

PROGRAM

PRESCHOOL
EDUCATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART ONE	Page
The Preschool Child	
Chapter 1 - The Needs of the Preschool Child	3
Chapter 2 - The Development of the Preschool Child	5
PART TWO	
The Preschool Education Program	
Chapter 3 - Program Orientations	11
A - Educational Aims	11
B - Principles	12
Chapter 4 - The Basis of the Program	13
A - Games as an Integral Part of Preschool Education	13
B - The Learning Process and the Teaching Process	15
C - The Active Participation of Parents	15
Chapter 5 - Program Objectives	19
A - Developing Self-awareness and Self-esteem	21
B - Developing Relationships with Others	24
C - Learning to Interact with Their Surroundings	28
Chapter 6 - The Spheres of Activity	33
A - Motor Skills	33
B - Oral and Written Communication	34
C - The Arts	36
D - Natural Science	38
E - Mathematics	39
PART THREE	
Teaching and Preschool Education	
Chapter 7 - Preliminary Considerations	43
A - Motivation in the Context of Preschool Education	43
B - The Teaching Approach	44
C - Technological Aids	48
D - The Transition from Preschool to Elementary School	49
Chapter 8 - Observation and Evaluation	51
A - Educational Evaluation	51
B - Principles Underlying the Evaluation Process in Preschool Education	51
C - The Role of Various Actors in Evaluation	52
D - Observation and Evaluation Instruments	53
E - The Report Card	54
Appendix	55
Bibliography	59



FOREWORD

This Preschool Education program has been designed to meet the requirements of the educational reform and to assist schools in the implementation of full-time kindergarten.

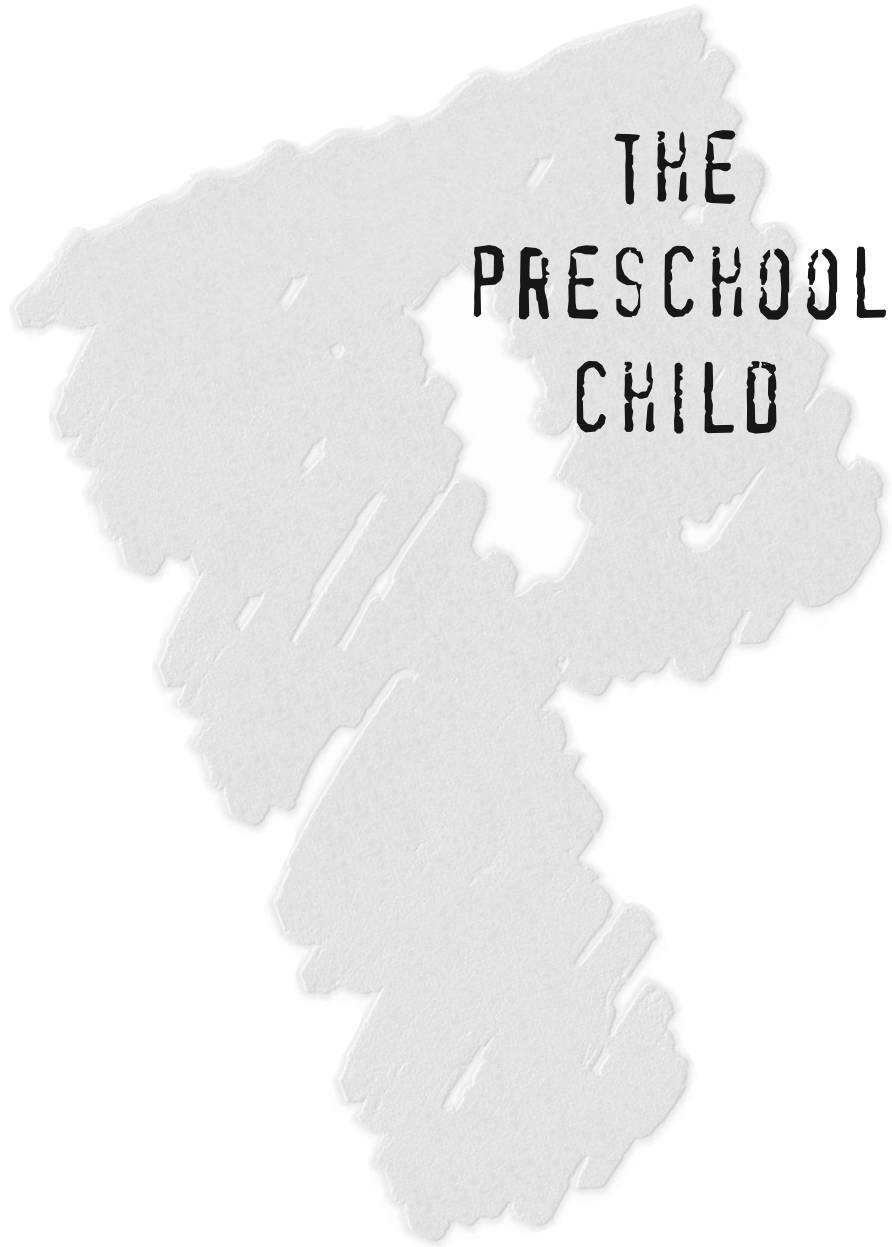
Based on current findings in child development, it reaffirms and enriches the objectives of the 1981 Curriculum for Preschool Education.

This program may be modified or added to during the coming year to make improvements to the content.



**PART
ONE**

**THE
PRESCHOOL
CHILD**



CHAPTER 1

THE NEEDS OF THE PRESCHOOL CHILD

Preschool education must take into account children's health and physical and psychological well-being, as well as their emotional, creative, intellectual and moral development.

On the one hand, children must be surrounded by responsible, significant, reliable individuals who make sure that their needs for food, shelter, clothing, hygiene and rest are met.

On the other hand, children feel secure, comforted and supported in permanent affective relationships. These relationships contribute to, and reinforce, children's self-esteem as well as the sense of security that is essential for learning.

Children's needs are first met within the family. Supported in their development, children progressively outgrow their egocentric attitudes. They become aware of others and learn to adapt to new situations.

Basically, children are beings who are growing and learning. They need to be encouraged in their efforts and supported in their motivation to learn; they need to feel that their personalities and learning styles are respected.

By having rich and varied experiences as well as facing appropriate and worthwhile challenges, children satisfy their need to discover and understand the world around them. In an appropriate learning environment, children can understand and appreciate behaviours, rules and cultural values.

Such an environment, which is based on a close relationship between the family and the school, takes into account the needs of children, contributes to their development, and gives them social recognition and a sense of self-worth.



Child's drawing taken from: Réal Dupont, *Lire les images des enfants* (Laval: Les Éditions L'image de l'art inc., 1991), p. 63.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESCHOOL CHILD

Supported by their parents in a warm, stimulating environment, children progress from a state of dependence to one of greater independence.

The bonds between children and their mothers and fathers, or any other significant adults, help children gradually develop their potential and acquire the knowledge and skills that will promote their physical, emotional, social, cognitive and language development.

From an early age, as they interact with others, children attempt to understand people and their surroundings. On the one hand, children possess an internal source of reference that enables them to act spontaneously, as, for example, in sucking, walking or listening. On the other hand, by being in contact with people and objects and by using their senses, children refine their actions and discover new ways of doing things.

It is therefore by interacting with others and their surroundings that children discover the meaning of things and facts, that they begin to develop an understanding of events, that they build new references and make generalizations.

All of their knowledge is based on their intuitive perceptions, on their ability to explore and interpret situations, to try things out, to start over, to become aware of their surroundings, to name objects, to establish relationships, to formulate hypotheses, to anticipate results, to evaluate, and so on. As a result, children can anticipate their behaviour and adjust their actions accordingly.

The quality of the care and attention children receive has a great influence on their development since, at this stage, development is intensive.

Physical Development

At four or five years of age, children are very curious about the different parts of their bodies, about certain postures and movements. Children know whether they are boys or girls; they are aware of sensations and reflexes.

By this age, children have learned to identify most of the external parts of their bodies: they can name several of these, identify their properties or potential and recognize their specific characteristics. Children notice what sets them apart from others (physical traits, such as hair and eye colour), and they begin to judge a person's physical appearance positively or negatively, not necessarily out of spite or envy.

Four- and five-year-olds have better control of their bodies overall than they have of individual parts. They can usually control spontaneous movements such as running, walking and jumping. They are more comfortable following their own pace than they are someone else's.

Through language, children have learned to name, validate and confirm exploratory gestures and acquire a sense of physical freedom or autonomy when relating to other significant individuals. By exercising better control over their energy levels, rhythm and space, children develop greater control over their bodies. If children are encouraged and stimulated to develop fine and gross motor skills, they become more comfortable with their bodies and acquire greater confidence in their feelings and abilities. Moreover, they perceive themselves more accurately, develop a clearer image of themselves and start to enjoy making an effort, taking initiative and expressing themselves.

Knowing their own bodies helps children gain confidence in themselves and adds to their feelings of self-worth.

Emotional and Social Development

Confronted with new situations or in a broader environment, preschool children become more self-confident and sure of themselves. Through a variety of experiences, they acquire knowledge about themselves and others and are better able to identify what they like and dislike.

At this age, children generally look for immediate gratification. They are often impulsive, mainly because they have difficulty expressing clearly what they feel.

They must therefore continue learning how to express what they feel and how they see the world. Little by little, they become more adept at identifying feelings, which were once vague or diffuse, or of which they were only partially aware, and they manage to use "I" statements to express what they feel.

By acquiring this self-awareness, children are better able to form relationships with others and to discover the characteristics of their cultural environment. As they mature, they will notice that other people have feelings, interests and points of view that may be similar to or different from their own, and they will gradually learn to reconcile their needs with those of others.

In conflict situations, children tend to place blame on others. That is why the ability to take responsibility for their actions while accepting others, and the ability to make compromises and to empathize are important steps in the development of preschool children.

Four- and five-year-olds want to be like, to look like people they love and identify with. They are fascinated with wanting to be like the big kids. Driven by their great need to play, they call on their imaginations. In their pretend games, they experiment with what it is to be someone else, which leads them naturally to make "I" statements. Through their symbolic games, children demonstrate their desire to know about the world, the pleasure they derive from doing things and the appeal of wanting to surpass themselves.

Children also seek to differentiate themselves from others in their environment. That is how they learn, emotionally as well as cognitively, how to differentiate, include, exclude, appropriate and reject.

Moreover, preschool children discover the restrictions and benefits associated with community life. Just as they first became aware that they are part of a family, they learn what it means to be part of a group. They become able to play an active role in a group and gradually form satisfying interpersonal relationships. They learn how to find their place, to define their role, to act appropriately toward others and to become aware of different cultural and social realities.

By interacting with others their own age, children move from symbolic games to games with rules. They learn to consider other people's points of view and to deal with attitudes that differ from their own. Although they have a tendency to believe that their way of thinking or doing something is the best way, children learn to put aside their own points of view in order to put themselves in other people's shoes. This initiation to community life gives children a sense of belonging to a group.

Cognitive Development

From birth onward, children erect an impressive system of representation, comprehension and knowledge that is based on their everyday experiences with people, objects and situations.

This information serves as a reference point when children communicate how they view the world, anticipate events and act in society. Children possess the necessary knowledge to recognize and point out elements that are immediately perceptible to them. They are capable of making mental representations, provided they feel that they can relate to the world and attribute meaning to their experiences. For example, they can describe objects that are not directly in front of them, or relate events from memory. Their ability to recall events increases.

