HANDBOOK FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTITIONERS IN OECS COUNTRIES

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook has been developed for Early Childhood Practitioners, and their Supervisors, who may be new to the practice of Early Childhood Education, or who are using the OECS curriculum framework for the first time.

The framework is not meant be used as a prescriptive document, except in so far as it identifies necessary learning outcomes for certain broad stages of development. It was developed as a flexible document which can be used by persons using different curriculum approaches to plan their own national or center curriculum. However, common to all these approaches are certain broad principles of learning. Also common are core curriculum and instructional functions which all early childhood practitioners must understand, and be able to carry out.

It is the implementation of these principles and functions that the handbook is intended to support, no matter which curriculum model you use.

The handbook includes discussion of important concepts and practices relevant to curriculum planning and implementation for early childhood education, together with examples of critical concepts and practices, and illustrations of concepts and practices. It presents suggestions for the selection and/or adaptation of materials, and for managing the physical space, for as Decker, Decker, Freeman and Knopf (2005, p. 20) note, “Curriculum includes all aspects of the program that influence what and how children might learn.”

The handbook also offers opportunities to apply what you learned in different chapters and sections. It is hoped that you will find it helpful in planning and implementing your curriculum.

ACRONYMS

CARICOM**:** The Caribbean Community
NAEYC: National Association for the Education of Young Children
OECS**:** The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States

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I. PLANNING YOUR CURRICULUM

Overview

Your curriculum encapsulates the type of learning experiences you aim at giving children in your care. It is your blueprint guiding all decisions you make. It is critical, then, that you should not simply select content, activities, and ways of assessing children's development according to what is now fashionable, or in deference to the wishes of people who may not be as aware as you of what children need to support their optimal development. A curriculum needs to be carefully planned. In this chapter, we look at different types of curriculum planning.

You will learn, first, how the OECS curriculum framework is structured, so that you will be able to easily select what you need to guide different stages of your own curriculum planning. You will also explore ways of ensuring that your curriculum is aligned in all important ways with your national curriculum. And finally you will learn about different types of designs, and how to organize your curriculum content and learning experiences to ensure that they are consistently integrated and child centered.

Objectives

At the end of this chapter you will be able to:

- Describe the different parts of the OECS curriculum framework, and how it is structured, so as to be able to select relevant parts to guide your curriculum planning process.
- Explain why curriculum planning is such an important process.
- Identify components of an early childhood curriculum that you need to plan.
- Plan the curriculum so as to ensure that it is aligned with your country's early childhood curriculum, and that the different components are aligned with each other.
- Determine the role of outcome statements in guiding curriculum planning for early childhood.
- Select a curriculum design that will guide you as you organize your curriculum content and learning experiences.

Using the Curriculum Framework Document

The curriculum framework document should be used to guide your own planning for curriculum and instruction in the center where you work.

Section I provides an overview of theoretical principles on which the curriculum is based, including the constructivist philosophy which drives it; theories of child development and learning; and an identification of key features of the social and historical context which should be considered in planning a curriculum.

Section I identifies the following key features of the curriculum:

1. An experiential learning cycle, with opportunities for active learning based on concrete experiences, but also for reflection and application of what has been learned
2. A learning environment that strongly reflects the child's authentic cultural experiences
3. Developmentally appropriate practices
4. Authentic assessment
5. The importance of a learning community

Section I will help to guide you as you determine how far your curriculum reflects these basic principles, and you identify features of your specific context that might lead you to adapt parts of the curriculum to meet your center's specific needs.

Section II describes the strands around which the curriculum is structured, and identifies key goals and learning outcomes, based on the stages of development through which children progress in early childhood. You should use these in identifying outcomes and planning how you might assess the attainment of those outcomes.

Section III looks at issues you should keep in mind when planning instruction and key experiences in collaboration with parents and community members.

The final section, Section IV, looks at curriculum evaluation, and suggests principles and methods for assessing children and evaluating your center's curriculum.

Planning for Alignment

Introduction

Whatever curriculum model you use in your center, you should try to ensure that it is aligned in significant ways to valued educational outcomes identified by your country; to the national early childhood curriculum, if one already exists, and to the CARICOM Learning Outcomes for Early Childhood (2010). Alignment serves to ensure that all children receive an education that is similar in its basic principles, and that offers them equitable learning experiences. In this section you will explore further what is meant by alignment. You will also learn about certain dimensions along which the center curriculum can, and should, be aligned with the national curriculum, and strategies you can use to bring both curricula into closer alignment with each other.

What is Alignment?

Alignment means, simply, a match between 2 categories of things. In the case of the curriculum, for example, if your country's early childhood curriculum (Category I: The National Curriculum) identifies 'number concepts' as an important part of the content, your center curriculum (Category II) must match it by including provisions for learning number concepts. If the national early childhood curriculum is child-centered in its philosophy, your curriculum should also be child-centered. In that way, stakeholders, like the children's parents, or people and organisations that might be willing to provide funding for your programme, can be satisfied that what your center has to offer does indeed match what the national curriculum says should be in the curriculum. It is *aligned*.

<u>Dimensions of Alignment</u>

English (1992) has identified 3 dimensions of the curriculum. These are the ones you need to be sure are aligned. They are the documented curriculum, the taught curriculum, and the assessed curriculum. The *documented* curriculum means the written plans you have for children's learning. This will include any activity guides you may have, but also any curricula you may have adopted from some other place, any text books you have that are meant to guide your teaching, etc.

The *taught* curriculum is the one you deliver to your children every day as you interact with them in your centers. And finally, the *assessed* curriculum is the part of the curriculum that you focus on when you assess children's development. The assessed curriculum may sometimes be slightly different from the documented and taught curriculum. For example, built in to your plans for teaching and learning may be a scheduled period you call *Devotion*. You have thus *documented* that it is your intention to teach the children moral values, and core beliefs of your religion. You have probably

had devotional activities built in to your daily schedule. It thus became part of the *taught* curriculum. You may not, however, be *assessing* their understanding of this part of the curriculum.

When you begin to align your curriculum with another one, you must be sure that all three dimensions are aligned.

Alignment and the Documented Curriculum

The first step is to assess how well your center curriculum is already aligned with the national early childhood curriculum. It may well be that it is already well aligned, and that you need do no further work in aligning it. So you should consider the following:

- Alignment of the philosophy. Does your curriculum's statement of beliefs about the nature of the child, the nature of a child's development process, and about learning, as well as what constitutes quality learning experiences in early childhood, match that of the national curriculum?

- Alignment of content. Are all the concepts, skills, attitudes, and emotional competencies identified as necessary in the national curriculum identified in your own plan for children's learning?

- Alignment of valued outcomes. Do the outcomes in the national curriculum, if one exists, match your own stated outcomes? For example, if your country has adopted the CARICOM learning outcomes, Wellness, Resilience, Cultural Awareness, Effective Communication etc. are all identified as valued outcomes for the young child. Look at your curriculum. Even if the same words are not used to describe them, are provisions for such outcomes stated in your own center curriculum? (You may also have identified other outcomes that you see as critical for the children in your particular center. That is quite alright. The important thing is that the ones identified in the national curriculum are also there.)

Alignment and the Taught Curriculum

The taught curriculum in your center should next be aligned with your documented curriculum, and if it is, then it is automatically aligned with the national curriculum. Your taught curriculum should equally match what is written down in the documented center curriculum. If the center curriculum claims to be child-centered, for example, your

interactions with the children should reveal that you are guided in all that you do by the children's needs and interests. An observer should see that you are consistently giving the children opportunities to choose what they do, what resources they select to play with etc.

You should also be continuously gathering data that will tell you where they are in their development, and using that information to guide what, and how, you teach them next. If the documented curriculum places equal importance on the development of motor skills and social competencies as on the development of cognitive skills, then you should provide equal opportunities for developing all when you teach the children.

Alignment and the Assessed Curriculum

You also need to determine where the assessment focus is in the documented curriculum. All areas planned for development should be assessed. If, therefore, your documented curriculum asserts that children's development should be holistic, you need to identify what techniques and strategies you have for assessing their physical, social, emotional as well as their cognitive development. You should be able to explain to anyone what you do to assess these aspects of their development, and under what conditions you assess them. You should also have records that will allow you to share with anyone how each child in your care has developed in those areas over a given period.

You Try It

The national curriculum for the twin island country of Atlantis and Napolis has stated as its most important goal that all children should be prepared to be good citizens, obeying the laws of the country, and prepared for the world of work.

Your center curriculum, however, is extremely flexible and child-centered, emphasizing that the child's interests must determine what is learned, and that the most important outcome for you is that each child should actualize his/her own potential.

Suggest what possibilities for misalignment of the two curricula exist, and say what, if anything, can be done to ensure that you bring your curriculum into alignment with the national curriculum.

Designing the Curriculum

Introduction

The OECS has committed to a *child centered, integrated curriculum*. As such, the curriculum your center designs must also be integrated, and support child-centeredness. This handbook looks at two possible ways of designing the curriculum to support child-centeredness: project centered designs, and thematic designs.

What is meant by Curriculum Design?

A curriculum design is the structure you use to organize your curriculum. You can compare the design to the blue print you would use in designing a house, or the pattern you would cut in making an article of clothing. You can have all the same raw materials as anybody else, but what will make a design that is perfect for your family needs or for your body shape is the way the materials are put together – the design. Similarly with your center curriculum – you can have the same raw material as anybody else, but what will make your center unique will be the curriculum which has been designed especially to meet the needs of the children who are enrolled there.

Commonly shared components of Curriculum Designs

The common raw materials that will be part of everybody's curriculum will be the following:

1. **The aims, goals and objectives** – Your aims, goals and objectives outline what you want the outcomes to be after you have taught or interacted with these children in the center. What purposes is your curriculum intended to serve, for example? What are your developmental goals? What are your instructional objectives, when you plan your daily schedule? Chances are, most of you will have the same common developmental objectives.

   For example, your curriculum might include some of the following (taken from the handbook of Learning Outcomes for Early Childhood Development in the Caribbean):

   GOAL: Children begin to develop verbal and non-verbal communication skills appropriate to their stage of development.

Related Instructional Objectives:

As a result of being provided with appropriate learning opportunities, children will be able to:

- Create texts, using emergent writing;
- Identify and print their first names.

2. **The content:**

   To fulfill the objectives outline above, you might select the following content:

   Alphabet knowledge and print awareness.

3. **Assessment:**

   At the end of a given time frame or after different experiences, you might observe whether children try to use capital and common letters when they write their names.

The Curriculum Design

However, different centers might go about *organizing* the content and learning opportunities they provide in different ways, so as to achieve the *objectives* identified above. Let us look at different possibilities for design:

The Teacher Centered/Subject Centered Design

In some centers, the teacher asks children to sit at their desks and practice writing their names, using different resource materials, such as an alphabet chart. The children come home at the end of the day, and tell their parents, "We learned how to write our names today!" In that same day, they may have also learned to count to 5. They learned by doing exercises that their teacher required them to do, and that focused on one isolated thing – reproducing the letters that constituted their names. Then they repeated the numbers 1 to 5. This is what we mean by saying that way of organizing the curriculum is teacher-centered and subject-centered. The teacher initiates topics and learning activities, and the curriculum is divided up into different subject areas, within which there are topics the children are expected to learn.

Limitations of the design

It is true that the children may have learned the knowledge and skills involved, when the teacher uses this approach, but some children may have felt disengaged from the process of tracing their letters over and over until they got them right, or repeating the numbers by rote. Also, having learned concepts and procedures in isolation, children may not really understand how they relate to their real life experiences, and may not be

able to apply what they learned in real-life situations. This design is, therefore, not generally recommended for an early childhood curriculum.

Integrated/Child Centered Designs

Child-centered designs are designs which allow children to make choices as to the content of their curriculum, and their learning activities. Integrated designs are designs which are structured to pull together different areas of knowledge in engaging in different activities, or exploring certain topics.

Features of Integrated, Child-Centered Designs

What exactly do we mean by an integrated curriculum? In the first place, it is a curriculum that helps learners make connections. The connections might be across traditional subject areas like Language Arts and Social Studies and/or Science. It might also be within a subject area, as happens, for example, when children learning Language Arts are given opportunities to carry out activities that have them reading, writing, speaking and listening, and improving their ability to do all these things as part of one learning experience. Or children can repeatedly address a topic that interests them through their experiences in learning centers that allow them to encounter the topic through different types of learning experiences.

For instance, children might ask a question like, what makes seeds grow? They might have the opportunity to set seedlings in the Science center, then draw pictures, or take and post photos of the seedlings as they pass through different stages in the Creativity center, and, with the assistance of practitioners, they can write short descriptions of what they see happening as the seedlings develop in the Literacy center.

Children experiencing an integrated curriculum will have the opportunity, secondly, to make connections between their lives in centers or other settings and their homes and communities, and between their earlier learning experiences and the new ones being offered to them. Thus, the question of what makes seeds grow might first have been posed because of something they observed at home or on a field trip.

In the third place, an integrated curriculum will be designed around experiences which the children find personally meaningful, based on their current needs and interests. In an integrated curriculum, the children, not the practitioner, identify the topics they want to study, and the questions they want answered, and they collect knowledge from different domains to address the issues they have identified.

Finally, the integrated curriculum will support their holistic development in several domains – physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual, as the experience allows.

The case study presented below illustrates an example of the implementation of one type of integrated design - the project approach. See if you can identify features of an integrated design based on how the activity is described.

CASE STUDY

All about Balls: A Preschool Project (Lilian G. Katz November 1999)

Some time was spent on this project on most days of the week over a period of about a month. In the course of this investigation, many of the children asked the teacher to help them represent a wide range of mathematical facts and concepts. Many asked for assistance in writing captions, labels, and descriptions of events recalled and observed.

Phase 1

The teacher began by suggesting to her group of 4- and 5-year-olds that they ask their families, relatives, neighbors, and friends to contribute any kind of old ball to a collection they were making in their preschool class for a study of balls.

Within a week, the class had a collection of 36 balls of many different kinds. The collection included tennis, Ping-Pong, cricket, croquet, billiard, golf, and bowling balls, as well as volleyballs, basketballs, a soccer ball, baseballs, a football, a beach ball, a Whiffle ball, and some marbles. A bubble gum ball and cotton ball were also included. One child added a world globe to the collection as well.

