education

Department:
Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Grade R

Practical ideas.

2008

Acknowledgements:

The Department of Education wishes to acknowledge all the Schools, especially Lewisham Primary School in Krugersdorp for the photographs used in this document.

Purpose

This document does not replace the National Curriculum Statement, but has been developed to achieve the following:

- To support the philosophy and principles of the National Curriculum Statement.
- To provide Grade R teachers with an understanding of:
  - How 'learning through play' is correctly suited to the development abilities of Grade R learners;
  - How learning outcomes are achieved through play;
  - How to create stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environments with low budgets and,
  - How the Grade R programme is intended to **prepare learners** for formal learning and teaching **to be** encountered in Grade 1 and higher.

About using the Booklet

The booklet is divided into three sections with the following focus:

1. **Creating Stimulating Indoor and Outdoor Learning Environments:**

Provides reasons why play is important, ideas on planning and organising the space and interest areas, choosing, storing and labeling materials, a suggested list of materials to add to interest areas and possible ways to overcome challenges.

2. **Managing the Daily Programme:**

Provides reasons why a daily programme is important, an example of a half day programme and its segments, the role of teacher in involving learners, an understanding of the concepts of, and ideas for supporting emergent reading, writing and numbers, integrating learning areas, observing and assessing learning, and ways to overcome possible challenges.

3. **Responsive Interaction Strategies:**

Provides reasons why responsive interaction is important, ways of finding the right approach, the teacher as a facilitator of learning and teaching, steps to get started, identifying learning outcomes, benefits to learners and society.

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Section 1

Introduction & Background

In keeping with the thrust of transformation in Education, the White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development (2001) and the National Curriculum Statement both aspires to provide quality Grade R programmes to 1 million learners by 2010. One of the strategies to transform education was through providing training programmes where the notion of 'the learner as the centre of the learning and teaching situation' was emphasized to align it to the philosophy and principles as expressed in these documents. However, evidence gathered by Department of Education officials and scientific research reports reflect that this teaching practice remains a challenge.

Since 2001 the Department of Education has provided the following training:

- Accredited National Qualification Framework (NQF) Level 4
- Some Provinces provided NQF Level 5
- Districts provided continuous training on the National Curriculum Statement as well as additional support programmes focusing on literacy, numeracy and life skills.

These training programmes aimed to improve the quality of programmes in Grade R classes while also highlighting the difference between the classroom arrangement, materials and equipment, and the teaching approach of a Grade R class and higher grades.

To date there are an estimated 14,000 Grade R classes country wide where Grade R programmes are provided to approximately 490,000 Grade R learners. However, monitoring and evaluation reports show evidence that only a small percentage of quality Grade R programmes could be found in the country.

Also evident in most School Based Grade R classes is the preference of teachers to use an 'instructional' approach. Learners are found seated at tables doing very formal activities much like a Grade 1 learners.

Section 2

Support For Creating Stimulating Indoor And Outdoor Learning Environments

- Have you ever heard or read this popular saying ? 'Play is the work of children.'
- Have you ever sat aside, just watching children play?
- Have you ever seen how serious children are when they play?
- Have you ever seen how they find their own things to play with?
- Have you seen and heard them decide what they are going to play?
- Have you ever noticed how they make their own rules?
- Do you remember doing the same things?
- Do you think there is value in play?

2.1 Why play is important ?

All over the world children play. Famous architects were once children who showed a love for building and stacking things when they were very young. Famous singers and dancers first showed their talents when they were children. Many professional and famous people showed their interest in particular fields when they were very young children. The successful ones are usually those who were encouraged and supported by teachers and parents to be spontaneous, to explore and to experiment.

Memories of our own childhood play activities like 'spontaneous hide-and-seek' show us that we had fun about completing tasks, we were able to control our lives at that moment, we created and changed rules of the game if everyone agreed. We did all this without anyone telling us how to play.

If play is spontaneous and chosen by the child, then why do parents and teachers worry that they are not learning?

Children engage in many types of play based on the development of their thinking, reasoning, language and social skills. There are different types of play:

Exploratory play:
Children enjoy exploring the properties and functions of materials such as wool, string, glue or paste, play dough, sand and stones.

Constructive play:
Children enjoy building and making things with blocks, cardboard rolls, scrap wood, styrofoam, plastic bottles, boxes or tins.

Pretend play:
Children enjoy to pretend and role-play with materials such as dress up clothes, hair dryers, mirrors, scarves, belts, helmets, bags or suit cases.

Games:
Children enjoy card and board games, and they enjoy using materials to make their own games such as cards, dice, game counters.

Although these play types differ from each other, they all promote language and communication, social and physical, thinking and reasoning skills. When grouped together in this way we see that children are learning in many different ways while they play.

2.2 The Indoor Learning Environment

2.2.1 Why indoor planning is important?

Children have a natural desire to explore their world. A stimulating setting will enable spontaneous discovery if you prepare their indoor and outdoor environments. Much thought should go into the organisation of materials and spaces to support children's learning.

Plan the activities that children enjoy doing:
Plan activities for the children such as painting, drawing, cutting, taking things apart and putting them back together, talking about what they are doing, building with blocks or scrap boxes and materials, cutting and pasting, pretending to write, read, be a doctor, a taxi driver, finding out about things, thinking about how to do things, listening to and making music.

Plan ways to organise the space, store and label the areas of play, and materials as suggested below:

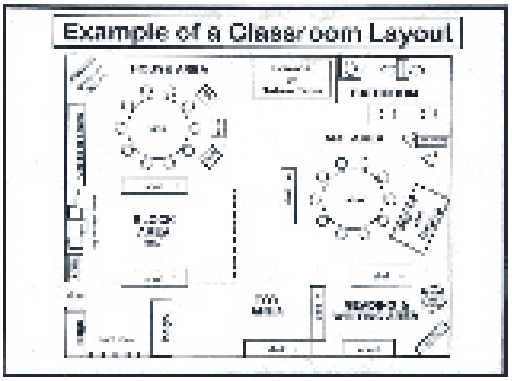
2.2.2 Planning the indoor learning environment

- **Organize the space:**
- Lay out interest areas to provide activities such as block play, art and writing activities, pretend play, and reading activities.
- Provide space for transition activities such as greeting time, story time and snack time.

- **Storing materials:**
- Store materials in the places where they will be used, within reach of the children, in clear or open containers such as see-through plastic containers, trays or baskets.

- **Label materials:**
- Write labels on containers and shelves, using easily understood symbols. This makes it easy for children to **take and return** materials on their own.
- Make visual borders to separate the areas by using low shelves, chairs, mats or carpets, rope, low home-made cardboard screens that children can see over and be seen.
- Allow enough space in each area for a small group of children to play comfortably.
- Allow space at children's eye level to display children's own drawings, paintings or any other work. Provide a space on a small table or low shelf to display children's own models.
- Constantly change and adapt these spaces throughout the year.