Preschool children must now compare their understanding of things and events with the physical world and the world of ideas and people. They enter a stage in which they observe facts, imitate others, deduce, categorize and generalize, insofar as the comparison involves play and is concrete and meaningful to them.



Children want to know about and understand things. Their intuitive perceptions, beliefs and models help to shape their thoughts. Being aware, cognitively, that there is a difference between their view of the world and that of others is an important step in achieving maturity.

At this stage, children need to make the most of their abilities, to experiment, to try things out (trial and error), to explore, to foresee how activities will take place in order to identify causes, to reflect on their actions and to understand systems of interaction.

Children are creative beings with limitless imaginations. They are capable of inventing, imagining or playing out diverse situations based on sensory, emotional and intellectual experiences. This wealth of imagination may be expressed using verbal or body language.

Language Development

From children's first attempts at language to its various symbolic functions, language development occurs in conjunction with physical, social and cognitive development.

At four or five years of age, children increasingly enjoy expressing themselves verbally. They enjoy recounting what has happened to them. They express what they feel and think for the sheer pleasure of it, be it to relive the experience or to share it with someone else.

Language allows children to convey, ask for and receive information. They use language to determine roles in games or activities, to express their imaginary worlds or to play with the sound of language.

At this age, children become more interested in the meaning of words. The meaning they attribute to reality helps them act and think about various situations, people or ways in which to act. Language is an important tool in children's cognitive development, a necessary tool for their socialization and their understanding of the world.





**PART
TWO**

**THE PRESCHOOL
EDUCATION
PROGRAM**





CHAPTER 3

PROGRAM ORIENTATIONS

The general objective of the program is to provide a precise and flexible frame of reference that will guide teachers while allowing room for their creativity and spontaneity.

The program makes it possible to add a variety of content suited to child development activities. It was designed to take account of the teachers' responsibilities with respect to the pedagogical organization of the class.

The program, which is child-centred, is based on key teaching principles that are intended to create a stimulating environment for children, in which they can develop all of their potential.

To think about education is to think about child development and learning. In preschool education, this means being familiar with the world of young children and wanting to bring out their full potential.

Preschool education is a right of all children, and aims at the overall development of each. To attain this goal, children must have access to quality education.

The preschool education program is not based on an academic model. It is designed to ensure that children continue to discover and explore their world.

A Educational Aims

The preschool education program aims at the overall harmonious development of the child. Its goal is to enable children to discover the joy of learning and to explore different ways of doing so.

Furthermore, the program recognizes children as unique individuals who are constantly interacting with their environment.

The overall harmonious development of children requires that education be centred on their needs and interests. Only if this condition is met can preschool education contribute to the development of children and the realization of their full potential.



B Principles

The preschool education program for four- and five-year-olds attending kindergarten is based on the following principles:

- Children are the main architects of their own learning and development. They must be active and self-motivated and attribute personal meaning to what they do.
- Kindergarten is an ideal place for children to acquire attitudes, skills and knowledge that will be useful to them in their future learning.
- Educational activities must be appropriate, consistent and meaningful for the child.
- Children's first educators are their parents. The knowledge parents have of their children is an essential complement to formal education.
- The medium- and long-term effects of formal education on children are greater when the parents are actively involved in their children's education.
- The recognition of play as an integral part of the young child's learning process is at the basis of education.
- All educational initiatives must respect the learning pace and style of each child.
- Preschool education takes account of experience acquired at home or in a daycare or nursery, and smooths the transition to the first year of elementary school with a view to ensuring educational continuity.
- The various spheres of activity explored in kindergarten (motor skills, oral and written communication, the arts, natural science, mathematics) are not ends in themselves but means of learning.



CHAPTER 4

THE BASIS OF THE PROGRAM

A Games as an Integral Part of Preschool Education

Play occupies a central place in preschool education, since it contributes significantly to the development of the young child. For Piaget, the child's cognitive development takes place slowly through spontaneous activity. To develop fully, children must grow up in a context conducive to action.

Children display a lively interest in play. Play is an affective component that continually intervenes in intellectual functioning. The interest that children bring to an activity generates the effort and motivation they need to derive meaning from their experience, change their way of thinking and take on the commitment that is indispensable to learning.

Play has the extraordinary advantage of drawing on a form of motivation that is not external, but that comes from within children themselves. It is an activity that generates immediate interest on the part of children.

Piaget distinguishes between four stages of play: practice play, symbolic play, games with rules and construction play.

Practice Play

Practice play consists in repeating an activity (for example, hitting a rattle) and learning that the same act has the same consequences. This form of play, which is the most primitive, is composed initially of simple, isolated gestures but gradually becomes more complex, in a series of increasingly coordinated actions. Many of the repetitive games played by preschoolers, such as jump-rope and certain ball games, are practice play.

Symbolic Play

Symbolic play expresses reality as children perceive and experience it. Children can not only reproduce reality, but also modify and reshape it and act upon it while simulating it. This form of play is important for the emergence of representative thought, for it enables the child to make the transition from representation to thinking. This symbolic function is what enables language to develop.

Symbolic play is also a "language" in itself, since it enables children to express themselves on both the affective and cognitive levels. Children need this particular language, since that of adults is a convention that is imposed on them, and one that they still have not mastered. Thus symbolic play emerges when adults begin demanding more and more respect for certain social rules.

This type of play imposes respect for a number of rules governing behaviour, so that children can correctly act out a role. These rules, which are developed as play goes on, always have a social dimension. For example, children who pretend to be putting a baby to bed are mimicking the events of their household.

Symbolic play makes it possible to separate thought and action, and to refrain from acting impulsively in favour of voluntary and controlled action. It is "free" play that becomes effective as long as its constraints are respected. According to Vygotsky, it constitutes an excellent context for learning self-control.

Games with Rules

This form of play occurs within a group and requires the players to conform to interdependent and specific rules and roles (as in, for example, the game of hide-and-seek, where each child has a turn at hiding or being “It”). This type of game requires that each person put himself or herself in the place of someone else, in order to better play his or her own role (for example, to know the strategies of the one who is “It” in order to avoid being found).

Games with rules contribute extensively to the development of autonomy and cooperation. By cooperating with others in situations where rules are not imposed from the outside but emerge in the action called for by the game, the child gradually internalizes these rules.

In this type of play, the adult’s system of rules is replaced by that of the child’s peers. Children do not feel constrained to adopt this system and are free to explore the consequences of acting in various ways. Thus they gradually come to understand the rationale of rules governing group life.

Construction Play

Construction play consists in piecing together and assembling materials of all shapes and sizes. By carrying out the steps involved in systematically reproducing an object that was originally the product of chance, children can acquire a number of skills related to mathematics and geometry.

Although this type of play can be carried out individually, children often play in small groups where they compare their points of view in order to solve a problem and work together to produce a product. This activity facilitates personal relationships and cooperation.

The Role of the Teacher

Play, which is essential to the development of the child, must occupy an important place in preschool education.

This is why, in light of the work that Thériault and his team carried out in Québec kindergarten classes in 1987, teachers must create an environment conducive to play. They must encourage children to play games of ever greater complexity by ensuring

that they have proper play materials, and by setting up play areas and setting aside sufficient time for play.

Materials must be selected in accordance with these considerations; otherwise, children may be asked to behave in ways far below their developmental level, and hence run the risk of arriving at an impasse. Thériault suggests that teachers ask themselves the following five questions when doing lesson plans:

- What roles can the child play in relation to the chosen profession?
- What must the child do in each role?
- What materials must be made available for this role-play?
- How can I set aside a somewhat isolated space that is organized in a logical manner and is conducive to small groups?
- What do children learn from these activities?

Teachers can also intervene directly in play activities, particularly in situations involving symbolic play. Such intervention must, however, take account of the child. Moreover, in participating, the teacher agrees to play a role and ensures that the game can continue and gain in complexity.

Some children have very few opportunities to play with other children, and often find it difficult to join in games and obey the rules. Such children can be assisted by the teacher, who can intervene in role-play to ensure that they are accepted by the others.

According to Berk and Winsler, three questions can be used to guide adult intervention in children’s games:

- How did the children act in similar situations?
- To what extent do the children need my help in order to attain their goals in this situation?
- How can I ensure that the children are more focused on themselves than on me?

The answers to these questions make it possible to gauge the level of support required, and to decide whether the child is capable of getting by without any help.

Clearly, play is important in child development, and in kindergarten it is important that teachers support children in this activity so that they can move forward.

B The Learning Process and the Teaching Process

The Learning Process

The learning process is an act of perception, interaction and integration with respect to an object or situation. In other words, through learning, children acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that contribute to their development. Learning involves dynamic and internal changes in individuals who, motivated by a desire and willingness to grow, devise new explanations to account for the world around them. This process facilitates the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

It is generally acknowledged that, in all activity, the learning process is made up of three phases: the “before” or preparation phase; the “during” or implementation phase; and the “after” or integration phase.

Preparation

The preparation phase is a very important step. It generally determines, for a given activity, the extent of the child’s motivation and commitment, two key factors in the learning process. Learners are first introduced to the learning focus and begin to prepare themselves for the learning experience. They develop an intention, recall their previous knowledge, skills, attitudes and strategies, and plan their projects, whether they originate with the group or with the teacher. Corresponding to these steps are three questions: Why am I doing this? What is going to help me do it? How am I going to do it?

Implementation

In this phase, the children act within the context of a learning situation. Learners apprehend and analyze reality by continually asking themselves questions while they are carrying out their tasks. They explore, organize and structure the learning focus; use their knowledge, skills, attitudes and strategies; and ask the help of the teacher and, when necessary, of other children.

Integration

This phase provides children with an opportunity to assimilate acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes, to transfer them to new situations, and to look critically at the learning process as a whole. The children reformulate their experience in order to integrate what they have just learned. They make assessments (what works and what doesn’t), objectify their new knowledge, skills, attitudes and strategies (by articulating what they have learned), and consolidate all these elements (now I know that . . .) with a view to applying them to new situations.

The Teaching Process

The teaching process supports the learning process that forms the core of preschool education.

In this respect, teachers make lesson plans that incorporate learning focuses, choose situations that will be meaningful for the children, and make the children aware of their own needs, learning and abilities. They organize activities, create conditions conducive to learning, give instructions to the children and tell them what is expected of them.

Throughout the activities the teachers guide and accompany the children through the steps of exploration and production. Finally, they evaluate their intervention and help the children become aware of what they have just learned so that they can transfer it to similar or slightly more complex situations.

C The Active Participation of Parents

Parents are their children’s first educators, and in this respect they are essential partners in kindergarten education. Two-way communication and respect for the roles of each person will make it possible to understand, foster and bring out the strengths and achievements of each child.

When parents participate in their children’s kindergarten education, the children see that they are interested and, as a result, gain in self-esteem and motivation. The parents, for their part, gain a better understanding of how the class works and see it as a place where they can exchange ideas and work with the teacher.

Types of Participation

Parent's participation in their children's education takes various forms, particularly individual and group meetings and parent-student workshops.

Individual Meetings

Individual meetings facilitate personal contact with the parents. In these meetings, parents and teachers discuss the children and how they are doing in kindergarten. This is an opportunity to emphasize the positive aspects of the children's development by focusing on their abilities and the challenges they have faced and by enabling the parents to relate their achievements outside the school.