As the collection grew, the teacher encouraged discussion about how the balls varied. In the course of the discussion, she developed a topical web indicating the many features of the balls in the class collection that could be studied in detail. These features included surface texture, size, circumference, weight, height of bounce, and so forth. However, there was some hesitation among the older children in the group about whether or not the globe was a ball.

The issue of the globe led to a discussion about whether a ball was only something to be played with. This led the teacher to bring in some picture books showing the common uses of ball bearings in various simple machines and a discussion of balls serving as wheels on some kinds of desk chairs. In the course of one of these discussions, the teacher introduced the concept of *sphere* and the term *spherical,* which many of the children enjoyed discussing and arguing about. The term *circumference* was also introduced into the discussion and recalled by some of the children. The question of whether or not the (American) football was a ball also became a focal point for heated debate.

Phase 2

Small groups of children volunteered to undertake specific investigations to answer the questions generated by the class in discussion with their teacher and indicated on the topic web.

Before the small group investigations were launched, the children made predictions of the outcomes. For example, one group weighed the balls and checked their predictions concerning which of them would be the heaviest and lightest. Their predictions indicated their strong association of size and weight, and their empirical findings yielded further curiosity and discussion. They were not quite ready to grasp the complexity of the concept of density!

One group of children, working in pairs, used string and struggled to ascertain the size of each of the balls by cutting the string to the length of the circumference. This process invariably required several attempts before successful measurement was achieved. Students then displayed the strings representing size by hanging them vertically in serial order on a chart displayed on a bulletin board with a caption prepared by two children indicating the differences between the predictions and findings with respect to size. Another small group used blocks and a plank to create inclined planes of various angles down which some of the balls were rolled. At first, the children studied which balls would roll the fastest and farthest down the plank and along the floor.

Then they conducted the same procedure on a linoleum floor, on a carpet, on grass, and on gravel surfaces outside their classroom to observe the differences in the distance of free roll once down the plank.

In the course of this exploration and discussion with their teacher, the children enjoyed applying the term *resistance* to describe the slowing down of the balls' roll caused by grass and gravel compared to the linoleum and carpet surfaces. This group also compared their findings to their predictions.

A group of the younger children made rubbings of the surface of each of the balls. These findings led them to launch a discussion of the variations of surface texture in the collection with their classmates who were involved in other aspects of the investigation. All the children expressed surprise at the wide variety of surfaces represented in their collection.

Another small group created a block structure several feet in height and, using a tape measure suspended from the top of it, predicted and then measured as best they could the height of the bounce of each ball. Contrary to their predictions, and much to their surprise, not all of the balls bounced!

The teacher engaged the children in a discussion of what might be inside each of the balls, in the course of which she explored with them the terms *hollow, solid, empty,* and *full.* With the exception of the golf ball, all of the balls were opened and their contents examined. The children were unable to open the bowling ball in the classroom and had to seek the assistance of a parent volunteer.

Following the close examination of the properties of the balls in the collection, the children discussed the variety of ways in which balls are used in games. They discussed which balls are struck by bats, clubs, mallets, and racquets, and which balls are caught, thrown, and moved by hands and feet. They also surveyed their parents on which games they played and which games they enjoyed watching. Bar graphs and pie charts were created by the children with their teachers' support and guidance to indicate in three columns the questions posed in the survey, the predicted answers, and the actual answers.

Phase 3

In Phase 3, the children completed their investigation. They prepared a display of their findings, including documentation showing them at work during the investigation. They concluded with an open-house evening for their parents with whom they shared their work by presenting the story of their investigation, and whom they accompanied around the displays ready to answer any questions they had.

Case Study (conclusion)

In the course of work that lasted about a month, the children engaged in measuring, drawing, reading, and creating stories; creating graphs and pie charts; looking things up in the local library with the help of the librarian and many parents; examining books about sports; and finally reporting to parents the story of their investigation and their findings.

Many parts of the investigation presented difficulties. For example, getting the strings around balls to measure the circumference and ascertaining the height of their bounce required considerable skill and persistence, both of which were strengthened by the work undertaken. As the children participated in preparing displays of their findings, they asked the teacher to write words that they could copy onto their drawings and charts. As they made predictions concerning various findings, the teacher encouraged them to explain the bases for them. As the work proceeded, their readiness to share their reasoning increased substantially.

This project provided contexts for analyzing, hypothesizing, predicting, observing, recording, and representing research findings. It provided settings for extensive discussions, working out disagreements, arguing, and checking the facts. It also provided contexts and pretexts for cooperation, individual initiative, sharing responsibilities, and many other developing intellectual as well as social capacities and dispositions. Children of all cultures and language backgrounds can become deeply engaged in the kinds of intellectual explorations such items in their own environments can provide.

Questions

1. What features of an integrated design do you note here?
2. Can you think of other ways to achieve integration of your curriculum?
3. How might you need to prepare a classroom environment to facilitate an integrated curriculum?
4. Would you need to make significant changes to your classroom space to do so?

Reflection

What are the relative opportunities and challenges presented by using an integrated approach with the children in your class or center?

It is clear that the approach taken here has led to higher order thinking, and increased communicative competence in the children who took part in the project.

II. PLANNING INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Overview

In this chapter we will look at different instructional activities you can use to support development for different age groups. The activities emphasise child-centered approaches to learning, by using children's interests or suggestions as a starting point, or by making connections with their own real life experiences.

Objectives

At the end of the section you should be able to:

- Formulate a plan for instruction that is appropriate for a child centered curriculum
- Establish a daily routine which structures the day for children, and allocates time for all critical learning activities
- Select strategies to support the attainment of different identified learning outcomes
- Set up the physical space to support learning
- Decide on strategies to respond to children's special needs
- Identify qualities of child centeredness that characterize each strategy
- Suggest other strategies to support the attainment of the outcomes identified

Planning for Instruction

A child centered curriculum presents certain challenges to educators who have been working with a teacher-centered curriculum. For a teacher-centered curriculum, the planning process is fairly straightforward: you identify your *instructional objectives*, and then you select *content* and *learning experiences* that are intended to help ensure that your objectives are attained, as your chosen methods of *assessment* should be able to determine.

Your instructional objectives are the behaviours you want children to demonstrate as a result of having learned what you have taught them. For example: "By the end of the lesson, all children should be able to spell their names correctly."

However, you may have noticed that this is very much an objective that suggests that the child's learning time is controlled by the teacher, as is the content of the lesson. You, however, are now working from a different position. You may even, in some instances, be working with what is called an *emergent curriculum*. That is to say, the

experiences and the content are not strictly pre-planned by the teacher, but must 'emerge' in response to the child's needs and interests.

And yet, you have a responsibility to plan what happens in your room as you interact with the children daily, to ensure that they do not learn purely by accident, but with some guidance from you, and some sense of direction. It is necessary, therefore, to plan instruction. The question is: what does 'planning' involve when the child's needs and interests have priority in all you do.

What do you plan for when you plan instruction?

a. When you plan instruction, you should have some broad idea of your desired *developmental outcomes*. If your children should be becoming more skilled in controlling their gross motor functions, for example, that increased control will be a desired *outcome*.

b. You should also plan for what concepts, skills and procedures they might be acquiring or refining. They may be learning concepts about space and patterns, for example, or refining their existing knowledge about how books work. Or they may be learning about problem solving. These constitute the *content* of your instruction.

c. Above all, you will need, at this stage, since most of their learning is experiential, to plan what types of learning experiences they will have. This includes your daily routine, which will include devotion time, play time, circle time etc., but it will also include experiences at the various activity centers, and their interactions with materials, with their peers, and with you.

d. Finally, you should plan what methods you will use to get evidence about their present state of development, and their progress. This is your *assessment*.

All of these must be carefully planned in the context of what you know about their developmental needs and their personal interests.

Approaches to Planning

i. Plan around identified domains of learning

You may have identified domains of learning related to cognitive, psychomotor, affective, social skills, for example. Or you may have focused more on broad subject areas like Art, Reading, Drama, Life Science, Health – or some

combination of both. Your plan should include selections of *content – concepts, skills and procedures* from the domains of learning you identified. If you have looked at the different skills and attitudes, you should ensure that your plan provides for learning skills and processes that are appropriate to their stage of development, as determined by theory, and by your ongoing observations and other forms of assessment. The skills etc. you selected should be enough within reach that they are not frustrated, and just challenging enough to engage them and move them forward. This will be the content that will allow them to reach and progress through different stages of development.

While you cannot decide that this is the level they will reach, working within and towards different levels gives you a broad focus for selecting appropriate learning experiences.

ii. Identify children's expressed interests

Your daily observations should have presented you with clear indications of what the children are focused on. This does two things: first, it suggests *experiences* you can provide that will be responsive to those interests; second it allows you to determine how those experiences can best be used to provide an opportunity for children to learn the concepts, skills etc. you have identified as necessary.

iii. Plan around the daily routine

The next thing you need to do is ensure that your broad plan incorporates all the major activities and experiences you provide in your daily routine. Thus, if your schedule includes Circle Time, and Small Group Time, you need to plan what will happen at those times, as well as at the other times set out in your routine. Each represents an opportunity for learning, and you should try to get a clear picture in your mind about what types of learning are possible in each case, and what types of specific activities are most likely to facilitate such learning.

iv. Plan opportunities for variation

Every child will not be in the same place, developmentally, at the same time. Therefore, you need to plan opportunities for extending learning (for children who are somewhat ahead in a given domain) or for providing opportunities for learning that are more appropriate to their stage of development if they are not yet where they might – theoretically – be expected to be.

v. Identify all the *resources* you will need, and ensure they are available. Review materials to see how they might be used to elicit every possible opportunity for

learning, and that you know where children might experience challenges in using them. Plan beforehand how you will address these possibilities.

vi. Identify what you will do to get information about, and track, their progress
This includes observations, for example, checklists, or portfolios. This constitutes your strategy for *assessment*.

Supporting the Physical and Cognitive Development of Infants and Toddlers

Overview

Toddlers and infants (i.e. children 0- 2+ years old) in your care may not always get the type of care and nurturing they need in their homes. Even if they do, they spend a significant part of their lives in your care. It is therefore your responsibility to do all you can to give them the nurturing they need for their healthy development.

What do infants and toddlers need?

Nurture (including a supportive environment and positive personal interactions) influences human developmental outcomes throughout our lives. The following factors are critical for the positive development of very young children (0 – 6 mths):

Warm interpersonal relationships, including social environments. These are particularly important in the early years, as young children, and even more so infants and toddlers, learn primarily through their relationships with others.

Experiences involving all the senses, including, for the infant:

- Touch (e.g. skin-to-skin holding)
- Smell (e.g. the smell of the caregiver's skin or the mother's breast milk)
- Taste (e.g. taste of breast milk)
- Sight (e.g. making eye contact with caregivers)
- Hearing (e.g. hearing familiar voices).

What you can do to support their development?

Below we look at specific strategies to assist their development towards the attainment of valued outcomes:

Promoting development in infants (birth-12 mths)

- Establish a dependable routine of activities
- Provide children with numerous opportunities for nurturing social interactions, involving interpersonal contact and demonstrations of affection. Respond quickly to signals of distress or discomfort.
- Give infants opportunities to play on the floor so they can begin to gain control of their legs and arms in the effort to roll over. Or place babies on their tummies and then on their backs, introducing a toy to motivate them to reach for the toy. Gradually move the toy further and further away, to encourage development of greater mobility.
- Seat babies on an infant seat, or propped up with pillows. Place them in different positions in the room so they can observe their surroundings from different perspectives.
- To develop their grasp of concepts like object permanence, while simultaneously engaging them in communication, interact with infants in playing games like peek a boo.
- Promote language development, by talking to infants. Once they develop beyond the stage of babbling, and progress to using individual words, acknowledge and support their effort at communication by trying to determine what they are trying to say, and reflecting the communication. If a baby says 'juice' for example, you might respond, 'You want juice?'
- Sing them songs, and play tunes they're familiar with
- Provide materials to act as stimuli for infants to respond. Introduce new toys, for example, and move them back and forth, so they follow the moving object with their eyes, allowing them to practice eye movement.
- Promote their intellectual development by providing toys that are responsive to children's actions, like rattles, stacking and nesting cardboard boxes and other containers etc.
- Promote motor development by presenting items for them to retrieve by grasping.

Promoting development in toddlers (12 mths – 24+ mths)

- Playing games to promote motor skill development like taking turns throwing balls. Throw the ball from short distances at first, then further and further distances. Use a soft sponge or rubber ball, of a size, at first, that toddlers can easily hold with one hand. As the child grows older, use larger balls that require the child to use both hands to throw the ball.
- Providing small wheeled toys that toddlers can pull and push.

- Organizing their space into activity centers where they can pursue their own interests.
- Providing daily opportunities for them to explore through water and sand play.
- Giving them materials and opportunities for painting and scribbling, and manipulating play dough.
- Providing opportunities for constructing things. For example, young children can be given collections of small, sturdy cardboard boxes or other stackable containers, and then helped to stack the containers until they can do so independently. Encourage them to experiment with different ways of arranging and stacking the containers.
- Developing their communicative competence by talking to them about their experiences, and things that are of personal interest to them, or that have caught their attention. In turn, encourage them to say what they're thinking, describe the parts of their bodies or identify familiar objects. In short, provide them with many opportunities for communicating about things they find meaningful.
- Providing opportunities for role play. Give toddlers objects that are appropriate to their cultural experiences, so they can pretend to do what they observe adults doing. For example, an old or toy telephone can be used to allow the child to pretend to dial and talk on the telephone. Encourage them to call someone, and join in the play by pretending that you too are talking on the phone.
- Supporting emergent numeracy by giving toddlers opportunities to work with shapes etc. For example, make or purchase a shape box with different shapes. Invite the toddler to experiment with putting shapes in the correct holes. If the child finds the task too difficult, scaffold the process by showing them how the pieces fit.
- Supporting emergent literacy and aesthetic experience: Promote language development by talking to children in simple language, reading aloud, and encouraging them to join in by pointing at pictures etc. Also, sing songs and recite nursery rhymes to the child. Ensure that children have numerous sturdy books available for them to touch, turn the pages etc. Help them expand their vocabulary by encouraging them to join in songs like Old Macdonald; provide pictures of the objects named in the song, and encourage children to name the objects as you point to them.
- Helping develop their sense of self: Sing songs and play games that encourage them to identify themselves.
- Promoting interest in the natural environment: Take children outdoors, draw their attention to different animals, objects etc. and name them for toddlers.

