Making Thinking and Learning Visible

Through Play-Based Learning

Full-Day Early Learning–Kindergarten Video Viewing Guide
How to Use the Viewing Guide

The video, *Making Thinking and Learning Visible Through Play-Based Learning* can be watched in its entirety or in segments. The accompanying questions are intended to provoke thinking and discussion before, during, and after viewing.

The Viewing Guide is designed for differentiated audiences and includes reflective questions for Educators (e.g., Full-Day Early Learning–Kindergarten (FDELK) teams, child care staff, family resource centre staff, other primary teachers), administrators (e.g., principals, child care supervisors) and parents. Administrators and other system leaders have a vital role to play in all aspects of the implementation of FDELK. Engaging administrators and system leaders in reflective discussion will provide educator teams with support in designing play-based learning programs.

Engaging parents in early learning provides valuable insights and observations that build bridges and relationships between community, home, and school. Insights, perspectives, and shared understanding about how learning that takes place in a play-based environment will ultimately benefit the children.

Play-Based Learning

*Learning in play is a highly complex and intellectual process that requires careful, planned, and intentional observation, interpretation, and analysis. This requires educators to have and continue to acquire an extensive knowledge base of how learning happens in play, how different children develop in play, how concepts are revealed and the critical role of the adult in making the learning visible.*

*(Adapted from Trawick-Smith & Dziurgot, (2010)*

Throughout the video you will hear how Full-Day Early Learning–Kindergarten teams across the province are “rethinking, removing, and repeating” practices in relation to play-based learning. Play and learning are not separated in the FDELK program. In each segment you will hear and see educator teams observing, listening, interacting with children, children interacting with each other, and educator teams reflecting and analysing their observations and describing how learning is made visible in play-based learning.
Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction

The following information on UDL is taken from Learning for All: A Guide to Effective Instruction and Assessment for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12, Ministry of Education, Ontario, 2011, p.11-20. [http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/L4All/L4A_en_downloads/LearningforAll%20K-12%20draft%201.pdf](http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/L4All/L4A_en_downloads/LearningforAll%20K-12%20draft%201.pdf)

UDL was inspired by work in architecture on the planning of buildings with a view to accessibility for people with physical disabilities (Turnbull et al., 2002). Architects observed that the added improvements facilitated access for all users, not just people with physical disabilities. An access ramp, for instance, provides a person using a wheelchair with easier access to a building, but it also makes it easier for a parent with a child’s stroller, a cyclist, or someone using a walker.

This notion soon found its way into education. Instruction that both responds to the characteristics of a diverse group of students and is precisely tailored to the unique strengths and needs of each student can be achieved using the principles and guidelines associated with three instructional approaches:

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- differentiated instruction, and
- the tiered approach to prevention and intervention

[Diagram of UDL and Differentiated Instruction]

Used in combination, UDL and differentiated instruction enable educators to respond effectively to the strengths and needs of all students. UDL provides educators with broad principles for planning instruction for a diverse group of students, whereas differentiated instruction allows them to address specific skills and difficulties (Raynal & Rieunier, 1998). The two approaches overlap, sharing certain goals and strategies, such as providing a range of instructional strategies, resources, activities, and assessment tools in order to meet the different strengths, needs, readiness, and learning styles or preferences of the students in a class.

The chart below highlights places in this video where connections to UDL can be seen in the practices of the educator teams. You may wish to read the chapter(s) cited before viewing the video, or as part of your follow-up discussions after viewing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Connections to Learning for All (Draft 2009)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:40</td>
<td>Analysing documentation guides interactions and co-construction of learning and materials</td>
<td>Chapter 3: Assessment for Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:50</td>
<td>Analysing observations and documentation to inform learning through play</td>
<td>Chapter 3: Assessment for Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:50</td>
<td>Analysing observations and documentation to inform learning through play</td>
<td>Chapter 3: Assessment for Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:00</td>
<td>Co-constructing learning through play and making learning visible</td>
<td>Chapter 3: Assessment for Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31:20</td>
<td>Scaffolding children's learning: responding, challenging, extending Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and differentiation</td>
<td>Chapter 2: Instructional Approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34:00</td>
<td>Following children’s thinking to respond, challenge, and extend</td>
<td>Chapter 2: Instructional Approaches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Considerations for Viewing

The following considerations are provided to inform and focus your thinking as you view the videos.

Numbers of Children
The groups of children seen in the classrooms may not be representative of the numbers of actual children in the class. Children present in the video had written parental permission to be filmed.

Classroom Space
The space allotted to Kindergarten classes varies from school to school. The classrooms shown represent this variation. The organization of some of the physical environments shown is indicative of the rethinking and removing that has been done.

Resources
The classrooms shown depict a wide variation in resources. The materials and equipment in the classrooms vary based on local contexts and decision making.

