fantuzzo & McWayne, 2002; Howes & Matheson, 1992; Klein, Worth & Linas, 2004; Newman, 1990; Nourot & Van Hoorn, 1991; O'Reilly & Bornstein, 1993; Smilansky & Shefatya, 1990; Steglin, 2005).

Instructional Practices in Kindergarten

“When you extend a child’s knowledge and understanding hand-in-hand with nurturing a positive relationship with that child, you create the optimal condition for you to teach and for the child to learn.”

Birch & Ladd, 1997

Effective educators of kindergarten students have a foundational knowledge of child development. This background in understanding key aspects of children’s physical, cognitive, social and emotional development will assist teachers in planning curriculum and implementing strategies that are engaging and challenging. It is critical that educators intentionally plan for and design experiences for students that deliver the content of the curriculum. Effective instructional strategies promote access to this content, but also must take into consideration active engagement through meaningful discovery. Purposeful play is an effective approach to build student interest and motivation, but play alone is not enough. Teachers must carefully plan and facilitate purposeful play throughout the day. They must make it a priority to balance their instructional practices to meet student needs. The ongoing measurement of developmental needs through observation and assessment will assist teachers in designing opportunities that build children’s foundation for success. The balance between teacher-guided and student-initiated learning is a priority for creating high-quality instructional experiences in kindergarten.

It is the educator’s responsibility to:

- Design a flexible environment where exploration is possible, divergent thinking is encouraged, and children’s interests are extended to achieve the kindergarten outcomes
- Adjust the environment as children’s interests expand and additional outcomes are targeted
- Engage in genuine conversations to guide inquiry experiences that children initiate
- Be prepared to initiate and plan conversations and experiences that will lead to achievement of the outcomes
- Observe play to determine ranges of children’s development
- Support play that will meet individual needs, address interests, and achieve outcomes

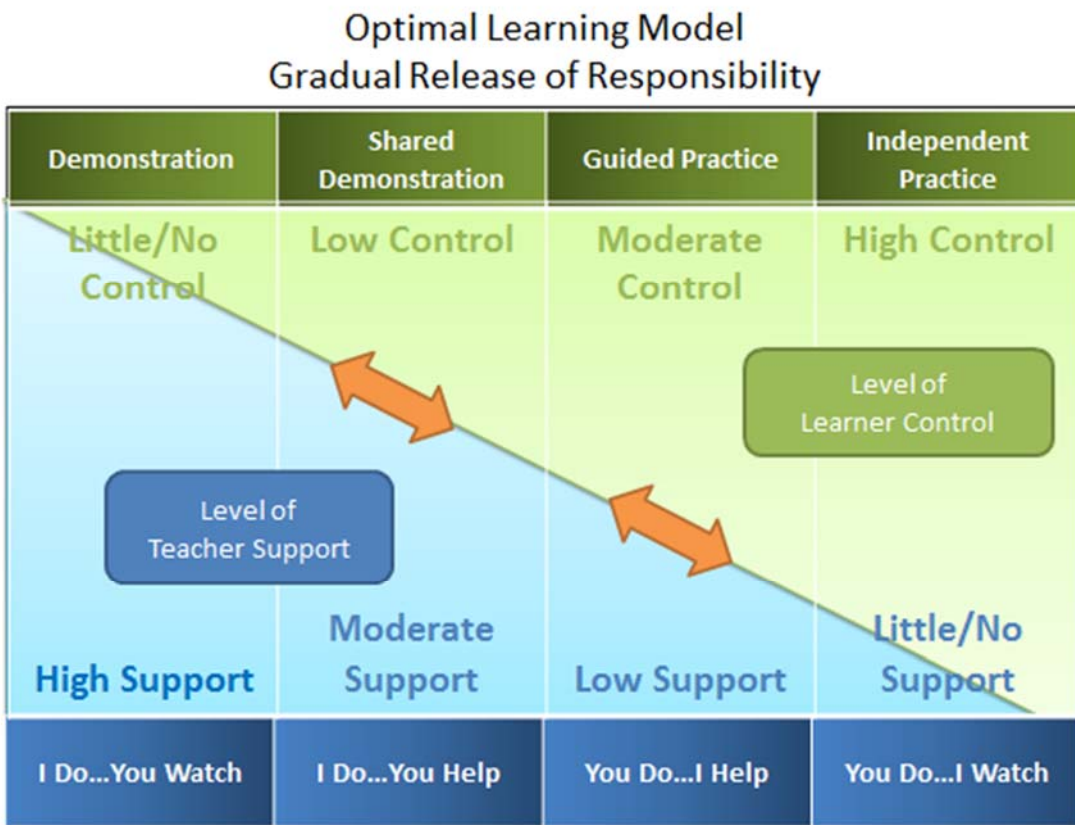
Kindergarten teachers need a variety of effective instructional strategies at the ready. Choosing the best strategy at any given moment depends on the learning goal, the specific situation, and the individual child (Heroman and Copple, 2006). It is important for teachers to be flexible in using different strategies.