Provide several opportunities for this, then begin asking children to name the things as you point to them.

- Providing opportunities to move about in the natural environment. Take toddlers outdoors for walks. Find different types of surfaces to give them different experiences. Introduce opportunities for them to walk up gradually sloping surfaces.

Promoting development in Toddlers 24+ - 36 mths

Foster toddlers' sense of community by:

- Inviting parents and community members come in and read to them, or take part in center events, or by carrying them out into the community to take part in community and cultural events
- Organising for children to play and interact with other children.

Support the development of their communicative competence by:

- Asking children open ended questions that will encourage them to use language skills in an unstructured way;
- Use short, simple sentences, and speak clearly so they can understand;
- Use different languages the children speak in the classroom, as labels, find children's stories being told on children's sites on the internet, if possible. Start giving them opportunities to compare Creoles and Standards by singing songs, or telling stories or rhymes that have English and Creole responses etc.
- Invite parents and community members in for puppet shows and storytelling.

Encourage aesthetic expression by:

- providing them with materials for scribbling, painting etc. which are easily accessible in activity centers.
- posting the children's drawings and paintings up on center walls or where they are immediately visible, with their names as captions.

Encourage the development of tools for lifelong learning by:

- encouraging them to ask 'Why?' questions, and giving them opportunities to explore and find out the answers to their own questions;
- providing materials for them to explore and manipulate;
- providing opportunities for them to have new experiences, and images of other places and cultural practices.

Promote the development of healthy lifestyles by:

- giving them many opportunities to enjoy nature, and to express how it makes them feel;
- singing songs and telling stories that celebrate aspects of their faith;
- giving them opportunities for quiet, and reflective time;
- answering their questions honestly, although in a manner appropriate to their age;
- giving them lots of opportunities for rough and tumble play;
- acknowledging their ideas and efforts, and encouraging them to do their best;
- showing them that you have high expectations that they will always do the best they can;
- sharing stories that present the world, and human relationships in a positive light
- encouraging them to express their feelings honestly, yet respectfully;
- discussing instances of conflict, and suggesting different ways of dealing with it

You try it

Suggest a song you might sing with children 12- 18 mths old to encourage them to identify themselves by name.

What sorts of containers are available in the home to give toddlers opportunities to stack and arrange them?

What do you now do to provide infants with the experience of skin-to-skin touch? What more might you do?

Supporting the Emotional Development of Infants and Toddlers

Helping children develop impulse control

Children must be able to express their emotions as part of their healthy development. At the same time they must begin to realise that there are times and ways to express them appropriately. If they cannot do so, both their ability to have positive personal relationships and their academic careers can be negatively affected. Teaching children impulse control is thus a critical dimension of promoting their healthy development.

Strategies for developing impulse control

Infants and Toddlers

Infants and toddlers can begin to develop basic skills for later impulse control. As with every other form of learning at this stage of their lives, the process begins with the kinds of experiences they have.

- Provide a responsive and predictable environment: Children should experience consistent routines, to give them a sense of the stability and consistency of their world.
- Help them develop language to express their feelings. Giving them opportunities, and encouraging them to describe how they are thinking and feeling is an important first step in giving them the mental tools to help them control their impulses.

Preschoolers

- Respond to a slip in impulse control with words, instead of impulsive actions. Explain to children why impulse control is so important, and the possible consequences of a failure to control impulses.
- Model self-control when you yourself are dealing with stress or frustration. You teach best by example.
- Encourage children to share toys and take turns.
- Help children to develop positive strategies for pre-empting conflict and dealing with stress or anger, such as sharing toys and taking turns instead of fighting, or talking to others who are causing them stress.

Establishing a Daily Routine

The daily routine is a tool for organising young children's day. It is intended to provide a structure which will give the children a sense of order and stability within which they are free to make choices independently. You should decide on what activities children should come to expect in the course of the day, how long such activities will last, and the purpose each will serve.

You should also plan transitional activities that will support children as they move from one center or type of learning experience to another, until this becomes automatic to them, and the tasks associated with moving from one activity to another are internalized by the children. Thus the transitional activities minimize disruption at your center.

Your daily routine should also incorporate strategies for helping children to derive optimal benefits from each activity, and for helping to ensure that the goals and objectives of your curriculum are attained. For example, after they have been engaged in a project, opportunities should be built in to your daily routine for them to reflect on what they've learned, and to apply it.

The daily schedule for early childhood programs should provide blocks of time to enable children to concentrate on integrated, active, engaged learning experiences. It should also provide a balance among large group, small group, and individual activities, and have time allocated for physical movement, outdoor activities and reflection. The schedule should reflect the appropriate developmental stages of the children involved.

Example of a Daily Routine: High/Scope

- Planning time
- Work time
- Recall time
- Small group time
- Large group time
- Outside time
- Transition times
- Eating and rest times

Example of a Daily Routine: A Montessori preschool

- Welcome and greeting
- Good Morning song and calendar review
- News time
- Choosing an activity for the day
- Independent work together with individual and group lessons
- Clean up time
- Circle time, with reflections on the morning's activities
- Clean up and lunch time
- Outside time
- Story reading time
- Departure

Children Learn In Different Ways

CASE STUDY

Teacher Michele's Very Different Children

As Teacher Michele and the children take part in the morning Circle, she notes with pleasure that Jamal is obviously listening attentively to the story she's telling them about Old Macdonald, all the farm animals he had to take care of, and his problems keeping track of them. When she plays the Old Macdonald song for them to hear, Tamika and Lin Lee join enthusiastically in the singing, and Alesandro jigs around to the rhythm. But in the corner, Jeanelle and Shania are more interested in laughing and talking with each other than in thinking about Macdonald's problems, and Alex is obviously making a joke about the poor, confused man, while Isaiah laughs loudly. Teacher Michele sighs. Those four were always more ready to laugh and talk with every other child in the group than to pay attention to what they should be doing, she reflected. And Alex was fast turning into the class clown. She wondered what she should do about it.

Teacher Michele sees Jeanelle, Shania, Alex and Isaiah as problems. The truth is, though, that the children in your center will always demonstrate such differences, and you will be able to use those differences to help them develop and learn effectively.

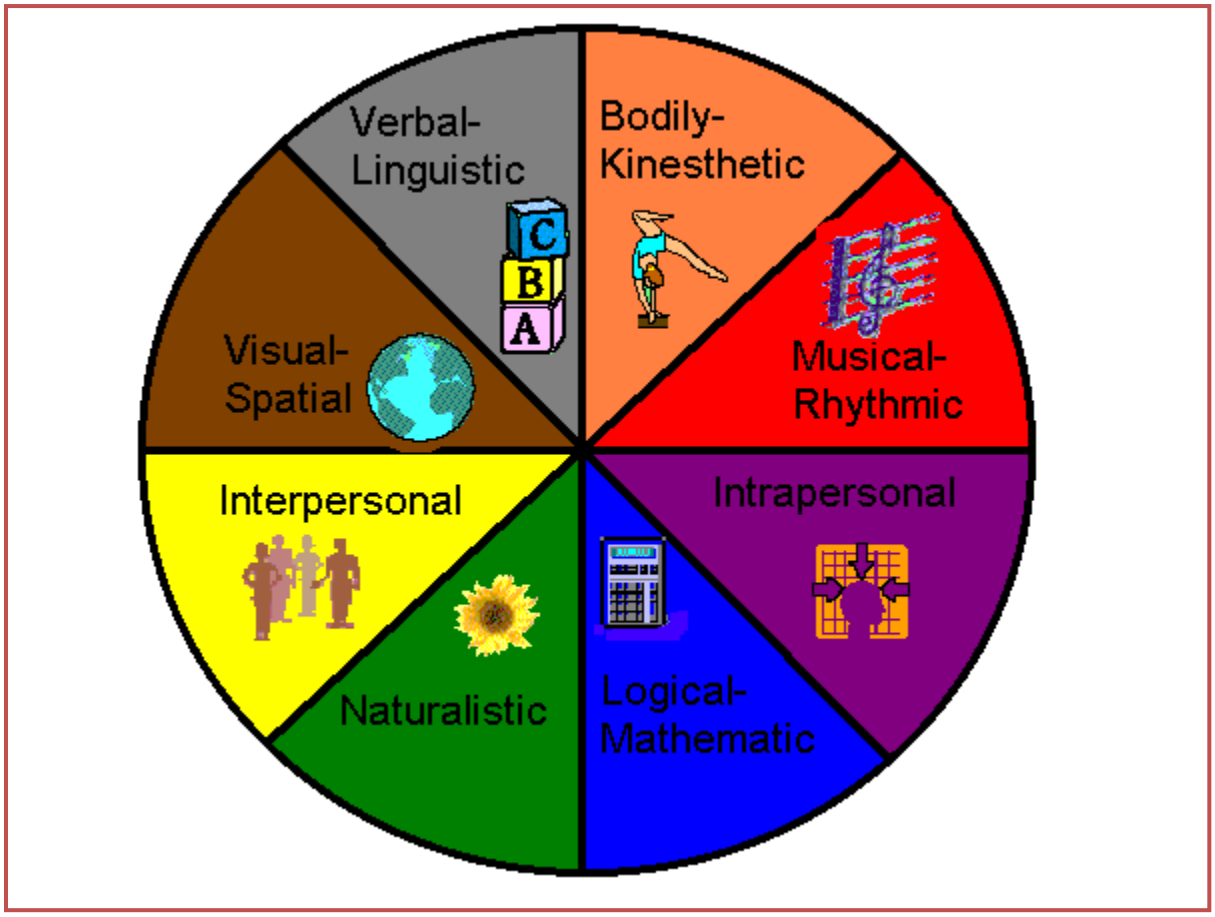
We all, children and adults alike, learn in different ways, and whenever we try to learn something we are likely to learn more easily and pleasurably if the approach to teaching is tailored to what we call our different *intelligences* and *learning styles*.

What do we mean when we talk about *learning styles*? The term refers to people's unique and preferred ways of learning, and learning styles are influenced by different things.

Three different preferred ways of learning have been identified: *Visual* learners learn best by seeing. Your visual learners will need to see you, and see whatever you want them to learn so they can come to understand it better. Your *auditory* learners, on the other hand, learn best by hearing, talking things through, listening to songs on the topic etc. And finally, your *kinesthetic* learners need to move, do and touch things to learn. Obviously, this is to be observed even more where young children are the learners.

Another factor that determines how your children learn best is their Multiple Intelligences. Multiple Intelligence theory has been described by Howard Gardner (1983) as being about the different ways people demonstrate intellectual ability. Gardner originally described seven intelligences (he has since added 'naturalistic') :

Figure 2.1: Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences



Visual/Spatial intelligence

This is the intelligence that deals with people's *ability to perceive the visual*. These learners tend to think in pictures and need to create vivid mental images to retain information. They enjoy looking at maps, charts, pictures, videos, and movies. Their skills include puzzle building, reading, writing, understanding charts and maps, having a good sense of direction, drawing, painting, and constructing, fixing, and designing practical objects.

Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence

These children have highly developed auditory skills. They are generally skilled speakers, who think in words rather than pictures. Their skills include listening, speaking, writing, storytelling, explaining, using humor, and understanding the meaning of words.

Logical/Mathematical intelligence

Children with this intelligence have the *ability to use reason, logic and numbers.* They think in logical and numerical patterns making connections between pieces of information. They're always curious about the world around them, ask lots of questions and like to do experiments. Their skills include problem solving, classifying and categorizing information. You'll often see them questioning and wondering about natural events, performing complex mathematical tasks, and playing with geometric shapes.

Bodily/Kinesthetic Intelligence

This is about the *ability to control body movements and handle objects skillfully.* These children express themselves best through movement. They have a good sense of balance and eye-hand co-ordination. (e.g. during ball play, balancing beams). Through interacting with the space around them, they are able to remember and process information. Their skills may include dancing, physical co-ordination, sports, hands on experimentation, using body language, crafts, acting, miming, using their hands to create or build things, and expressing emotions through the body.

Musical/Rhythmic Intelligence

These musically inclined learners *think in sounds, rhythms and patterns*. They immediately respond to music, either appreciating or criticizing what they hear. Many of them are extremely sensitive to environmental sounds (e.g. bird sounds, bells). Their skills may include singing, whistling, playing musical instruments, and remembering melodies.

Interpersonal Intelligence

Children with interpersonal intelligence demonstrate a strong *ability to relate to and understand others*. They usually try to see things from other people's point of view, and to understand how they think and feel. They often have almost an adult's ability to sense other people's feelings, intentions and motivations. These children are natural organizers of other people, and events. They will generally try to maintain peace in the groups they belong to. They use both verbal (e.g. speaking) and non-verbal language (e.g. eye contact, body language) to communicate with others. Their skills include understanding other people's moods and feelings, co-operating in groups,

communicating both verbally and non-verbally, building trust, peacemaking when there is conflict, and establishing positive relationships with their peers.

Intrapersonal Intelligence

These children have the *ability to reflect on themselves and be aware of their inner state of being.* They may try to understand their inner feelings, dreams, and relationships with others. Their skills include recognizing their own strengths and weaknesses, being aware of their inner feelings, desires and dreams, and reasoning with themselves.

Implications for Planning Instruction

Knowing about the different intelligences and learning styles can help you, first of all, to be prepared when children respond in different ways to the same learning experience. Instead of feeling challenged by all the different ways her children were responding to the devotions, Teacher Michele might have used her observations on this and other occasions to inform herself about how her children were approaching learning differently.

She could then have used her knowledge to plan how to approach different activities in the future. When she was planning small group activities, for example, she could have encouraged the children with strong interpersonal intelligence to play an active role in managing group activities and helping to ensure things went smoothly. Instead of seeing Alex as the class clown, she might sometimes have encouraged him to play with words as he liked to do. And when she had her read alouds she would have asked Alesandro and others with his bodily kinesthetic intelligence to act out parts of the story for the other children's enjoyment.