- During the first and second terms, give a large space the “pretend areas”, e.g. house, shop or hairdresser.
- During the third and fourth term, make the writing area bigger as more children become interested in writing.
- Draw a plan of your classroom and think of what you would like to change.
- Draw a second plan to show the changes you will make.



Choosing materials
Choose materials that will interest the children. What do children talk about?
Once you know what the children's interests are, choose additional materials that will extend further learning. For example, children may be talking about the recent petrol shortage.

You can:
Bring pieces of hose pipe, empty carton rolls, empty oil tins or bottles, and petrol attendants' uniforms.

Put these in the block area to represent items used at petrol stations for children to play out real life experiences.

Find items that can be used in a variety of ways.

For example, collect empty carton rolls of different sizes, and put these in the house and art and block areas and other interest areas.

Choose materials that reflect the children's experiences and cultures. Provide a wide range of real-life materials, for example, old cake tins, basins, irons, toasters, kettles.

Children love to use real things because these objects enable them to imitate the roles of adults.

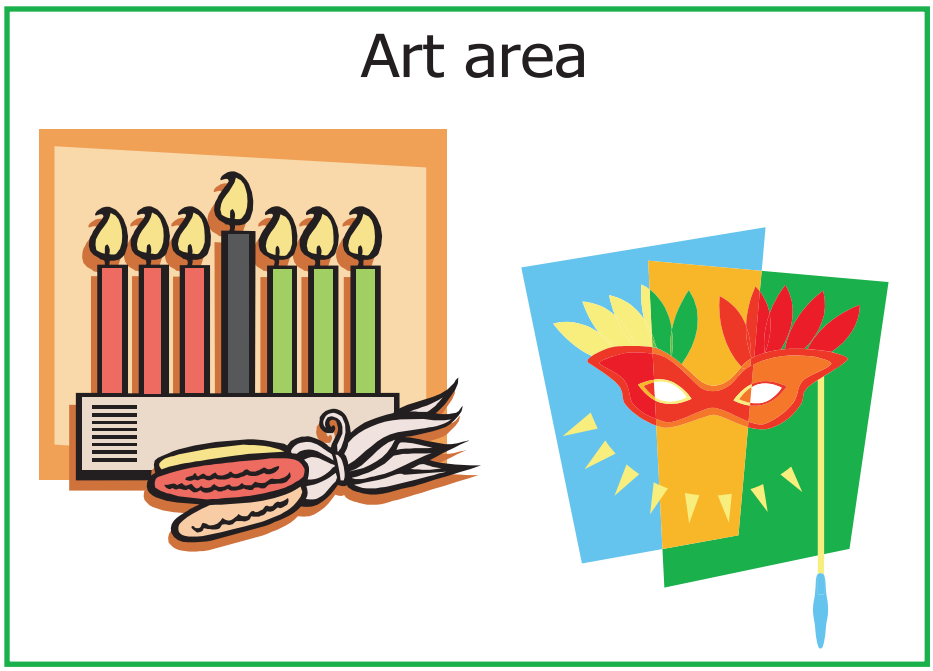
- Store materials in see-through containers, trays, low-cut boxes for children to see into them.

- Store materials in the same place to give children a sense of security and independence. Principle: 'Children need to become independent and solve problems. Opportunities are lost if adults choose materials for them.

- Store materials on low level open shelves or in boxes so that children can easily reach them. Children can then be independent in finding, using and returning the materials.

Labeling Materials

- Label the interest areas using print and pictures- e.g. 'Block Area', 'Quiet Toy Area',Reading Area'
- Label both shelves and containers so that children can find and put away materials on their own.
- Use labels that children can understand, for example: use real objects, tracings, drawings or catalogue pictures.



Label containers with items showing what pieces are inside, e.g. an actual shoe, or a picture of a shoe. Arrange the containers so that the children can return things by matching the shoe or the drawing of the shoe.

- Labels help children identify where materials are stored.
- Labels make cleaning-up an easy task.
- All this helps the children to sort, classify, order and match.

2.2.3 Some ideas of materials for activities in different interest areas

Materials for two-dimensional representation	**Materials for mixing and painting**
Pencils Pencil crayons Crayons Chalk and chalk boards Khokis Ink pads and stamps Magazines and catalogues Paper of different textures, sixes, colours Empty carton rolls Stencils	Powder paint Starch for finger painting Soap powder Jars with lids for storing paints Paintbrushes of different sizes Toothbrushes Small cake trays Polystyrene trays Yoghurt cups Saucers or lids Sponges Twigs, aprons, big shirts or plastic bags
Materials children see at home	**Materials for pretending**
Old clocks Soft chair Broom and dust pan Toaster Old microwave/ old oil stove Suitcase Cooler bags Cake tins Canisters (use coffee tins) Jars Dishing up spoons Plastic bowls and basins Old radio, old TV (made with box)	Hair salon, barber Doctor's surgery Farm Shop Doll's stuffed toys Baby rattles, baby clothes Bibs Bags Plastic bottles Adult size (including men's and boys') clothes, hats, scarves, caps, helmets Badges Purse and wallets Mirror Blankets, sheets, sleeping bags
Materials for pretending in the kitchen	**Materials for pretending: cooking & cleaning**
Child size: Stove, fridge, sink, forks, knives, teapot Ice block trays Mixing bowls Canister set Sponges, dish cloths, drying cloths Plastic vegetables Styrofoam Acorns Boxes, jars, and bags	Adult size Pots, pans, baking trays Eggbeater Soup ladel, cake trays, measuring cups Flour sieve (for sifting) Plates, cups, bowls Bottle caps Pine cones Cereal boxes Detergent boxes Shampoo bottles (washed) Moisturizer jars and bottles
Materials for building, constructing and pretending	**Materials for matching, sorting, counting, classifying, sequeneing and threading**
Large, medium and small wooden blocks Building materials Cardboard boxes Shoe boxes Sheets, blankets, bedspreads Wood scraps String, rope, Old Camera, binoculars Old hats, helmets Carpet pieces Cardboard roll (toilet, foil) Old torch Measuring tapes, nuts, bolts Old keys and locks	Lego Magnifying glass Stackings rings Interlocking squares Beads and strings Picture dominoes Bottle caps and bottles Number and matching cards Puzzles Magnets Scales and balances Buttons, stones, shells Lids and tins
Materials for writing, drawing, creating	**Materials for reading, looking at and talking about**
Paper Used envelopes Cardboard Pens, pensils, khokis, crayons Stickytape String Pieces of ribbons Used wrapping paper Empty boxes: shoe, cereal, soap Catalogues Scissors, stapler Picture and writing stencils Paper punch	Storybooks about people, jobs, places, traditions, cultures Rhymes and verse Books about shapes, colours, numbers Books in home languages Books made by children Photo albums with photos of the children, their families, the community, classroom outings, special events Puppets Magazines, picture calenders

Adding materials to your classroom

The task of adding materials to the interest areas may seem difficult. However, any teacher in any setting can collect a wide variety of materials through careful planning.

