

TO

PARENTS:

SOME ANSWERS TO
YOUR QUESTIONS

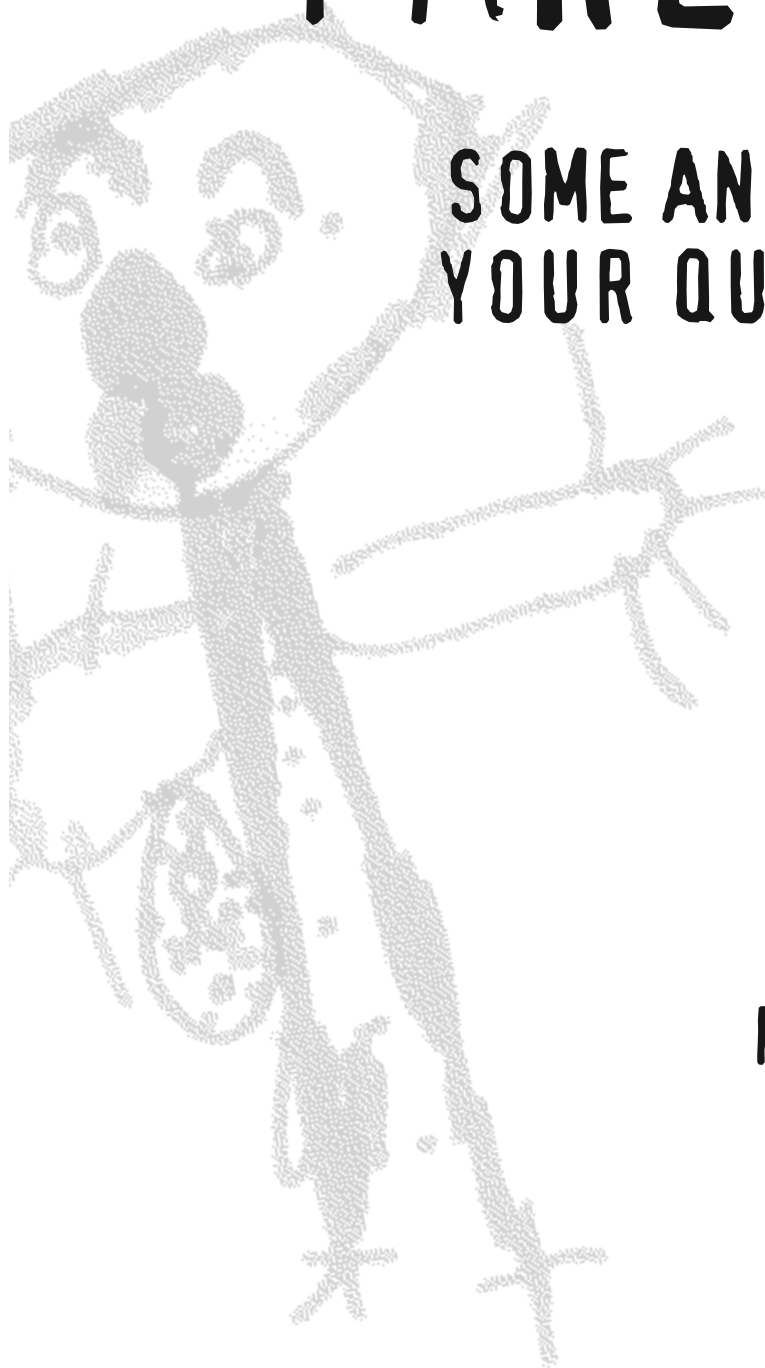
THE
PRESCHOOL
EDUCATION
PROGRAM

Québec 

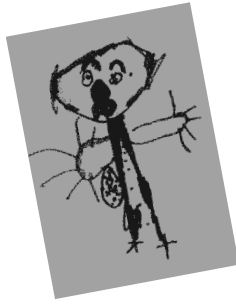
TO PARENTS:

**SOME ANSWERS TO
YOUR QUESTIONS**

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



ABOUT PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

The aim of the preschool education program is the overall and harmonious development of the child. Furthermore, its goal is to help the child discover the joy of learning and to explore various ways of doing so.

