

Introduction

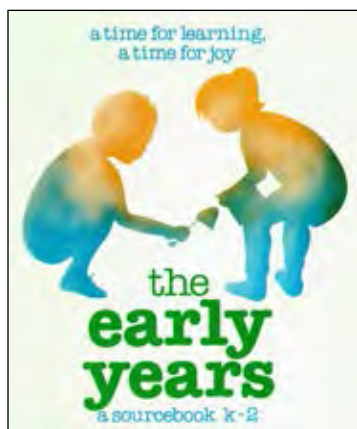
Our Vision

Manitoba's Kindergarten learning program offers our youngest students a joyful introduction to school through intentional play-based and developmentally appropriate learning experiences that respect children* as capable, motivated, and confident learners and that foster children's health across all *developmental domains*.

“Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children” (Sitting Bull)

Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning supports an integrated, child-centred approach to education and learning, recognizing that young children learn through play and through relationships with caring adults and each other. The department acknowledges the valuable work being done in schools and Kindergarten classrooms across Manitoba, and the dedication of Kindergarten teachers throughout the province in creating inclusive learning environments that support the success of every student.

Purpose and Audience



Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning developed *A Time for Learning, A Time for Joy: A Resource for Kindergarten Teachers* to provide Kindergarten teachers and school leaders with a play-based pedagogical approach to Manitoba's Kindergarten curriculum. This resource is intended to be practical and inspiring, developmentally appropriate, engaging of families, and congruent with children's early learning experiences prior to school entry.

This support document builds on earlier versions of *A Time for Learning, A Time for Joy*. In 1979, Manitoba Education published the original version entitled *Early Childhood: A Time for Learning, A Time for Joy*, followed in 1986 with an updated version entitled *The Early Years: A Time for Learning, A Time for Joy: A Sourcebook for Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2*. The purpose of these resources was to assist Manitoba's

Early Years teachers in providing young children with a rich and stimulating environment that promotes growth and learning. In the 1970s and 1980s, the department encouraged Early Years teachers to move toward a play-based learning approach, but in the decades that followed, the pedagogical pendulum swung toward a focus on subject matter to be mastered, and Kindergarten became far more academic.

* Throughout this support document, the term *children* refers to young children in the period of early childhood development, from birth through approximately age eight, as a reminder of the unique developmental characteristics of these young students.

The Importance of Play*

- expands intelligence
- is a testing ground for language and reasoning connecting to the challenges children face in school, such as literacy, math, and science concepts
- stimulates the imagination, encouraging creative problem solving
- helps develop confidence, self-esteem, a sense of strengths and weaknesses, and a positive attitude toward learning
- is a significant factor in brain and muscle development

* Source: McCain, Margaret Norrie, J. Fraser Mustard, and Stuart Shanker. *Early Years Study 2: Putting Science into Action*. Toronto, ON: Council for Early Child Development, Mar. 2007. 49. Reproduced with permission.

Today there is an increasing appreciation for a holistic, play-based approach to early childhood education. Based on recent neuro-scientific research, play is validated as children’s natural way to learn.

Emphasizing play-based learning, intentional teaching, and an integrated approach to the Kindergarten curriculum, this revised and updated version of *A Time for Learning, A Time for Joy: A Resource for Kindergarten Teachers* reaffirms the child-centred approach that Manitoba’s early childhood teachers have embraced for over a century. This resource links playful learning with children’s family and cultural experiences, with their neighbourhoods and communities, and with children’s own developing identities as successful learners within their peer group of friends.

Learning Landscapes: The Manitoba Curriculum and the Classroom Environment

Throughout this support document, you will note the use of the term *learning landscapes*. The purpose of learning landscapes is to support you in your planning, using Manitoba’s Kindergarten curriculum in a play-based environment. The landscapes support the way you plan to address the provincial Kindergarten curriculum. You can think about the concept of landscapes as both content and context. The various curricula themselves and the classroom environment are learning landscapes—both provide fertile ground through which children explore and engage in meaningful inquiry.

As you examine the questions in Figure I.1, think about the learning landscapes as common ground that supports the multiple ways children have of knowing. Learning is possible when you use children’s questions as sparks for your long-range and daily planning. The landscapes present you with deep and meaningful contexts and many directions through which you can plan children’s journeys. As is the case with any journey, however, flexibility is essential, as it allows you to respond to unanticipated learning opportunities that may emerge along the way, as well as the suggestions of your fellow travellers—the children in your classroom.