Children's different ways of learning need not be a challenge, except in so far as they encourage you to find different ways of using them to empower them and engage them in the learning process.

You try it

Suggest how you might use preschool (3-4+ years) children's different learning styles and intelligences in developing their awareness of the environment and valuing its importance to us.

Supporting Emergent Literacy

One important goal of any curriculum for early childhood is supporting *emergent literacy*. By emergent literacy, we mean the knowledge, skills and attitudes that *precede* learning to read and write. The general principle here is to provide many, varied, and engaging activities to encourage children's language development and their familiarity with printed materials, as well as their increased control over their attempts at producing print. They also begin to understand and value printed texts as a way to communicate. This process starts from birth.

Supporting language development

Infants and toddlers

Language development starts in infants and toddlers when you talk to them, and respond to their efforts to communicate. For example, when you are tending to infants and toddlers you can maintain an ongoing conversation, telling them what you are doing, even as you are performing the act. Speak plainly and simply, but avoid baby talk!

Scaffolding Talk

You should not only initiate conversations with infants and toddlers, but you should also be alert for their own attempts to communicate, and support them and extend the communication into spoken language, as though they have in fact spoken. Thus, for example, if an infant points to a cup or glass, you might respond, "Yes! That's your cup! Do you want juice, Tamika? Okay, let's put some juice in your cup, then!"

Learning about Written Texts

Toddlers can be given opportunities to handle sturdy books, made of materials that can survive hard use, and containing pictures of familiar objects and activities. You should read these to them constantly, and encourage them to hold the book and help you turn pages etc. as a way to teach them how to handle books, and how books work.

Listening and Responding to Stories and Rhymes

Sing songs that the child loves, and that provide opportunities for the toddler to imitate sounds made. Include other songs that draw the child in by incorporating their names, and those of their friends, and encourage the child to respond to their names, or to repeat them.

3 – 4+ year olds

As children get older, they develop increasing control over language. You need to continue giving them ample opportunities for using and interacting with both written and spoken language. Reading and writing should be a part of the daily routine, and there should be many opportunities for preschoolers to showcase what they have written and drawn, as their work is posted on classroom walls etc.

Talking about Texts

For example, you can engage them in conversations about books they love, and in re-telling stories they like. This supports their love of reading.

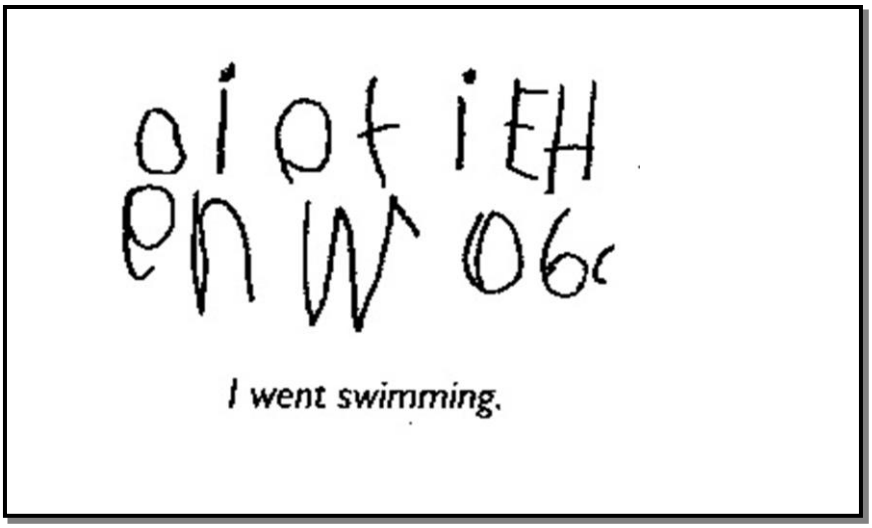
Developing Comprehension Skills

Preschoolers can begin to develop strategies to support their comprehension of texts. When you read to them from books, for example, you can start encouraging them to make *predictions* about what the text is likely to be about, and what will happen next, from the pictures on the cover and within the book. You can also encourage them to construct understandings about what is said in the story by *making connections* with their own real life experiences.

Collaborative Writing

Make children aware they can be writers as well as readers of texts. Provide them with many opportunities for producing written texts - scribbling and drawing. You can include storytelling, and also functional writing. Thus, you can encourage them to record their observations and information when they do projects. Again, these reports can sometimes be collaborative – where they dictate what they want to say and you write it, and then they read back what you wrote. Sometimes let them write the information, using emergent writing. Keep your expectations about what they should do as writers realistic: remember that at this stage scribbling, random letter strings and invented spelling are all perfectly normal parts of writing.

Figure 2.2: Examples of children's early attempts at writing



Provide them with many surfaces and tools for writing. Your center should be equipped with easels, paper and crayons. Collaborate with them, too, in producing written texts, by encouraging them to dictate stories which you can write, and then asking them to read aloud.

Play as opportunity for emergent literacy

Does your classroom have puppets and dolls, and home centres with opportunities for dressing up and pretending? These give children opportunities to make up, and act out, conversations between people. Again, they are developing their vocabularies, and gaining competence in using language for communicative purposes.

Creating the environment to support literacy

Figure 2.3: A Reading Corner

The physical environment should be rich in materials to support children's emergent literacy. *Environmental print*, such as labels and signs denoting centers and different types of materials and products should be clearly visible and accessible to the child.

Figure 2.4: Example of Environmental Print

Each child's name should also be an important part of your environment, being written on different surfaces and furnishings that the child uses, so that his/her name is something s/he can always recognize.

Books that the children love should be attractively displayed, and easily accessible. *Toys* that they can use to dramatise stories will also encourage them to produce oral, and later written texts.

Rooms should also be designed to include spaces for them to read alone, or to have conversations with each other.

If your center has enrolled children who speak *different languages* at home, those languages should also be displayed in classroom signs etc. so that all the children will become familiar with some elements of those languages. This also makes each child secure in using language, because s/he knows that the language of home is accepted in your center.

Planning an Activity to Support Emergent Literacy
Example of a Valued Learning Outcome:
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION (*CARICOM Learning outcomes for early childhood development*)
Strategy: Supporting emergent literacy and oracy
Instructional Goal: Children will enjoy listening to stories (*Learning outcomes*, p. 38)

Reading Strategy: The Read Aloud
One important strategy to cultivate children's love of reading, and the growth of print awareness, is to read aloud to them. Reading stories or other books aloud will usually be an activity that children enjoy. It will also make them increasingly of how books are organized. However, a read aloud is a deliberate teaching choice, as well as being fun for them - and you. As such, you need to plan the read aloud as carefully as anything else you do in the classroom.

The following strategies are suggested for conducting a read aloud:

Preparation Time
Before you read to the children, take time to go over the story, and to analyse it, to identify possible learning opportunities. For example, identify words that might be strange to them, and words they have already encountered and/or discussed. Also, what opportunities does the story present for discussion and reflection?

At the start:
Use the book cover to begin engaging the children's interest. Discuss the picture on the cover. Read the title to them, and invite them to predict what the story will be about.

While reading:

- Dramatise! Be sure to use your voice, facial expressions and body language to make the story come alive.
- Make real life connections: Take the opportunity, while reading, to encourage them to make connections between what they encounter in books and what they have experienced in their own lives. If the book discusses a family, for example, encourage them to discuss what their own families are like. If the book talks about animals, let them talk about animals they may have at home, or that they may have seen on the way to the center. This way, they come to 'own' the story. It becomes partly about them.
- Highlight the familiar: There will be some words the children may already have encountered in the classroom environment. The word 'On' for example, is probably on light switches in the classroom. This is an example of 'environmental print'. When the word appears in a book, you can draw their attention to it, so they begin to internalize how the word looks in printed texts. It also draws their attention to the appearance of the word as it is used repeatedly within their classroom and home environments.
- Explain the unfamiliar: Are there words and concepts that may be strange to them? Take time to paraphrase the words at first, so that the idea is made clear to them.
- Project into the future: When the story ends, ask them what they think might happen to the characters next.

Extending the read aloud

Provide opportunities for hands-on experience with the contents of books after the children have read them, to concretize the read aloud experience for them. Give them opportunities to draw, create or dramatise things related to the book. A field trip will also be a good follow up, allowing them to experience personally what they have encountered within the pages of their book.

Supporting Emergent Numeracy

What do we mean by emergent numeracy? *Emergent numeracy* is the term we will use to describe how children construct mathematics through a combination of cognitive development and interaction with their environment. Children attempt to make sense of their world, and this includes mathematical sense. Young children, whether they are 6 weeks, 6 months, or 6 years old need to be immersed in both mathematics and literacy from the day they are born, through interactions with parents or caregivers. Even before a child can add or count, he must construct ideas about mathematics that

cannot be directly taught. Just as emergent readers learn that letters in the alphabet correspond to spoken sounds, the understanding that numbers have a quantity attached to them is also something that children must construct (Xu, Spelke, & Goddard, 2005).

Important Areas of Mathematical Knowledge

Important areas of mathematical knowledge for young children to develop include:

- Patterns and shapes
- Comparisons of size
- Counting
- Classification
- Spatial relationships

Young children can be given opportunities to learn about all these things from early on. They learn about classification, for example, when we give them opportunities to sort things according to criteria like size, colour and shape (red/green; round/square etc.) They compare sizes when we encourage them to ask questions about things that interest them, like, ”Am I as tall as my friend?” and we teach them to start finding ways to solve problems when we ask them how they can find out such things. As they dance and beat out rhythms to music they are also discovering patterns. And many of the songs we teach them are counting songs.

What is critically important is that we must structure their environment to support such learning. As Deanna McLennan has pointed out:

Preschool classrooms also celebrate curiosity and risk-taking as children engage in inquiry-based exploration at various learning centers and outdoors. Interesting items in the environment encourage children to find answers to their questions and solve problems across all curricular domains. Children measure as they clap out the beats to music. In addition, every preschool classroom needs to be rich with materials that encourge math exploration and learning. A well-stocked math and manipulatives center includes found objects such as shells, stones, bread tags, and sticks, as well as purchased materials.

Making Math meaningful for children. *Teaching young children*. 8 (1)
http://www.naeyc.org/tyc/files/tyc/Making%20Math%20Meaningful_0.pdf

Project Work: An example

Teaching points: Cause and effect; life cycles of plants; working together

Overview

Making meaning often involves young learners in manipulating materials, ideas, or symbols so that they make sense in the light of previous experiences. It is important to give young children authentic opportunities to do these things individually or in collaboration with other children. The following activity suggests one strategy for doing this. The task helps to develop their understanding of the concept of cause and effect.

Curriculum Areas:

- Life sciences
- Learning to learn
- Working in community
- Communication

Objectives

Children will:

- Work with others to plan and carry out a project
- Test their understandings of a phenomenon
- Suggest things needed to cause seeds are to develop into seedlings
- Communicate their observations orally and in print.

Activity: Cultivating a seed bed

Task: Children attempt to get seeds to grow.

Resources: Containers (recyclable, like coconut shells); plant seeds and beans.

Introducing the topic: Teacher encourages reflection on how plants grow from seeds. Children are encouraged to suggest what causes plants to develop. They are given seeds, and encouraged to test their hypotheses. They plan how they will go about getting the seeds to grow, and are provided with the resources to carry out their plans.
The teacher records, in the children's own words, what each group plans to do. She reads the plan back to the group, to ensure that they have an input in every stage of the planning, and also to give them a language experience.

They implement their plan, and report to the class on what they see happening each day. Computer tablets can be used to take photographs of what they see. They put their reports up on the message board, and discuss with the others in their group, and the

other groups, why they think the results they observe are occurring. When some seeds finally sprout, they try to come up with an explanation for what makes plants grow.

Different kinds of groups

Why bother with groups?

Children construct understanding as they interact in groups. Just working together in a group helps them to develop such skills as communication, working collaboratively with others, and conflict management. In small groups, you will be able to engage them in focused attention to tasks that are important to them, when you can give them individual attention as you circulate and observe their needs. You will also be able to record their actions and interactions, and so to track their progress. It is therefore important to make different types of group interactions a regular part of your instruction.

Planning ***small group*** activities

One way of breaking children down into small groups is by creating *learning centers* where a certain number of children at each center can do different kinds of activities – which they themselves may choose to do, as is important in a child-centered classroom. You can have learning centers devoted to reading, for example, or dramatic play, or art. Another way, which is somewhat more teacher-centered, is to encourage them to do projects that require them to work together, like working on puzzles and teaching them simple board games like snakes and ladders.

How and when to use the ***large group***

The large group activity is often known as *Circle Time* in preschool. It allows you to connect with all of the children at the same time, and to have the children share common experiences. For example, you can use the large group for worship; for emergent literacy activities like read alouds; or for science activities such as getting children to explore textures, tastes and other sensory activities. In circle time, too, the entire group can enjoy the pleasures of music and dance simultaneously.

Scaffolding Children's Learning

In all of the activities described above, it is not enough to expose the children to the range of experiences that will allow them to develop in different domains. To make such experiences even more effective, you, as the more knowledgeable adult, must be able

to deliberately *scaffold* children's continuous progress towards new levels of development.

What do we mean by scaffolding?
In his theory of child development, Lev Vygotsky put forward the theory that learners have a zone of proximal development, that is to say, a region where they acquire new skills more readily with the assistance of someone more knowledgeable than themselves (Berk 2001; Vygotsky 1962). That assistance is known as scaffolding. Scaffolding is quite easy to understand if you think of what an actual scaffold does.

In construction work, for example, a physical scaffold is a structure used when we want to get from one place to another that we cannot reach without help. As we get to the place we aimed for, however, we no longer need a scaffold, or we no longer need for it to stretch over such a wide distance. We can perform any necessary tasks we want within that zone of activity without further help in getting there. A scaffold is drawn back more the closer the person is to reaching the goal.