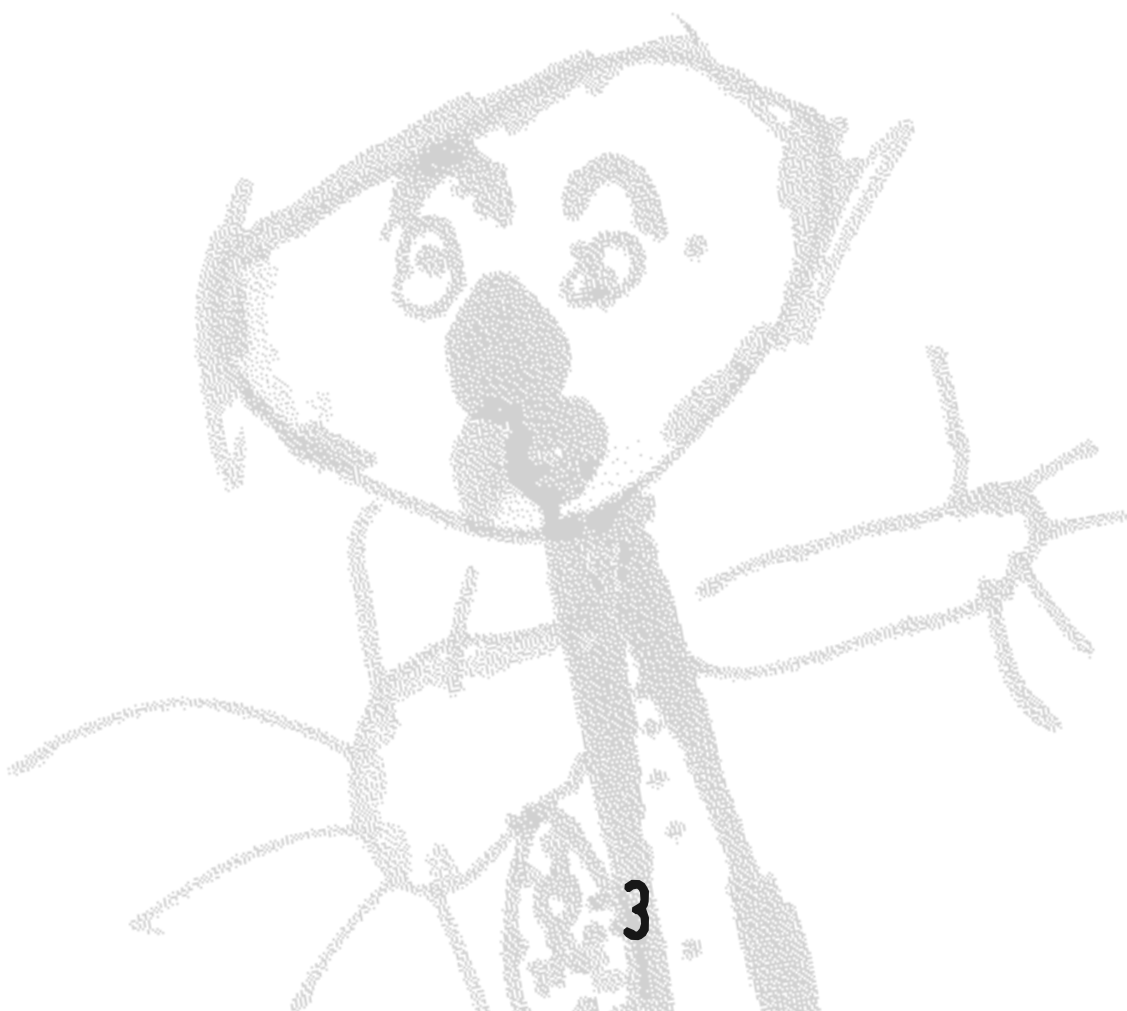
Preschool is an important step during which, once integrated into a group within the school, children can acquire and expand knowledge, have new experiences and cultivate the positive aspects of their personality.

As of September 1997, kindergarten for five-year-olds will be offered on a full-time basis. Where available, the program for four-year-olds will be offered half time. The compulsory school age in Québec is six years old.

WHY A FULL-TIME KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM?

Children who attend kindergarten on a full-time basis have more time to:

- have rich and varied experiences that will serve to enhance self-discovery, the discovery of others and of their surroundings;
- participate fully in class and school activities;
- engage in activities at a pace that is in tune with their age group.



WHAT IS THE BASIS OF THE PRESCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAM?

The preschool education program recognizes the child as a unique individual who is constantly interacting with his or her surroundings.