Planning helps us to think about what we want to add, how will we get the materials, by when do we want it, and who can help.

Step 1: Look at the materials list (on the previous pages). Tick the items you would like to add to your classroom. Add to the list by writing in any materials you have, but are not on the list.

Step 2: Make a list of the materials you would like to add to each area.

Step 3: Make a list of people who can help you collect the materials, for example, parents and learners, staff, factories, shops, banks, churches, family members, and friends.

Step 4: Call a parent meeting to explain **what** you need, and **why** you want those materials.

Step 5: Invite **parents to help** you label and store the materials.

You can build confidence and increase motivation if children are able to choose their own activities and materials, talk about what they are doing, and share their achievements with others.

2.2.4 Overcoming practical challenges

Challenge	**Solution**
Don't think: "A Grade R class needs to look like a Grade 1 class".	Ensure that parents and staff understand that Grade R children are still getting ready for formal teaching and learning. Learning through play activities prepares them for Grade 1.
Don't despair: "If there are no materials or equipment and funds to provide a stimulating environment"	The whole school development plan has a role to play in providing resources for Grade R classes. The lists provided (earlier in this booklet) should give you some ideas to start developing interest areas and gathering materials.
Don't worry: "I need to keep the materials locked up because children fight over them and may break them."	Actually, children fight and things break when there are too few interesting things to play with. Use the lists to add things that the children can play with. In this way children have more interesting things to choose from which will reduce fighting!
Don't worry if parents want their children in Grade R to be able to write and read.	In Grade R children are still developing pre reading and writing skills. Teaching reading and writing is best left to Grade 1 teachers they are specially trained to do this job.
Don't assume that children are not interested in the posters displayed in the class.	Take one poster at a time and set aside time for discussion about the poster. Talk about what they see happening in the pictures. Add questions to prompt the children's thinking.

2.3 The Outdoor Learning Environment

2.3.1 Why outdoor play is important?

'Young children should be entitled to high quality outdoor learning opportunities.' (Early-Education U.K. 2001). The outdoor learning environment is like an extension of the indoor environment. The outdoor space forms an essential part of the Grade R curriculum. It is therefore just as important as the indoor environment.

?

Do you remember what you loved to do outdoors when you were a child? What did you do? Whom did you play with? What equipment and materials did you use ?
Did you dig in the soil, add water and make mud cakes?
Did you play with tins, twigs and stones?
Did you play at mommies and daddies with a piece of wood wrapped in a cloth for a baby?
Did you lie flat on your tummy following a trail of ants, or did you run chasing a butterfly?
Do you think children today still like to play in the same way?

Today children still love open spaces where they can run, make a noise, enjoy the sun and fresh air, and be in contact with nature. The outdoor environment provides plenty of opportunities for stimulating all types of play. It does not require expensive equipment and materials.

2.3.2 Planning the outdoor learning environment

There are many ways to plan for outdoor play, but the best way is to watch children's interests and plan from a child's perspective.

- **Plan for 'spur of the moment'** events:
  Keep materials and equipment that can be used spontaneously, e.g. boxes containing off-cut materials, an old tape recorder and cassette tapes with various types of music, home made instruments, scarves and ribbons for dancing.

- **Integrate topic planning:**
  Integrate indoor topic ideas with outside ideas, e.g. an indoors shop could be equipped with boxes or spaces outside for 'taxi's', cars or buses, which can become transport for shoppers.

- **Focused plans:**
  Plan small group activities for outside, with specific learning outcomes. For example, prepare and provide materials for children to use in the sand area to convey **the concept of light and heavy; or** in the water area the concept of **float and sink.**

Games and songs:
Plan learning outcomes for games and songs as they provide many opportunities for children to learn different attitudes, skills and concepts.
The games should include learning to take turns, sharing, co-operating and working as part of a group.

While all learners can flourish outdoors, research shows that those children with high physical abilities (often boys) benefit from quality outdoor activities. Such children may struggle indoors but 'shine' outside where more physical and hands-on experiences are provided.' (South Gloucestershire Council)

Organising the space
Divide the space into different play interest areas. There can be spaces for:

- children to run, climb, jump;
- children to play in small groups;
- a quiet place for children who prefer to sit and relax;
- a place for children to experiment (water, sand and science activities); and
- a place for pretend play.

Choosing the materials and equipment
Below is a suggested list of materials and equipment suitable to stimulate a variety of play types. You may add your own ideas to the list

- **Climbing**
  Climbing equipment, jungle gyms, climbing nets, ladders (rope or step ladders)
- **Balancing**
  Balancing beams, planks supported by bricks, tyres, see-saw and stilts (could be made with tins and rope)
- **Swinging**
  Swings, monkey ropes, tyre swings
- **Sliding**
  Slide, ramps, flattened cardboard boxes
- **Play inside**
  Play house, large boxes, tunnels (cement pipes or large drums)
- **Sand and water play**
  Sand pit or sand tray, tins, plastic containers, enamel mugs, pots, pans, cake pans or trays, funnels, sieves, rice colanders, spoons and jugs
- **Water**
  Bath, basins or water table, plastic bottles, funnels, plastic containers, jugs, squeeze bottles, sponges, containers with holes, straws and eggbeater or egg whisks
- **Jumping in or over**
  Skipping ropes, tyres or tubes, old mattress
- **Pulling along, pushing and riding**
  Boxes or plastic crates with a rope to pull along, tyres, tricycles, wheelbarrows and prams
- **Pretend play**
  Empty paint bucket, adult-size paint brushes, traffic signs and track, steering wheels of old cars, hats, helmets, adult-size clothes, bags, empty boxes (cereal and large), tins, plastic containers, sunglasses, binoculars, old suitcases and cooler bags.

- **Catching, throwing, kicking and hitting**
  Bean bags, large and small balls, bats, goal posts and hoops
- **Building**
  Blocks, planks, old sheets, small carpets, large and small cardboard boxes, string, rope, pegs, tyres and tubes.
- **Gardening**
  Pot plants, a small garden patch, container for watering, garden tools and seeds.

Storing materials
Store materials that need to be carried daily from the place of storage to the outdoors every day in strong containers such as plastic crates or cardboard boxes. Involve children in the task of carrying the containers to and from the interest areas.

Labeling containers and materials
Label each container with symbols or pictures so that children return the materials to the correct containers after use.