The following strategies can be used by teachers in different contexts and will help teachers be effective in their instruction (Copple and Bredekamp, 2006):

- **Encourage.** Offer comments or nonverbal actions that promote children’s persistence and effort (“that wasn’t easy, but you kept trying different things”) rather than giving evaluative praise.
- **Give specific feedback.** Offer specific rather than general comment on the child’s performance (“that’s a “d”, Lilly, not a “b” - it looks a lot like a “b” but it’s turned the other way, see?”).

- **Model.** Display for children a skill or desirable way of behaving (whispering when you want the children to lower their own voices; modeling cooperation and problem solving by saying, “you both want to use the computer, so let’s think about how you could use it together”).
- **Create or add challenge.** Generate a problem or add difficulty to a task so that it is just beyond what children have already mastered (once a child counts up to five items accurately, begin engaging him in counting sets of six to eight).
- **Give a cue, hint or other assistance.** Help children to work “on the edge” of their current competence (such as initially labeling cubbies with both picture and print labels, with the pictures to be removed later).
- **Provide information.** Directly give children facts (“Birds make nests like this one to live in”), verbal labels (“this is a cylinder”), and other information.
- **Give directions.** Provide specific instructions for children's action or behavior (“Move the mouse to this icon and click on it; “Pour very slowly so we don’t lose any of the liquid”).

Using a model of scaffolding or a gradual release of responsibility also will help kindergarten teachers be effective in meeting the needs of students and helping them reach challenging and achievable goals.



In a typical kindergarten classroom, there is a significant range of development in all areas; social, emotional, physical, language and cognitive. No two kindergarteners are alike. It is essential that kindergarten teachers differentiate instruction to meet the needs all students in their classroom. Teachers must provide children multiple paths to reach similar goals. Effective kindergarten teachers are skilled at aligning curriculum content and adjusting instructional strategies with each child's developmental levels and abilities (CA Transitional Kindergarten Implementation Guide, 2013). An ongoing cycle of observation, assessment, instruction, and reflection is essential to address the learning needs in a kindergarten classroom. Effective teachers use this cycle to create a pathway for success for all students.

Planning for Variability

(Adapted from Focus on K2: An Integrated Approach to Teaching and Learning. Boston Public Schools. June 2014.)

Young children arrive in our kindergarten classrooms with a wide variety of competencies and challenges. They express their ideas and questions in many ways and demonstrate their particular approaches to tasks and problems in countless languages: with words, movements, gestures, artwork, symbols, stories. Some children's learning paths have been codified by diagnoses and specific recommendations have been written into Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). While these documents lay out goals, benchmarks and accommodations, we know that our most precise attention is required to understand how all children learn and to design progressive and provocative learning experiences. In the framework of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), teaching and learning is crafted around carefully articulated goals, achievable by all children through multiple paths of access. This represents a shift away from designing curriculum for most children and then planning accommodations for others. Instead, a variety of materials, tools and processes allow children and teachers to approach learning experiences from different points and in different ways, while maintaining the expectation that all children will develop and express understandings, enhance new strategies, and demonstrate skills as they develop.

Recognition of variability among all learners has led us to change language in this guide referring to "special learners." All children benefit from having available a broad menu of specialized tools and strategies in order to best access various activities and we share some suggestions here.