The program is not based on an academic model. It is designed in such a way as to enable the child to continue to discover and to explore his or her own universe.

To ensure quality education and a stimulating environment, the program is based on a set of child-centred principles.



THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES OF THE PRESCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAM:

- Children are the main architects of their own learning and development. They must be active, 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 a basic principle of education.
- All educational initiatives must respect the learning pace and style of each child.
- Preschool education takes into account the child's experiences in the home and in a daycare or nursery; it smooths the transition to the first year of elementary school and ensures continuity in education.
- 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 a means of learning.

WHY DOES PLAY OCCUPY SUCH AN IMPORTANT PART IN THE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM?

Play, an integral part of learning

Play has an immediate fascination for children. It is an important factor in their development on several levels, from preschool age and beyond.

Play contributes significantly to children's growth. As a central part of their daily activities, it enables them to express reality as they see it and feel it. Play facilitates the child's acquisition of numerous skills and stimulates creativity, imagination and communication with others.

There are four categories of play: practice play, symbolic play, games with rules and construction play.

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Practice play	Involves “practice” by repeating an activity. It enables the child to learn, among other things, that the same act has the same consequences. <i>Examples: skipping rope or throwing a ball</i>

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Symbolic play	Through “make-believe,” symbolic play enables children to express reality the way they perceive it and experience it, and then to call upon their knowledge. It facilitates language acquisition. <i>Example: playing grocery store</i>
Games with rules such as board games or team games	This requires children to conform to specific, interdependent rules and roles. Children must place themselves in other people’s shoes in order to play their own role better and learn the strategies of someone who strives to come first. Games with rules contribute to the development of autonomy and cooperation. <i>Example: matching games</i>
Construction play	This involves assembling materials of all shapes and sizes. It helps children acquire several skills related to, among other things, mathematics and geometry. It facilitates cooperation and develops fine and gross motor skills. <i>Examples: handicrafts and block sets</i>

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM?

The aims of the preschool education program, since its inception, have been to:

- contribute to the child's overall harmonious development;
- centre education on children's needs and interests and present them with challenges that are within their capabilities;
- create a stimulating living environment for children, in which they can develop their full potential and abilities;
- provide children the opportunity to become familiar with the school environment;
- enable children to discover the joy of learning.

For children of preschool age, attending kindergarten provides an opportunity for self-discovery and the discovery of others and of their surroundings.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM ARE:

TO DEVELOP SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-ESTEEM

TO DEVELOP
RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

TO LEARN TO INTERACT WITH THEIR SURROUNDINGS

DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-ESTEEM

In pursuing this objective, children learn to discover their body by developing their ability to:

- become more familiar with their body;
- become aware of the different functions of their body;
- use their perceptions;
- perceive the different reactions of their body in action and at rest;
- perform activities involving gross and fine motor skills.

Children are encouraged to assert themselves by developing their ability to:

- identify their tastes, sensations and attitudes;
- recognize their feelings and emotions;
- respect and have confidence in themselves;
- express themselves and create;
- talk.

SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-ESTEEM

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

In pursuing this objective, children are encouraged to develop an awareness of social and cultural diversity by developing their ability to:

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

Children are encouraged to establish harmonious relationships with others by developing their ability to:

- make contact with another person;
- communicate;
- find a middle ground between their own needs and those of another person.

Children also learn to participate in group life by developing their ability to:

- respect the operating rules of the group;
- become involved in the life of the group;
- cooperate with the other children;
- participate in games with rules.

LEARNING TO INTERACT WITH THEIR SURROUNDINGS

In pursuing this objective, children learn to assimilate significant information.

To do this, they develop their ability to:

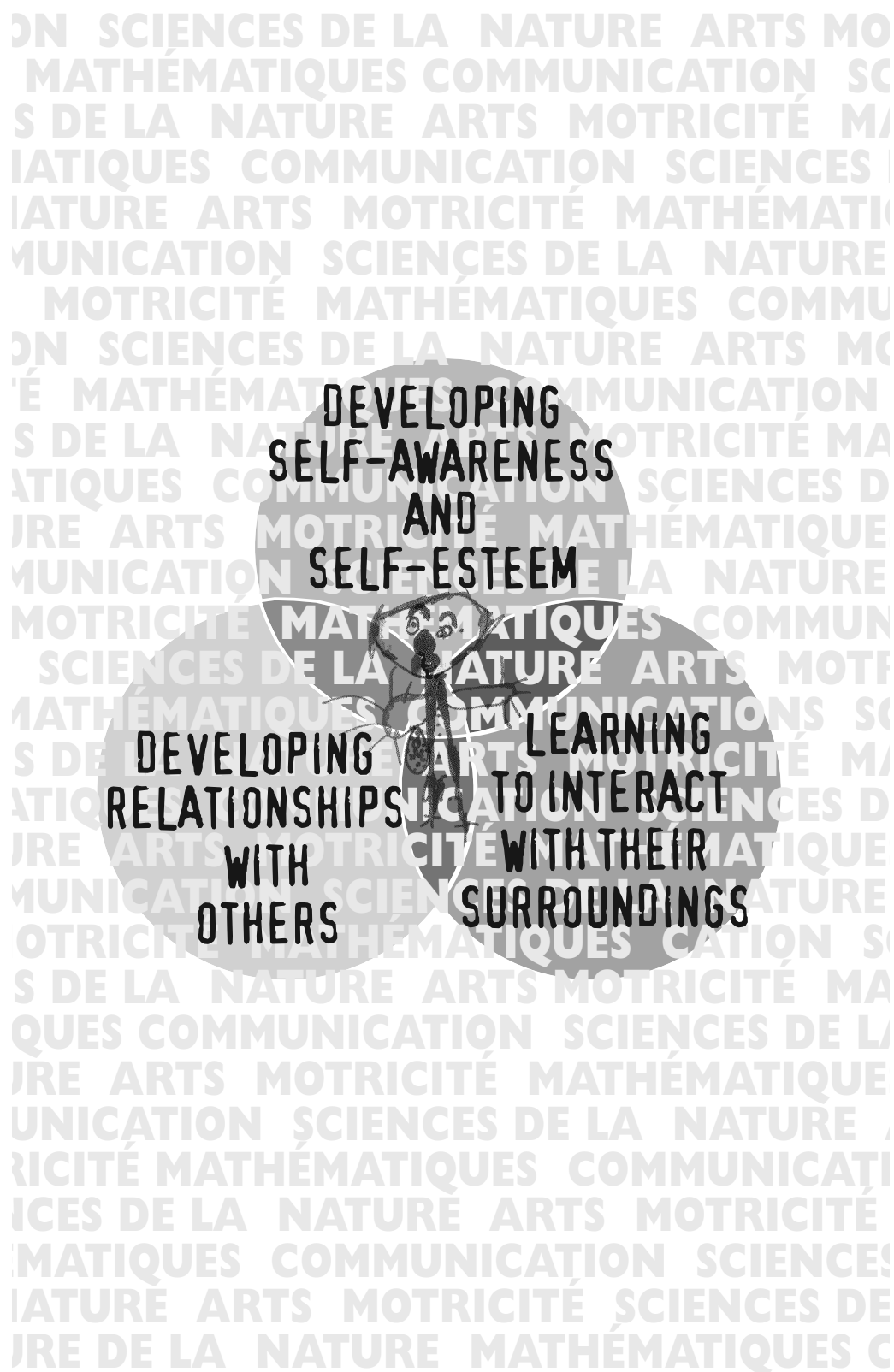
- explore the sounds of language;
- improve their oral communication skills in relation to comprehension and expression;
- become aware of writing;
- become familiar with the arts, natural science and mathematics.

Children also learn to act on their surroundings, to reflect on their actions and to create.

To do this, they develop their ability to:

- explore their surroundings;
- experiment;
- make choices;
- communicate their experience;
- transfer their knowledge;
- organize their time and physical surroundings;
- express their creativity.

INTERACT WITH THEIR
SURROUNDINGS



HOW ARE YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS MET IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION?

Movement and play

- Various physical activities
- Play, disguises and outings

Feeling loved and secure and establishing enriching social relationships

- Calm and warm atmosphere
- Secure premises
- Harmonious relationships with the teacher and with other adults in the school
- Companionship and friendly relations with the other children

Developing self-awareness and self-esteem, knowing others and becoming aware of other realities

- Everyday situations providing opportunities for activities that develop self-awareness and social skills

Expressing themselves and communicating

- Language games and activities
- Discussions with other children and with adults

Exploring, discovering and learning

- Activities involving manipulation and discovery
- Activities based on the weather, on animals or gardening activities
- Activities involving reference points in time and space: the four seasons, the calendar, etc.