Similarly, teachers provide different levels of *structure, support and feedback* to meet children's individual learning needs. They *scaffold* their learning. This allows them to perform at a higher level than they would be able to independently. Scaffolding becomes necessary as children attempt new tasks, or try to master old ones. You should note, however, that the scaffold is not used to perform the act for the person. It is simply used to facilitate the child's increasingly expert accomplishment of the act. You should always try to provide the least amount of help the child needs to perform a task successfully, and gradually withdraw your support as the child becomes more skilled in doing it.

Strategies for Scaffolding Children's Learning
How do you help a child to perform at a higher level that s/he can do on her own? Let us explore four important strategies that will be useful:

i. Provide prompts, hints and cues as children struggle to understand concepts and develop skills
ii. Offer a range of possible answers from which the child can choose what seems correct
iii. Encourage children to use different resources to help them understand concepts and ideas
iv. Model the necessary thinking processes

Providing hints and cues

When teachers use simple directions, gestures, and touch, for example, they provide young children with valuable cues about how and when to regulate their emotions, attention, and behavior.

The text box below provides examples of how hints and cues might be used:

Using Hints and Cues to Scaffold Learning Self-Regulation

Teachers can help children recognize and name their emotions by calmly saying to frustrated or angry babies and toddlers, "You sound angry" or, "I wonder if you're frustrated," and then cuing them to start self-calming by using gentle touch and saying, "Let's relax" or "I'm here to help you."

As children begin to use language, adults can provide cues about when and how to ask for help, when to take a break, or when to try a different strategy.

Providing a range of possible answers

Sometimes presenting children with a number of possibilities from which to select an appropriate response helps to remind them of facts they may have forgotten or overlooked:

Teacher: Okay! So today we're going to talk about pilots and what they do. Candice, can you tell me what a pilot does?
Candice: No response
Teacher: Don't you remember what a pilot does?
Candice: Looks at you silently.
Teacher: Well, let us look at some of the jobs we found out about when we went on our field trip last week. There were people who delivered letters, and people who took care of sick animals, and people who put out fires, and people who flew planes…....
(***discussion continues***)

Providing the necessary resources

You should always plan to have the relevant physical classroom resources readily available, so that children can use those resources to help them with unaccustomed tasks. For example, if your plan is for very young children to learn how to use books, it is necessary to ensure that the children have a wide range of books available, and ample

opportunity to touch them, open them, etc. By doing so, you are helping them to learn all about using books as people in our culture do.

Modeling Thinking Processes

One of the most important forms of scaffolding you can do is to model critical thinking and problem solving processes. The example below from Kearn (2000) illustrates such modeling:

Teacher: *"Our recipe says that we need 1 cup of flour. I don't have a measuring cup that big. I have a half cup. What could I do with that, I wonder? How many half cups would I need to make a whole cup?"*

Several children give answers.

Teacher: "I think 2 sounds right. When Matthew had the play dough earlier today, he gave Eli one-half. Then Matthew had 2 pieces: One for himself and one for his friend. So I think 2 half cups is the answer."

Repetitive experiences with such modeling provide children with tools for doing their own thinking when they encounter similar problems. After a time, they have internalized your voice going over the process, and they become more confident and expert carrying out such a process on their own.

Planning Learning through Play

Many parents – and even some early childhood educators – still see play as an 'add-on' activity, included in the curriculum only to give young children a necessary break from 'real work'. In this section, however, we will look at the function of play in children's development. You will identify different kinds of play, and you will explore ways of incorporating play into plans for supporting specific areas of children's development.

Why is 'play' important?

Psychologists have described play as 'the most critical activity of children's early years (Bodrova & Leong, 1996; Vygotsky, 1977). This is because while playing, children acquire the foundations of self-reflection and abstract thinking, develop oral language skills and metacommunication skills, learn to manage their emotions, and explore the roles and rules associated with functioning in adult society (Bond & Wasik, 2009; Verenikina, Harris, & Lysaght, 2003).

The Jamaica Early Childhood Commission has pointed out that play allows children to refine their motor skills, learn how to deal with their own feelings and emotions, think critically about a range of new experiences, interact sociably with others and resolve conflicts in appropriate ways. In addition, play is also important for children to develop their imagination and creativity. Through play they are able to experiment, discover and dramatize what they see happening around them. In an attempt to make meaning of the world around them, play helps children to integrate knowledge in a meaningful way, learn self-expression and gain a sense of competence (Early Childhood Commission, 2014).

Different Kinds of Play, and Their Functions

Various categories of play have been identified in the literature, among them:

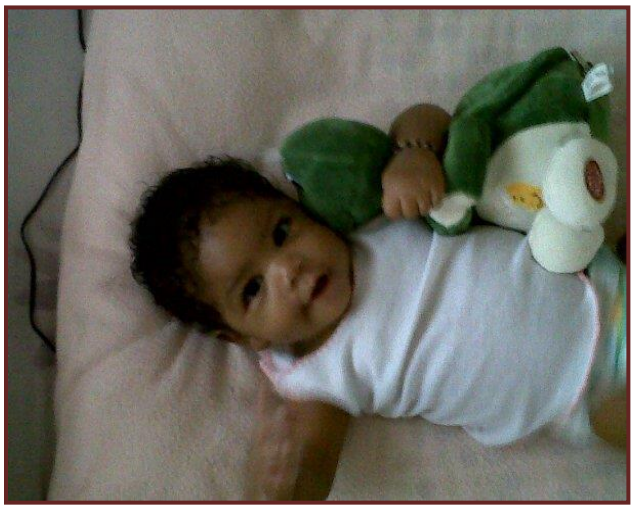
1. taking part as onlookers;
2. solitary play;
3. parallel play;
4. expressive play; and
5. group play.

The *onlooker* is the child who observes the play of others. In *onlooker play*, which often happens with toddlers, the child watches others, and may ask questions, but doesn't join in the play. Nevertheless, the child is developing language at this time, and learning how to relate to others.

In *solitary play,* the child plays alone. You may see the child talking to himself or herself, and using private speech.

Vygotsky pointed out that in solitary play children may be internalizing the speech of others, and so turning shared knowledge into their own personal knowledge. Infants playing on their own with their rattles and other toys are also exploring their world, as they grab objects that they have been looking at. They are just beginning to develop concepts about their world.

Figure 2.5: Playing Alone

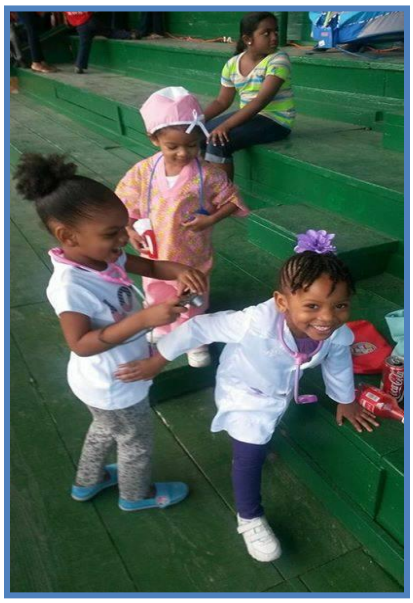


In *parallel play,* children play along with each other, although there may be little interaction among the players.

G*roup play* represents higher levels of interaction, with children playing together, doing similar things, and coordinating their actions (Dockett & Fleer, 1999).

Play that involves *enacting different roles* also plays an important part in shaping role identity in children. Many children's games entail playing roles that they see enacted in their homes and communities. Thus, for example, children take on roles of mummy and daddy, or other people in their communities, and play at doing many of the things they see their parents do in those roles. We see them cooking, taking care of their doll-babies, cleaning, pretending to be doctors or nurses, etc. As they do so, they are learning behaviours, practices and roles that are important in their culture, and so are beginning to learn how to behave in the society of which they form a part. They are also learning that it is possible for them to assume different roles – just as they will later have to do in real life. These are critical opportunities for development from ages 2 – 6.

Figure 2.6: Role playing: Today we're doctors!



Associative play helps the preschooler learn the do's and don'ts of getting along with others. In associative play, groups of children have similar goals. However they do not set rules, although they may all want to be playing with the same types of toys and may even trade toys. There is no formal organization of this type of play. Associative play teaches the art of sharing, encourages language development, problem-solving skills and cooperation.

Expressive play involves playing with materials – play dough, blocks, paints and markers etc. It can allow children to express their feelings as they play.

Figure 2.7:Expressive Play

Playing games entails physical play, as children run, jump, play hide and seek etc. Such physical play allows them to develop their muscles, and get good exercise.

Figure 2.8: Physical Play

In planning your curriculum you should be sure to include repeated opportunities for these different types of play, depending on what developmental outcomes you hope to help them attain. If, for example, your focus is on ***wellness***, and your goal is that they will grow up healthy and strong, you know you must provide frequent opportunities for *physical play*. As they play together with their friends too, you are helping them to achieve emotional well-being. If you want them to develop a healthy sense of Self, *role playing games* allow them to begin to understand who they are as they take on different roles they will assume in their real life communities.

For **infants**, opportunity for *solitary play*, with different objects, developmentally appropriate toys etc. gives them opportunities to learn more about their world through sensory stimulation – seeing, reaching for and touching different objects.

When you play *games* with infants they are also being presented with opportunities to learn. For example, the game of peek a boo which we play with infants 6 mths to 1 year old helps them to learn the concept of *object permanence* – that is, they come to understand that objects and people continue to exist, even when they cannot be directly seen, heard or touched.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

What sorts of play might help children 3- 5 years old to develop increasing control and strength in their upper bodies?

Supporting Reflective Thinking

Can young children think reflectively? Consider the story of Sophia and Christopher in the text box below.

Young Children's Thinking: Sophia and Christopher

Sophia (3 yrs and 6 months) and Christopher (3 years 8 months) are playing in the outside area at Aunt Millicent's Day Care center.
They find some flowers growing in the grass, and they pick them, taking off the petals, and putting them into Sophia's bucket.
"I'm going to make soup," Sophia says.

This exchange, on first appearances, doesn't seem very reflective – until we think what must happen for Sophia to go from the flowers in the garden to making soup. First she must go beyond looking at the flowers as they are in the here and now. She must be able to think about other possibilities for the flowers that she has picked. She must have thought about what else they could be, and how else they might be used, before she comes up with the possibility of using them to 'make soup'. In going beyond the immediate 'reality' that she recognises to explore other possibilities and make plans for action based on those possibilities, 3 year old Sophia has just engaged in powerful reflection.

The importance of Reflective Thinking

It is clear from this story that reflective thinking is at the bottom of problem solving and creative thinking – two critical skills that we need to foster in children.

We have looked at the project approach and seen how children go from thinking of topics to deciding that they want to find out more about them, to deciding how they can use that information. Such curriculum approaches help to foster reflective thinking. But to get the benefit of doing projects, for example, we must be able to seize the moment

and help the children to become accustomed to thinking reflectively when they carry out their daily activities.

Strategies for Fostering Reflective Thinking

Ask children questions which create conflict and confusion. And then help them reach an answer. There are many such questions, just waiting for teachers to recognize or ask.

These questions promote the reflection that provides the best kind of learning that human beings have so far invented.

Creating conflict and confusion

Consider the following discussion that took place between a teacher and her children while they were reading the story Jack and the Beanstalk:

- Q: “What did Jack do when he got to the giant's castle?"
- A: “He hid from the giant, and he stole the goose with the golden eggs!”
- A: (second child) “And then he ran away! And then after he reached the bottom of the vine, he chopped it down!”
- A: (another child) “And then the giant fell down and broke his neck, and Jack lived happily ever after with his mother and all the money!”
- Q: "My goodness! But – didn’t Jack go into someone's house where he did not belong?"
- A: “Yes!”
- Q: “And he stole the goose?"
- A: “Yes!”
- Q: “And - what did you say happened after he got away?”
- A: “He cut down the vine, and he killed the giant!”
- Q: “But the giant didn’t do anything to Jack, did he?”
- A: “No-o-o-o!”
- Q: “So if Jack broke into his house, stole his goose, and murdered the giant, why is the giant the bad one in this story, I wonder? ……(***discussion continues***)”

<u>Providing the stimulus for reflection</u>

In the conversation recorded above, the teacher stimulates reflection by:

1. First presenting the children with an engaging experience – the story
2. Then she focuses their attention on critical parts of the experience: she repeats part of the story they have read together (and enjoyed) just as the children recited it to her, prompting them to think of all that Jack has done, and reminding them that he was not provoked.

3. And finally she asks them the puzzling question that stimulates them to reflect on what Jack had done, and whether it was right for him to behave in that way.

Planning to meet children's special needs

In your classroom there may be children with special needs. That is to say, they may have sensory, physical or cognitive challenges, as well as those arising from developmental delays; or their first language or cultural experiences may be different from those of most children in their group. Or these children may be 'gifted'; that is to say, they may show evidence of being able to perform at very high levels in some area of competence, or in certain academic fields. You will need to pay special attention to these children, to ensure that they are given opportunities to develop their capabilities fully. At the same time, you must always ensure that they never feel singled out because of their areas of need.

General Principles

There are general rules you should follow when attending to the special needs of children in your care. Among those are the following:

- Above all, ensure that you know each of the children, and what their needs, and their special interests, are. This is critical if you are to structure developmental activities that they will be motivated to participate in. This means that if you have reason to suspect that a child, or children, in your class has special needs and you are not sure, you should recommend that the child should diagnostic testing.

- Encourage these children to develop a repertoire of different strategies to compensate for their areas of challenge. For example, children with language challenges can be encouraged to use body language to communicate ideas.

- Provide them with the physical resources and structures to support their learning processes. For example, books with large print or in Braille can be used for children who are visually challenged. Certain types of computer software can also support learning. And some songs, books etc. can be available in the first languages of children who speak other languages. For the gifted child, you can offer toys that encourage creative responses like building things and inventing things.

- Involve them, as far as possible, in all whole group activities.

- When creating opportunities for learning, or structuring situations and events to scaffold their learning, make sure they always feel in control of their learning by encouraging them to make choices – among resources, activities, food etc. For example, you can ask the child, "Would you like crackers or fruit for your snack today?"

Instructional Strategies

i. Support the child's independent performance

For example, expand on their statements by adding key words that can help to build vocabulary. For example, a child may say, "Juice!"