Safety is important

Always make sure that the outdoor play area and equipment is safe and clean.
Inspect all equipment, materials and the playground before children are invited to play outdoors.

We believe
Play is the work of children. The more opportunities children have to play, the more they learn.

2.3.3 Overcoming practical challenges : especially at school based Grade R sites

Challenge	Solution
Don't say: "There is no space for outdoor play."	Where there is no space for outdoor play,you can plan regular visits to a nearbypark or a big open space near the school. Arrange with parent to assist with supervision. Take a range of materials for children to enjoy different types of play.
Don't let people say: "Outdoor play is not really learning, and it is not important."	Persuade all staff, parents and SGB's that outdoor areas are as important in the curriculum as books and pencils. Outdoor equipment is an investment; it is not an 'optional extra'.
Separate the little ones: Grade R learners should have play breaks at different times.	Adapt your programme so that Grade R learners are outside at different times from older learners.
Don't accept: "There is no dedicated area for a Grade R outdoor area."	The whole school development plan should have a long-term strategy for Grade R learners to learn outdoors in accessible and well resourced outdoor areas. In the meantime, you can arrange activities in small spaces.
Don't complain: "There are no funds to buy equipment."	Limited funds should not stop you from creating a stimulating outdoor area. You can do a lot with few resources. **Plan** for the things you can collect with the help of parents and the community. **Plan** for fund-raising events.
Take care: "Vandalism continues to be a problem."	Appeal to the whole school community to safeguard your resources and facilities.

Notes

Section 3

SUPPORT FOR MANAGING THE LEARNING PROGRAMME

'What are we going to do?'
'When can I go to the toilet?'
'What will happen after we eat?'
'When will we go outside?'

Children ask these questions all the time. A consistent daily programme helps them to know what will happen throughout the day.

3.1 The daily programme

3.1.1 Why is a daily programme important?

This section makes suggestions for activities during the day.

It is important to structure each day. This determines what kinds of interactions children have with their classmates and with the teacher during specific times. A well-structured daily programme, with time blocks, ensures that:

- Children develop a sense of safety and security.
- Children know 'what will happen next' and can prepare themselves for the next activity.
- Children's needs are catered for, including those with special needs.
- Children spend their time on stimulating and challenging learning experiences, and teachers can spend more time with them.
- Teachers can prepare children for unexpected changes such as visitors, weather conditions, education trips, and special events or traditions.
- Teachers are able to put into practice the values and educational philosophy of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS).

3.1.2 Our beliefs about children and teachers

Foundation Phase teachers understand the needs of very young children. From birth through to six years of age, children have cognitive, intellectual, social, emotional and physical developmental needs and capabilities. These needs differ from children in higher grades.

For this reason, the programme structure, the types of activities we prepare, the teaching and learning styles we use, the way we arrange the learning space, and the assessment methods we use, are different from those for older children.

Early childhood programmes focus on shared and responsive interaction between children and teachers, and between children and their peers.

The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) is based on the belief that children learn best:

- when they follow their own interests,
- when they work with a variety of materials,
- when they are free to express their thoughts and ideas,
- when they have supportive teachers.

Teachers are practising this belief when they design a daily programme that creates a balance between teacher-initiated activities and child-initiated activities, within a flexible yet structured manner.

Beliefs about how children learn:
As an ECD person yourself, you will, without any doubt agree with this statement from education experts in New Zealand:

- 'Through exploration, children learn useful and appropriate ways to find out what they want to know and begin to understand their own individual ways of learning and being creative.
- These experiences enhance the child's sense of self-worth, identity, confidence, and enjoyment.

Exploration involves actively learning with others as well as independently, and helps to extend children's purposeful and enjoyable relationships.'

(Te Whariki Early Childhood Curriculum, Ministry of Education, New Zealand).

3.1.3 Guidelines for organising a daily programme

By using the following guidelines as a checklist you can create and maintain a daily programme that works well at your site. Check that:

✓ There is a variety of 'learning segments' to provide children with a variety of experiences and interactions. These learning segments include small and large group times, eating, rest and toilet times, outside time, and transition times.

✓ Learning segments happen in a predictable sequence that meets the needs of the children and the site. For example, breakfast may be served regularly, but children using scholar transport often arrive late.

✓ Experiences take place in a suitable physical environment.

✓ Each learning segment involves children engaging actively in learning experiences in a stimulating learning environment.

✓ Transitions and routines flow smoothly from one activity to the next.

The parts of the daily programme are like paving blocks along a path. In each activity block, there is a learning activity or routine – such as times for children to participate in group activities, routines for eating, toilet and rest times, and play outside.

The daily programme provides:

- A framework for children to do a variety of interesting activities throughout the day.
- A daily programme that is supportive

- **Supports children's initiative**:
  Children explore a variety of materials. They can express their ideas and interact responsively with teachers throughout the day.

- **Supports children's social experiences:**
  Children experience and develop social relationships with teachers and peers in a safe and purposeful environment.

- **Supports the values of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS):**
  Children have the freedom to engage in play activities of their choice.
  They learn to do things for themselves, take responsibility and cooperate with others within a structured programme framework.

- **Supports the education goals of the NCS:**
  Children learn literacy, numeracy and life skills in an integrated way and through the variety of materials and activities offered through out the day.

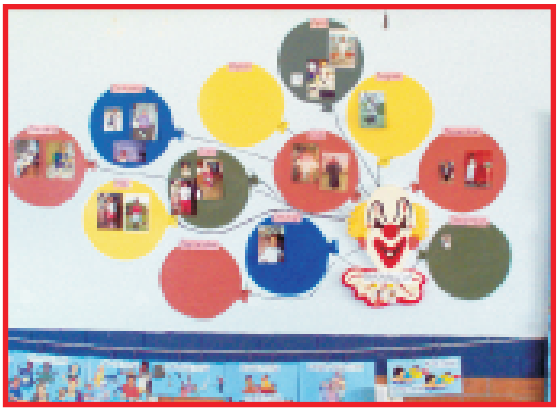
  '… Learning can result from play and exploration and paves the way for later academic learning.' (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation)

Young children develop the necessary skills for reading, writing and working with numbers in the home, community and pre-school environments.

Here is a birthday chart showing birthday months and photos of children.
This promotes an interest in **early reading and numeracy**.

- Give children a personal symbol to encourage decoding (bears, stars, flower).

- Use children's symbols, as well as their names, on birthday charts, group chart, their art work, and on their lockers.



Emergent Literacy – Reading

- Children begin to make a connection between a word for an object through their actual experience with materials such as household objects, dressing up clothes, art materials, water and sand play materials.

- Children learn to make sense of the lines and curves of the letters that make up the alphabet. They do this by decoding simple recognizable symbols through their actual experiences with photos, posters, pictures, drawings and symbols.