Imagining and creating

- Stories, drawings, dance, song, crafts, plastic arts, drama, etc.
- Individual or group projects

WHAT TYPE OF ACTIVITIES ARE AVAILABLE TO YOUR CHILD?

The activities offered in kindergarten enable children to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will prepare them to become more effective learners. Designed to involve the children as well as the adult, they are grouped according to spheres of activity.

These spheres of activity are defined as ways of teaching that stimulate children's curiosity and capacity for wonder. They include, among other things, motor skills, oral and written communication, the arts, natural science and mathematics.

SPHERE OF ACTIVITY	CHILD
Motor Skills	For example, children: move, dance, catch, push, pull, manipulate, build, cut out, sculpt, develop precision in their movements.

**Oral and
Written
Communication**

For example, children:
express themselves, discuss, enrich
their vocabulary, become aware of
the importance of writing, develop
an interest in and appreciation for
written and oral communication by
using it spontaneously in their own
way, have fun with sounds, make up
rhymes.

The Arts

For example, children:
express their emotions and their
reality in various ways, through
poetry, drama, body language,
music, songs, drawings, paintings.

Natural Science

For example, children:
further explore the animal and
vegetable kingdom, air, water,
light, objects.

Mathematics

For example, children:
classify, order, sort, compare,
add, measure, recognize shapes.

A TYPICAL DAY AT KINDERGARTEN

At kindergarten, the schedule can vary from place to place, but the order of activities is generally the same. Occasionally, regular indoor or outdoor activities are supplemented by educational outings, special guests, parents' participation in workshops, and so on.

The table below describes the sequence of a typical day in a preschool classroom.

MORNING

Welcome

Organizing children into groups

- talk circle
- planning the afternoon schedule

Group, class or individual activities

- theme-related activities
- weekly project activities
- cooperative activities

Snack time

Activity workshops

- role-playing or construction play

Organizing children into groups

- review of morning activities

Lunch break

AFTERNOON

Welcome

Organizing children into groups

- planning the afternoon

Rest and relaxation activities

Snack time

Return to activities begun in the morning or start of new group, class or individual activities

Organizing children into groups

- review of the day: “what I learned today; what was difficult for me; how I resolved my difficulties.”

Tidying up and preparing to leave

Departure for home or daycare



WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN RELATION TO YOUR CHILD?

The teacher plays a key role in the life of the child. By lending a supportive, dynamic and warm presence, the teacher:

- helps children develop self-awareness and self-esteem;
- facilitates good relationships among children by being available and receptive;
- draws children's attention to the world around them;
- suggests a variety of interesting activities and new experiences and a wide range of material;
- encourages each child to make a contribution and to participate in developing new projects and activities;
- creates a context that is conducive to children's learning in keeping with their own pace and rate of learning, thus allowing them to develop their full potential.



SHOULD PARENTS PARTICIPATE IN THEIR CHILD'S PRESCHOOL EDUCATION?

Parents are their child's first educators, and in this respect they are essential partners in kindergarten education.

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. Moreover, parents 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.

Parent participation can take many forms:

- individual meetings to discuss their child's development and behaviour with the teacher;
- group meetings to discuss topics related to education or to organize special events;
- parent-student workshops to allow parents to take part in an activity with the children.

WILL THERE BE AN EVALUATION?

Evaluation is an integral part of learning and teaching. Everyone entrusted with the task of teaching within the education system must perform evaluations.

In kindergarten, evaluation is normally carried out during regular activities. 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 special activities that lend themselves to collecting information. However, these activities are limited in number and respect the child's needs.

The evaluation procedure recommended at the preschool level establishes links between the three main participants: the child, the teacher and the parent. It involves a variety of observation and evaluation instruments, such as: a logbook, the child's portfolio, meetings with parents, and so on.