You expand on the statement: "Do you want some juice?"

ii. Provide prompts and cues

For example, if a child forgets to accomplish part of a task, you might point or gesture to remind him or her about it. Or you can provide more explicit information to help him or her along. You might also want to model or demonstrate ways of accomplishing different tasks, or to have them watch as another child does it.

iii. Engage the child's interest

Provide materials or introduce events that will engage the child's interest, and so motivate him or her to want to learn. The following illustrates how this can be done:

Brittany has been diagnosed as having a language delay. She is often reluctant to speak, and prefers to point, or grab what she wants. Her teacher, Aunty Sonia, notices that she likes music, and that she particularly likes the percussion instruments. She places these just slightly out of Brittany's reach, so that she needs to ask for them if she wants to play with them. However, Aunty Sonia does not give Brittany the instruments she wants until she at least tries to name them.

iv. Use peer support

Pair children with disabilities with others who are more accomplished in that particular skill or area. This allows them to observe and imitate more skilled performances by these children. In general, give them many opportunities to interact with, and learn from, one another.

Working with Gifted Children

Giftedness refers to a student's outstanding, innate ability in one or more of the following domains: intellectual, creative, socioaffective or sensorimotor (Gagné, 2007). The gifted child's needs must also be addressed in your classroom. For example, Nancy Sweeney suggests the following:

- Consider the needs of gifted children to interact with mental peers (children who are on the same thinking level). Therefore, gifted children may prefer older children as playmates. Provide opportunities for cross-age groupings and activities with older children in the child care center whenever possible.

- Provide them with opportunities to pursue their special interests

- Provide opportunities for gifted children to think divergently as well as convergently. For example, they need to have many educational experiences and problems for which there is more than one correct answer. When you are discussing issues or events in class, ask probing questions that will puzzle them and cause a certain amount of cognitive dissonance.

- While gifted preschool children may often learn to read and understand content from the early grade levels and beyond before they enter school, they are still young children and the "sit down and complete" (fine motor skill) tasks are not developmentally appropriate (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992).
  Instead, provide for higher-level intellectual exploration needs through such activities as a science corner with a variety of books and objects that present advanced ideas, as well as more advanced books in the library corner where children may choose according to interests and ability level.
- Provide instructional materials that support invention and creative activity

  Nancy Symmes Sweeney, Gifted children have special needs too.
  http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article_view.aspx?ArticleID=248

Planning an Environment for Learning: Learning Centers/Interest Areas

The physical environment must also support learning. One means of ensuring that this is so is by having learning centers**.**

What are learning centers?

Interest Areas or "Learning Centers" are “carefully designed areas that contain planned learning activities and materials” (Kostelnik, Soderman and Whiren 2007, in Decker et al, p. 135) – places in a preschool room's physical environment where specific activities can be arranged for the children to explore. Learning centers should provide opportunities for independent action, foster decision making, and encourage children’s involvement in different activities.

General Criteria for Learning Centers

Learning centers should usually make provision for at least 7 kinds of learning experiences every day:

- Quiet activities like reading
- Structured activities with puzzles, construction toys, manipulatives etc.
- Expressive and discovery activities, with materials like water and sand; with play dough, paint and easels
- Dramatic play like dress up, puppets, toys representing human beings
- Large motor activities, like slides, climbing equipment, balls and large blocks.
- ICT activities, with computers, tablets and software
- Activities that entail interaction with the natural environment, giving children opportunities to play outside.

It should be noted, however, that centers can also be designed to accommodate specific areas of the curriculum, like reading centers, science centers etc., or to accommodate children’s natural interests.

Features of Learning Centers

Centers should:

- Be designed to contain planned learning materials and to facilitate planned types of activity;
- Support hands-on learning, so all materials should be sturdy, and accessible to children;
- Be clearly identified, with labels and other forms of signage that make their purpose clear to children

- Accommodate children of various developmental levels, interests and abilities, and cultural experiences
- Include learning materials that support both open-ended and structured play activities
- Be located in specific places, that are well suited for the activity
- Have clearly marked boundaries
- Provide areas for play and for observation

Everything in your center should be kept clearly labelled, and loose parts and pieces should be placed in boxes or bags to keep them together.

Safety Considerations

Children's safety is a critical consideration when organizing centers. For example, heavy but portable items like large trucks should be placed on the lower shelves, so they do not fall on children.

Selecting Appropriate Learning Materials

Criteria for Selecting Materials

Learning materials are a critical part of the curriculum for very young children, who need concrete experiences to foster learning. In choosing materials, however, you should ensure that they meet certain important criteria:

- Developmental appropriateness: Simple toys like balls and soft dolls will suit infants and toddlers best. Similarly, art materials should be kept simple for children at this stage of development – crayons and differently colored paper, for example.

- Cultural appropriateness: Toys should reflect children's cultural experiences. Thus, for example, toys can include everyday household items like pots and pans, construction tools like hammers, telephones and toy boats, in centers located in fishing villages. Dolls should represent people of different ethnic backgrounds, and should be both male and female.
- Supporting the development of the imagination: This will include props for role play like blankets and materials for children to care for their own 'babies'.
- It will also include dress up clothes and play equipment for role playing (like house furniture, doctors' instruments etc.).

- Scaled to size: Furnishings should be scaled to suit children's size and height. Chairs, for example, can be 8", 10", 12" or 14" high as appropriate. Tables can be 16", 18", 20" or 22" high.
- Appropriate to different domains of learning: For example, your learning resources should include board books and Big books to support literacy development, shape boxes to support the development of numeracy, and crayons and easels to support aesthetic expression.
-

See the Appendix for a list of materials that your center should have. Remember that some materials can be made by you from recycled materials like cardboard boxes of different sizes for stacking, or old socks for puppets, which are readily available in the home.

III. ASSESSING LEARNING

Overview

Assessment of children's development is a critical component of your curriculum. Assessment of children's progress should be continuous, and should serve a range of different purposes. Screening identifies potential problems in development, and allows you to ensure that development is on target. Instructional assessment informs, supports and monitors learning. Finally, diagnostic assessment helps to diagnose areas of need, and to determine the severity and nature of children's special needs.

Assessment, therefore, allows you to collect information which you can use to determine the success of what you are doing, by providing evidence of how the children are developing. As a result of conducting effective assessment you will be able to make changes in the strategies you use as it becomes necessary to ensure that even more effective learning takes place. You will also be able to use data obtained in assessment to plan ongoing learning activities. This section gives you the opportunity to explore different assessment strategies you can use to support instruction and promote children's effective learning.

Objectives

At the end of this section you should be able to:

- Explain what is meant by assessment
- Describe the role of assessment in a child centered curriculum
- Select appropriate types of assessment for different instructional purposes.

The Nature of Assessment

Assessment is ***the process of finding out what children can do, what they know, and what they are interested in.*** It is important in any child-centered curriculum, because once a teacher or child care provider has obtained this information, appropriate activities and experiences can be provided to help each child to continue to grow in all areas of development. In addition, in a child-centered curriculum assessment should be experienced by children as meaningful, and as part of activities which they have initiated. It emphasizes 'authentic' assessment. Both *authentic assessment* and *developmental assessment* are terms that refer to types of assessment which focus on children's actual performance during their regular, real-life experiences, rather than on

contrived testing measurement devices, and tend to be preferred in assessing young children

Some Assessment Strategies

There are many kinds of assessment, although some assessment strategies have traditionally been dominant among practitioners. Some of these dominant approaches, though, are considered to be inappropriate for use with young children, except in specific circumstances.

Formal testing, which is a systematic (and usually summative) procedure for getting samples of children's performances, for example, is often not very useful to early childhood practitioners, given that accurate testing can only be achieved with accurate, reliable valid instruments, and that examples of these are so rare. In addition, we in the Caribbean tend to place so much emphasis on formal testing that it often becomes a cause of high stress among children throughout their school careers, and should be avoided as far as possible as a means of providing information about young children.

Generally speaking, assessment of individual children's development and learning relies heavily on ***observations*** which elicit descriptive data. However, it is advisable to use more than one source of data, when assessing children's progress, so as to ensure, as far as possible, that you have a comprehensive picture of how each child is progressing.
In this section we focus on three types of assessment strategies: observation; portfolio assessment; and project-based assessment.

Observation

Introduction

Observations focus on specific behaviours of individual children, or on interactions among groups of children. You conduct observations in order to get information about their developing knowledge, skills, feelings and dispositions.

What is Observation?

Observation is the practice of looking at and listening to children to find out how they are developing, what they like doing and what they are learning through their play and the experiences on offer. In early childhood education settings observation should be systematic.

Puckett and Black (2008) describe how observation can be used during story time, for example:

During story time…..the teacher visually scans the listeners for facial expressions and body language, and listens for verbal responses indicative of enjoyment, language development and comprehension. The teacher observes children as they move about, attending to their posture, gait, coordination, agility, endurance, persistence, use of materials and equipment, and the choices they make (p. 94).

It is important to observe all children, and not just those who are very visible, or very outgoing at all times. Taking notes and keeping organized records of all children will help you to avoid doing that sort of selective observation.

Using Observation to Support Instruction

Effective observation can be used to help you to determine what skills and knowledge individual children currently have, and what is engaging their interest. That information can then be used to individualise instruction, ensuring that instructional activities are poised at a high enough level to challenge each child without frustrating him or her. It also enables you to provide opportunities for learning that you know will interest each child.

Although observations done at home may not be as systematic, both home and center should conduct ongoing observation of young children. It is important that parents and practitioners should then share what they have learned from their observations, so that they can decide whether the child's development is at the expected stage, whether the resources such as toys and equipment are suitable for the child and to focus on what to provide in future to support the child to develop new interests, learn new skills and acquire new knowledge.

Systematic observation is something all practitioners should do. To do it well requires skill, and practitioners who are just starting out in early childhood education may come to realise, as they practice it, just what an important role they play in children's optimal development.

Portfolio Assessment

Introduction

In this section we look at portfolios and their use in instruction and assessment. You will be introduced to different types of portfolios, and will design a portfolio for a specific group of children and purpose.

What is a portfolio?

A portfolio is a selection of samples of a child's work to be used as evidence to support an assessment of his/her development. Portfolios may contain examples of examples of children's work, illustrating their progress and achievements over time. Thus they serve the dual purpose of providing a showcase where the child can see his/her work displayed, and feel that it is appreciated by other people, and of allowing interested persons to assess how the child is progressing. Batzle calls the portfolio "a celebration of the child's unique abilities, achievements and progress, displayed through authentic samples (p. 60).

Portfolio Formats

Portfolios can be formatted as collections within 3-ring binders, photo albums, accordion files, or simple boxes. The important thing is that the container should make it possible to organize different categories of work, or different stages in the progress of a piece of work.

Portfolios may be used to showcase children's best work or to bring together samples of their work done at different times, and in different contexts, so you can get information about how they are progressing.

Possible contents of a Portfolio

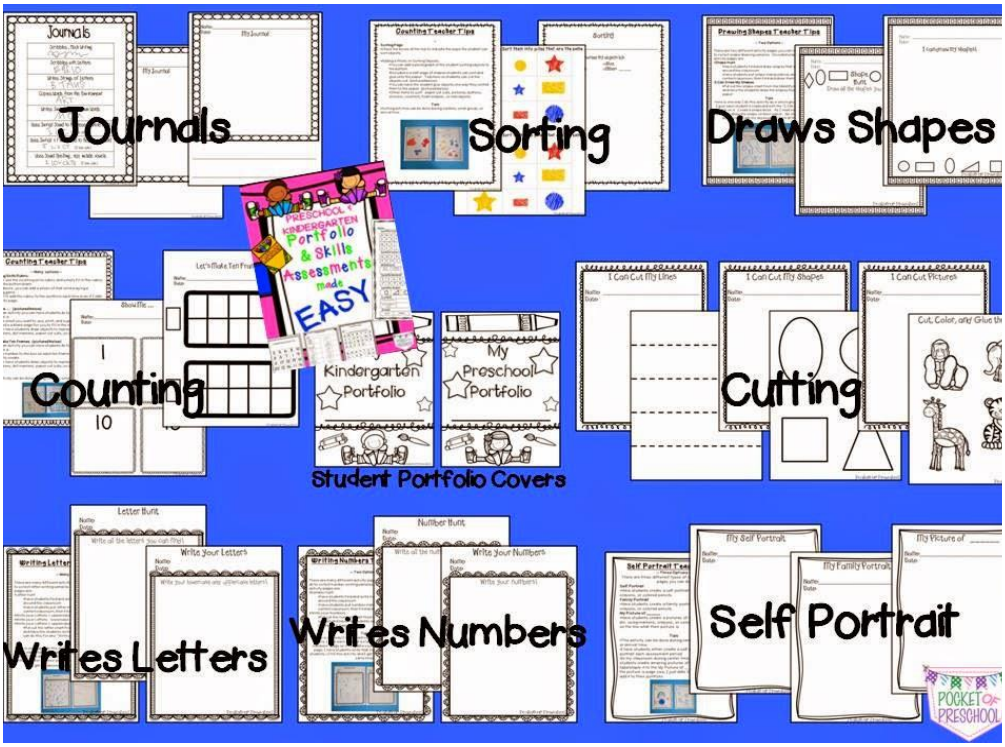
Contents of a portfolio may include, among other things, anecdotal records, photographs of their work at different stages of its development, videos, children's self-reports of projects and experiences, examples of work that they completed, and rubrics. Each child should have his/her own portfolio collection, though, so that the assessment is individualized.

Examples of possible contents:

- Cover page, providing information about the child
- Photographs of the child's family
- The child's description of his/her interests (can be text or images)
- Photographs of the child's block work
- Photographs of the child at the beginning and end of the year
- Samples of bead work or drawings completed by the child at different times
- Videos of children interacting in groups, leading the morning assembly, or reciting poems or singing songs
- The child's accounts of field trips or science projects completed at different stages of his/her development
- Rubrics, with your analysis of work done by the child, using different criteria

- Rating scales

Figure 3.1 Examples of Portfolio Content



Planning your portfolio

The portfolio contents should be placed in categories (illustrating performance in different areas of the curriculum, or different domains of development – cognitive, gross motor, fine motor, social etc.) and in chronological order. Each category should include examples of different types of work that illustrates the child's performance in that category. If, for example, you wanted to collect evidence of the development of the child's fine motor coordination, you might include video clips of her stringing beads, samples of her colouring with crayons, pictures of puzzles she has completed, etc.