Teachers or parents who are aware of problems with specific children can discuss the various steps that could be taken. Teachers can ask the parents' permission to draw upon the skills of other resource people in order to complete their observations or more effectively structure their interventions with the child. Such resource people could include speech therapists, psycho-educators and psychologists.

The goal of these meetings is to obtain the parents' cooperation in order to facilitate their children's development.

When scheduling individual meetings, teachers must ensure that the parents are available on the date selected. They must also plan the meeting in a way that fosters free discussion and the exchange of ideas.

If they are called upon only when their children are having problems, parents gradually come to associate meetings with unpleasant experiences. This could jeopardize cooperation between them and the school.

Individual meetings can take place on many occasions, such as the first parents' meeting at the beginning of the year, or when report cards are handed out. Other occasions might include informal discussions or follow-up sessions associated with interventions designed for children in difficulty.

Group Meetings

Group meetings should foster the active participation of parents. The objectives of group meetings are as follows:

- To provide parents with information on their children's progress with respect to preschool educational objectives.
- To facilitate meetings with parents, to enable them to discuss and find solutions to any difficulties they or their children may encounter.
- To enable parents to define the educational approach best suited to their children.
- To facilitate informal discussion.

The following are a number of themes for meetings with parents:

- The parent-child relationship
- The importance of play in child development
- Class rules, student guidelines, support and supervision
- Problem solving
- Reading stories to children
- Appreciation of the role of the parents

Parent-student Workshops

The purpose of these workshops is to familiarize parents with the educational approach adopted in their children's kindergarten class. Parents take part in the activities and are asked, at specific times, to observe their children's behaviour. A parent or group of parents can assume responsibility for a workshop. For example, they could talk about their job, or about particular skills they possess. Festivities and school outings are also ideal opportunities for parent participation.

Promoting Parent Participation

Many methods are available to teachers to promote parent participation. A class newsletter can be used to keep parents informed of activities or life in the classroom. A weekly or daily agenda sent back and forth between the home and the school can offer parents and teachers a quick and easy way to communicate. Phone calls are an effective way of establishing contact with parents and of providing or gathering information about particular situations. Teachers can also send home questionnaires to enlist the participation of parents in special projects or to obtain suggestions for new topics to cover in class. This list is by no means exhaustive. There are, in fact, many ways of establishing close relationships with parents. The goal is to promote genuine cooperation that will benefit children in their development.

Communication Skills

The challenge faced by teachers in encouraging parent participation is communication. Whatever the methods used, the teacher must adopt attitudes and develop skills that promote communication and create an environment conducive to the exchange of ideas and to establishing an effective home-school partnership. The following skills may prove useful:

- Showing your understanding by reflecting the feelings of the person you are talking to
- Asking for clarification and reformulating
- Discussing facts, not interpretations or judgments of situations
- Describing children in positive terms
- Arriving at common objectives and determining expectations

Effective home-school relationships depend on the following:

- It is essential to recognize the importance and the responsibilities of parents.
- Teachers must be proactive in dealing with parents.
- The purpose of parent-teacher meetings is to communicate: both parties have something important to say and to learn.
- Parents are entitled to ask teachers about their expectations, the program, the schedule, and the behaviour of their child.
- Teachers are entitled to ask parents about their expectations and the children's experiences and behaviour at home.
- Teachers should refrain from using professional jargon, which could hinder communication.

CHAPTER V

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The preschool program objectives are interrelated and are designed to favour the harmonious overall development of children as they learn.

The principle underlying the program objectives requires that teachers plan and organize activities and projects with rigour in order to ensure that the children acquire the skills and behaviours necessary to learn in school, and in particular, in the first year of elementary school. Teachers must present children with reasonable challenges that elicit their participation.

Children must confront such challenges in order to progress from relatively unstructured experiences to structured activities and active participation in the learning process. It is important for them to acquire a receptive attitude toward their own experience: their point of reference should be themselves. This attitude is the very basis of autonomy. Children also need to be able to listen to themselves, to be aware of what is happening within them and to act in consequence. They must be open to others, entering actively into relations with other people. Finally, children must come to have a certain control over their environment by getting to know it and developing their ability to act upon it.

These general precepts underlie the goals of the preschool education program, whose global objective is:

to enable preschool-age children to develop self-awareness and self-esteem, to develop relationships with others and to learn to interact with their environment.

Thus for children of four or five years of age, attending kindergarten means:

DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-ESTEEM

- discovering their body
- asserting themselves

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

- developing an awareness of different social and cultural realities
- establishing harmonious relationships with others
- participating in group life

LEARNING TO INTERACT WITH THEIR SURROUNDINGS

- assimilating significant information
- acting on their surroundings, reflecting on their actions and creating



A

DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-ESTEEM

This involves learning to attend to their body, their sensitivity and their spirit. By paying close attention to the needs of their body, their feelings and their thoughts, children become aware of their motor skills, and also of their social, emotional and intellectual skills. They derive pleasure from this discovery, and become active agents of the harmonious development of all dimensions of their personality. They grow more and more independent, learn to exercise their will and participate actively in their own actualization.



DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-ESTEEM

Discovering their body

LEARNING OBJECTIVE	CHILDREN
Children develop their ability to:	For example:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– become more familiar with their body;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– recognize the different parts of their body;– discover their physical characteristics;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– become aware of the different functions of their body;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– identify the senses: sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch;– recognize the rhythms of their heart and breathing after a physical effort;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– use their perceptions;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– react physically to different stimuli;– explore and make choices on the basis of their senses;– remember sense experiences;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– perceive the different reactions of their body in action and at rest;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– run, climb, jump;– move different parts of their body, coordinate parts of their body to move together and individually;– imitate given postures;– maintain their balance;– learn relaxation techniques;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– perform activities involving gross and fine motor skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– move with grace and flexibility;– correctly use tools and materials placed at their disposal;– demonstrate dexterity in activities.

These learning objectives are designed to contribute to the harmonious development of the whole child.



DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-ESTEEM

Asserting themselves

LEARNING OBJECTIVE	CHILDREN
Children develop their ability to:	For example:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– identify their tastes, sensations and attitudes;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– identify their tastes and choices;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– recognize their feelings and emotions;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– display their feelings and emotions;– talk about their feelings and name them;– express appropriately what they feel;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– respect and have confidence in themselves;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– make appropriate choices;– explain their choices;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– express themselves and create;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– sing, play an instrument, play a part in a skit, dance, draw, paint or sculpt an image;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– talk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– master phonemes increasingly well;– pronounce words correctly;– use the correct word for what they want to say;– enrich their vocabulary;– use the pronoun “I”;– describe a simple situation or an image;– refer to real or imaginary situations;– express a desire or a need.

These learning objectives are designed to contribute to the harmonious development of the whole child.



8

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

This involves discovering different social and cultural realities, making friends, developing a feeling of belonging in a group. Through listening to others and sharing new social experiences with peers and adults, children come to feel accepted.

With a new awareness of their uniqueness and of the importance of what they do, they continue their progress toward maturity and emotional balance that will enable them to live happily in society.





DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

Developing an awareness of social and cultural diversity

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

CHILDREN

Children develop their ability to:

- recognize and respect the similarities and differences between their own situation and that of others;
- take an interest in the social and cultural characteristics of their milieu.

For example, they:

- observe that other people have different feelings and needs than they do;
- identify different physical characteristics and lifestyles;
- compare their achievements with those of others;
- share their experiences with others;
- talk about what they know about the milieu in which they live.

These learning objectives are designed to contribute to the harmonious development of the whole child.



DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

Establishing harmonious relationships with others

LEARNING OBJECTIVE	CHILDREN
Children develop their ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– make contact with another person; – communicate; – find a middle ground between their own needs and those of another person.	For example, they: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– approach other people, greet them, look at them;– accept the presence of others near them;– make friends; – listen to the person speaking;– ask questions;– discuss and propose ideas;– maintain a dialogue; – take the other person into account;– compromise or make concessions;– express their opinion;– explain their point of view;– put themselves in the other person’s shoes.

These learning objectives are designed to contribute to the harmonious development of the whole child.



DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

Participating in group life

LEARNING OBJECTIVE	CHILDREN
Children develop their ability to:	For example, they:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– respect the operating rules of the group;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– understand the meaning of the rules governing the life of the group;– recognize group rules and respect them;– participate in the development of rules for the group;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– become involved in the life of the group;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– distinguish their own role from that of others and abide by it;– take part and let others take part in turn;– participate in activities willingly;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– cooperate with the other children;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– accept and share responsibilities;– seek help and accept it;– offer help to others;– let others join in their games;– organize games involving two or more children;– congratulate and encourage playmates;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– participate in games with rules.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– adopt and persevere in the different roles in a game: opponent, partner, accomplice.

These learning objectives are designed to contribute to the harmonious development of the whole child.



C

LEARNING TO INTERACT WITH THEIR SURROUNDINGS

This involves discovering the world around them and developing their ability to think. By exploring different spheres of activity, children use, transform and organize the information given them. This constant interaction with their surroundings stimulates their learning and also enables them to discover and gradually master learning mechanisms and strategies. In addition, it awakens them to the diverse nature of reality and develops their self-confidence, so that they can realize their potential and express their creativity.



LEARNING TO INTERACT WITH THEIR SURROUNDINGS

Assimilating significant information

LEARNING OBJECTIVE	CHILDREN
Children develop their ability to:	For example, they:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– explore the sounds of language;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– play with sounds, modulate their voices (pitch, rhythm);– make rhymes;– recite nursery rhymes and poems;– associate letters with sounds;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– improve their verbal communication skills in relation to understanding;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– listen to what a person is saying;– perceive the links within a story;– stick to the topic of a conversation, discussion or debate;– carry out a task following one or more instructions;– recall the context, characters and situations in a story;– predict on the basis of clues;– invent the conclusion of a story;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– improve their verbal communication skills relating to expression;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– tell a story;– describe an event or their efforts to find something out;– convey information;– transmit a message (name, describe, enumerate);– ask questions;– express their ideas or opinions;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– become aware of writing;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– display an interest in writing;– recognize some letters or words;– experience contact with writing as pleasurable;– associate words with images;– understand symbols, signs or logos;– try to figure out the subject of a book;– seek information from a book, poster, table or computer;– choose a book according to their taste or interests;

These learning objectives are designed to contribute to the harmonious development of the whole child.

LEARNING TO INTERACT WITH THEIR SURROUNDINGS

Assimilating significant information (cont.)

LEARNING OBJECTIVE	CHILDREN
Children develop their ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– become aware of writing; – become familiar with the arts, natural science, mathematics.	For example, they: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– correctly follow the orientation of a piece of writing;– read or write words in their own way and when they feel like it, for their own pleasure;– write a spontaneous message;– participate in the creation of a collectively written story;– write their first name;– recognize written information from their daily life in different forms: instructions, rules, locker identification, calendar; – discover sounds, instruments and objects that make noise;– draw lines and shapes;– mix and match colours;– experiment with methods and techniques;– feel the rhythm, movement and energy of their body as they move;– observe the characteristics and movements of nature: plants, water, sand, insects and animals;– use instruments such as a magnifying glass, a magnet, a microscope;– experiment with natural phenomena: buoyancy, absorption, freezing, evaporation, etc.;– classify objects in terms of one or several properties;– order objects according to quantity;– indicate shapes;– compare the dimensions of various objects;– explore the concepts of interior and exterior space (make labyrinths, trajectories);– apply spatial concepts: above, below, in front of, behind, far, near, etc.