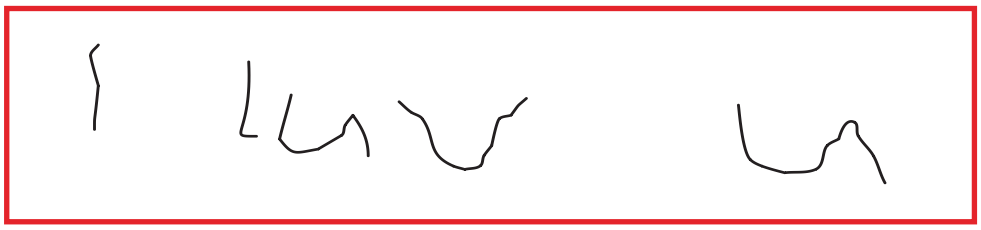
- Children learn to recognize print through many forms of print, e.g. books, magazines, signs and labels.

- Children build the desire to read by seeing significant adults read, e.g. teachers reading stories to them, parents reading newspapers or magazines.

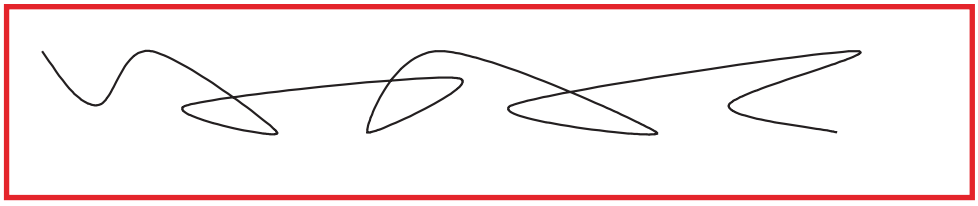
Remember: Label materials and interest areas to provide more experiences for exploring with symbols.

Emergent Literacy – Writing

- Children manipulate interesting objects such as crayons, pens, pencils, threading boards, and paint brushes. These activities help strengthen small-muscle coordination needed to hold writing tools.
- Children have a natural inclination to write. This usually happens before they show an urge to read.
- Children see adults communicate through writing throughout the day. They see teachers writing observation notes, notes to parents, filling in record keeping books, writing reminders, and writing down children's words on their art work.
- Children identify their scribbles that progressively develop into letter-like forms as 'writing'.
- Some children begin to invent their own words using real letters and real words, e.g. 'I luv u".



- Understand and accept whatever form children's writing take.
- Offer to write down children's words on their work. See below.
  Teacher asks: " What is your drawing about, Themba?"



Themba replies: "This is a space ship traveling through the air."
Teacher writes Themba's words on Themba's picture.

Emergent Numeracy - Numbers

- Children frequently refer to **numbers** in their play ('two babies', 'ten chairs', 'one cup').
- Children often refer to **quantities** of volume or weight in their play (lots, big, few, more, just a little, huge, heavy).
- Children are frequently **counting** (the number of lines they drew, or dots made on a page, pegs they fit into a pegboard).
- Children often **compare** the number of things they have ('you have more blocks than me', 'I only have a little glue', 'can you give me some of your beads').

  - Listen to how children use number concepts.
  - Support children's emerging numerical skills.
  - Encourage these natural opportunities to further explore numbers.

Try to provide a variety of interesting materials for children to explore with numbers. Include a variety of sizes, shapes and texture.

Remember: The role of the teacher is to facilitate children's '**learning how to learn'** rather than to directly teach them facts.

Example: Half-day programme showing what children and teachers do during each segment

(This programme excludes breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snacks and rest time segments catered for in full day programmes).

Time and sequence	What children do	What teachers do
Arrival time 15 – 30 minutes	Children arrive and pack away their bags. Gather together on carpet or chairs set in a circle.	Welcome children.
Health check 10 minutes	Children answer questions about any health problems, e.g. they show 'band-aids' over any cuts, bruises.	Run a quick head to toe check of each child. Keep a health record of any signs of illness observed or medication given. Refer cases that need attention.
Morning circle 10 to 15 minutes	Children participate in activity presented.	Introduce new materials, ideas, song or rhyme, announcements, concepts or skills.
Work time 45 to 55 minutes	Children choose what to do, interacting with materials in the interest area of their choice.	Provide stimulating materials and challenging activities. Observe, interact, join in, support and assist children.
Small group time 10 to 15 minutes during Work Time	6 to 8 children meet with teacher to engage in a particular activity planned by the teacher on a mat or round a table.	Present special activity, e.g. working with numbers, experimenting with materials or use materials and objects to solve problems.
Tidy up time 10 minutes	Children pack away materials and equipment.	Join children in packing materials and equipment away.
Hand washing 5 minutes	Children wash their hands.	Provide clean water and towels.
Snack time 10 to 15 minutes	Children enjoy morning snack.	Talk to children about what they did during work time. Prepare room for next activity.
Music and movement ring 15 to 20 minutes	Children participate in music and movement activities.	Present music and movement activities.
Outdoor play 20 to 30 minutes	Children enjoy energetic, noisy, physical play.	Join in children's play, talk to children, and assist where needed.
Hand washing and toilet time 15 minutes	Children go to the toilet then wash their hands.	Supervise routine.
Story time 10 to 15 minutes	Children listen to and participate in storytelling. Children share own stories or work completed during work time.	Engage children in story being told, ask responsive questions, allow children to be actively involved in the story.

See: Support for Responsive Interaction Strategies

3.1.4 Ways to actively involve children in the programme

1. The daily programme chart

- Make a daily programme chart with the name of each segment.
- Add a picture to illustrate the segment.
- Display the chart low enough for children to reach.
- Ask a child to point to the segment indicating the next activity.

2. Arrival time

- Divide total number of children into small groups of 6 to 8.
- Prepare name cards for children.
- Mark name cards to match small groupings (red, blue, yellow, green).
- Place all the name cards on a table close to the entrance door.
- Have children find their name and place it in a matching container.
- During greeting time bring unplaced cards to the ring.
- Have children identify the names of children who have not yet arrived.

3. Transition times

- Minimize waiting periods.
- Start the next activity when most of the children are ready.
- Allow others to join in as they finish what they are doing.

4. Work time

- Set up interesting and stimulating interest areas.
- Let children choose where they want to play.
- Limit the number of children playing in an area. Negotiate with them to choose a second favourite area until enough space becomes available.
- Allow children to follow their natural tendency to move materials from one area to another, **but put limits** to the quantity they move especially if it disrupts the play of others.
- Avoid disrupting children's work time to test them. Use small group time to focus on assessment of children's competencies in specific learning situations.
- Avoid solving children's conflicts. Talk children through the situation and let them come up with a solution to the conflict.
- Assess the popularity and use of materials in the interest areas. Add interesting items to attract children to areas less used.