All information should be dated. Your conclusions about each child's achievements, abilities, strengths and needs should be based on evidence about the full range of the child's development, in all different dimensions, over time. Thus the portfolio should support assessment of children's *holistic development*.

You Try This

What samples of work might you include in the section of the portfolio that assesses each child's emergent literacy?

Project Based Assessment

Project based assessment follows naturally from the project approach to curriculum and instruction. Project based assessment uses documentation of project activities and findings to assess children's development.

Strategies

Five strategies may be used to document and analyse children's progress in project based assessment:

a. Portfolios
b. Analysis of individual and group products
c. Observations
d. Children's reflections
e. Narratives of learning experience.

Each of these should contribute to teachers' and caregivers' understanding of children's progress and interests, as well as of ongoing understanding of the progress of the project and changes that might need to be made. They should also contribute evidence of children's progress that can be shared with stakeholders.

The importance of Continuous Assessment

You should remember that the younger the child, the more difficult it is to obtain valid assessments, since children develop so rapidly, and since performance on any assessment may depend on the child's mood at the time, as well as the conditions under which the assessment takes place. Thus your data gathering and analysis of what you are seeing should be continuous.

Keeping Records

As you observe children, you need to keep records of what they say and do over time. The following are ways of doing so:

Anecdotal Records

Anecdotal records document what you have observed informally about children's learning – their behaviours, social interactions etc. They are brief narratives that seek to capture important information about individual learning sessions, but they are most useful when they are analysed over time to get a cumulative picture of each child's progress. Anecdotal records help teachers to understand how well children have grasped individual concepts or procedures.

Format

Anecdotal records confine themselves to factual accounts of what is actually observed or noticed, without any editorial content by the teacher.

Content

Anecdotal records must include information about where the observation occurred, the time, and the scheduled activity, together with unembellished information about what the child did and/or said.

N.B.*In the interest of detail and accuracy,it is suggested that you let as little time as possible elapse between an incident and the time when you record it. If you cannot record the incident immediately because too many things are happening simultaneously at the time, then you can take brief notes at the time, and then complete the expanded version later in the day.*

Examples of anecdotal records:

1. **High/Scope**

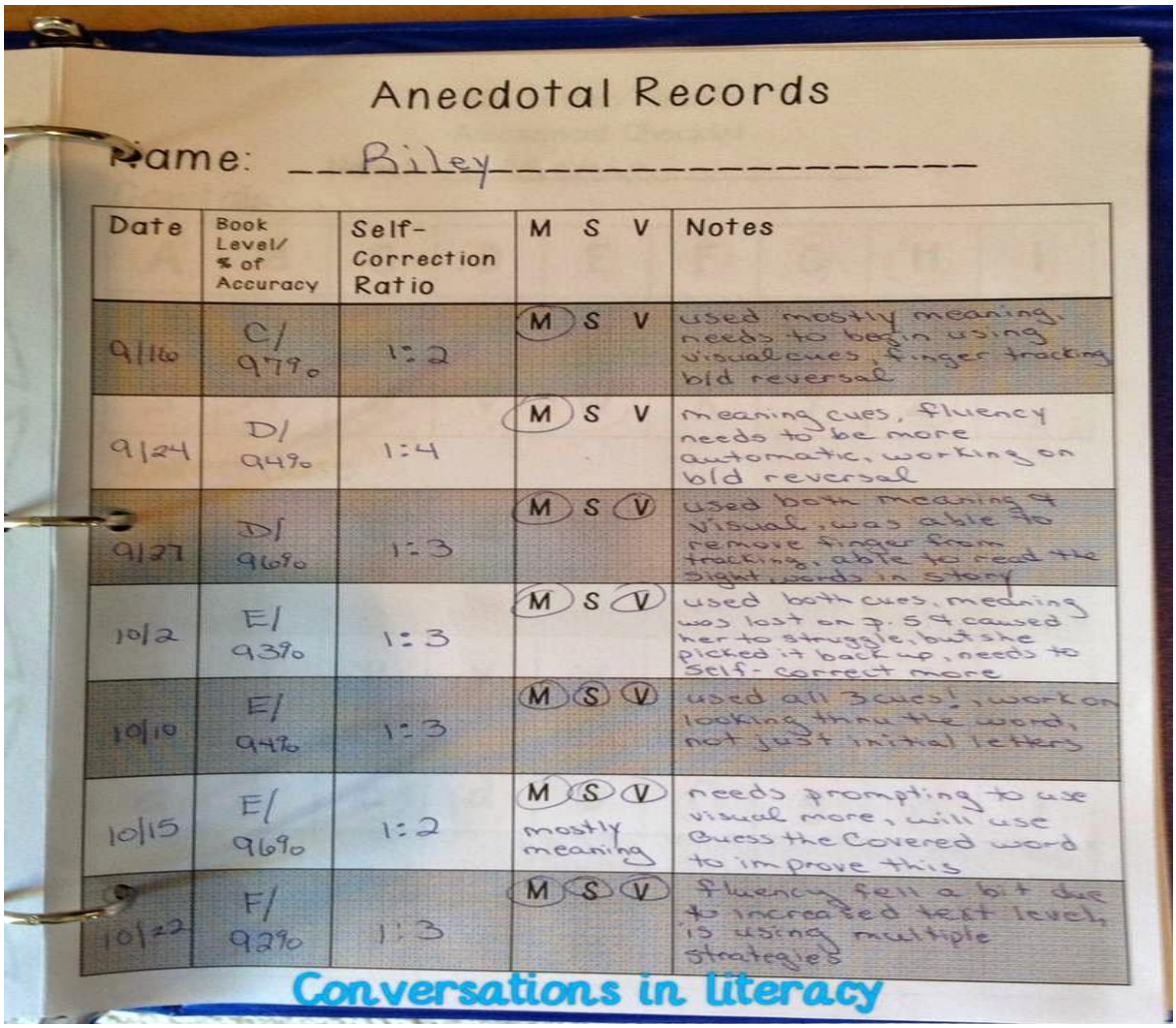
   Date: 15/6

   Observer:

At work time in the house area, Asia used an empty cake mix box, a cake pan, and a mixer. She told Sue [teacher] "Hey, look, I'm using the mixer to make a cake for my mom!"

2. **Another format**:

Figure 3.2: Example of an Anecdotal Record



Anecdotal Records

Name: Riley

Date	Book Level/ % of Accuracy	Self-Correction Ratio	M S V	Notes
9/16	C/ 97%	1:2	(M) S V	used mostly meaning, needs to begin using visual cues, finger tracking b/d reversal
9/24	D/ 94%	1:4	(M) S V	meaning cues, fluency needs to be more automatic, working on b/d reversal
9/27	D/ 96%	1:3	(M) S (V)	used both meaning & visual, was able to remove finger from tracking, able to read the sight words in story
10/2	E/ 93%	1:3	(M) S (V)	used both cues, meaning was lost on p. 54 caused her to struggle, but she picked it back up, needs to self-correct more
10/10	E/ 94%	1:3	(M) (S) (V)	used all 3 cues!, work on looking thru the word, not just initial letters
10/15	E/ 96%	1:2	(M) (S) (V) mostly meaning	needs prompting to use visual more, will use Guess the Covered word to improve this
10/22	F/ 92%	1:3	(M) (S) (V)	fluency fell a bit due to increased text level, is using multiple strategies

Conversations in literacy

Checklists

Another way of keeping records of your observation for assessment is the checklist. Checklists are designed to record the presence or absence of specific traits or behaviors. They are easy to use, and are especially helpful when many different items need to be observed. They often include lists of specific behaviors to look for while observing. Depending on their function, they can vary in length and complexity. Checklists may be designed for any developmental domain — physical, social, emotional, or cognitive.

Below is an example of a checklist to assess children's physical development:

Table 3.1: Gross Motor Skills Group Assessment

DATE / ACTIVITY	SHANIA	ALESANDRO	JEREMIAH	NAVID	TAMIKA
Completes forward somersault	✓	✓		✓	✓
Throws ball without losing balance	✓	✓	✓		✓
Hops on one foot		✓	✓		✓
Maintains balance while riding tricycle	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Creating Rubrics

What are rubrics?

Rubrics are tools for assessing the quality of a child's work by outlining the criteria you are using for assessing the work, describing the qualities in the work with specific detail, and determining the extent to which the work has met the criteria identified. Thus, in addition to describing the criteria you will use to judge the work, you also describe how the work will look at different performance levels.

How are rubrics designed?

In developing a rubric, you should follow certain systematic procedures:

First, decide on the criteria you want to measure. For example, in assessing a child's drawing, you may want to use criteria such as:

a) Use of lines: Do the lines come together to form a recognizable image?
b) Realistic detail: If the child draws a person, does s/he make a circle, to represent a face? Have important details like hair and clothing been include?

Second, decide what *performance levels* to use for your early childhood rubrics. Is it going to be *excellent, very good, satisfactory*, and *needs improvement*? Or would you rather use *five stars, four stars, etc.?*

Third, develop *descriptors* that will make it clear what each performance level means in terms of what the child did. What will be the difference, for example, between a five star effort and a four star?

Fourth, explain your descriptors to the students in the simplest way that you can, and also explain them to their parents. Always remember that the rubric must be meaningful to all stakeholders.

Below, you will see two examples of rubrics. In the first, you note the 2 criteria by which the work is assessed: How *realistic* is the shape, and how *accurate* are the details the child has included. Each column that follows provides descriptions of what the teacher is looking for at different levels of performance.

The second one, the bean count rubric, assesses behaviours associated with the activity (the criteria for judging). The performance level descriptors focus on the accuracy and independence with which each activity is performed.

Table 3.2: Rubric assessing a child's drawing of shapes

Realistic Shape	Looks like a cartoon fish.	Shape is mostly like a real fish, but we can't tell which kind	Shape is exactly like the actual type of fish we would see in nature.
Accurate Details	Details are missing, so looks like a cartoon fish	Has some basic details like fins and a tail, but not enough to tell what kind of fish it is.	Details are so carefully drawn that we know what kind of fish this is.

Figure 3.3: Bean Count Rubric

Name _____

Bean Count Rubric

1st Try I put the correct number of beans in each cup.	All cups correct	More than 5 cups correct.	Less than 5 cups correct.
2nd Try I fixed the mistakes that my partner found .	correct	almost	I still needed help.
3rd Try I tried one more time to put the correct number of beans in each cup.	correct	almost	I needed help

Two Examples of Rubrics

Deciding what method of assessment you should choose

There are three main considerations to be addressed in choosing a method of assessment:

1. First, the method chosen depends on the type of behavior you want to assess and the amount of detail you need.
2. Another consideration is whether the information needs to be collected for one child or the entire group.
3. Finally, the amount of focused attention required by the observer needs to be considered.

You Try It

(a) You want to assess your class in terms of the development, over time, of their knowledge of methods and practices related to good nutrition

(b) You want to assess the development of one girl's control of fine motor skills

Question: What methods might you use in each case?

IV. INTEGRATING ICT

Overview

There has been some discussion as to whether and how information and communication technology (ICT) should be infused into the early childhood curriculum. In this chapter, you will explore the criteria for determining whether ICT might be used in the curriculum. You will also have the opportunity to consider how ICT can be used to support instruction across different areas of the curriculum.

Objectives

At the end of the section you should be able to:

1. Explain what is meant by ICT
2. Outline some arguments for and against the use of ICT in the early childhood curriculum
3. Identify criteria for selecting ICT for use in the classroom
4. Suggest how ICT might be infused into different areas of the curriculum.

What is ICT?

ICT is an acronym for Information and Communications Technology**.** It can be defined as "anything which allows us to get information, to communicate with each other, or to have an effect on the environment using electronic or digital equipment" (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2003, p. 4). In early childhood education, the term 'ICT' might include computer hardware and software, digital cameras and video cameras, the Internet, telecommunication tools, interactive stories, simulated environments, programmable toys, and many other devices and resources.

Should ICT be used? Some Considerations

Arguments Against

Many arguments have been cited against the use of ICT in the early childhood curriculum. Critics of ICT express concerns, for example, about possible ill effects of using ICT because it can lead to young children becoming reluctant to exercise, with consequences for physical fitness, and obesity. It has been suggested, too, that heavy use of some forms of ICT can cause strain on young children's eyes, and can even lead to

the short circuiting of their cognitive and social development, with declines in literacy development and creative thinking, among other ill effects.

Arguments supporting the use of ICT

On the other hand, people who support the use of ICT note that it is already very much a part of young children's cultural experience, with most children having homes where computers, tablets, smart phones etc. are used on a daily basis. They point out that it is almost impossible to speak of providing authentic experiences for most children today while leaving ICT out of those experiences.

Advocates argue further that ICT can be used to support and enhance learning in a number of different areas of the curriculum, by offering children opportunities for active learning of different skills and knowledge, and new types of play experiences. They suggest, too, that since ICT may be abused outside the early childhood center, in the center children can learn to use it appropriately, and to see how it can help them in their learning across the different areas of the curriculum.

ICT also offers practitioners and administrators opportunities to support and strengthen relationships and communication between early childhood centers, parents, and other people connected to the early childhood education setting.

A final argument for use of ICT in the countries of the OECS is that the development of these countries requires that citizens become digital natives, instead of digital immigrants, as many of their parents and grandparents still are, and that they should therefore be skilled in the digital languages of computers, social media and other sites on the internet. In order to prepare young children for responsible practice of these 'languages', however, it is necessary that education should develop children's ability and disposition to use them wisely.

ICT for Instruction

ICT can be used to support instruction across different areas of the curriculum. It can be used, in the first place, for technology education. Secondly it can support learning across the curriculum.

Dramatic Play

ICT can be used as props in dramatic play, as is the case with any other pieces of household equipment. Thus children can use cell phones to 'call' their friends, or to

telephone the doctor to come pay a house visit to attend to their doll 'babies', for example.

Software has been developed to support different kinds of role play, which in turn leads to a variety of other learnings. Morgan and Siraj-Blatchford (2009) in *Using ICT in the early years: Parents and practitioners in partnership*, describe how:

In one class the *At The Vets* Semerec CD Package was used to support role play in the role play area. Most of the control involves the use of the mouse, but the child also uses the keyboard for typing his or her name and the name of the pet.