To expand accessibility in the brain's recognition networks (gathering and categorizing information):

- Use visual images to:
 - support understanding of the steps of a process
 - reference resources ("Your building reminds me of this house.")
 - inspire (ideas for building, writing/drawing, acting, experimenting)
 - document children's work and support conversation about it
 - give instructions
 - list needed or possible tools and materials
- Use a slow pace of speech and simple phrases
- Use songs and rhymes for transitions, leave a word out and ask children to fill in the blank
- Answer questions with one or two words
- Ask questions that can be answered with one or two words (e.g., "What are you doing?" "I'm dancing")
- Ask yes/no questions
- Ask explicit questions (who, what, when, where, how many)

- Provide one-step directions
- Make predictions (“What will happen if you build higher?”)
- Incorporate specific vocabulary pertaining to each unit
- Demonstrate and repeat book vocabulary
- Retell stories with illustrations or pictures
- Record stories and non-fiction texts for listening center
- Adapt stories by offering simplified language and plot
- Restate facts from non-fiction text
- Start phrases for children to finish (“I am pretending to be a....”)
- Use non-verbal signals (thumbs up/down to refer to facts and to answer questions, thumb to self for “Me, too.”)
- Verbally label children’s actions (“You are using the brush to paint the box.” “You are building a tall structure.”)
- Verbally label and describe attributes of materials (shapes, colors, sizes)
- Provide concrete or realistic props (hats, buckets, photographs related to the unit)
- Identify the features of academic material (parts of a book, concepts of print, communication and thinking processes)
- Label tools, materials and features of the environment in children’s home languages
- Provide name tags for dramatic roles
- Limit clutter
- Encourage collaboration with other children

For English Language Learners:

The emphasis on oral language, work in small groups, conversation, and interaction with rich materials are all research-based strategies that support language development and acquisition. Hearing teachers use and label objects with specific vocabulary, both during the introduction to centers and while scaffolding in centers, will enhance the vocabulary development of all children.

To expand accessibility in the brain’s strategic networks (planning and performing tasks, organizing and expressing ideas):

- Create a picture schedule of the flow of the day, using “Boardmaker” icons, photographs or sketches to remind children of what to expect next
- Provide sequencing templates and other graphic organizers
- Provide picture cards to make sentences and express ideas
- Provide sentence frames
- Invite children to point to express understandings and ask questions
- Make available a small choice board that offers a limited number of centers at a time
- Provide visual menu of activities
- Put all materials needed for a project on a tray
- Use tape to define work spaces (building space in block area, work space on table)
- Provide name tags for dramatic roles
- Encourage children to use non-verbal signals (thumbs up/down to refer to facts and to answer questions, thumb to self for “Me, too.”)
- Encourage collaboration with other children
- Provide writing papers with various templates for more/less space for drawing and writing
- Provide papers with and without lines
- Provide sentence starters for stories, descriptions of work, questions to research to be used for writing and with picture-word cards

- Provide flannel boards for retelling, restating (stories, life cycles, processes)
- Clip paper to a binder to provide a slant for writing/drawing
- Provide variety of materials such as Wikki Stix, straws, and pipe cleaners for making symbols, letters, and figures
- Add grips to pencils and markers to facilitate grasp; offer markers, crayons, pencils, brushes in a variety of thicknesses
- Provide tongs to pick up materials
- Provide gloves
- Provide pre-torn tape on a block in the middle of the table
- Demonstrate the use of materials and tools with step by step instructions and options for variability in approach
- Limit number of materials, gradually adding more in number and type over time
- Ask children to help identify materials and tools needed for a particular task and set them aside in designated work space
- Create picture cards for gestures and actions children develop for acting out stories
- Participate in play (as a minor character), interacting directly to expand play themes
- Be consistent with set-up of materials and tools
- Limit clutter
- Provide small work spaces with limited visual stimulation

To expand accessibility in the brain’s affective networks (getting engaged, being challenged and staying motivated):