5. Clean up time

- Give children a five minutes warning before the end of work time.
- Sing a clean up song when the five minutes are over: 'It's clean up time, clean up time. We all join in to clean up.'

`When children know what to expect it gives them a sense of security and control.'

Children work together to clean up after play and before moving to the next activity.

6. Small group time (Teacher-initiated)

An opportunity for children to come together in small groups to experience new skills, new ideas, build new knowledge, share ideas, and learn from each other.

Beginning

- Initiate a special activity for a small group of 6 - 8 children. For example, show them how to paint with string.
- Meet with children in a special place – on the floor or round a table.
- Provide enough materials and extras for 6 - 8 children to use.
- Briefly introduce the materials and technique.

Middle

- Allow children to explore and experiment with materials in their own way.
- Encourage children to make choices and decisions about how to use the materials, and describe in their own words what they are doing.
- Observe children, join in, and offer support to children.
- Comment briefly on what you see individual children doing:
  'John you are using three colours, that looks interesting.'
- Refer children to each other to solve problems.

Mpumi: 'I want to make circles but it keeps coming straight.'
Teacher: 'See how Mary is moving her string round and round in the center of the page.'

End

- Explain to children that materials will be available the next day for further use.
- Show them where the materials will be stored.
- Engage children in cleaning-up.

7.Large Group Time (Teacher initiated)

A time for children to work together in a large group to learn in a fun way, experiencing social interaction with peers and the teacher and learning social skills.

- Group comes together for singing, music and movement activities, storytelling and dramatizing of stories or events.
- Initiate ideas: 'Today we are going to move like big and small animals….'
- Encourage children to offer ideas. 'Refilwe says we can walk like **big** fat elephants. Let's follow her as she shows us how to walk like a **big** elephant'.

- Encourage turn taking. 'Now its Judy's turn. She wants to show us how a duck walks.' "Is a duck a **big or small** animal?'
- Use these opportunities to emphasise learning content, e.g. big and small. 'Refilwe showed us how a **big** elephant walks. 'Judy showed us how a **small** duck walks'. 'So we have big and small'. 'Is there another big animal you can think of'?

When we understand the differences of development and capabilities between young children aged birth to six years and older children, we begin to understand the need for a different approach in the way we engage young children in learning experiences.

It is useful to know that:

- Cognitive and intellectual skills are not the only skills children need to succeed at school. Social, emotional, and physical skills are just as important.
- The cognitive, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical skills and abilities needed for children to succeed at school are achieved through play.
- Children experience important social and emotional abilities such as getting along with one another, taking turns, being patient, making new friends, sharing, taking responsibility for actions, expressing feelings, understanding the feelings of others, solving problems and conflicts.
- Children need to be free to move around the room – to sit on the floor, carpet, or pillows as they engage in activities.
- Children need to be free to play outdoors – to run, climb, skip and jump.
- Children express their creativity through music and music activities.
- Children strengthen their small and large muscle coordination, control of body and understanding of spatial relations through a range of activities.
- These learning opportunities lay the foundation for further successful learning and social relations.

3.1.5 A note for educators, parents and communities

Play is the work of children. Through a variety of activities and routines, children are being prepared for more than just the next grade; they are being prepared for life-long success.

Notes

Section 4

4. SUPPORT FOR RESPONSIVE INTERACTION

John is sitting at a table drawing. His drawing is a selection of colours, straight and curved lines. The teacher watches John, then moves closer to him. She is unsure of what to do or say. Should she say something like: 'Good work, John, beautiful drawing.' Should she ask him questions like 'Tell me about the colours and shapes in your drawing?' Should she ask John 'Tell me about your drawing' Or should she wait for him to talk about his drawing without prompting?

Have you, just like John's teacher, ever felt that you are never quite sure of what to say, or what to do when children are involved in activities?

4.1 Responsive Interaction

4.1.1 Why responsive interaction strategies are important

What teachers and parents believe about learning and teaching directly affects both their own actions and the children's actions.

When adults are friendly, warm, encouraging, and attentive to individuals and small groups, when they relate in a non-directive way with large groups, and when they encourage children to make decisions, children are more likely to achieve the following:

- exhibit high 'task' involvement,
- language comprehension,
- social participation,
- constructive use of materials,
- spontaneity,
- creativity,
- sympathy, and
- independence.

Yet many teachers are **unsure** of how to interact with children when they are busy with activities. Some teachers **avoid** interacting with children when they are busy drawing, painting, cutting and pasting, building, fitting puzzles, or reading books.

Very often teachers think: The children are busy and don't need me. Anyway, what would I say?'

Other teachers understand the need to support children while they are busy, but are uncertain about how to start and carry on with the interaction. Too unsure of themselves to interact naturally with children, these teachers often fall into dull patterns. They always ask the same kind of questions, too many questions, or automatically praise everything children make or do.

It is important for teachers to understand how children learn and how this affects their relations with children. For example, a teacher who believes that childrenlearn mostly by listening and by following instructions would probably manage and instruct children during activities.

On the other hand, a teacher who believes that children learn best on their own, would probably withdraw from children while they are busy, while the teacher continues with his/her own everyday work.

But teachers who believe that children learn best through the active involvement of choosing their own materials, using the materials in their own way, and talking about what they are doing, find it easy to engage in meaningful conversation with children.

4.1.2 Finding the right approach

Facilitating children's learning is key to creating responsive and supportive learning experiences for children.

Every day, teachers plan activities to **'teach'** children new information or skills, e.g. new information or skills about numbers, colours or shape concepts; or new information on specific topics such as people and their professions, transport, animals or events such as traditional holidays.

However, 'the way we engage with children in learning situations' is of utmost importance, as this shows our beliefs about how children learn. Let's look at two approaches namely, the instructor and the facilitator.

The teacher as an instructor

If a teacher 'instructs and manages' children's learning, s/he runs the risk of taking away their creativity, independent thinking, problem-solving skills, and the sense of exploration and curiosity.

In this approach the teacher ignores the contributions of children when introducing new information or skills to be learnt. This teacher assumes that children have no prior knowledge or experiences of the new topics or skills. This teacher also believes that children must be silent and follow instructions. Here the teacher is more interested in the '**end product**' rather than the '**process**' of learning.

Story of teacher as an instructor

It is nearing Easter time, and teacher Zodwa has planned for the children to make 'Easter bunny cards'.

Teacher Zodwa supplies the children with perfect circles she cut out for the bunny's body, cotton wool for the tail, small black round circles for the eyes, two white rectangles for the teeth and pieces of wool for the moustache?

She gives the children clear instructions about what to place where. The children remain silent as they carefully follow her instructions. They are too afraid to make a mistake.

Teacher Zodwa is pleased to see all the cards look alike. The children are very happy the activity is over and run off to play outside.