The child chooses the type of animal, which could be wild or from a farm, and they select the medicine and equipment they need to treat the animal. This activity runs for eight to ten minutes, which is a short enough period of time to keep children focused and interested. The child can also print off an invoice for the treatment, gaining more skills and ICT knowledge as they use the printer. The teacher reported upon the children's learning associated with their knowledge and understanding of the world, their physical development as they improve their mouse control, their mathematical learning as they used language such as more or less, longer or shorter and also counted out equipment or medication required. The application also encouraged the children to be sympathetic and caring towards animals and to collaborate with each other in the activities. (p. 15)

Scaffolding Learning

ICT can also be used as children learn to search the internet to get information for different projects. Teachers can scaffold learning by providing virtual field trips for children, giving them opportunities for experiences they could never have had otherwise. For example, children can visit other countries to learn more about cultural practices in those countries.

Developing Literacy

ICT can be used to develop literacy as children use DVDs to listen to stories, and computers to draw pictures that illustrate the stories (thus demonstrating their comprehension).Software can also be used by teachers to create books in collaboration with the children, with accompanying illustrations, so as to help them develop a love of reading.

Documenting Learning

Children and teachers can use ICT to document children's learning, as they use digital cameras and video recorders to record children's activities, and then create electronic portfolios of their work. This can then support assessment of children's project, and can also be shared with the children as they review their own work with their teachers, reflecting on what they like about their work, and what they might want to do differently another time.

Sharing information about learning

These records can also be used in discussing children's progress with parents or other primary caregivers.

ICT for Practitioners

ICT can also be used by individual practitioners to develop individual learning plans for children, or to create data bases with important information about children and their families. It can be used by groups of practitioners to exchange ideas about effective practice, and by administrators to communicate with different stakeholders about the children, or about events planned to support their development.

Selecting ICT for use with young children

ICT should be used discriminatingly. For instance, it is generally agreed that ICT should not be introduced to children under the age of three, although, again, some interactive toys may be used for toddlers. In 1986 the American National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) issued their position on the appropriate use of technology in the classroom identifying the following necessary features of technology to be used in the classroom, which are still relevant today:

- It should be age appropriate, individually appropriate, and culturally sensitive
- It should be used to enhance children's cognitive and social functioning
- It should be infused into the curriculum to support learning
- It should eliminate exposure to violence
- It should avoid stereotyping any group.
- In addition, technology for children should be interactive, promoting the children's active engagement with what is going on, rather than their passive response to it.

Reflection

How do you now use ICT in your practice?

What new uses can you think of that would help you to be even more effective in supporting children's learning?

What are some challenges you experience that help to limit your use of ICT, and how might these be addressed?

V. MANAGING YOUR SPACE

Overview

Social and emotional competence is thought to underlie children's behaviors, specifically their ability in two critical areas that are central to success in school: (1) positive interactions with peers and teachers; and (2) focused attention and behavior during classroom activities. Developmental psychologists have theorized that improving social and emotional competence may be both an important outcome in its own right and a possible pathway, along with other factors, to improved academic achievement.

Unfortunately, preschool practitioners rarely receive sufficient training or support to manage the classroom so as to promote the social and emotional competence of children in their classrooms. This chapter discusses the importance of classroom management, identifies some challenges you may encounter in managing the learning space, and proposes certain strategies that will make classroom management easier.

Objectives:

At the end of the chapter you should be able to:

- Explain what is meant by 'classroom management'
- Say why effective classroom management is so important
- Select strategies to help you deal with challenges of classroom management

Classroom Management Strategies

What is Classroom Management?

Classroom management entails creating a positive, constructive and calm environment within which all children feel welcomed, accepted and comfortable. It is a crucial component of successful learning. Classroom management is also about how you run and manage your classroom, with procedures that ensure that children know what to do, when to do it, and how they can do it, so that they can all learn and succeed.

The importance of Classroom Management

Effective classroom management is an important dimension of high quality instruction. Children do better academically when they are enrolled in classrooms that are emotionally more positive and well-managed, compared with children who are enrolled in classrooms that are chaotic, disorganized, and emotionally negative. Children's

engagement has also been found to be higher in classrooms where teachers manage behavior problems more effectively.

In addition, preschool children with behavioral challenges are more likely to face social, behavioral, *and* academic difficulties throughout their school careers than their more well-adjusted peers. Children who have difficulty negotiating the classroom environment may also disrupt their classmates' academic and social progress, since when children act out aggressively or become sad and withdrawn, teachers may be diverted from instructional time to manage these behaviors.

In a well-managed classroom, you should establish clear and firm rules, communicate your expectations, and provide a high level of monitoring until children have internalized what you expect of them. To help your students get used to the routine and structure of your preschool classroom, introduce these concepts to your students as soon as they enter the room. By letting your students know where they should put their things, where they should wait for the day to start, and what behavior is expected of them when they enter the room, you'll help reduce any confusion students may have, and you should be able to start your day in a more organized manner. Clear and consistent communication about the day's schedule and your expectations for behavior will make a significant difference in establishing a calm classroom environment.

You also need to be flexible in your use of rewards and sanctions, celebrating children's positive behavior, and allowing them greater responsibility and choice, while responding to disruptive behavior in ways that do not inadvertently reinforce children for acting out.

Effective teachers also maintain a positive climate for learning that is characterized by established classroom routines with a minimum of disruptiveness, and short transitions between well-planned activities. In poorly managed classrooms, teachers may lose large amounts of time to transitional activities such as lining up, putting materials away, and moving between small- and large-group activities. The changes in the interactions between teachers and children can improve a set of skills - collectively referred to as "social and emotional competence" - that enable children to engage positively with peers and teachers.

In the narrative below, a practitioner describes her Circle Time routine.

Aunty Jacky describes her Circle Time

"Once the children have all come to join us for morning circle time, we choose our "Helper of the Day" and invite our helper to take a look outside and tell us what they think the weather is like today which often leads into a short discussion about the day's weather. So we have introduced two procedures that our classroom will follow every day and we begin these procedures on our very first day too!"

QUESTIONS:

1. ***How far does Aunty Jacky's approach to Circle Time constitute an effective strategy for classroom management?***
2. ***What are two classroom management strategies you have found most useful, and why are they so effective?***

VI. ESTABLISHING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Overview

An essential part of successful early childhood education is the ability to establish collaborative relationships in which the parties involved work with each other for the good of the child. In this chapter we will explore what is meant by collaborative partnerships, as well as ways to establish and maintain them.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this chapter you will be able to:

1. Explain what is meant by a collaborative partnership
2. Outline the benefits of collaborative partnerships
3. Select strategies for building collaborative partnerships among stakeholders

What do we mean by Collaborative Partnerships?

Collaborative partnerships are partnerships in which each member may have a different perspective on how to address an issue – in this case, early childhood education - that all recognize as important. However, the partners agree to work together as equals, respecting each other's knowledge and experience, in order to explore solutions and initiatives that go beyond what each member can envisage, to ensure that the issue is dealt with as effectively as possible.

Who benefits from a Partnership?

All the parties most closely involved in early childhood education benefit from successful partnerships. Children benefit because they see people who are important to them working well together – thus modeling the kinds of behaviours we want our children to imitate. They benefit too because decisions taken are informed by multiple perspectives on exactly where the child is in his/her development, and by what s/he needs. They benefit, finally, because there is likely to be more integration and articulation between what happens at home and what happens at preschool.

Parents benefit because they get an intimate knowledge of what is happening when they are not with their children during the day, and because they know what they need to do to help them, and how best to go about doing it.

The center benefits because people who have an interest in the center being successful are involved in making decisions, and understand what they can do to help. Staff are more likely to feel that their efforts are appreciated if they work closely with families to carry out their responsibilities. And staff can be made aware in a timely manner when any issue arises at home that may affect the child's behavior at the center. In addition, since parents are children's first teachers, center staff benefit from having access to information that will help them understand the kinds of knowledge children bring from home to the centers.

Outside the center there are other partners who stand to benefit from partnerships in early childhood education as well. For example, partnerships which include the wider community in the effective development of their young children benefit the community itself in the long run. Children who have experienced high quality education in the early years are likely to succeed in their later academic careers, and also to have fewer emotional and behavioural issues that can lead to criminal behavior, or cost the community in other ways.

Partnerships should also include early childhood officers in your Ministry of Education, or any other body or institution which has a significant investment in early childhood education, and which is able to provide assistance to ensure that centers run efficiently and have the resources needed to make them succeed in attaining their educational goals. The Ministry itself also benefits from such partnerships, since it is better able to make informed interventions that can lead to an even higher quality of early childhood education in your country.

How do Collaborative Partnerships work?

Partnerships start with positive relationships, and involve:

- everyone being equal and contributing in different ways
- each person being valued and respected for what they think even if there are differences of opinion about, for example, parenting practices and philosophies, or religious beliefs
- listening and talking to each other
- making an effort to understand and trust other people's points-of-view
- checking in with each other when making important decisions.

Building Effective Partnerships: The Foundations

Effective partnerships are built on the following foundation stones:

1. A shared vision
2. Clear and consistent communications
3. Respect for differences
4. Empathy

Shared Vision

A vision complements your statement of philosophy. It often expresses the kind of quality service you are working to provide, and unites everyone in working towards a shared purpose.

Having a shared vision clarifies your purpose, and identifies what you are striving for in relation to children's learning and development. To arrive at a shared vision, you should make a deliberate effort, first, to ensure that all partners are involved in the process of formulating the vision.

Communication

Clear and consistent communication starts with the process of *sharing the vision* for early childhood education that informs all your later decisions. All partners should be aware of the vision, which means that it should be part of the ongoing discourse among partners, and that it should be clearly displayed to be seen as soon as anyone comes to the center.

In addition, *a policy handbook*[1] should be distributed to all stakeholders, setting out different ways in which partners can become involved in the operations of centers; principles governing the partnership; the roles and obligations of each partner, and the types of services each will provide. It should thus provide clear options for how all stakeholders can work together to achieve different goals. It will also set out center expectations and beliefs about different issues like discipline, attendance, clothing etc.
Finally, many *different channels of communication* can be used – word of mouth, when parents come to the center very day; newsletters; PTA meetings, etc.

An important part of planning your communication in a partnership is providing ample opportunities for *feedback*. It should be very clear to all partners that communication

[1] Policies for all centers should include, minimally, those related to issues of children's health, discipline, inclusiveness, payment of fees, expectations with regard to children's clothing and meals, and arrangements for access to children.

goes back and forth, and is responsive to the concerns of different persons in the partnership.

Above all, effective communication means that parents and guardians *must* be kept informed in a timely manner about any issues which affect their children's welfare and development.

Respect for Differences

There may be many differences between partners in early childhood education. Let us look at certain important ones: There may be religious differences, for one, and so parents may have concerns about whether their children will be expected to take part in devotional practices.

There may also be cultural differences. You may have concerns, for instance, about the kinds of lunches and snacks parents/caregivers pack for children. Even more significantly, you may have concerns about parents' disciplinary practices. Language differences can also contribute to communication challenges.

You should not try to impose your own beliefs or practices on your partners. Instead, you should always be prepared to acknowledge those differences and to accommodate them as far as possible. In instances where you feel you *must* act in ways that are opposed to the belief systems of parents, you need to inform them of this, and to make your reasons for doing so clear.

There are times, however, when differences will create conflict, and at those times a way of moving forward must be negotiated.

Empathy

Center staff should try to understand the challenges faced by many primary caregivers, like parents and guardians, and the unique circumstances that give rise to those challenges. They should take these into consideration when creating policies and making decisions about the children in the center. In an effective partnership, other partners will also try to understand the center's position on different issues.

GLOSSARY

Assessment. The process of obtaining information about individual children from natural observations, anecdotal records, interviews, portfolios, projects, and other sources, for the purpose of understanding the child's development and planning for curriculum intended to enhance learning and development.

Assistive technology. Physical means of support that is provided to any person with visual, auditory, or motor impairments

Developmentally appropriate practice: Curriculum practice that takes into account those aspects of teaching and learning that change with the age and experience of the learner.

Learning Community: A social context in which all participants collaborate with the common purpose of fostering a culture of learning aimed at increasing knowledge.

Scaffolding: **A** variety of instructional strategies used to move students progressively toward stronger understanding and, ultimately, towards greater independence in the learning process, by providing them with successive levels of temporary support. The strategies are removed, little by little, as soon as they are no longer needed.

Zone of Proximal Development: *"T*he distance between [a child's] actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving, and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" *(Vygotsky).*

APPENDIX

Suggested Materials

These materials are suggested, *but do not constitute an exhaustive list*:

For active play

- Balls
- Beanbags
- Blocks
- Climbing equipment
- Buckets and pails
- Exercise mats
- Push/pull toys
- Rocking toys
- Steerable toys (tricycles, cars etc.)
- Tunnels

Manipulatives

- Play dough, Legos, sewing and lacing cards, with yarn and laces, peg boards with large pegs, sand and sand toys (pails, sieves, measuring cups, funnels etc.)
- Shape sorters
- Stacking and nesting toys
- Water table and water play toys

Materials to support creative expression

- Crayons and markers (washable and nontoxic)
- Easels
- Glue
- Magazines for cutting
- Paintbrushes
- Water paints
- Software for creating pictures
- Paper
- DVD recordings of children's songs, nursery rhymes etc.
- Rhythm and percussion instruments
- Scissors
- Sponges
- Stamp pad and stamps
- Aprons
- Food colouring

Materials for dramatic play

- Cars, trucks, planes, boats (be sure they are sturdy)
- Cash register and shopping cart
- Telephones
- Dollhouses, farms, doctors' instruments etc. as props for different settings
- Dress up clothes (representing all cultures in your classroom)
- Furniture for playing house
- Handbags
- Mops, brooms, spoons, rolling pins etc. and other cleaning and cooking equipment
- Dolls and puppets

Materials to support literacy development

- Books of all kinds in print
- Books on CDs
- Different kinds of paper
- Pencils, pens, markers
- Computers and word processing software
- Puzzles for developing literacy knowledge (story book themes, rhyming words etc.)

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