New Jersey Department of Education

Division of Early Childhood Education

New Jersey Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines

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Acknowledgements

New Jersey's *Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines* were conceived as an essential step in building continuity from preschool to grade three and in response to school districts' many questions about developmentally appropriate kindergarten practices in the twenty-first century. The *Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines* reflect the work of early childhood professionals across the state to bring current research and best practices together in one usable document for school administrators, teachers, teacher educators, and families.

The Department sincerely thanks the kindergarten focus groups, individuals from New Jersey's universities, school districts, and organizations across the State, and members of the Division of Early Childhood Education for their cumulative efforts in developing guidelines.

The *Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines* takes a close look at the major components of successful kindergarten programming. Applied systematically and comprehensively, these components can yield high-quality programming for New Jersey's twenty-first century kindergarten classrooms.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

The *Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines* are designed to give administrators, teachers, and teacher educators guidance and resources to effectively implement the components of a high-quality kindergarten program. Based on research and best practice in the field and informed by position statements authored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the *Guidelines* clarify appropriate kindergarten structures, practices, and environments. The *Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines* are also intended to advance a comprehensive and seamless educational continuum from preschool through grade three in New Jersey's school districts. An extensive bibliography provides support and references for the practices discussed throughout the document.

The kindergarten year is critical in laying a strong foundation for the future of every child. In recent years, there has been a push for kindergartners to acquire skills formerly reserved for later grades. Some trends, including teaching skills in isolation and eliminating opportunities for children to engage in "choice" activities, are not in keeping with the best ways young children learn -- through ample opportunities to explore, practice, apply, and extend on the concepts presented in the classroom.

The *Guidelines* are divided into three sections. Section One, **Guiding High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten**, provides background in developmentally appropriate practice for working with five- and six-year-old children. The second section, **School Structures that Support High-Quality Kindergarten**, describes a comprehensive framework for optimal program delivery. The final section, **High-Quality Kindergarten in Action**, details what a kindergarten classroom should look like and what should be happening in that environment on a daily basis throughout the kindergarten school year.

School districts are encouraged to use this document as a springboard for discussion and action, ensuring that kindergarten is a developmentally appropriate place for teaching and learning in New Jersey's preschool through grade 12 education system.

Section One

Guiding High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten

It is critical for teachers to know the sequences in which children gain specific concepts, skills, and abilities, in order to plan intentionally for optimum development and learning (NAEYC 2009).

Understanding Child Development

High-quality kindergarten programming hinges on fostering children's development and learning in all domains—physical, social-emotional, cognitive, and language.

Cognitively, kindergartners show more flexibility in their thinking than younger children and greater advances in reasoning and problem solving (NAEYC 2009). They retain concepts best when presented in contexts meaningful to them. As a result, active, experience-based learning, while good for all ages, is key to this period of development.

Socially and emotionally, forming and sustaining relationships with adults and other children is central to a young child's development. Studies show that children who fail to develop minimal social skills and suffer neglect or rejection from peers are at risk for later outcomes such as school dropout, delinquency, and mental health problems (Dodge et al. 2003; McClelland, Acock & Morrison 2006).

Entering kindergartners vary in their ability to self-regulate by intentionally controlling emotions, behaviors, and thoughts (Tomlinson in Copple & Bredekamp 2009). It is important for their teachers to minimize sources of frustration, overstimulation, and stress in the environment that might be more than young children can handle.

Physically, kindergartners become increasingly more competent in physical skills such as balance and eye-hand coordination.

Many kindergartners initially struggle with fine motor tasks such as writing, drawing and precise cutting. Five- and six-year-olds benefit from many opportunities to practice, including painting, working with clay, constructing with blocks, stringing beads, zipping, buttoning, using scissors, and pouring juice at snack time. They are also becoming more competent in their gross motor skills and can skip, hop and climb with ease by the end of their kindergarten year.

Language and vocabulary skills of kindergartners vary widely. Kindergartners can generally answer open-ended questions (e.g., "What would you fix for dinner if you were the cook?") with relatively complex sentences, can retell a story or relay details about an experience or event, and can participate appropriately in conversations. Their vocabularies are growing at a fast pace and they still make frequent incorrect generalizations and grammatical errors when they speak (e.g., "Look at all of those deers.")