These learning objectives are designed to contribute to the harmonious development of the whole child.

LEARNING TO INTERACT WITH THEIR SURROUNDINGS

Acting on their surroundings, reflecting on their actions and creating

LEARNING OBJECTIVE	CHILDREN
Children develop their ability to:	For example, they:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– explore their surroundings:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• observe facts, objects, changes in matter and in people;• wonder about events or situations;• handle objects, instruments, tools;• formulate hypotheses;– experiment;– make choices;– communicate their experience;– transfer their knowledge;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– use their senses and perceptions or rely on their knowledge;– seek explanations for phenomena;– seek information;– take initiative;– make an effort;– persevere;– perform a task carefully from beginning to end;– change their mind and make a different choice, if necessary;– express what they have learned in words;– establish relationships between phenomena;– apply their new knowledge and skills in various contexts;

These learning objectives are designed to contribute to the harmonious development of the whole child.



LEARNING TO INTERACT WITH THEIR SURROUNDINGS

Acting on their surroundings, reflecting on their actions and creating *(cont.)*

LEARNING OBJECTIVE	CHILDREN
Children develop their ability to:	For example, they:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– organize their time and physical surroundings;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– do things with their free time;– foresee what materials and tools they will need for a project;– adjust their activities to the amount of time they have;– vary their activities;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– use their creativity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– use the resources at their disposal in an original way;– use their imagination;– invent short sequences of sounds, gestures and movements;– represent their ideas or emotions in an individual or collective work.

These learning objectives are designed to contribute to the harmonious development of the whole child.

CHAPTER 6

THE SPHERES OF ACTIVITY

Participating in a variety of activities helps children acquire a clear perception of their surroundings. It reinforces their perceptual skills, creativity, initiative, intellectual abilities, curiosity and focuses of interest. In the longer term, these activities help children acquire effective work methods and a sense of critical judgment.

In preschool education, activities prompted by various events, by the children's contributions and those developed by teachers are divided into spheres of activity: motor skills, oral and written communication, the arts, natural science and mathematics.

These spheres of activity do not constitute an end in themselves, but rather ways of teaching that stimulate children's curiosity and capacity for wonder. The children are not expected to systematically explore or assimilate the main concepts associated with these spheres of activity, although many of the concepts are already well within their reach.

However, the children will also have many occasions to discover new concepts, in conditions that are real, playful and meaningful for them.

In addition, the proposed activities will enable the children to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help them learn effectively. It must be borne in mind that the transdisciplinary nature of these activities guides and sustains the educational approach favoured in preschool education.

A Motor Skills

Four- and five-year-olds have a strong need to develop their motor skills, which is why these skills are emphasized in preschool education. As they acquire the ability to coordinate their senses, perceptions and movements, children learn to interact with their surroundings.

To help develop motor skills, teachers use games and activities involving appropriate challenges within the children's capabilities. Motor skill activities are not necessarily structured: every time the children move about freely in the classroom, put away or distribute objects (blocks, games, furniture), they are engaging in such activities. It is important that children be able to perform these movements with ease and agility.

There are two types of motor skills: fine and gross motor skills.

Gross Motor Skills

Activities involving gross motor skills use different parts of the body. They are chosen because they stimulate the curiosity and amazement of four- and five-year-olds.

Gross motor skill activities also favour the achievement of a certain ease of movement. Children gain an awareness of their movements, do exercises promoting flexibility, jump, climb, crawl and run, and relax all parts of their body.

Fine Motor Skills

Fine motor skills involve the development of dexterity in different activities. In these activities, the children do exercises such as catching objects with their hands, pushing, throwing or rolling an object carefully, or using various materials in an original way to draw, bend, hammer, assemble, cut out or model. By the end of kindergarten, the children perform manual activities more skilfully, their movements are more precise and they can easily manipulate small objects.

B Oral and Written Communication

In preschool education, there is more emphasis on oral communication than written communication. The latter nonetheless has considerable importance, for it is in kindergarten that children acquire their taste for written communication.

Before discussing the dimensions of language, let us consider the conditions children must meet in order to sustain interest in the verbal exchange:

- eye contact
- respect for each person's turn to speak
- keeping to the subject
- the ability to initiate communication
- interest in the interlocutor

Through increasing use of oral communication, the children affirm their personalities, enlarge their circle of relations and become more knowledgeable; they learn to express their ideas and feelings, to convey information to those around them and seek information from them, and more generally to add to their store of knowledge.

The Dimensions of Language

In the act of communication, language involves three dimensions:

- the pragmatic dimension
- the formal dimension
- the semantic dimension

The Pragmatic Dimension

The pragmatic dimension of language concerns the characteristics of its use. The child speaks at a given moment, to a specific person, in a certain context, with a particular aim or intention.

- WHY is something said?
- TO WHOM is it said?
- WHEN is it said?
- WHERE is it said?

It is important to take into account the speaker's aim, because the message will vary according to the desired reaction. In *Lire et écrire au préscolaire*, Nicole Girard presents the seven functions of language according to Halliday:

Function:	Aim:
- Instrumental "I want"	• to satisfy the speaker's needs
- Regulatory "Do this"	• to control behaviours
- Interactional "I love you"	• to relate to others
- Personal "This is me"	• to define oneself, express feelings
- Heuristic "What's this?"	• to discover, explore, learn
- Imaginative "Let's pretend"	• to create a fictional universe
- Representational "How is it?"	• to inform

The Formal Dimension

The formal dimension in language concerns:

- HOW to say something

It refers to the following systems:

- phonology: the phonemes, or basic sounds of a language (e.g. f - v- ch)
- vocabulary: the words
- morphology: the way words are formed and variations in word form
- syntax: the rules of grammar

This dimension concerns the “beauty” of the language and of its “envelope.” It “defines” the message and the manner in which it is transmitted.

The Semantic Dimension

The semantic dimension concerns the CONTENT of the message:

- WHAT I mean

It is the meaning, which must be clearly expressed in order to be understood.

Oral Communication in Preschool Education

Teachers play a key role in the development of oral communication. They must encourage children to communicate, emphasizing the content of the message at first, and spending more time on form later on.

Teachers must verify first of all that children engaged in oral communication use words rather than mimicry and gestures; the content of the message and the “reason” for communicating are more important than the form.

If it is necessary to alter the phonology, vocabulary, morphology or syntax, the teacher should reformulate or expand. Interruptions must be avoided; the person receiving the message must wait until the speaker has finished before taking his or her turn to continue the dialogue.

Oral Communication among Non-anglophone Children

Non-anglophone children are those whose mother tongue is other than English, and who continue to use their first language in the home. At school, they must therefore learn a new language, as well as its specific code of communication.

When non-anglophone children start school, they have a number of extra things to learn, as compared with Anglophones. They must acquire the rudiments of the English language (vocabulary, syntax, intonation, rules of communication, etc.), and also become familiar with the values and socio-cultural situation in Québec.

In kindergarten, such students should be strongly encouraged to practise verbal expression by expressing choices, feelings or personal opinions or asking questions. For some, this will be a new experience.

According to the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, “one of the characteristics of teaching is the need to handle a double set of cultural references among the students, which greatly complicates the task of socialization teachers are expected to perform.”¹

Teachers working with non-anglophone students provide a model for them, use simple, concrete language and create a climate of trust that favours communication. “In general, teachers must base their teaching strategy on communication situations and simulations, because, in order to learn to communicate competently, children must:

- experiment actively with communication situations;
- hear many modes of expression, in different situations, in order to assimilate the rules that structure a given language;

¹ Québec, Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, *Pour un accueil et une intégration réussis des élèves des communautés culturelles* (Québec: ministère de l'Éducation, 1993), p. 46. (Free translation)

- store words or sets of words pertaining to a particular context that is meaningful to them;
- experience different communication situations: social, cognitive, playful.

“Teachers therefore play a key role; the more they stimulate the children and encourage their desire to communicate in concrete classroom activities, the more likely the children are to succeed.”²

“Certain dimensions of the teacher’s role acquire greater importance. For example, the teacher must enable the children to develop a functional vocabulary for everyday activities, the classroom routine and their own needs. In addition, they must take advantage of the children’s new experiences—their first snowfall, for example—to enrich their stock of knowledge. Teachers must encourage and stimulate students to listen, and test their comprehension regularly, by reformulating if necessary. Visual aids and gestures are also extremely helpful to those learning a new language. Finally, teachers must make sure that the students communicate successfully in a variety of situations, in order to consolidate their sense of competence and their self-confidence.”³

Written Communication in Preschool Education

In kindergarten, children become aware of the usefulness of written communication and develop a taste for writing. Written communication should never be systematically taught at the preschool level: the written environment exists in the classroom for those children who feel a need to consult written material, to use writing as a memory aid, or to use it spontaneously and freely to transmit a message, give instructions or formulate a greeting.

Children who “draw” messages gradually add lines symbolizing writing, letters or numbers; in this way, they begin to communicate in writing. If they are surrounded by books and a variety of attractive printed materials, they will be attuned to the written word, and will be inclined to explore this fasci-

² Hélène Quinty, *Guide d’activités pour les maternelles d’accueil et de francisation* (Montréal: Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal, Service des études, 1992), p. 12. (Free translation)

³ Guylène Colpron, *L’acquisition du français langue seconde et les difficultés qui y sont associées* (Montréal: Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal, 1995), p. 39. (Free translation)

nating medium, at their convenience, and in their own way.

Teachers can stimulate children’s curiosity about written communication. Role-playing games (writing a grocery list, writing out a client’s restaurant order, filling out a participation form for a lottery), and real-life situations (sending cards, exchanging their address or phone number) offer many occasions for children to discover how useful and fun writing is.

As in the case of oral communication, what matters is for the children to use written communication according to their own rhythm, interests and development. That their reading of a text does not correspond exactly to the words on the page does not mean they are not reading: the important thing is that they realize that the meaning of a story, documentary text, or poster is transmitted by writing. The fact that the children’s written message may or may not contain lines, letters or figures is immaterial; what counts is that they are using writing as a means of communication, to inform, to remember, to create—and that is what teachers must encourage.

Teachers should try to take advantage of real, concrete situations, in which the use of written communication occurs spontaneously, without obligation, stress, or laborious explanations.

C The Arts

Four- and five-year-olds need to engage in authentic creative activity and to express their creative powers in order to develop fully.

Any of the artistic disciplines—dance, drama, music or plastic arts—can provide a vehicle for the expression of the child’s uniqueness. Children represent reality in terms of their emotions and intuitions.

Giving spontaneous expression to their interior images enables children to become aware of who they are, of their evolution and of their ability to communicate with others. It also enriches their experience and gives them new perspectives that will shape their future efforts.

In kindergarten, the arts represent a particularly appropriate way for children to learn to understand other people and experience the pleasure of discov-

ering new ways of expressing, creating and communicating and new social and cultural values.

Teaching Artistic Activities in Kindergarten

The teacher's role is to encourage the development of the children's creative potential and interest them in artistic activities. The approach is holistic, but should also enable the children to assimilate certain aspects appropriate to each mode of expression and to integrate them into their daily lives.

This approach involves certain basic principles:

- The importance of play

Children's principal motivation for participating in artistic activities resides in the pleasure they derive from expressive games based on their own experience.