How much do you think these children learned?

The teacher as a facilitator

This approach shows a balance between the contributions from children and the teacher. The teacher **'facilitates'** children's learning by respecting the children's own knowledge and experiences. The teacher welcomes the contributions of children when introducing new information or topics. Here the teacher is interested in the **'process' of learning** rather than the **'end product'**.

Story of teacher as a facilitator

Teacher Belinda has also planned to make Easter bunny cards.

For the activity, the teacher – together with the children and parents – collected a variety of shiny paper (sweets, chocolate, gift wrap), non-shiny paper, pieces of wool, small buttons, bottle caps, pipe cleaners, pairs of scissors, glue and straws.

Teacher Belinda sets up two tables, arranges the materials on the tables and invites eight children to join her. She reminds the eight children of their morning ring discussion about Easter and the plan for them to make Easter cards for their parents. They discuss the materials set out on the table, the main features of a bunny before getting started with the activity.

The children speak to each other about what they are doing. Teacher Belinda sits listening and waits for the right moment to join in their conversations. She makes notes about what she hears children saying and what she saw them doing.

At the end of the activity the children are very excited about their Easter bunny cards. They continue to talk about their cards. Teacher Belinda is very happy to see the variety of cards made by the children.

How much fun do you think these children had?

Facilitating children's learning happens throughout the day and in all aspects of the daily programme.

Compare teachers as 'facilitators' and 'instructors'

The situations below take us through a typical day in a Grade R class. Situation **1** demonstrates the teacher as facilitator, and situation **2 shows** the teacher as instructor.

In Situation 1:	In Situation 2:
The teacher planned to 'initiate discussions' about the national flag.	The teacher planned to 'teach the children' about the national flag.

This is how the day went

Situation 1	Situation 2
Morning ring: Children gathered on mat. Teacher engages children in discussion. T: I have a very important song I would like you to sing along with me. It is about South Africa. They sing it when there are big national rugby, cricket or soccer games. All the countries sing their own one before the games begin. T: Can anyone tell me which song they think I am speaking about? C: Yes miss, yes miss! (Children name all kinds of songs.) T: It sounds something like this (Hums 'Nkosi Sikelel' i-Afrika'.) C: It is Kosi sekeleli … T: Yes, it is Nkosi Sikelel' i-Afrika, and it is our National Anthem. T: Now I have something in this box. It is made of cloth; it has red, blue, white, green, yellow and black colours. When it hangs up everyone knows that it means South Africa. Who can guess what it is? There is always one hanging at the police station. C: A flag, a flag!	Morning ring: There is no morning ring. Children sit at tables singing songs while teacher hands out photocopy picture of flag for colouring-in, red, blue, green, yellow and black crayons. T: Today we are going to make a flag like this (holds up a picture to show). T: Now the flag has different colours. T: Asks children 'What colour is this? as she points to each colour. C: Red. T: And this? C: Green. T: And this? C: Yellow. She continues until all the colours have been mentioned. T: Now I want you to colour-in the picture in front of you. You must colour your picture just like the one I am keeping in my hand. I am going to stick it on the board. Teacher then walks between tables

Situation 1	Situation 2
Morning ring: Children gathered on mat. Teacher engages children in discussion. T: I have a very important song I would like you to sing along with me. It is about South Africa. They sing it when there are big national rugby, cricket or soccer games. All the countries sing their own one before the games begin. T: Can anyone tell me which song they think I am speaking about? C: Yes miss, yes miss! (Children name all kinds of songs.) T: It sounds something like this (Hums 'Nkosi Sikelel' i-Afrika'.) C: It is Kosi sekeleli … T: Yes, it is Nkosi Sikelel' i-Afrika, and it is our National Anthem. T: Now I have something in this box. It is made of cloth; it has red, blue, white, green, yellow and black colours. When it hangs up everyone knows that it means South Africa. Who can guess what it is? There is always one hanging at the police station. C: A flag, a flag! T: Yes. It is our country's flag. It is our national symbol. Let's open the box and take it out. C: Yeeh, where can we keep it? T: I was thinking of hanging it up across the board for all to see. If you like you can paint, draw or colour in your own flag in the art area. I also added some pictures of the flag in the Book Area, small flags in the Block Area, and small ornaments with the flag on it in the Pretend Area.	Morning ring: There is no morning ring. Children sit at tables singing songs while teacher hands out photocopy picture of flag for colouring-in, red, blue, green, yellow and black crayons. T: Today we are going to make a flag like this (holds up a picture to show). T: Now the flag has different colours. T: Asks children 'What colour is this? ' as she points to each colour. C: Red. T: And this? C: Green. T: And this? C: Yellow. She continues until all the colours have been mentioned. T: Now I want you to colour-in the picture in front of you. You must colour your picture just like the one I am keeping in my hand. I am going to stick it on the board. Teacher then walks between tables correcting children's work. T: No, Busi, that part must be red not green. Look properly at the picture! T: Hands Busi a clean copy and tells her to do it over. At the end of the session all the flags look the same.

Snack Time	**Snack Time**
Teacher invites children to have their snack. T: I saw some of you made some interesting flags. Children start telling teacher about the flags they made.	Teacher tells girls to fetch their snack first, followed by the boys. T: Stop talking and eat your snack. Children sit quietly at tables.
Music Time	**Music Time**
Children gather in a large circle. T: Let's try singing our national anthem 'Nkosi Sikelel' i-Afrika'. T: Can we pretend to be flags blowing in the wind? C: Yes, like this. T: Okay, Thabo, let's move like this C: Can we blow like in a storm, fast like this? T: Tumi wants us to blow fast like in a storm! Come on everyone let's blow fast. T: Now let's blow very slowly and think about the colours you saw in the flag. As children name the colours, the teacher invites them to look at the flag hanging on the board to make sure all the colours were mentioned. T: Who has seen our national flag hanging at the police station? C: Me, me, me! T: Do you know how it stays in the air? C: Some say 'Yes', some say 'No'. T: Let's look at this picture to see, shall we? C: 'It is on a pole with ropes to make it go up and down', says Peter.	Children sit at tables on chairs. T: Come everyone, what can we sing. C: Can we sing 'Down in the jungle'? T: No, Dineo, every day you want to sing 'Down in the jungle'. T: Joseph, what can we sing? J: Five little elephants. T: Vuyo, Willie, Tracy, Peter and Sam come here. You are the elephants. All the others you sing loud. Louder I can't hear you!

Story Time	Story time
Teacher gathers children in a circle on mat. They join teacher in singing "Nkosi Sikelel' i-Afrika'. T: Today, instead of our usual story, you are invited to come and tell us a story about the flag you made this morning. Tumi: I am going to tell a story about my flag I painted! T: Very well, Tumi, you go first.	There is no story time. Children sit quietly on the mat while the teacher puts children's colour-in flags in their portfolio files**.**

4.1.3 Principles of National Curriculum Statement (NCS)

Guided by the philosophy of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), we believe that children learn best through their active involvement with people, places, things, ideas, and events. The role of the teacher is to provide interactive and responsive learning experiences for children throughout the day.