Kindergarten Guidelines for Understanding Child Development

- *School districts should embrace a philosophy of teaching and learning based on knowledge of how children within a given age span typically develop and learn;*
- *Kindergarten teachers should be thoroughly trained in child development, with an emphasis on the early years;*
- *Kindergarten teachers should receive ongoing support to ensure that the daily learning environment, learning experiences, and teacher-child interactions reflect the children's developmental stage; and*
- *All school administrators and staff associated with kindergarten should have some training in child development specific to kindergarten-age children.*

When kindergarten teachers offer a child-centered classroom climate, students are more often on-task and engaged in learning (Pianta et al. 2002).

Teacher-Child Interactions

The emotional support that teachers give to students provides a solid foundation for developing the motivation and cognitive skills critical to positive long term academic outcomes (Crosnoe et al. 2004; Greenberg et al. 2003; Gregory & Weinstein 2004; Pianta et al. 2002; Rimm-Kaufman et al. 2005; Roeser et al. 2000; Zins et al. 2004). Indicators of social adjustment in school settings include self-control, emotional regulation, getting along with peers, and enjoyment of school (Birch and Ladd 1997; Wentzel 1996).

Fostering Social Development and Learning through Teacher-Child Relationships

Social development and learning are fostered when a teacher is warm, caring, and responsive to children's interests and feelings.

Teachers are generally more successful in supporting these characteristics when they:

- Consistently demonstrate that they care about their students as individuals;
- Validate children's interests and feelings; and
- Support children's efforts to regulate themselves.

Part of a kindergarten teacher's role is to monitor children's social activities and provide positive ways of solving problems, settling disputes, and keeping interactions fair and inclusive. Teachers must be sure to provide children with ample time and opportunities to interact through cooperative work and problem-solving activities, in conversations, and during group discussions.

Teachers should model appropriate behaviors by helping children label emotions and link them to appropriate ways to respond. Explicit and consistent rules with clearly described age appropriate consequences should be applied. Children who need social assistance to find play partners should be coached by teachers in strategies for entering and participating in activities with classmates. This might include directly teaching the words a child needs to communicate ideas and feelings while negotiating differences. Warmth and genuine acceptance of each child's social learning process should be apparent in every teacher-child interaction.

Developing Self-Regulation through High-Quality Teacher-Child Relationships

Successful self-regulation means that a child can purposefully monitor him or herself. Children who can self-regulate are able to control their social-emotional and cognitive processes. The child can exert self-control, think about what he or she is learning, consider

alternate perspectives, and adjust the amount of mental energy needed based on a task's level of difficulty.

Learning to self-regulate requires daily participation in experiences that:

- Involve children being regulated by a teacher or classmate;
- Give children the opportunity to regulate others; and
- Provide opportunities for children to voluntarily practice regulating themselves (Leong et al. 2009).

Kindergarten Guidelines for Teacher-Child Interactions

- *Teachers foster children's trust, security, and social development through warmth, caring, and responsiveness to individual children's interests and feelings;*
- *Teachers recognize that academic learning occurs in a social context;*
- *Teachers use space and materials, encouragement for socio-dramatic play, cooperative work experiences, problem-solving activities, conversations, and group discussions as ongoing opportunities for children to practice social skills;*
- *Teachers accentuate children's prosocial behaviors while actively supporting self-regulation and learning; and*
- *Teachers maximize positive behavior and social interactions through careful design of schedules, activities, and classroom space.*

*"To have standards-driven instruction … means that teachers must understand **why** they are teaching what they are teaching…In this way, their teaching will become more **intentional**, with student learning outcomes in mind" (Kagan and Kauerz 2006).*

Comprehensive Standards-Based Curriculum

New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards should be supported by a kindergarten program rich in classroom experiences that promote higher level thinking skills while stimulating curiosity, experimentation, brainstorming, and problem solving. Play should serve as the driving force for learning. Child-initiated play based activities and teacher-designed experiences that incorporate play should frame kindergartners' learning during the school day. Competence and skill development in all learning areas will be optimized from these experiences.

Content area subject matter should be woven into learning experiences and projects, allowing children to develop new understandings by making meaningful connections during hands-on applications. "A high-quality kindergarten curriculum is anchored in state content standards, principles of child development, and age appropriate teaching strategies" (Gullo 2006).

Classroom instruction dominated by worksheet activities, pre-determined topics, and/or scripted themes provides little opportunity for lessons that are individualized to children's needs and interests.