- Respect for children's creative potential

The activity must mobilize the children's imagination. Images, stories, games of make-believe and of expression all serve this purpose. Teachers must encourage creation rather than the imitation of a model or the search for an artistic result. They must also respect the children's individual abilities and rate of learning. They must accept the children's artistic output as it is, without passing judgment or comparing. The educational approach used should strengthen the children's desire to express themselves creatively and to be proud of their work. It should help them develop self-esteem. They should be able to look at what they have produced.

- The importance of an intuitive and global approach

This approach involves sensitivity, affectivity, the whole person. In pedagogical terms, this involves eliciting the children's PERCEPTION of things, beings and the world. The teacher also asks the children to give concrete expression to their perceptions and explorations; here the accent is on DOING. Finally, the teacher consolidates the actions and the perceptions by asking the children for their REACTIONS.

Activities begin with **PERCEPTION**. The teacher creates a situation or a simulation that focuses the children's attention on certain factors in order to spur their creativity.

In the **DOING** step, children give form to their interior images, using tools, techniques and materials, and learning the components of the various artistic activities. They engage in free but guided exploration, and direct contact with the materials. The **REACTION** phase permits the children to objectify their experiences and artistic output. They "observe" and evaluate what they have done, and describe their idea in relation to their experience. They learn to pass critical judgment. This step also allows the children to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the proposed activity or with the way they experience it.

In preschool education, the artistic activities are defined as: dramatic arts, creative dance, plastic arts and music.

Dramatic Arts

Using imagery, music, fables, stories and texts, the children do improvisations expressing their emotions and intuitions. They create both individually and collectively, in a playful context. They discover the basic elements of dramatic art: the body, voice, space and objects. They participate verbally and non-verbally, using characters and dramatized stories as a vehicle.

Creative Dance

By exploring the components of movement—time, space, energy and interrelation—the children discover the potential and the limits of their own bodies. After exploring these components, they interpret and create short sequences of movements.

Plastic Arts

In the plastic arts workshops, the children discover their creative potential by developing their own "hand technique" based on the exploration of the materials, gestures and techniques used in this sphere of activity, in order to produce a genuinely personal image.

The children learn to make their movements more precise, and to identify and classify them. They also learn to look at their own artistic work and that of their classmates, and to establish relationships between images they have produced and those produced by contemporary artists and those who worked in the past.

The practice of techniques in the plastic arts does not occur in a vacuum. It is closely associated with motor, psychic and intellectual development. The quality of the children's output depends on a number of factors, including how frequently they practise, their motor skills and their cultural background.

In kindergarten, the following plastic arts are offered: drawing, painting, modelling, assembling, printing and print-making.

Music

Musical activities offer children the possibility of establishing contact with the world of sounds.

The children begin by perceiving, identifying and exploring the various aspects of sound by diverse concrete experiences derived from their own experience and memory; they experiment with intensity of timbre and with pitch and the duration of sounds.

In the second step, the children are asked to organize sounds in their own way. They are both creators and performers.

The third step calls for the children to react to their own sound productions and those of their classmates. They become aware of what is easy to do, and what is difficult, they make choices, suggest ideas and become conscious of cultural realities, all in the context of a response to their own expressive needs.

Natural Science

Natural science offers children a chance to develop skills and to learn more about the environment.

Classroom experiments, especially in natural science, favour the exploration of the following components:

- biological components:
human beings, animals, vegetation
- physical components:
air, water, light
- technological components:
tools, simple machines

Exploring these components helps children develop a scientific outlook.

The sphere of activity of which natural science is a part in preschool education favours the integration of learning and of knowledge bearing on oral communication, mathematics, sense experience, artistic experience and symbolization.

This allows for considerable attention to natural science in the activities planned for children in preschool education. Natural science opens up a new perspective on the world, and appeals to children's curiosity and thirst for knowledge, particularly as regards natural elements such as plants, animals, water and soil. Children are also intrigued by the operation of objects or devices in their surroundings, such as alarm clocks, televisions and computers.

Exploring, observing and manipulating, which are all intrinsic elements of scientific and technological activities, enable children both to assimilate new information and to gradually acquire more rigorous observation and data collection methods. These activities are likely to elicit a strong response in children, because they help them answer questions of real interest to them.

One thing children learn by studying natural science is that there are several explanations for a given problem. In addition, they develop patience, assess their ideas, and take into account various factors before reaching a conclusion.

Natural science activities help children build new concepts and grasp the importance of interaction between people and objects. They perceive the world differently, and once they learn to communicate the result of their observations, they become in their turn resource persons for the other children.

E Mathematics

Four- and five-year-olds begin kindergarten with certain information and attitudes concerning mathematics. What they already know about space, measurement, geometry, numbers and logical thought is the result of a natural process of construction of the representations necessary in order to learn mathematics.

Children need support in their construction of mathematical concepts, and in undergoing this learning process. Teachers should favour a natural and spontaneous approach to these concepts. For example, they should invite the children to explore mathematical concepts in a variety of situations, including games, observation, assembly and construction.

The children's exploration may lead them to compare, select, classify, rank, form series and other groupings, identify, transform, work by trial and error, reason, and establish analogies. The exploration may concern people, objects, shapes, colours, sounds, words or other signs.

The exploratory approach, which we recommend over an informative approach based on teaching by concept, enables children to develop their capacity for logical thinking, because it calls for the use of understanding, judgment, reasoning, imagination and creativity. It can also exercise the children's memory.

In addition, it is important to place children in situations allowing them to observe, establish relationships between phenomena and become skilful at finding solutions to problems, for anything they learn in the domain of mathematics will be relevant only to the extent that it permits them to solve problems.

Thus, using real problems, teachers must support the children's exploration and enable them to:

- recognize the problem;
- represent the problem;
- find solutions;
- communicate their solution;
- assess what they learned;
- generalize.

These experiences will familiarize children with the codes and conventions of mathematics, such as figures, measurement and enumeration, as well as with concepts related to quantity, numbers and geometry.

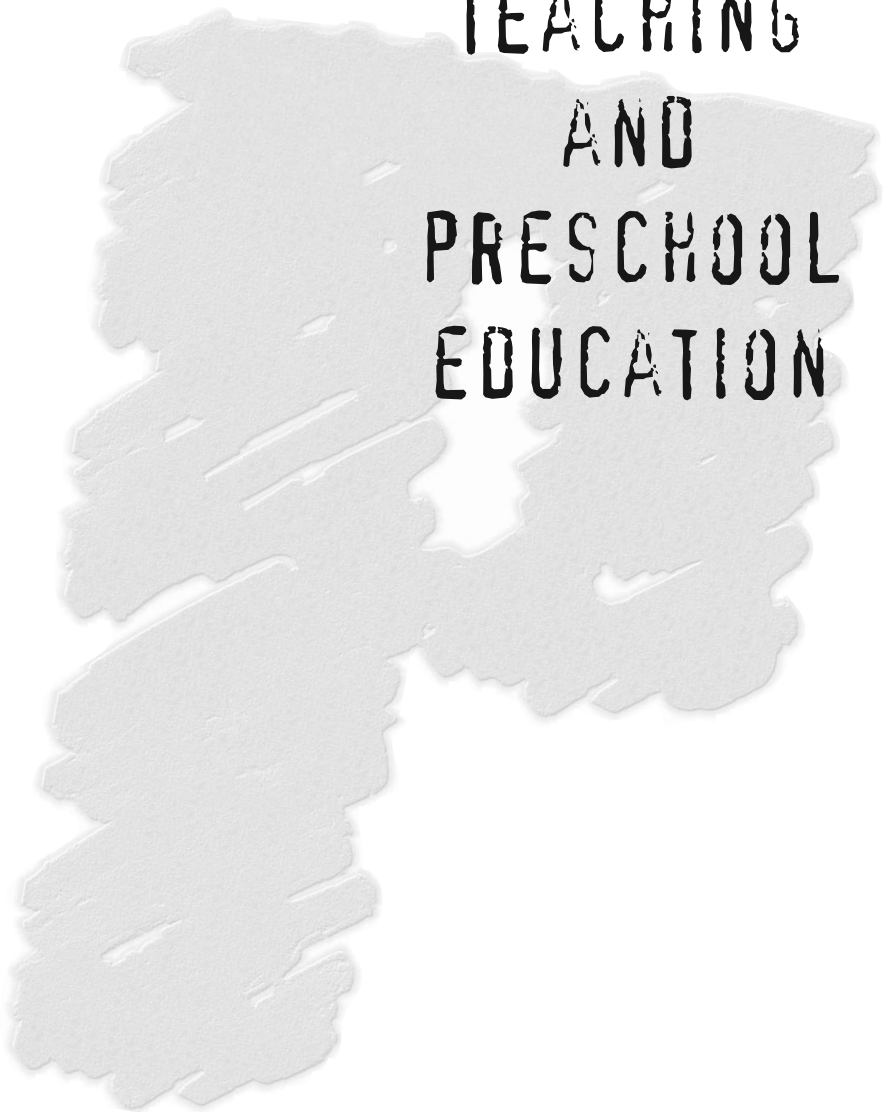
In addition, activities such as following or establishing itineraries can help the children organize their concepts of near and distant space, and determine points of reference.

These experiences provide an intellectual preparation that will subsequently enable the children to confront mathematics with confidence, and to be aware of the applications and the importance of the field.



**PART
THREE**

**TEACHING
AND
PRESCHOOL
EDUCATION**



PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

A Motivation in the Context of Preschool Education

Teaching approaches that focus on the learning process of the child indicate that affectivity and motivation are the essential factors to be considered in attempting to understand how children use their intellectual or cognitive resources.

Intrinsic motivation prompts people to engage in an activity for its own sake and for the pleasure they take in it. In education, such intrinsic motivation is manifested in the pleasure of learning, curiosity, perseverance and an orientation toward the goal of mastering learning (and not only performing), as well as an inclination to take up challenges, confront difficulties and handle new tasks.

Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, rather than engage people in an activity for its own sake, prompts them to gain some reward or avoid an unpleasant situation.

These individual characteristics are composed of and develop from learning experiences and interactions with the most influential social actors in the environment. In this respect, parents and teachers act as intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation for the child.

From a social and cognitive point of view, motivation in the educational context is a dynamic state originating in children's perceptions of themselves and their surroundings. These perceptions will lead them to choose an activity, engage in it, participate actively in it and persevere in attaining its goal. Defined in this way, motivation consists not only

of the learning focus but also of the conditions in which it is pursued and of the children's perceptions of the educational activity in question.

These perceptions of self and the environment may develop from a number of factors, some of which include the causes people identify to explain their successes or failures: the function of time, energy, perseverance, concerted effort, intelligence, skills, required knowledge, luck, difficulty of a task, ability to take risks, to revise and to start over, and so on. It is important to note that it is not whether a cause is internal or external that is important, but whether the causes cited are perceived as being under the child's control. The important thing when children examine the causes of a success or failure in an activity is that they identify a certain number of causes and estimate the respective value of each one to explain the success or failure. Depending on whether the causes are perceived as manageable or not, different emotions will be felt, positively or negatively affecting motivation in the school context.



Since children in kindergarten are at the beginning of their educational experience, it is vital that the teaching approach take into account this dimension of the learning process.

B The Teaching Approach

At the kindergarten level the teaching approach revolves around the child, the group of children and the classroom.

It consists of stimulating, supporting and confronting children so as to enrich their experience and develop their talents and aptitudes.

By means of gestures, attitudes and actions, the teacher establishes a climate of receptiveness and mutual respect necessary to foster a genuine educational relationship.