- Offer a variety of seating at group meetings and at tables (chairs with arms, rocking chairs, exercise balls, cube chairs, T-stools, bean bag chairs)
- Stretch elastic material between front chair legs
- Allow children to stand while working
- Allow and encourage movement breaks (wall push-ups, jumping jacks, floor-tape “balance beam,” arm circles)
- Clip paper to a binder, to provide a slant for writing/drawing
- Provide headphones or earmuffs
- Add or remove environmental scents
- Offer a child a personal box of materials
- Create a cardboard box office that provides a semi-private work area, either for one child or two children
- Offer opportunities to work with partners
- Provide a mat to designate a protected space for a child to work (adjust size of space depending on needs or child/task)
- Model expanding on or making adaptations to a repetitive activity, narrating through the process
- Provide different textures of blocks by covering some with pantyhose, fabric, felt, sandpaper
- Soften sound environment with large towels or yoga mats
- Offer squishy balls or other concentration tools for group meetings
- Invite children to move and lay on belly while looking at books
- To support transitions into and out of centers, use a visual timer so that children can see when it is nearly time to clean up

In addition to the guidelines, further consideration may be needed to assure accessibility for the variability of all learners, based on the context of your classroom and classroom community. Adaptations outlined in children’s specific IEPs will inform your preparations and processes. For excellent ideas on expanding access to center activities and routines, please refer to: Gould and Sullivan, *The Inclusive Early Childhood Classroom: Easy Ways to Adapt Learning Centers for All* (Prentice Hall, 2005).

Additional Curriculum and Instruction Resources:

Your Child's Progress Document from OSPI: <http://www.yourchildsprogress.com/>

Washington State Learning Standards: <http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/default.aspx>

World Languages in Kindergarten – Resources:

http://www.k12.wa.us/WorldLanguages/pubdocs/Kindergarten_World_Language_Experience_HO.pdf

http://internationalewa.org/resources/wl/early/fdk_resources.htm

American Sign Language:

<http://www.nellieedge.com/members/resources/Teaching-All-Children-Fingerspell.pdf>

http://www.nellieedge.com/pdf/ebook_magicSigning.pdf

Spanish:

Free online program:

– http://www.123teachme.com/learn_spanish/spanish_for_children

– Video showing a morning routine in Kindergarten using Spanish and English

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W97zQ6ZmoJM>

– Kindergarten Spanish Games

http://www.ehow.com/list_6675055_kindergarten-spanish-games.htmlActivities and Ideas for Teaching Spanish to Kindergarteners

<http://www.brighthubeducation.com/pre-k-and-k-lesson-plans/103387-teaching-spanish-to-kindergarten-students/>

Japanese:

Basic lessons for teaching Japanese

<http://web-japan.org/kidsweb/language/>

Arts in Kindergarten – Resources:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/Arts/Resources.aspx>

Environmental and Sustainability Education (ESE) Learning standards:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/EnvironmentSustainability/Standards/default.aspx>

OSPI ESE - <http://www.k12.wa.us/EnvironmentSustainability/default.aspx>

State Guidance for Selection of Instructional Materials:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/InstructionalMaterialsReview.aspx>

Foundations in Literacy:

http://foundationsinliteracy.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=34&Itemid=53

Teacher/Principal Evaluation: <http://tpep-wa.org/>

Teacher-Child Interactions in Early Childhood Research Summary:

http://cdn2.hubspot.net/hub/336169/file-1265335269-pdf/PDF_or_Documents/Research-Summary_Teacher-Child_Interactions.pdf?t=1437412779648

Guidance for WaKIDS Teachers Working with English Language Learners (ELL):

<http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/pubdocs/GuidanceWaKIDSTeachersWorkingwithEnglishLangLearnersELL.pdf>

Curriculum and Instruction Self-Assessment/Reflection

Curriculum and Instruction	Not evident in my school/ practice	Somewhat evident in my school/ practice	Consistently evident in my school/ practice	Consistently evident with practices that elaborate upon or exceed expectations
District and/or school has clearly defined resources to support standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
District and/or school has clearly defined success criteria for students to show understanding/proficiency of standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kindergarten teachers have developed enduring understandings or essential questions based on standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
High leverage instructional strategies are evident and consistent across kindergarten classrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers participate in selecting common curricula that address both academic and social-emotional well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning targets in student-friendly language are posted in the classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
District and/or school has invested in a systematic approach to professional development that is grounded in child development and focused on effective instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kindergarten teachers demonstrate effective support of children’s language/reading, math, and social and emotional development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kindergarten teachers demonstrate effectiveness in responding to individual children’s development and learning needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kindergarten teachers demonstrate common and cohesive instructional practices (across classrooms) that are developmentally appropriate and differentiated to meet the needs of all children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Assessment



RCW requirement

– Administer the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS).