Any assigned homework activities for kindergartners should be experiential rather than rote practice. Home activities including reading to a child, doing simple science experiments or hands-on mathematics activities, and drawing or writing in journals carry the message that learning is an important and engaging pursuit. It is not age appropriate for kindergartners to be subjected to negative consequences if home activities are not completed.

When approaching curriculum content:

- Concepts are best taught when tied to a topic or theme, introduced in a variety of formats, and embedded across curricular domains.
- Concepts are best taught through project-based learning, a balance of child-initiated and teacher-guided learning that starts with a central idea and is studied over an extended period of time. This method carefully considers children's interests and evolves as they explore and investigate, represent, and share their findings (Heroman and Copple 2006).

Within the daily schedule:

The kindergarten curriculum should support a daily schedule that allows enough flexibility for extending experiences that children find particularly engaging. Choice Time should be long enough to give children the opportunity to interact deeply with materials and peers. NAEYC recommends that Choice Time each day be sixty minutes or more in full day programs and at least forty-five minutes in half day kindergartens. Children should be active participants in all activities and never be required to sit passively.

Each segment of the day should fully incorporate purposefully planned learning, including arrival, meals, rest, snack, transitions and routines, outdoor time, and departure. Teachers should plan daily routines and transitions that incorporate rhythm, rhyme, songs, chants, and math story problems.

Weaving gross motor activity into indoor and outdoor learning experiences addresses a kindergartner's developmentally appropriate need for movement while facilitating large muscle development. It also gives children a break from academic learning, helping them to better concentrate and self-regulate for the duration of the day (Barros 2009). Scheduled physical education classes are not considered a substitute for recess, the time for children to socialize and self-select their physical activities (NAEYC 2009).

Outdoor time for at least thirty minutes daily should be considered part of the curriculum. The outdoor environment should include materials for making choices, plans, socializing, and collaborating in addition to using large muscles in gross motor play. Portable equipment, such as balls, hoops, ropes, and parachutes can supplement what is on the playground. Indoor gross motor activity should be substituted for outdoor time during severe weather conditions.

Kindergarten Specials

Specials, if part of a school district's kindergarten programming, should be used to directly support specific aspects of the classroom curriculum. Specials teachers will ideally work in conjunction and consultation with classroom teachers.

With the exception of physical education, the content of kindergarten specials is best delivered in the context of the children's classroom and curriculum. Specialists can circulate among and work with small groups of children in centers or in appropriate whole group instruction in the kindergarten classroom as long as daily, dedicated Choice Time is not interrupted. Kindergarten specials should never require that children sit still and attend for inappropriate periods of time.

Specials should always enhance the content under study in the classroom. Specials teachers should be familiar with teaching practices best suited to kindergarten-age children, have training in the kindergarten curriculum, and meet regularly with classroom teachers to discuss and coordinate programming.

Kindergarten Guidelines for Comprehensive, Standards-Based Curriculum

While meeting overarching content area goals, curriculum delivery should be:

- *Scheduled to meet kindergartner's developmental needs;*
- *Matched to the developmental level of kindergartners in teaching methods and content;*
- *Flexible enough to meet the needs and interests of the children in the class;*
- *Individualized enough to accommodate each child in the classroom;*
- *Integrated to purposefully incorporate meaningful skills and concepts from multiple content areas in each learning experience; and*
- *Part of an uninterrupted continuum of teaching practices and concept development for children in preschool through third grade.*

Children who engage in complex forms of socio-dramatic play develop higher levels of thinking, stronger language and social skills, and more empathy and imagination than children who do not have these opportunities (Miller, as cited in Stewart 2009).

Learning through Play in Kindergarten

The kindergarten school day should include extended time for play. Children do best and learn best when their education blends play with academics (Levin, as cited in Miller 2009). Play helps children acquire higher-order thinking skills, including generating testable hypotheses, imagining situations from another's perspective, and thinking of alternate solutions (Engel 2010).

Kindergarten play time and child-initiated activities are best accomplished through learning centers. Centers give children the opportunity to make their own choices, assimilate new concepts, and use a variety of skills through interactions with peers, materials, and teachers in an integrated, coordinated context.