When teachers express enthusiasm toward the child or the group, behave in a welcoming manner and show flexibility in their actions, strong bonds may be formed between them and the children. This complicity directs the dynamic of the classroom and allows for fruitful interactions among all concerned.

The teaching approach includes direct and indirect intervention. The first type refers to all actions on the part of the teacher in relation to an individual child or the group of children, while the second refers to factors related to the functional organization of the classroom: organization of time and space according to various types of activities, choice of furniture, materials and tools.

Direct Intervention

Stimulating: an approach whose purpose is to encourage the child to explore new paths, develop an idea, or try something new. It may mean:

- participating in an activity with a child or group of children;
- offering attractive and varied materials;
- offering a choice of activities;
- teaching a new technique;
- designing and arranging a new workshop;
- suggesting field trips;
- leading a discussion by asking open questions to make the children think;

- using humour, laughing together;
- using the children's strengths: showing interest in what a child knows, knows how to do and invents;
- offering assistance;
- helping the child formulate questions;
- getting children to participate in the organization of time and space; setting up classroom rules with them;
- encouraging self-evaluation;
- allowing repetition of an activity so that the child can master it;
- alternating between structured and non-structured activities (or materials).

Supporting: an approach whose purpose is to encourage and support the child or the group in its thinking, feelings and actions. It may mean:

- encouraging spontaneity;
- sitting down with children individually, listening to them, giving them the time they need and acknowledging what they are experiencing;
- encouraging and accepting children's verbal and non-verbal communication;
- recognizing the children's involvement in what they are doing, regardless of the result;
- watching the children's progress and helping them see it;
- encouraging children in their efforts;
- maintaining a certain regular schedule, especially at the beginning of the year;
- reviewing the classroom rules and displaying them, making sure that the children understand what they mean;
- supplying appropriate materials and making them available to the children so that they can use them independently and put them away without help;
- sharing a pleasant situation with the children;
- allowing children to make choices and experience an activity in their own way.

Confronting: an approach whose purpose is to modify a situation, an attitude, a behaviour or an action. It may mean:

- enforcing respect for the rules or adopting an attitude that places the child face to face with an unpleasant reality that nevertheless must be confronted;
- asking children in a conflict situation to explain themselves;
- expressing disagreement;
- making children understand that they are responsible for their actions;
- being able to refuse to do something that is the child's responsibility.

Indirect Intervention

Stimulation, support and confrontation can also be achieved through arrangement of space, physical organization, criteria for selecting activities, types of activities and organization of time. These are all ways of enriching children's experience through indirect intervention.

Organization of Space

Children do not need to be in ideal physical surroundings to develop. The quality of attention they receive, the support offered them, the variety of activities available to them and the richness of human contact in their environment are all valid means of stimulation.

Nevertheless, if 20 children are brought together in one place with the aim of stimulating their development, that place, its arrangement and necessary materials must be selected and organized to further attain the program objectives. Physical organization is one of the most influential forms of indirect intervention.

The organization of space in the kindergarten and the arrangement of materials are important because they will influence everything the children do there. In preschool theory, space has a special resonance as children are at the height of their development in the learning of spatial-temporal relationships. They proceed by trial and error. If the space is not designed with this function in mind there is a greater possibility of shoving matches, pile-ups and other problems. Nothing should be left to chance.

The space must be organized both inside and outside the building, including the yard or playground.

For preschool-age children, space must be provided for playing, moving around, storing personal effects and working on projects. Spatial organization thus affects their relationships with others and with the environment.

In the kindergarten the space is divided into distinct working areas. These are called "corners" or "workshops." The arrangement of the classroom in areas allows children to structure both their space and their time. They know the names of the areas, what is in them, what can be done there and when they are allowed to go there. Children can therefore better plan their time, prepare and organize their materials, and choose with whom they will do an activity. This arrangement fosters the development of autonomy promoted in the program.

While the corners that have been organized stay relatively stable, the workshops are set up to accommodate more occasional needs. The number, form and duration of the workshops are not fixed, but adjusted as needed. In these workshops the children engage in the same type of activity for personal projects. They may work individually or in groups.

However, a workshop can become a collective work site for the purpose of a group project. The place and organization of the workshop are determined by the nature of the project. This is called a "co-operative" work shop because in these the children acquire a more highly developed notion of interpersonal relations.

The layout of the kindergarten is primarily designed in accordance with the needs and interests of the children. This is why the teacher will modify it during the course of the school year. Everyone must become used to the mobility of the furniture and deal with a number of givens.

Furthermore, the accessibility of the children's materials should foster their autonomy and preclude unnecessary movement.

Physical Organization

Physical organization, or the placement, selection and variety of materials, influences the educational process.

These materials must be varied, stimulating, versatile, attractive, safe, durable, and appropriate for different levels of skill.

All types of materials must encourage activities of discovery, invention and exploration. Their use is not necessarily determined in advance.

The child's activities are not only encouraged by games but also by friends, ideas or "open" materials. These materials allow the children to create bonds, to explore the various uses of a thing and to deepen knowledge, which a "closed" game might not allow them to do.

The teacher who so wishes may, with the cooperation of parents, collect a quantity of materials not usually purchased in specialized stores. These materials can help the children acquire the habit of making do with objects commonly found at home and give more scope to their creativity.

These materials can be used as a springboard to an activity. The teacher cannot ignore children's irresistible attraction to objects. When they are arranged so as to highlight their attractiveness, they can serve to draw attention and revive interest. By the same token, materials that stay in one place too long are no longer noticed. These materials are a key element in the teaching approach, and the proper dosage of materials to start off an activity is very important. At times the visual space needs to be thinned out to avoid the trap of overstimulation. A new, open decor also helps to spotlight the children's various focuses of interest and encourage them to add their personal touches.

Materials can also be used as focuses of security. In this capacity, materials and pieces of equipment become familiar landmarks that the child can easily locate. Their individual spots in the cloakroom, the presence of the same adult, the same games, the same activities and the same friends can also reinforce children's sense of personal security.

Finally, materials can be used as an aid in developing respect for public property. The children are responsible for the materials in their classroom. The beginnings of an awareness of respect for objects

can lead them to participate in the maintenance and repair of those that are deteriorated or broken.

Criteria for Selecting Activities

Since the preschool education program is focused on the overall development of the child, kindergarten activities do not consist of systematic exercises. In fact, although children acquire knowledge in kindergarten, it is important to respect each child's own rate of development.

A child is active from birth and is bombarded with stimuli on a daily basis. The school presents the child with new stimuli, in an enlarged physical environment and in the midst of a sizable group of other children. Quality education requires that special attention be paid to preparation of activities and that the selection of these be based on certain criteria.

Activities must be appropriate to different dimensions of the children's development and take into account how this development occurs. They must also be balanced with regard to these dimensions. In this respect, criteria for selecting activities should be established. This means choosing activities:

- that meet the demands of the pleasure principle in children;
- that proceed from the children's focuses of interest; that are likely to interest them when there is room for novelty; that can pique children's curiosity;
- that lead the children to make choices and to realize and evaluate the consequences of those choices;
- that lead to the gradual but real empowerment of children, in the areas of planning, organization, execution and evaluation;
- that are based on real, concrete experience (e.g. physical handling of materials, solving real problems);
- that allow all the children to succeed, recognizing that each child has a different capacity for success;
- that lead children to solve current problems or improve situations in their personal lives;

- that allow children to actually participate in the management of the classroom by involving them in the development, application, evaluation and modification of instructions or classroom rules.

Types of Activities

Free play

Free play periods are those in which the children are free to choose the activities they wish to do, alone or in groups. Teachers will use this time to observe carefully, relate to each child individually and diversify their contributions as much as possible.

Free play time is a special time in kindergarten: the teacher does not lead any specific activity, but he or she is constantly present and alert.

Directed activities

These are activities planned by the teacher, often carried out by all the children at the same time. They can be opportunities to introduce certain concepts.

Such activities are necessary for the group to function well day to day. They may include regular and transitional activities, as well as planning, organizing and evaluation activities. They are directed, but not always carried out as a group.

It would be useful to imagine a new concept of kindergarten activities that would make greater use of the physical and human environments—activities that take advantage of the children’s experience, increase the opportunities for exploring and handling objects and stimulate the emergence of ideas.

Workshop activities

Organized activities requiring the use of materials may be carried out by the children individually or as a group. There are a variety of such activities: a “corner” can be devoted to home, painting, carpentry, books, sewing, music, handicrafts, nature sciences, mathematics or educational toys.

During the discussion period, the children and teacher can explore which activities they will do on that day. Together they can agree on some basic

outlines of the activities: where they will be done, the materials required, and so on.

Workshop activities require careful attention in order to determine a wide variety of needs, even if they are not always expressed.

A cooperative workshop or a group project also requires a lot of special attention since everyone must select a location for it, plan a procedure, organize materials and space according to the defined goal, and distribute the tasks.

The teacher answers the needs as they are expressed, without getting too far ahead of the children, or anticipating their wishes. The teacher can also participate in the project, on the same basis as the children.

This type of activity may be based on an idea, an interest, a theme, or a subject of curiosity. Such activities may share some basic traits; for example, they may:

- require flexibility in their planning and timetable;
- require an open-minded attitude toward the unexpected;
- allow the children to develop and realize an idea;
- require planning of the actions, materials, human resources and time required;
- be based on ideas suggested by the children;
- be interesting to a child, a group of children or the whole class;
- stimulate a pooling of resources: ideas, skills, knowledge;
- lead children to carry out activities outside the classroom;
- encourage children to bring materials or objects from home;
- involve children in the activity for several days, if they so desire.

Organization of Time

It is very difficult for four-year-olds, or even five-year-olds, to structure their time. Learning about time is part of a long process of maturation. Having activities proceed in regular segments helps the child to develop an understanding of time. The child becomes increasingly proficient at anticipating what is to come, estimating duration, planning and remembering.

At the beginning of the year the segments of the procedure (always referred to by the same names) must be followed in as strict an order as possible. The main segments to note are the arrival at class, discussion period, snack time, activities, free play, clean-up time, review of the day's activities and leaving for home.

These segments can be illustrated (by drawings, photographs, etc.) so that the children can visualize the progress of the day.

The teacher will warn the children several minutes before the end of the activity, so that they can try to estimate the time remaining before a new activity begins.

Transition activities are short, and often directed. They bring all the children together and serve as links between major activities. A good stock of transition activities can be very useful and enriching.

In general, when establishing a daily routine, it is important to:

- alternate calm activities with more active ones;
- plan activities to be done individually or in large or small groups;
- choose activities that have specific objectives as well as ones that have general objectives;
- make sure that the activities are adapted to the children's pace;
- choose sufficiently varied activities to allow for different development procedures.

Group experience also requires structured activities to present children with challenges they can respond to successfully.

C Technological Aids

Most areas of activity in preschool education include aspects of communication and information. Information and communication technologies are useful means of introducing these factors. These technologies offer the possibility to research, encode, reproduce, process, develop, create, produce and store information. They change the physical and social environment of the kindergarten child while offering an alternative means of play. Such new and plentiful stimuli can influence cognitive development.

Technologies can also provide a window on the world and human knowledge and activities. The children can reproduce elements of their own experience, and return to them later. In the new spaces created by technology, children can move, act upon, add or remove new objects, without restrictions and according to their own pace. Quietly and safely, these technologies can give them the means to further their exploration activities and improve their action skills and strategies and their ability to solve problems.