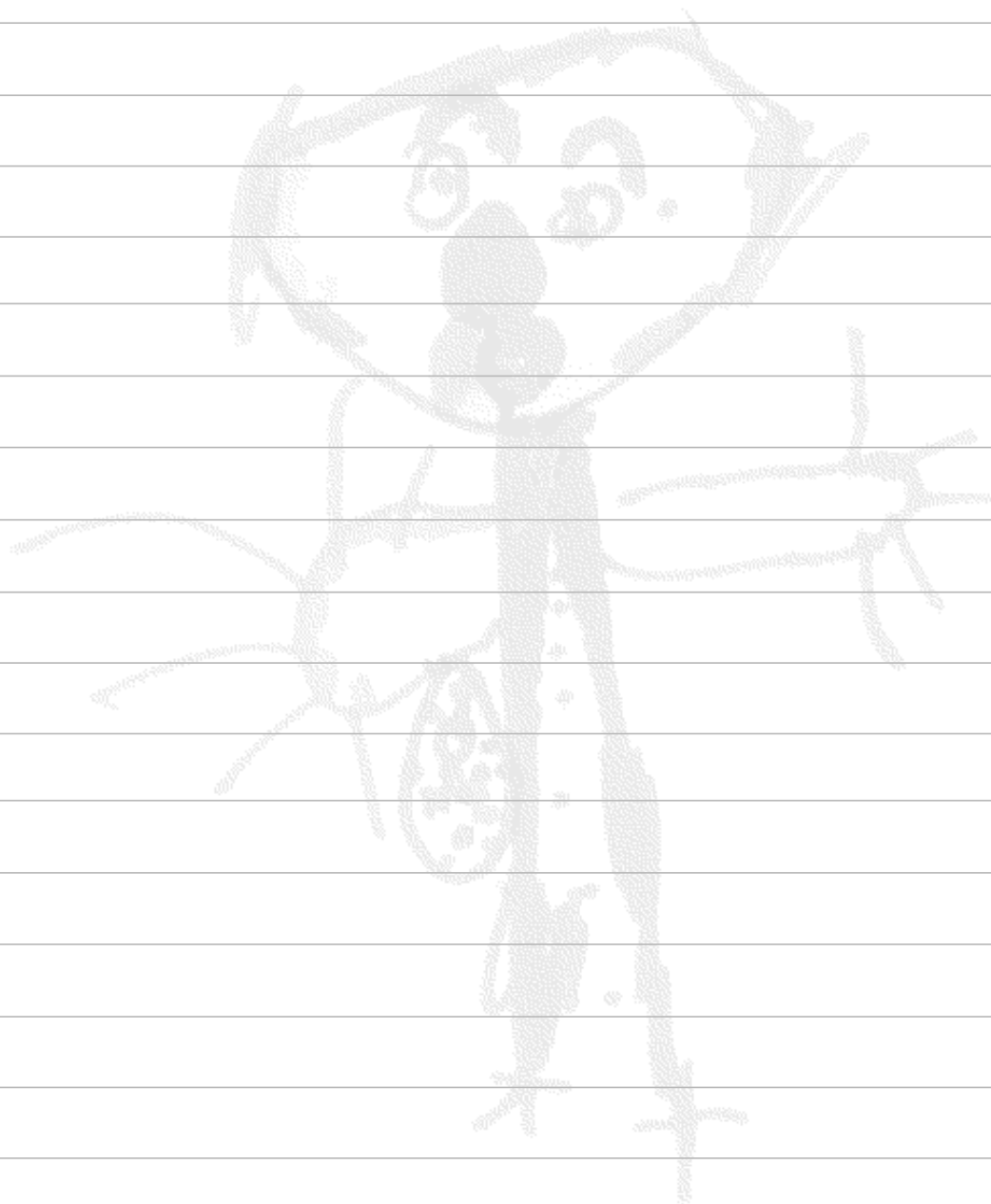
The report card is used to inform parents of their child's progress.

HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILD THROUGHOUT KINDERGARTEN?

Here are some ways parents can help their children in their process of discovery:

- send them positive messages and avoid criticism;
- support them in carrying out their projects;
- show an interest in them by asking what they're doing;
- listen to them for they will tell you, in their own way, what they think;
- help them solve their difficulties but don't do it for them;
- read them stories;
- teach them songs;
- encourage them to partake in new activities;
- help them discover the joy of learning;
- participate in classroom activities whenever possible;
- recognize that they can learn by trial and error;
- communicate and stay in touch with the school personnel.

NOTES





Why a full-time kindergarten program?

What is the basis of the preschool education program?

Why does play occupy such an important part in the preschool program?

What are the objectives of the preschool program?

What type of activities are available to your child?

How are your child's needs met in preschool education?

What is the role of the teacher in relation to your child?

Should parents participate in their child's preschool education?

Will there be an evaluation?

How can you help your child throughout kindergarten?