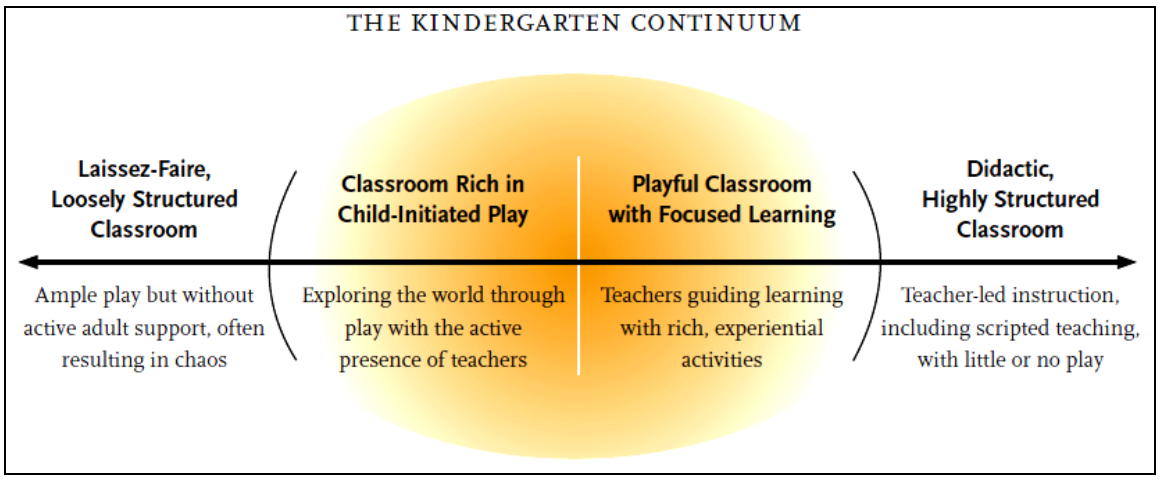
When kindergarten-age children engage in complex socio-dramatic play, they act out specific roles, interact with one another in those roles, and plan how the play will go. Research shows that make-believe play in small groups, with opportunities to learn how to get along, contributes greatly to five- and six-year-olds' understanding of emotions and social relations (Leong & Bodrova 2005). And, repeated success with social and emotional problem-solving helps kindergartners become even better at self-regulating and "reading" emotions.

Five- and six-year-olds are highly motivated to stay within the roles and rules of play and act out their self-regulation abilities. They practice inhibiting impulses, acting in coordination with others, and making plans (NAEYC 2009). For example, when kindergartners play "restaurant," they must regulate their behavior to remain in the roles of customer, waiter, cashier, or store manager. Children of this age still need guidance and support from teachers to help them engage in the sustained, complex play that is most beneficial to their development. However, the level and nature of the teacher's support will be differentiated for each child over the course the year.

When scaffolding children's play, the teacher's role is to share control and, without dominating the play, engage with children to scaffold increasingly complex and sustained interactions and situations. The teacher subtly facilitates when children's play stalls, adds materials that stimulate children to extend their current play scenarios and projects, and rotates or provides different materials to spark new play ideas.

While experts agree that play is about "whole child" development – social-emotional, cognitive, and physical, the idea that, "letting students loose for extended periods of time is going to automatically yield learning gains," is far from true (Pianta in Wilson 2009). This

is particularly so for young children still learning to self-regulate, collaborate, and become good listeners and communicators. Both extremely chaotic classrooms and overly didactic teacher-directed classrooms are counterproductive to young children's skill development in all domains. There must be a balance for learning to be optimized.



(Miller 2009)

In a continuum of practice, kindergarten classrooms should be rich in child-initiated play and be playful classrooms with focused learning. A full day kindergarten class should have at least sixty minutes of play in centers in addition to an extended outdoor play period. By emphasizing this time for play based activity, kindergarten programs afford children opportunities to become deeply engaged at a complex level that supports every content area in the curriculum.

Kindergarten Guidelines for Learning through Play

- *Design kindergarten schedules, classroom spaces, materials, and daily plans to accommodate play;*
- *Ensure that play opportunities are ongoing to support children's development; and*
- *Educate all staff and families about play as essential to the kindergarten experience.*

"It is absolutely reasonable to expect that kindergarten is about playful learning and learningful play, and about academic socialization and social academics" (Gullo 2006).

Kindergarten Teaching Practices

Recognizing and using effective teaching strategies in the kindergarten classroom means reflecting on the ways kindergartners develop, meeting each child at his or her developmental level, and bridging children's individual developmental differences. It means using research-based teaching strategies in the kindergarten environment all day long and in each learning context.