In using technology, children develop their coordination, organization and conceptualization of space; they must regularly solve problems to correct or adjust their actions in view of a desired result; they make contact with skills and concepts related to oral and written communication; they count, order and visualize the results of real or fictional experiences; they telecommunicate and become acquainted with authors and their works; they exchange visual and aural productions and comment on them.

Children's interest in these technologies helps them become aware of their own behaviour: following verbal or coded procedures, researching and processing information, making decisions and choices, restoring, creating, producing, communicating, sharing, cooperating, helping.



D The Transition from Preschool to Elementary School

The transition from preschool to elementary school is a decisive stage in the child's life since he or she is moving from a free, spontaneous life, to a supervised and structured one. For some children, the adaptation from one to the other is long and difficult. In some cases the learning or behaviour of the child can regress. Depending on the personality and attitude of the child, the stress of numerous changes (new grade, several teachers in different locations, new friends) may be experienced in different ways. In order to reduce children's stress, this transition should be harmonious.

Preparation for this transition is made gradually, during the course of the year. Nevertheless, children should not be subjected to a year of systematic teaching in order to acquire any specific concept necessary to enter the first grade. Rather, they should be encouraged to build the foundation of their future learning. To do this, the teacher should offer them the chance to acquire working methods and attitudes that will foster success at the academic level.

The teacher presents the children with activities that will challenge their capabilities, use previously acquired knowledge, open their worlds to other knowledge and help them to carry out their tasks to the end.

The teacher must also plan more specific activities, such as visiting other classrooms or the schoolyard, using different locations (library, computer lab, gymnasium), sharing ideas and joint activities with first-grade students.

These activities will enable the child to gain an awareness of how the elementary school functions, and feel secure. Children who arrive in the first grade aware of their capabilities and reassured by a familiar context will be integrated more quickly and easily.

OBSERVATION AND EVALUATION

A Educational Evaluation

Anyone entrusted with a teacher's tasks in the school system must engage in educational evaluation. It is important to remember that the main goal of evaluation is to improve the quality of decisions relating to learning and to the student's development. But in preschool education, how can we adequately evaluate whether developmental objectives have been attained through the various open educational activities?

Every objective carries the need to verify whether the desired results have been attained and to what degree. The teacher must therefore evaluate the child's behaviour, attitudes and progress.

Educational evaluation is defined basically as a process oriented toward decision-making. It is a way to facilitate making better choices in future situations.

B Principles Underlying the Evaluation Process in Preschool Education

- Evaluation is an integral part of learning and teaching. It is at the heart of the educational act.

It applies to all the educational activities in the classroom. It may be applied to occasional, spontaneous situations, as well as to planned, recurrent situations. It is part of an interactive process that moves back and forth between teaching and evaluation, highlighted by observations and research of supporting information.

- Evaluation is a tool or a process that must serve both teacher and learner.

It is only meaningful if it can really follow the progress of the child's development and enlighten both teacher and student on the quality of learning that has taken place for the purpose of making informed decisions. In this perspective, evaluation supports, adjusts and improves both teaching and learning.

"Since students are the focus of any educational activity, instructional approaches must favour their active participation and evaluation should be closely linked to their learning."⁴

⁴ Commissions scolaires et direction régionale de Québec–Chaudière–Appalaches, *The Educational Use of Measurement Data* (Québec: ministère de l'Éducation, 1996), p. 3.

This statement reminds us that any educational approach favouring the development of the child must be basically centred on the child and help him or her learn independently. The evaluation must ensure that children become personally involved in their own learning. The more meaningful the situations are for children, demanding their active participation, the more they will stimulate their creativity, maintain their interest and vitality, and motivate them to reinvest their knowledge, skills and attitudes in other situations.

- As far as possible, evaluation should be carried out during the child's regular activities.

The evaluation of the child in the classroom context allows for greater accuracy since children are more spontaneous in expressing themselves in familiar surroundings. The teacher may set up activities that lend themselves to collecting information. However, these activities should be limited in number and respect the child's needs.

- In evaluation, emphasis is placed on observation of the child's behaviour and its purpose is to understand the child's overall development.

Since the preschool education program is oriented toward a holistic model of the child in relation to itself, others and the environment, "observation should not seek to diagnose the state of development of motor, cognitive, physical, social or emotional elements, but rather to better understand specific, personal and original modes of development, learning, expression, action and interaction with the surrounding world."⁵

C The Role of Various Actors in Evaluation

Role of the Child

General Objective of the Evaluation Procedure in Preschool Education

- To enable children to become actively involved in their learning and development.

Particular Objectives

- To understand that they have the power to act.
- To give themselves a goal.
- To adjust their actions appropriately.
- To evaluate the result of their actions in relation to their personal experience.

Suggested Means

- Verbal exchanges with persons around them
- Reminding by means of clues or markers
- Provision of periods in which to reflect on their actions

Role of the Teacher

General Objective of the Evaluation Procedure in Preschool Education

- To enable teachers to obtain information on the learning and development of each child in order to adapt their educational and teaching approaches, while involving the child in his or her own development.

⁵ Québec, ministère de l'Éducation, *Observation of the Child in Preschool Education* (Québec: MEQ, 1982), p. 10.

Particular Objectives

- To help the children orient themselves in relation to their development and learning.
- To encourage the involvement of each child in his or her learning, based on program objectives.
- To draw up a more accurate profile of the child in terms of his or her development patterns. For example: personal style of learning, development, expression and interaction, learning strategies, attitudes and behaviours.
- To take stock of and adjust educational and teaching strategies.
- To support the participation of parents and give them the necessary tools to follow the learning and development of their child.

Suggested Means

- Observation of the child
- Discussion with the child and the parents
- Noting of observations on the report card
- Analysis of professional practice
- Compilation of a portfolio of the child's productions
- Support for the child in carrying out self-evaluation
- Referral to a professional expert where necessary

Role of Parents

General Objective of the Evaluation Procedure in Preschool Education

- To enable parents to participate in their child's development at the preschool level so that they can support and accompany the child.

Particular Objectives

- To follow the progress of their child in his or her learning and development.
- To be better equipped to assume their role as persons with primary responsibility for the learning and development of their child.
- To become familiar with approaches they can use to help the child and encourage his or her involvement in kindergarten.

Suggested Means

- Exchanges of information with the teacher pertaining to the development of the child
- Examination of the child's productions in the classroom and certain observations of the teacher, progress reports and self-evaluation sheets produced by the child
- Consideration of the child's report card and adjustment of subsequent interventions

Observation and Evaluation Instruments

In preschool education the informal approach to measurement can be facilitated by the use of certain observation instruments. In fact, "observation cannot be carried out haphazardly. It needs to be done systematically to make it more efficient. Furthermore, it requires instruments, given the limitation inherent in perception and memory."⁶

To be effective, an observation instrument must act as a guide or a reminder, or both. It can act as a guide when it enables the teacher to construct a control model for the purpose of orienting his or her observations. It can act as a reminder when it allows the teacher to effectively record observations. In either case, the sole purpose of the observation instrument is to further the accuracy of the intervention.

There are several types of instruments to facilitate the collection of data. Some of these seem especially appropriate for preschool education: the logbook, the anecdotal report, the portfolio, the questionnaire for parents, observation grids and meetings with parents.

The Logbook

This is a tool for noting, on a daily basis, particular events of the day, the children's reactions to the various activities and comments on certain children. It can help to remind the teacher of the contexts in which certain behaviours were observed.

⁶ *Observation of the Child in Preschool Education*, p. 27.

The Anecdotal Report

"The anecdotal report involves describing as objectively as possible an observed event, an anecdote that the teacher considers significant. Notation of these events will enable the teacher to study their frequency, note the particular surrounding circumstances and extract common factors."⁷

The Portfolio

The portfolio is a selection of the child's projects and productions, notes made on them or records judged significant with respect to the child's learning and development.

The Questionnaire for Parents

This is a tool that allows the teacher to supplement observations made in the classroom and to place them in a larger perspective. "However, the teacher must maintain a critical attitude to these questionnaires and be certain that the questions contained in them are pertinent and useful."⁸

Observation Grids

Observation grids are lists of observable behaviours. They can be very general or very specific and limited to a single activity or to one aspect of development.

Meetings with Parents

These are formal or informal meetings with parents during which the teacher can obtain very useful information on the child. These meetings form part of the larger context of parental participation in preschool education and should take place in a climate of trust, information sharing and cooperation directed toward a common plan of action.

E The Report Card

The report card is an "assessment whose purpose is to transmit to parents a picture of their child's development in the school context."⁹ Certain principles govern the composition of a report card in preschool education.

- The report card emphasizes the positive aspects of development. In this sense, it should offer a positive image of the child, in the child's own eyes and in those of his or her parents.
- It highlights the developmental dynamics of the child rather than giving a simple list of his or her specific knowledge or skills. It is a sort of progress report on the child's evolution.
- It is prepared from observations of the child made over an extended period and in different contexts.
- It is written in language accessible to the parents and in concrete terms to initiate action.

It is important to remember that learning occurs in a cyclical fashion. The report card functions in a formative context throughout the year, with the exception of the final report, which presents a summary situating the child at the end of his or her period of preschool education.

The report card is part of a cooperative effort with parents to focus all efforts on the necessary educational initiatives. The form used is flexible and enables the teacher to individualize the evaluation of the child, when necessary.

⁷ *Observation of the Child in Preschool Education*, p. 31.

⁸ *Observation of the Child in Preschool Education*, p. 41.

⁹ Québec, ministère de l'Éducation, *Politique générale d'évaluation pédagogique, secteur de l'éducation préscolaire, primaire et secondaire* (Québec: MEQ, 1981), p. 32.

APPENDIX

The Theory of Learning and Development in Preschool Children

The work of several researchers reflects the main currents of thought over the years. Their research gradually gave rise to new educational methods and approaches.

Nevertheless, while researchers agreed on the importance of the early childhood years, they disagreed on how to approach them.

At the beginning of the century, Maria Montessori (1870-1952), inspired by the work of Séguin and Froebel, developed a method based primarily on children's sense experiences and on the desire to give them the means for free expression by providing games especially adapted to their personality and interests. Next, Decroly (1871-1932) focused his educational principles on children's interests and life experiences. His methods, educational games, centres of interest and emphasis on global learning focused largely on observation of the child's surroundings. Toward the middle of the century, the views of John Dewey (1859-1952) characterized the prevailing trends in American educational theory.

Dewey believed that children should be active rather than passive, that they should create their own experiences and make their own efforts, rather than unquestioningly accept the information given them by an adult. Thus the teacher was seen more as a guide than as an authoritative figure. He believed that, given a problem, children should find their own answers and solutions.

All of these theorists sought to apply their theories on children according to the trends and areas of interest in research at the time.

Apart from these prominent educational theorists, mention must be made of the theorists who established the main turning points in modern psychology. Gesell (1880-1961) became famous for his

descriptions of normal human behaviour. In his view, there was a progression or succession of stages corresponding to age and level of maturity, and he centred his observations around psychomotor sequences.

Thus, an entire school of "developmentist" theory was fundamental in providing strong support to educators concerned with continuity in their approach. In this light, Erikson and Piaget set about defining all the various changes which take place during the major stages of childhood and adolescence, up to adulthood.