Teachers encourage children's creativity, independence, problem-solving abilities and their need to experiment when they move away from **directing** or **instructing** children on how to do things.

Eight Responsive interactions strategies

1. **A supportive environment:**

   Provide a variety of interest areas such as block play, quiet play, painting, and book and pretend play.

2. **Sharing management:**

   Teachers and children work together as partners. Children are in charge of their own decisions such as where to play, how to play, what to play with, and with whom to play. Teachers are in charge of adult decisions such as managing the daily programme, planning group activities and ensuring children's safety.

3. **Offer comfort and closeness:**

   Be aware of children who need comforting by offering a reassuring hand to hold, a hug, a lap to sit on, or just a comforting word.

4. **Help children resolve conflict:**

   Engage children in a process of solving problems and conflicts.

5. Take part in children's play:

Join in a child or children's play at their physical level, either by invitation from children or for the opportunity to connect with them. Follow children's guidance, and take on the role they suggest. Jody is pretending to be a nurse at a clinic injecting the babies: 'Teacher, teacher, bring your baby, come sit. You must get your prick'.

6. Ask open-ended questions:

Ask questions that encourage problem-solving skills, e.g. 'What do you think will happen if you stack the blocks higher?' 'How many more boxes do you think you need to pack in the row to make your long train?'

7. Observe, listen and make notes:

Spend more time observing, listening and making notes. Watch carefully to understand the thought processes of children before asking questions or making comments. Avoid asking too many questions. This may take the fun out of the activity.

8. Talk to children as partners:

Talk to children in a natural way about what they are doing. Encourage the conversation to continue without forcing the child for answers. Make objective (real) comments that encourage children to expand their descriptive language and think about what they are doing.

Tips for interacting responsively

In the Art area, the teacher observes Thembi carrying her wet painting to the drawing table. At the drawing table she draws curved red and yellow lines. Thembi fetches a pair of scissors and cuts out around the lines she drew. She takes her cut-out to the pasting table, spreads glue at the back of it, then sticks it in the right hand corner on the page of her drawing, and takes it outside to dry. The teacher walks toward her where she is putting her picture to dry.

Teacher: I see you are hanging your paper to dry, Tembi! You were quite busy in the art area.
Thembi: Yes, I made a picture.
Teacher: You made a picture , and what is your picture about?
Thembi: It is a burning building.
Teacher: A burning building? Hmm, I see, so what part of the building is burning, then?

- Acknowledge children's efforts.
- Ask questions to encourage children to tell you about what they are doing.
- Listen to what you **hear** children **say** and **see** them **do.**
- Repeat what children say. Then make a comment or ask a meaningful question.

Avoid this !

Don't assume what you think they did.

Teacher: Oh Ruby, I see you painted a house!
Child: It's not a house, it's my church where I go to on Sunday!

Steps to get started

If a responsive interaction approach is new to you, then here is one way to get started.

1. **Ensure that the learning environment has been set up** as suggested in the section on support for creating indoor and outdoor learning environment.

2. **Scan the interest areas and check what children have chosen to do.**

3. **While you are scanning, look for specific types of play:**

- Who is exploring, manipulating, trying out something?
- Who is constructing or making something?
- Who is pretending, role-playing?
- Who is playing some sort of game?

4. **While you are scanning the interest areas, decide on:**

- Whom to interact with, and how?
- What play type you would like to support, e.g. reading in the Book Area; building in the Block Area; or role-play in the Pretend Area?

5. **While scanning the interest areas think about:**

Learning experiences that may be happening (number, classification, language, movement).
Efforts that need to be encouraged e.g. a child 'reading' on her own, a child battling to stick boxes together

> In the house area Aruna is setting a table with four plates and spoons. ' I'm waiting for Sam, Lily, Jabu and Mary to come and eat.'
>
> Learning outcomes achieved: Numeracy – 'one-to-one correspondence'

6. **Choose children to observe. You might see:**

- A child finding it difficult to start an activity on his/her own.
- A child calling for help.
- A child enjoying what he is doing.
- A child not doing anything.
- A child taking the lead and involving others in a game.
- Children inviting you to join their play.
- A child or children calling you to handle a dispute.

7. Take notes. Write down the child's name and key words about specific things the child did or said during the day. Use these notes to assess learning outcomes. See the example below:

Activity	**Learning outcome:**
In the House Area, Jacob is rolling a piece of play dough he brought from the art area. C: I am making a pizza. It is going to be a big pizza.	**Thinking and Reasoning (LO5)** The leaner is able to use language to think and reason, as well as to access, process and use information for learning. Assessment Standard: • Understands concepts and some vocabulary relating to size.
Activity	**Learning outcome:**
In the Book Area, Thabo is pointing to pictures in a book and reading. **C:** First Papa bear, then Mama bear, and last Baby bear.	<u>Reading and viewing</u> The learner is able to read and view for information for enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts. Assessment Standard: • Reads picture books.

4.1.4 Encourage responsiveness in children

Support children and encourage them to be responsive. Children need support in developing their emotional and social needs and abilities.

Conflict and violence have become a topic that crops up often, and is of great concern in the education arena. Teachers working in early learning settings, who adopt a responsive interaction style, can make a huge contribution towards reducing violent behaviour.

However, while responsive interaction styles are an important aspect of developing cognitive, intellectual, social, emotional and physical needs of children, it is probably the most difficult style to master.

To adopt a responsive style, start by carefully analyzing the ways in which you interact with children. Many teachers, who have analysed their interactions with children, are often surprised to find out:

- How often they 'talk at' children without listening to them.
- How often they 'manage' children's activities without joining them.
- How often they 'jump in and take over' when children are in conflict, rather than help children to work out a solution to the conflict.

On the good side, teachers who have learned to be interactive and responsive have reported significant changes in the behaviour of the children and the management of their class.

When teachers use a responsive approach to children's needs, children are inclined to adopt a similar technique. Children are being responsive when:

- They interact positively with their peers.
- They freely express how they feel.
- They confidently initiate their own ideas.
- They copy the caring style of their teachers.
- They understand the feelings of others.
- They begin to show an understanding of sharing space, sharing materials, teacher's time with others, taking turns and following rules.
- They treat materials and others with respect.
- They trust their own decisions and the decisions of others, and take responsibility for their actions.
- They are confident that their teachers will be supportive.

Nurturing children to grow into socially accepting and responsible citizens is probably the greatest contribution that teachers can make towards building a peaceful society.

Notes

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