Early literacy assessment in the context of play-based learning

Coquitlam
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Workshop overview

- Focusing activity
- Benefits of learning through play
- The teacher’s role in a play-based program
  - Designing engaging experiences
  - Supporting and scaffolding learning through play
- Assessing learning in a play-based K program
Principles of play-based learning

www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning
Learning through play in Kindergarten

Kindergarten children learn with their whole bodies, their minds, and their hearts. They learn best when

• activities are play based, involving exploration and inquiry, with hands-on activities that engage all their senses

• activities are developmentally and culturally appropriate

Full day Kindergarten Program Guide, p. 8
The importance of play

• All aspects of children’s development and learning—physical, social, emotional, cultural, linguistic, and intellectual—are inter-related and inter-dependent.

• Language plays a central role in connecting thought and learning.

Making linkages, p. 4
The importance of play

During group play activities with their peers, children are building relationships, combining ideas, compromising, developing oral narratives, and learning to take the perspective of others—key elements of social competence, creative thinking, imagination and early literacy.

BC Early Learning Framework, p. 12
Learning occurs in a social context

“…zones” illustrate how people can stretch beyond their individual capabilities toward more mature cognitive functioning when they learn through social interactions.”

Vygotsky, 1978
p. 46, BC Primary Program
The importance of play

Play is vital to young children’s daily lives and promotes their healthy physical and intellectual development in ways that cannot be achieved by focusing on narrow pre-academic skills, such as counting to 10 or learning the alphabet.

BC Early Learning Framework, p. 12
There are consistent findings in research about the close relationship between symbolic play and literacy development and good evidence that increasing opportunities for rich symbolic play can have a positive influence on literacy development.

Pretend play fosters communication, developing conversational skills, turn taking, perspective taking, and the skills of social problem solving—persuading, negotiating, compromising, and cooperating. It requires complex communication skills: children must be able to communicate and understand the message: this is play.

Let the children play:
Nature’s answer to early learning

www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/
Play and school success

- Rich, complex play develops children’s abilities to think for themselves, to explore possibilities, to test their personal theories, to solve problems and to self-correct.

- Oral language that occurs naturally in complex play is closely linked to the development of thinking skills.
Play and school success

• In exploratory play, children develop language and use vocabulary that reaches beyond their zone of comfort and confidence.

• Confidence in learning grows because children stretch themselves beyond their comfort level and discover what they can do for themselves.

• The sense of success that comes from figuring things out increases children’s motivation to take risks.
Play and self regulation

• Rich, complex play contributes to the development of self regulation or self control.
• Self regulation is tied closely to motivation to learn. Students who have a sense of personal control and autonomy approach learning with more positive attitudes.
• Self regulation contributes to lifelong learning and success.
Language and literacy develop as children play and talk together

- Oral language is the foundation of literacy development
- Language development is facilitated in rich play-based learning environments
Assessment and instruction are integrated within the context of everyday learning

• The teacher purposefully structures the environment for meaningful learning to occur.

• Language and literacy develop in the context of play.
Assessment informs practice through the assessment cycle

- Knowledge of children and how they learn
- Professional experience and knowledge
- Assessment and evaluation resources (e.g. KLP developmental continua)
- Reporting
- Planning for Learning
- Supporting Learning
- Evaluating Learning
- Assessing Learning

Curriculum and learning resources
Professional experience and knowledge
Strategic planning for instruction is based on regular observations using a developmental framework.
Observation is guided by developmental assessment continua

- The continua focus on student development through the Kindergarten year.
- The continua identify aspects of student development that are most important in literacy learning.
There are five developmental assessment continua

- Oral language
- Social responsibility
- Emergent/early reading and viewing
- Emergent/early writing and representing
- Numeracy
The continua describe K children’s development toward independence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental aspects</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Extending</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Child</td>
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<td>Speaking and Listening</td>
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<td>Knowledge of the Content and Structure of Language</td>
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<td>Knowledge of the Sounds of Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Support/Scaffolding*</td>
<td>The Model:</td>
<td>The Coach:</td>
<td>The Advisor:</td>
<td>The Mentor:</td>
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*a variety of supports (teachers, peers, environmental, etc.) can be provided at any stage of development*
The continua indicate the level of support needed at each stage of development

- Based on a “gradual release of support” model
- Guide teachers in identifying and providing appropriate levels of support at each stage of development

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<td>The Child</td>
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<tr>
<td>With direct support</td>
<td></td>
<td>With guided support</td>
<td>With minimal support</td>
<td>Adjusts language use for play and collaborative learning. Uses language for a range of purposes and actively contributes to conversations.</td>
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</table>
A developmental continuum is different from a Performance Standard because

- It provides a snapshot of the child’s level of development (versus achievement) along a continuum
- It provides a description of the appropriate level of support to be provided by the teacher
Teachers scaffold development by adjusting the learning environment

• Modeling
• Guided practice
• Independent practice
• Independent application

An essential quality of a scaffold is that it be self destructive. By that we mean that the child’s behaviour signals the teacher: ‘I don’t need your help anymore. I can do this all by myself’.

Jeffrey D. Wilhelm
### The learning environment and the teacher’s role change as children grow

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Actions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Beginning – with direct support</td>
<td>The Model</td>
<td>Showing, instructing, explaining, directing, making explicit, demonstrating, giving examples</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing – with guided support</td>
<td>The Coach</td>
<td>Structuring, sequencing, focusing, cueing, guiding, organizing, supporting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applying – with minimal support</td>
<td>The Advisor</td>
<td>Suggesting, reminding, prompting, monitoring, asking for elaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extending</td>
<td>The Mentor</td>
<td>Extending, stretching, wondering aloud, exploring, ‘what if-ing’</td>
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Thanks to SD 38
Teachers and children follow a path of support toward independence

Focus for gradual release of support:

Context/situation:
Observation reveals the level of support needed

Emerging

Children needing **Direct Support**:
- ☐ might say “I don’t get it!”
- ☐ have limited vocabulary
- ☐ need support to link background knowledge to new experiences
- ☐ are not able to point out or explain thinking or learning
- ☐ are dependent, need reassurance
Observation reveals the level of support needed

**Developing**

Children needing **Guided Support:**

- show interest in trying activities related to the task
- need encouragement to begin
- need encouragement to follow a model through to completion
Observation reveals the level of support needed

Applying

Children needing **Minimal Support**:

- recognize and try to use concepts that have been previously taught
- initiate participating in task-related activities
Observation reveals the level of support needed

**Extending**

Children who are independent and can help others

**Without Support:**

- use concepts, strategies and routines that have been previously taught
- extend on what they have learned in new and creative ways
- help others learn and practice what they know and can do