Erikson (1959) defined development as an evolutionary process. He suggested a theoretical model of human development divided into main stages, all of which are interrelated and overlap until the stage of maturity. He divided childhood into three developmental stages: the acquisition of confidence, the development of autonomy and the exercise of initiative. Erikson also tried to apply psychoanalytic thought to questions of education. He was greatly interested in the social behaviour manifested in children's play and in approaches to conflict resolution at different stages of life.

It is also important not to overlook the invaluable contributions of Piaget, whose work has affected several generations. Although the system he proposed is very often called into question, numerous researchers have confirmed the validity of the genetic order that he described so precisely. In fact, cross-cultural studies have verified that all children go through the same stages in thinking (Dassen, 1972). The description of the main stages in cognitive development, beginning with the first years of life, forms one of the main elements in the revolution which followed Piaget's first publication (1936).



A brief summary of the six main stages proposed by Piaget follows. Three of them precede language acquisition and are part of the reflex stage. They include the stage in which the basic motor skills are established, then that of sensori-motor intelligence or the pre-language phase. Then, after language acquisition, come the stages of intuitive intelligence, concrete operations and abstract intellectual operations. Piaget's works emphasized children's capacity to solve problems through activities involving perceptions, gestures and movements and then lead to representational thought while taking into account the child's personal milieu.

According to Piaget, learning is the result of children's active interaction with their environment. Through their actions, children come to understand the world around them and to modify it in terms of their goals, a process known as assimilation. They also learn to modify it in terms of their behaviour, a process known as adaptation.

Along a different line of thought, Carl Rogers in his works justified the importance of interpersonal relationships and the need for communication with others from childhood on. The principles of non-directiveness which he advanced have clearly influenced new trends in education, sometimes even going beyond his own theory (Rogers, 1961, 1969).

On the basis of the stages of development defined by Erikson, Kohlberg and Piaget, several neo-piagetian theorists, inspired by the work of Vygotsky, demonstrated the influence of social and cultural experience on cognitive development.

Other developmental psychologists, inspired notably by the work of Bolby, Winnicott and, more recently, Ainsworth, have studied the organization of attachment and the very first bonds created between children and their mother or father or any other significant person. They demonstrated how this early childhood bonding and the mental representations of the parent-child relationship have a determining influence on the affective, social and cognitive behaviour of the child.

A Few Important People in the History of Preschool

The first mention of preschool education is found in the 16th century in Rabelais, who seems to have been the first to speak of early childhood education, and in Comenius, at the beginning of the 17th century. Comenius developed a sort of preschool education program by describing what kindergarten education should consist of. His teaching guide for natural science was based on the pleasure of learning through the senses, as opposed to the very rigid lecture system of his era.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) marked an important turning point in Western thought by proposing that children learn by discovering and that, consequently, adults must call upon their instinctive curiosity: he insisted on the need to observe children in order to learn about them and educate them.

Johann-Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) recognized the importance of educating mothers, to whom he gave guidelines that are still astonishingly valid today: the development of language, the development of intelligence and the need for children to acquire knowledge about themselves. He is also responsible for the principle forming the basis of current preschool education, that of the development of the whole child.

The first preschool institutions appeared at the beginning of the 18th century and were designed for the young children of the poor. The "infant schools" set up by Robert Owen (1771-1858), a wealthy industrialist disgusted by the working conditions of children at the time, quickly gained popularity in his native Scotland and beyond. (France adopted the principle by instituting the "salle d'asiles.")

Froebel (1782-1852), who founded the first Kindergarten (literally "children's garden") in Germany in 1837, is considered the father of preschool. He developed an original concept of education centred on early childhood and play.

Maria Montessori (1870-1952), with Froebel, gained international fame for preschool education with her "casa dei bambini" (house of children), founded in 1907. She emphasized the importance of sensory development and the recognition of

stages in child development. Her concepts recur frequently in child psychology, especially in the work of Piaget.

Célestin Freinet (1896-1966), a French teacher, developed a teaching approach that was at once individualized and focused on the child, yet cooperative and focused on the group. Natural science activities, field trips and the organization of the kindergarten class into workshops are all largely based on Freinet's techniques.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Altet, Marguerite. *Les pédagogies de l'apprentissage*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1997.
- Archambault, Jean, and Roch Chouinard. *Vers une gestion éducative de la classe*. Montréal: Éditeur Gaëtan Morin, 1996.
- Aubin, Isabelle. *Structuration des apprentissages dans un programme d'éducation par l'art au préscolaire*. Québec: Université Laval, 1994.
- Baillargeon, M., and J. Thériault. "Contribution de l'éducation préscolaire à la réussite éducative : une perspective à renouveler." *Pour favoriser la réussite scolaire : réflexions et pratiques*, p. 91-103. Montréal, 1992.
- Balleyguier, G. *Le développement émotionnel et social du jeune enfant*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1996.
- Berk, L.E. *Vygotsky's Theory: The Importance of Make-Believe Play—Young Children*. 1994.
- Berk, L.E., and A. Winsler. *Scaffolding Children's Learning: Vygotsky and Early Childhood Education*. Washington: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1995.
- Betsalel-Presser, Raquel, and Denise Garon. *La Garderie, une expérience de vie*. Québec, 1984.
- Colpron, Guylène. *L'acquisition du français langue seconde et les difficultés qui y sont associées*. Montréal, CECM, 1995.
- Commission scolaire de la Chaudière-Etchemin. *Après avoir dit bonjour. Répertoire réussir ensemble*. 1993.
- _____. *Guide des interventions. Maternelle 5 ans temps plein*. 1994.
- Commissions scolaires et Direction régionale de Québec—Chaudière—Appalaches. *The Educational Use of Measurement Data*. 1996.
- Cyrulnik, Boris. *Naissance du sens*. Hachette-La Vilette, 1991.
- _____. *Sous le signe du bien*. Hachette, 1989.
- Devries, R., and L. Kohlberg. *Constructivist Early Education: Overview and Comparison with Other Programs*. Washington: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1990.
- D'Hainault, L. *Des fins aux objectifs de l'éducation*. Paris: Nathan, 1994.
- Dubuc, Y., G. Hamel and J. Roussy. *Programme de stimulation au préscolaire*. Laval: Commission scolaire Des Mille-Îles, 1996.
- Filion, R., and M. Doucet. *Le langage et l'affectivité à travers l'analyse des objets de jeu, facettes complémentaires au système ESAR*. Québec: Documentor, 1993.
- France. Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale. Direction des Écoles. *Programmes de l'école primaire*. Paris: Centre national de documentation pédagogique, 1995.
- Gardner, Howard. *L'intelligence et l'école*. Édition Retz, 1996.
- Garon, D. *La classification des jeux et des jouets : le système ESAR*. Québec: Documentor, 1985.
- Girard, Nicole. *Lire et écrire au préscolaire*. Laval: Édition Mondia, 1989.
- Goupil, Georgette. *Communications et relations entre l'école et la famille*. Chenelière/McGraw-Hill, 1987.
- Goupil, Georgette, and Guy Lusignan. *Apprentissage et enseignement en milieu scolaire*. Montréal: Éditeur Gaëtan Morin, 1996.
- Groupe d'intervenants pédagogiques au préscolaire et au primaire. *Processus d'apprentissage et démarche d'enseignement*. Commission scolaire Des Mille-Îles, 1992.
- Hadji, Charles. *Penser et agir l'éducation*. Paris: ESF éditeur, 1992.

Hohl, Janine. *Apprendre à la maternelle. Instrument d'observation et d'auto-évaluation pour les enseignantes de maternelle de milieux défavorisés*. Conseil scolaire de l'Île de Montréal, 1996.

Hohl, Janine, et al. *Réussir dès la maternelle. Instrument de réflexion sur les maternelles 5 ans plein temps en milieux défavorisés*. Conseil scolaire de l'Île de Montréal, 1993.

Legendre, Renald. *Dictionnaire actuel de l'éducation*. 2nd ed. Montréal: Guérin éditeur, 1993.

Levasseur-Tremblay and Monique Vermette. *Guide d'intervention école-famille au préscolaire*. Montréal: Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal.

Martin, Lyne. *La motivation à apprendre, plus qu'une question d'intérêt!* Montréal: Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal, 1994.

Nelson, Katherine. *Language in Cognitive Development: Emergence of the Mediated Mind*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Québec. Conseil supérieur de l'éducation. *L'éducation préscolaire : un temps pour apprendre*. Québec: CSE, 1987.

_____. *Pour un développement intégré des services éducatifs à la petite enfance : de la vision à l'action*. Québec: CSE, 1996.

_____. *Pour une approche éducative des besoins des jeunes enfants*. Québec: CSE, 1989.

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. *Arts in the Preschool*. Québec: MEQ, 1986.

_____. *The Curriculum for Preschool Education*. Québec: MEQ, 1981.

_____. *Dès le préscolaire... Recueil d'outils de gestion de classe*. Québec: MEQ, 1992.

_____. *Guide général d'interprétation et d'instrumentation pédagogique pour le programme d'éducation préscolaire*. Québec: MEQ, 1981.

_____. *Guide pédagogique du préscolaire. L'enfant de la maternelle au moment du passage à l'école primaire : proposition d'éléments pédagogiques*. Québec: MEQ, 1985.

_____. *Guide pédagogique du préscolaire. Le langage au préscolaire*. Québec: MEQ, 1982.

_____. *Guide pédagogique. Éveil mathématique*. Québec: MEQ, 1977.

_____. *Observation of the Child in Preschool Education*. Québec: MEQ, 1982.

_____. *Politique générale d'évaluation pédagogique, secteur de l'éducation préscolaire, primaire et secondaire*. Québec: MEQ, 1981.

_____. *A Taste for Nature. Natural Science and the Awakening of the Scientific Mind in Children of Preschool Age*. Québec: MEQ, 1992.

Québec. Office des services de garde. *Jouer c'est magique*. Québec: OSG, 1996.

Quinty, Hélène. *Guide d'activités pour les maternelles d'accueil et de francisation*. Montréal, CECM, 1992.

Royer, Nicole, ed. *Éducation et intervention au préscolaire*. Montréal: Éditeur Gaëtan Morin, 1995.

Schickedanz, Judith A., et al. *Strategies for Teaching Young Children*. 3rd ed. Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1990.

Tarabulsky-M., Georges, and Réjean Tessier. *Le développement émotionnel et social de l'enfant*. Québec: Presses de l'université du Québec, 1996.

Thériault, J., et al. *L'exploitation du matériel dans l'aire des jeux symboliques. Projet d'analyse du matériel éducatif des classes maternelles (PRAMÉ)*. Chicoutimi: Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, 1987.

_____. *Le potentiel et la pertinence du matériel éducatif des classes maternelles. Projet d'analyse du matériel éducatif des classes maternelles (PRAMÉ)*. Chicoutimi: Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, 1987.

Vermette, Monique. *Grandir ensemble au préscolaire. Ateliers d'intervention auprès des parents*. Montréal: Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal, 1996.

_____. *Découvertes au coeur des saisons*. Montréal: Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal, 1991.



Vermette, Monique, and Christine Perusset. *Zoom sur la maternelle. Profil d'intervention en maternelle 4 ans et 5 ans temps plein en milieux défavorisés*. CSIM, 1992.

_____. *Zoom sur la maternelle. Guide d'accompagnement*. CSIM, 1992.

Viau, R. *La motivation en contexte scolaire*. Québec: Éditions du renouveau pédagogique, 1994.

Weil-Barais, Annick. *L'homme cognitif*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1996.