Some kindergartners have been in child care since birth, others have one or two years of nursery/preschool experience, and some have no pre "school" group experiences with peers. Kindergarten cut-off dates result in some children entering just prior to their fifth birthday while others, based on family preference, may not begin kindergarten until age six.

Building Community

A well run kindergarten classroom functions as a community. Predictable routines and schedules, rules developed by all and applied fairly, and shared classroom responsibilities are hallmarks of an environment responsive to children and their needs. Rules should not be punitive or negative. Guidelines for acceptable behavior should be expressed in simple language accompanied by a clear rationale. Work and play settings should be planned so that children can navigate through daily activities with as much independence as possible.

When children understand that they are able and expected to regulate many of their activities independently they, in turn, develop self-control and self-direction. These attributes, complemented by the presence of consistently warm and caring adults who nurture academic success and successful relationships between and among classroom community members, contribute to feelings of well-being and security that instill confidence in everyone in the community.

Supporting Social-Emotional Development

Kindergarten children need opportunities to label their feelings and ideas for managing strong emotions in socially acceptable ways. Classroom libraries should contain books with social themes (e.g., feelings, friendship, managing anger). Dramatic play, art easels, clay, sandboxes, and water tables can be outlets to express frustrations. Teachers can also provide opportunities for children to role play and talk about their feelings in small or whole group settings.

Teachers should step in and provide one-to-one coaching when a child is less adept at developing friendships with peers, or less practiced in essential skills such as sharing, turn-

taking, and collaborating. Adults in the room can model prosocial behaviors by interpreting social situations in ways that show sympathy and caring. A housekeeping or dramatic play center in the classroom, equipped with dress-up clothing and props, gives children the opportunity to enact family and community roles and scenarios. It also provides a safe way for children to discuss their feelings and practice alternative ways of approaching conflict. The emotional security found in classrooms that foster trusting, nurturing relationships frees kindergartners to focus on the curriculum's cognitive demands.

Facilitating Cognitive Development

Workbooks and worksheets should not be the primary conduit used to engage children with academic content. Rather, teachers should systematically incorporate essential cognitive skills into the scope and sequence of hands-on learning activities. Teachers can involve children in planning activities as well as in discussions about experiences after they take place. This approach encourages children to make appropriate choices, problem-solve, and reflect, in addition to practicing specific skill sets such as letter and number knowledge.

Teachers should plan to engage in two-way conversations with children throughout the school day, using rich vocabulary and descriptive language to extend learning. Active listening and speaking on the part of the teacher should include consideration for what children are seeing and saying as equal partners in a verbal exchange. This requires listening attentively to children's plans, interpreting and expanding on what children do and say, and asking questions that provoke and encourage children to think more deeply.

Techniques that enhance learning activities (Epstein 2003) include:

- Incorporating daily planning and reflection times into the schedule;
- Ensuring easy access to classroom areas and materials that provide the backdrop for children's activities, projects, and plans;
- Using open-ended questions to encourage children's thinking;
- Observing children to learn about their interests, what they know, and what they are thinking about;
- Listening carefully to children's plans and the questions children ask in order to prepare appropriate supports;
- Encouraging children to describe in detail the outcomes of their plans;
- Encouraging children to use their outcomes as stepping stones to new plans; and
- Making opportunities available for children to represent ongoing activities and projects through writing, drawing, and three-dimensional media.

When a task is just beyond a child's independent reach, adults and more competent peers can provide the scaffolding that allows the child to succeed at that task. When the child stretches to a new level in a supportive context, he or she can go on to use the skill independently and in a variety of new contexts. This lays a foundation for the next challenge.

The most effective scaffolding occurs when a teacher is flexible and takes advantage of an array of techniques, including:

- Giving encouragement rather that evaluative praise;
- Making instructions or directions, when called for, direct and specific;
- Providing the factual background or information children need in order to explore, extend, and apply;
- Modeling desirable behaviors and skills for children to see and hear in action;
- Giving visual or verbal hints or prompts;
- Offering specific feedback instead of general comments;
- Building on prior knowledge to encourage higher order thinking;
- Developing incremental challenges that go just beyond a child's current level of comfort or mastery;
- Prompting children to elaborate on their conversations and explain their answers; and
- Gradually reducing scaffolding as children's skills develop, until the task or activity can be performed independently.