Community Partnerships
Many Board teams benefit from community partnerships with organizations such as faculties of education, community colleges, and parent volunteers. Additional adults in the classrooms reflect these partnerships.

Safety
Educators are responsible for ensuring the safety of children, and for encouraging and motivating children to assume responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others. Educators must ensure that children acquire the knowledge and skills needed for safe participation in all learning opportunities both inside the school and in the outdoors. Children must be aware of any required safety procedures and of ways of interacting with each other to ensure that they are not putting themselves or their peers in danger.
Sample Questions for Educator teams

These sample questions can be used to guide reflection and discussion about play-based learning. You may wish to reference *The Full-Day Early Learning–Kindergarten Program (Draft 2010)* (pages 13-16), which focuses on making learning visible through play.

**Before viewing the video**

What do children learn in play?

What does the document say about play-based learning in Kindergarten?

**While viewing the video**

Notice how educator teams are:

- rethinking play
- rethinking the role of the educator in the children’s play
- planning for learning
- using documentation to make learning visible to the children and to others
- supporting the children in play-based learning
- scaffolding learning
- responding, challenging, and extending learning
- co-constructing learning

What observations did the teams make about how learning through play impacted on children’s learning?

**After viewing the video**

What strategies did teams use to support children in play-based learning?

What observations did the teams make about children’s learning?

How might your team rethink your roles in play-based learning?

What connections are you making between play-based learning and self-regulation?

How was learning differentiated? How are you planning to differentiate learning?

What strategies will you use to engage families in discussion about how learning happens in play?
Sample Questions for Administrators

These sample questions can be used to guide reflection and discussion about play-based learning. You may wish to reference The Full-Day Early Learning–Kindergarten Program (Draft 2010) (pages 13-16), which focuses on making learning visible through play.

For additional support, administrators can reference resources from the Ministry’s Administrators Leadership Development site at: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/principalsWanttoKnow.html

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After viewing the video

What connections can you make between play-based learning in Kindergarten and other early years settings and play-based learning in the primary, junior, and intermediate grades?

What strategies will you personally use to engage families in discussions about how learning happens in play?

In what ways can you support your educator teams as they have these discussions?

What are the courageous conversations you would facilitate with teams:
- whose practices related to play-based learning are not aligned with practices presented in the video, (e.g., “Reflecting upon your own practices and those practices in the video, what aspect of your current practices are you going to rethink, repeat, and remove?”)?
- whose play-based learning practices are aligned with practices presented in the video, (e.g., “Reflecting upon your own practices and those practices in the video, what aspect of your current practices are you going to rethink?”)?
Sample Questions for Parents and Community Members

These sample questions can be used to guide reflection and discussion about play-based learning. You may wish to reference The Full-Day Early Learning–Kindergarten Program (Draft 2010) (pages 13-16), which focuses on making learning visible through play.

Before viewing the video

What do children learn in play?

How do you think play at school is different from play at home?

While viewing the video

Note: These elements from the video are not intended to be presented to parents in isolation from a facilitated discussion, as many of the terms may be new to parents (e.g., scaffolding, co-constructing). They are intended as a guide for facilitators working with parents.

Notice how educator teams are:

- rethinking play
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- planning for learning
- using documentation to make learning visible to the children and to others
- supporting the children in play-based learning
- scaffolding learning
- responding, challenging, and extending learning
- co-constructing learning

What observations did the teams make about how learning through play impacted on children’s learning?

After viewing the video

In what ways did the video change your thinking about play-based learning?

What aspects of play-based learning might be applicable at home as well as at school (e.g., think about choices of toys and materials, questions to ask)?
Acknowledgements

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Branch, Ministry of Education, would like to thank the Full-Day Early Learning–Kindergarten teams, the school administrators, the Board Program Leads, the parents/guardians and the Full-Day Kindergarten children in the following Boards and schools, for allowing us to visit and film in their classrooms, and for sharing their learning with others across the province.

Greater Essex County District School Board
Belle River Public School

Halton Catholic District School Board
St. Luke Elementary School

Halton District School Board
Mohawk Gardens Public School

Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board
St. Lawrence Elementary School

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
Prince of Wales Elementary School

Lakehead District School Board
Westmount Public School

Kenora Catholic District School Board
St. Louis School

Near North District School Board
Marshall Park Public School

Ottawa Catholic District School Board
Our Lady of Wisdom School St. Elizabeth School

Peel District School Board
Marvin Heights Public School

Rainbow District School Board
Landsdowne Public School
Princess Anne Public School

Sudbury Catholic District School Board
St. Raphael School

Toronto District School Board
Pape Avenue Junior Public School

Waterloo Region District School Board
Floradale Public School

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