“Education is a lifelong journey whose destination expands as you travel” (Stovall 59).

Figure I.1:
A Child's Multiple Ways of Knowing within the Learning Landscapes



Guiding Principles

The Kindergarten guiding principles that provide the overarching structure for this document are represented in Figure I.2 in a circle around the child, the centre of all we do. The guiding principles are of equal importance. Within this document, the guiding principles are identified with a star icon.



Figure I.2:
The Kindergarten Guiding Principles



The Child

Children learn in a variety of ways, and teachers value their many ways of understanding and constructing knowledge. Children come to school with their own experiences, social relationships, and abilities, are naturally curious, and are constantly learning.



The Teacher

Kindergarten teachers are passionate about the opportunity to teach and learn with our youngest students and intentionally create joyful, nurturing, and engaging learning environments that welcome all children.



The Environment

The Kindergarten environment allows complex, rich play to thrive. It is a warm and inviting place where children and adults inquire, learn, and co-construct together.



The Schedule

Kindergarten scheduling is responsive to children’s changing needs, allowing a developmentally appropriate curriculum to emerge over time.



The Learning Program

The Kindergarten learning program provides opportunities for child-initiated play supported by engaged and intentional teachers, in balance with more focused experiential inquiry guided by teachers.



Inclusion and Diversity

Kindergarten experiences reflect the diversity of children, families, and colleagues, and actively promote inclusion.



Partnerships and Continuity

Kindergarten teachers honour children’s families and communities, recognizing that children interact with and learn in a variety of contexts and that family engagement in children’s learning is a critical support for their school success. The continuity of children’s past, present, and future learning is best supported through coordinated home, school, and community approaches.

Using This Document

Document Content and Organization

This Kindergarten support document contains the following components:

- This **Introduction** presents the vision for Manitoba’s Kindergarten learning program and identifies the purpose of this teacher support document. It also explains the concept of learning landscapes, identifies the guiding principles of this teacher resource, and describes the content and organization of this document.
- **Chapter 1: Kindergarten in Manitoba: Past and Present** provides background information on the evolution of Kindergarten in Manitoba and discusses some of the key influences and milestones in its history.
- **Chapter 2: A Foundation in Play** introduces the play-based approach to Kindergarten, beginning with children’s entitlement to play. This chapter focuses on the various types of play, and how teachers who embrace a playful pedagogical approach to learning and teaching foster children’s development across all developmental domains through play.
- **Chapter 3: The View of the Child** reflects on ideas about childhood and defines what is meant by developmentally appropriate practices. This chapter highlights new understandings of the relationship between play and brain development,

drawn on the latest neuroscience findings, and reviews key child development theories and early childhood approaches to learning. You are encouraged to connect what you know about children’s development to the “How” and “What” you teach in an intentional way. This chapter introduces some vital aspects of children’s development, including how children become aware of difference, and how oral language, literacy, and numeracy learning unfolds.

- **Chapter 4: Teaching and Learning Strategies** further explains intentionality and shares some of the recommended strategies used by intentional teachers, including scaffolding, modelling and demonstrating, and the use of provocations or invitations for learning. This chapter also explores inquiry-based learning and backward design approaches to Manitoba’s Kindergarten learning outcomes in a play-based environment. It also addresses how pedagogical documentation through observations and various ways of gathering and making sense of “data” can help you to plan optimal learning experiences for children. Assessment remains an important feature of play-based learning in Kindergarten but must be authentic in its focus. It includes screening and early identification, development of class profiles, and ways of sharing children’s learning with their families. Also included in this chapter is a discussion of strategies that support the full inclusion of children with diverse needs, such as differentiated instruction, adaptation, modification, and individualized programming, followed by concrete suggestions for how you can guide children’s behaviour in your classroom in positive ways.
- **Chapter 5: Designing the Learning Environment** discusses the four dimensions of the Kindergarten environment that contribute to learning (Nash 6):
 - **Temporal (time):** The way you manage your schedule and your available time with children in your class.
 - **Space:** The physical dimensions of your Kindergarten classroom.
 - **Things:** The resources found within the environment, including toys, furnishings, learning/play centres,* props, books, and other materials.
 - **People:** The peer group and adults who interact within the environment and the larger school in which the Kindergarten classroom is located.