TPEP Criteria

– Using multiple student data elements to modify instruction and improve student learning.

“Early childhood personnel must constantly balance the need for instructionally relevant assessment information against the time and resources necessary to collect, organize, interpret, display, and store data.”

*A Guide to Assessment in Early Childhood; Infancy to Age Eight.
Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2008*

An important requirement when receiving state funds for full-day kindergarten in Washington is the administration of the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS).

WaKIDS includes three components: 1) A “whole-child” assessment; 2) Family Connection, and 3) Early Learning Collaboration.

The WaKIDS “whole-child” assessment is an observational assessment tool, *GOLD™*. Using *GOLD™*, teachers observe their students at the beginning of the kindergarten school year to find out what each child knows. *GOLD™* provides indicators (“look-fors”) of student skills in a rubric of developmental progressions. Information for each child is to be entered by October 31st.

Knowing more about children’s entering skills and strengths helps teachers and parents work together to support student growth in the kindergarten year, with the goal of meeting end-of-year standards. In addition, the results are being used to provide feedback to early learning providers, target resources, and influence state policies.

With *GOLD™*, teachers inventory each child's developing skills in six areas: Social-emotional, Physical, Cognitive, Language, Literacy and Mathematics. The list of objectives being assessed can be found at: http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/pubdocs/GOLD_HNDT_Objectives.pdf

Prior to administering *GOLD™*, teachers are required to attend a training, which are provided by each of the state’s Educational Service Districts. See www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS for the schedule of trainings.

Although the state requires teachers to assess students only once at the beginning of the year, teachers may choose to assess students up to three times a year in order to document student growth.

Individual student, classroom, and school results are available as soon as the data has been entered in the *GOLD™* online tool. Teachers and principals are able to view and print out a variety of reports at the individual and classroom-levels.

The table below illustrates how the *GOLD™* observational assessment differs from other state assessments:

WaKIDS Assessment Differs from Other Washington State Assessments

WaKIDS Assessment	Other State Assessments (e.g. Smarter Balanced,)
Measures development and learning evident at beginning of school year	Measure knowledge and skills evident at end of school year or course
Observational	Multiple-choice or constructed response; can be computer-adaptive
Assesses whole child	Assess knowledge and skills in specific academic content areas
Conducted by teachers while children are engaged in curriculum-embedded learning activities	Conducted by proctors as a separate testing activity
Not a screening tool	Not screening tools
Ongoing; evidence collected over multiple points of time within the assessment window	Measure a single point in time
Uses formative data to inform instruction at the moment collected	Not applicable
Reports summative data immediately after teachers finish uploading it	Report summative data weeks after students finish testing

WaKIDS Resources

OSPI has developed resources to assist principals and teachers to implement the “whole-child” observational assessment component of WaKIDS. See the WaKIDS web page for additional information, including information about required and optional training opportunities:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS>

Other State-level Assessments

In addition to WaKIDS, school districts are required to administer a number of other assessments and evaluations for purposes of state and federal programs, such as the Washington English Language Proficiency Assessment (WELPA) and screening tools for the state Learning Assistance, Highly-Capable, and Special Education programs. Additional information regarding these program, including assessment and evaluation information, are available online at the links at the end of the Program Structures section of the Guide.

School and School District Assessments

Many school and school districts require other diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to be administered in the early grades, primarily in reading and mathematics.

While no single assessment is valid for all purposes, [RCW 28A.150.315](#) (2)(a) states that it is the intent of the Legislature that administration of WaKIDS replace the administration of other assessments being required by school districts or that other assessments only be administered if they seek to obtain information not covered by WaKIDS.

6. Transitions: The WaKIDS Family Connection and Early Learning Collaboration



RCW requirements

- Demonstrate strong connections and communication with early learning community providers.
- Participate in kindergarten program readiness activities with early learning providers and parents.



TPEP Criteria

- **Families and Community:** The teacher communicates and collaborates with students, families and all educational stakeholders in an ethical and professional manner to promote student learning.
- **Professional Practice:** The teacher participates collaboratively in the educational community to improve instruction, advance the knowledge and practice of teaching as a profession, and ultimately impact student learning. Student growth data must be a substantial factor utilizing the OSPI approved student growth rubrics.

“Kindergarten is a context in which children make important conclusions about school as a place where they want to be and about themselves as learners vis-à-vis schools. If no other objectives are accomplished, it is essential that the transition to school occur in such a way that children and families have a positive view of the school and that children have a feeling of perceived competence as learners.”

Docket and Perry, 2001.

The transition into kindergarten is a special milestone in a child and families life. It can be filled with joy, anticipation, and apprehension as well. It is also a critical transition from the birth-five world into the K–12 system that can influence their further educational experiences. A child faces many discontinuities as they enter kindergarten and it is critical that a system approach is not only implemented but thoughtful of both the child and his/her family. The transition should not only be considered from the child and family perspective but the teacher and administrator as well. A clear understanding of kindergarten readiness on the part of all involved parties also assists in a smooth transition.

A child’s transition into kindergarten may be his/her first experience with materials, a school setting or even social interactions with other children who are outside their immediate or extended family. It is a critical time for everyone, the child, the family and the school. It has been described as "one of the major challenges children face in their early childhood years" (Victorian Department of School Education, 1992, p. 44) or "a key life cycle transition both in and outside school" (Pianta & Cox, 1999, p. xvii).

Dockett & Perry, (2004) found:

- Children are usually eager to show that they are *big kids* going to *big school* but at the same time feel anxious about this new endeavor
- While parents are excited about their child’s transition to school, they are also apprehensive about what their role will be
- Staff in early learning settings are both amazed at what students have achieved in their preschool programs but also concerned about the change their former students will face as they enter the K–12 system
- The kindergarten teacher is excited to meet their new students, but also know that getting to know a new class of students and their families is a big task

Family Connection

As noted earlier, the “Family Connection” is one of the three components to WaKIDS. This component requires that kindergarten teachers meet one-on-one with the child and the child’s family at or near the beginning of the school year for at least 20 to 30 minutes.

These one-on-one meetings are intended to welcome families to school and provide a safe environment for families to speak freely with the teacher. They also help families and teachers begin to build relationships so that they can work together to help children be successful in school. The earlier these meetings occur, the more helpful they are.

OSPI has a booklet, *Introducing Me!*, which was written to guide the Family Connection conversation. It is available in PDF format in multiple languages and can be downloaded at:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/Family/default.aspx>

Legislation passed in 2013, permits schools to use up to three full school days for the Family Connection without applying for a 180-day waiver from the State Board of Education. These three days are specific to the Family Connection component of WaKIDS, and are not to be used to conduct assessments. However, schools may continue to use any model they would like to conduct the individual meetings with families, including early-release days, evening conferences and prior-to-school meetings.

Early Learning Collaboration

The goal of the collaboration component of WaKIDS is to increase communication and build connections between kindergarten teachers and early learning providers to promote smooth and successful transitions to kindergarten for children.

Specific objectives of the early learning collaboration component of WaKIDS include:

- Building and strengthening relationships between early learning providers and kindergarten teachers
- Developing and sharing common expectations for kindergarten readiness
- Sharing emerging best practices
- Sharing and better familiarizing districts and the early learning community with *GOLD™*, the data being collected, and the reports that can be generated
- Analyzing WaKIDS data to inform practice and improve future school readiness
- Coordinate with districts and elementary schools to engage kindergarten teachers, elementary principals and administrators in the ESD/Coalition convening's

Additional Resources

Transition to Kindergarten

Successful Kindergarten Transitions: Your Guild to Connecting Children, Families, and Schools

Pianta & Kraft-Sayre 2011

The Transition to Kindergarten: A Review of Current Research and Promising Practices to Involve Families: <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/the-transition-to-kindergarten-a-review-of-current-research-and-promising-practices-to-involve-families>

WaKIDS Family Connections: <http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/Family/default.aspx>

Highline School District Readiness Guidelines:

<http://www.highlineschools.org/cms/lib07/WA01919413/Centricity/Domain/94/K-Readiness-Family-Guidelines-2014-English.pdf>

Early Learning Collaboration

WaKIDS Early Learning Collaboration: <http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/Collaboration/default.aspx>

Parent Education

Ready! for Kindergarten: <http://www.readyforkindergarten.org/index.jsp>

Kaleidoscope Play and Learn: <http://www.childcare.org/family-services/find-care-kaleidoscope.aspx>

7. Program Structures

Kindergarten Teachers

“Districts emphasized that selecting a credentialed teacher who has a background in child development was a key to the success of the program. Also, it was shared that it was very important to select a teacher who understands the need to differentiate instruction for the range of developmental abilities and who understands the essential skills that children need to have in order to successfully transition into the second year of kindergarten.”