A discussion of the use of outdoor space is accompanied by an appeal to get Kindergarten children out into nature more often, where they can experience graduated risk and the feeling of success when they meet physical and problem-solving challenges. This chapter explores the importance of offering children choice and the opportunity to initiate their own learning and recommends play-based learning centres.

- **Chapter 6: Learning through Play** provides the rationale for the play-based approach to learning (first recommended in Manitoba’s original Kindergarten curriculum in 1968 and still recommended today). Intentionally planned play centres can promote the provincial curricular goals through the types of materials that are present and the types of learning they invite. This chapter offers a wealth of ideas about how to set up and stock your play centres, including

* In this document, the terms *learning centres* and *play centres* are used interchangeably.

those that are available year round, and those that may be of a more temporary nature to support your emergent curriculum.

- **Chapter 7: The Learning Landscapes** describes the many pathways and questions representing the essence of the Manitoba curriculum.
- **Chapter 8: Play throughout the Kindergarten Curriculum** discusses how to apply planning approaches to specific curricular outcomes as you develop learning experiences for and with children in your Kindergarten. This chapter provides snapshots of the core curricular areas, or big ideas, with many rich examples and useful strategies shared by departmental consultants and classroom teachers. Snapshots are provided for the following subject areas: arts education, English language arts, mathematics, physical education/health education, science, social studies, and English as an additional language (EAL).
- **Chapter 9: The Integratable Elements** follows a format similar to Chapter 8, but highlights the many ways to embed content that further enriches children's play-based learning while meeting departmental priorities. These integratable elements of learning in Manitoba are overarching and integral to your Kindergarten learning program and include
 - First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives
 - education for sustainable development (ESD)
 - literacy with information and communication technology (ICT)
 - diversity education and inclusion
- **Chapter 10: Continuity and Partnerships**, the final chapter, begins with children's experiences with continuity or discontinuity as they transition into school. This chapter pays special attention to the factors that influence family life and, therefore, the child growing up within that family. These factors include newcomer or Indigenous status, divorce and blended families, stress and mental health, and the influence of the media and of children's prior experiences in preschool settings. You are encouraged to look beyond your classroom doors to consider relationships with others who are key to your students' lives, and share strategies to help foster engagement by families and communities, and partnerships with others in the early childhood development (ECD) sector, with related school professionals, and with your Grade 1 colleagues.
- The **Afterword** encourages you to commit to creating play-based Kindergartens and acknowledges your vital contribution to helping children experience joy and success in their learning during the Kindergarten year.
- The **Appendices** found at the end of this document provide additional information, including samples, forms, protocols, recipes, and templates, which may be beneficial to Kindergarten teachers. Specific appendices are referred to in various chapters of this document.

- The **Glossary** defines terms used throughout this document.
- The **Bibliography** consists of resources consulted and cited in the development of this document.

Icons

The following icons are used throughout this document to draw your attention to specific content:



Guiding Principles: The eight guiding principles that provide the overarching structure for this support document are identified with the star icon.



Vignettes: You will learn more about children’s playful learning through vignettes or stories from Manitoba Kindergartens, which are scattered throughout this resource. The vignettes, shared by classroom teachers in Manitoba, serve as examples of Kindergarten practices around the province. They are often linked to Kindergarten learning outcomes “to illustrate the potential for open-ended play for curriculum delivery through child-initiated [and adult-supported] play” (Broadhead and Burt 3).



Diversity and Inclusion: Throughout this resource, you have opportunities to explore diversity perspectives, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, as well as EAL perspectives.



Reflection: The reflection questions scattered throughout this support document can help you to reflect on important ideas, such as your own image of young learners, your role as a teacher in a play-based classroom, how you create your classroom learning environment, and so on. These questions are helpful for independent reflection and goal setting, for gatherings of teachers during staff meetings, and for professional learning opportunities.



Continue Your Learning: Each chapter of this document encourages you to continue your learning by suggesting a variety of print and online resources about specific topics. The Bibliography also cites an extensive list of resources used in the development of this document.