California Transitional Kindergarten Implementation Guide

As schools districts recruit and employ full-day kindergarten teachers, it is important to carefully consider the training and prior teaching experience. Aside from the teacher having the proper credentials, administrators should consider the individual’s experiences in working with young children. ***School districts should seriously consider hiring kindergarten teachers who have an endorsement in Early Childhood Education and provide incentives for existing kindergarten teachers to obtain this endorsement.***

Holding the proper credentials alone does not ensure that the candidate has the knowledge and expertise to support the youngest learners. Having a deep understanding of how children grow and learn is essential in setting up a high-quality learning environment for students. There must be a fine balance of understanding the standards as well as being thoughtful and intentional with how children grow and learn. A highly-qualified teacher can take into account what a child should know and be able to do and infuse these milestones into lesson planning, environment, adult-child interactions, and the curriculum extending his/her knowledge.

An early learning teacher is not only nurturing but sees play as a required instructional strategy, and uses ongoing observational assessment to make formative instructional decisions. He or she is able to set up structures that teach children to be independent, problem solve, and self-regulate through play-based learning.

According to teachers, qualities that effective teachers display include:

1. A strong understanding of the subject matter. For kindergarten this would encompass not only grade level standards, but child development as well
2. Personal interest in the students as well as the ability to work with families
3. Ability to create a warm, responsive classroom environment
4. Enthusiasm for the students and their learning

Upon asking principals what they are looking for, a slightly different view was taken. They would add that a high-quality early learning teacher:

1. Is able to plan, organize, and execute developmentally appropriate lessons
2. Child oriented
3. Display enthusiasm for his/her students

Additional surveys have shown that other values such as being an effective communicator, life-long learner, patient, nurturing, and organized also are required. (NAEYC, March 2008)

Research finds that “...early childhood teachers who hold bachelor’s degrees (e.g., bachelor of arts, bachelor of science) with specialized training in early childhood education provide better quality learning experiences, which lead to better outcomes, most notably for 3- to 5-year olds.” (Barnett, 2003; National Research Council, 2001; Whitebook, 2003)

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Foundation Task Force on Early Learning recently recommended that pre-service training “...include a focus on child development, knowledge and practice to promote children’s school readiness, early childhood curricula and assessment, and approaches to family engagement as well as the interrelationship between programs that serve children up to age 5 and K–3 programs.”

In order to provide intentional instruction, a teacher must be able to call upon sound judgment, content knowledge, developmental knowledge, and knowledge of the individual child to instruct towards reaching outcomes (across all domains). Without specialized training, kindergarten teachers are less likely to be able to provide effective intentional instruction because of lack of knowledge around developmental needs of children in kindergarten and the strategies to use to support strong child outcomes. Currently, teachers who have taught higher elementary grades, such as 4th grade, can be put in charge of kindergarten classrooms, despite being unfamiliar with the needs and capacities of children in kindergarten. As a result, kindergarteners may receive instruction that is inappropriate for their age level, or not effective in reaching expected outcomes.

State and Federal Programs

A number of state and federal programs provide additional support for children in kindergarten classrooms. These programs include a range of services including providing services for English language learners, children with special needs, and students who are considered highly-capable. In addition, in 2010 the Legislature created a new program for evaluating teachers.

Information regarding these programs can be found in the links below:

Special Education: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/default.aspx>

State Learning Assistance Program: <http://www.k12.wa.us/LAP/default.aspx>

Federal Title I Program, Part A: <http://www.k12.wa.us/LAP/default.aspx>

Bilingual and Migrant Education: <http://www.k12.wa.us/MigrantBilingual/default.aspx>

Highly-Capable: <http://www.k12.wa.us/HighlyCapable/default.aspx>

Teacher/Principal Evaluation: <http://tpep-wa.org/>

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