Establishing the Learning Environment

Classroom arrangement and organization impact children's experiences in the kindergarten learning environment. A predictable schedule gives kindergartners the structure they need to navigate independently through the school day. Each kindergarten classroom day should include blocks of time that engage children individually, in whole group and in small group configurations, with a balance of child-initiated and adult-guided experiences. Children's evolving interests and skills should determine the materials and learning activities offered during group times and in classroom learning centers.

Learning centers should be available every day for open exploration and for activities with specific content focus, such as mathematics and language arts literacy. Daily Choice Time gives children an important opportunity to practice and cement the academic and social skills introduced during more formal lesson times. Choice Time provides teachers critically important time to interact with individual children and informal small groups while reinforcing skills across curricular domains. Centers should contain open ended, concrete materials geared to different developmental levels as well as hand-on activities that reinforce content area skills and concepts. Priorities should be set for purchasing materials that align with the kindergarten curriculum and reflect diversity, families, and student interests. Teachers should examine materials carefully to avoid stereotypical roles and language. Using recycled and natural materials provides an inexpensive way to add a variety of stimulating materials to the classroom.

Kindergarten classrooms should be clean and safe, uncluttered, bright, and arranged with dividers, storage units, and bookshelves with consideration for the ways children use materials in the classroom. The furniture should be child sized and appropriate for five- and six-year-old children. It should include round tables that encourage small groups of

children to work together together and spaces for children to store work and personal belongings. Materials should be organized logically, enabling children to find what they need and return materials to their proper locations. Labels with words and pictures in centers and storage places should feature legible print in English and the children's home language(s) to convey functional messages and foster independence.

Displays in the classroom should be current and hung at a child's eye level. Evidence of the children and teachers who occupy the space should be visible when entering the room. Commercially made products and signs do little to convey what is happening in the classroom. Photographs and names of teachers and children, along with photos and drawings of the children's families and pets, reflect individual interests and culture, create a sense of belonging, and help children and families feel valued (Curtis & Carter 2003). The daily schedule, in photos or graphics, should be visible year round. Original children's work, both two- and three-dimensional, should be changed at least monthly, referenced during ongoing instruction, and used as a way of documenting the rich learning that is taking place in the classroom.

Using In-Depth Investigations to Support Children's Learning

Long term studies or investigations offer integrated opportunities for deep involvement in play, problem-solving, and creativity. Using this approach, children are motivated to work through their interests and individual strengths while seeking answers to their questions. Learning through projects avoids teaching content area skills in isolated segments. The scope and duration of a project is determined by the children's level of interest and engagement. Projects allow children to be partners in learning with other children and with the teacher, who is a facilitator and a co-researcher in learning.

Science and social studies content offer many possibilities for investigations. Literacy and the arts come into play as children read and write about what they learn and represent what they know and understand. Classroom learning centers can be designed to support the topic of study. Families and community places of business can donate items to enhance the learning opportunities in the classroom. Field trips into the community and invitations to community members can support the study (Jacobs & Crowley 2010).

Building Partnerships with Families

Engaging families is a powerful teaching strategy. By participating in classroom activities and projects, families can better understand how and what their children's kindergarten experience is all about. High quality relationships with families develop when teachers foster regular, respectful, two-way communication that emphasizes each child's relative strengths. It also means inviting families to participate in their child's school learning with at-home reading and hands-on activities suggested by the teacher.

In our increasingly multicultural society, it is essential for teachers to embrace the diversity in backgrounds brought to the classroom by children and their families. Teachers should be proactive in learning about the variety of cultures and values represented in their classroom community. The classroom environment should be enriched with a selection of books, music, and materials that reflects and expands on the diverse backgrounds and cultures of the children and the community. Families should be invited to share their skills and traditions, not just on special occasions, but as true partners in the everyday kindergarten teaching and learning process.

Kindergarten Guidelines for Teaching Practices

- *Build a classroom community;*
- *Support social/emotional development;*
- *Facilitate cognitive development;*
- *Establish the learning environment;*
- *Implement in-depth investigations; and*
- *Build partnerships with families.*

Every child should have access to a high-quality kindergarten learning environment that offers individualized supports for school success.

Pre-Intervention and Inclusion

The range of abilities and behaviors of young children is broad and should be accepted and accommodated in every kindergarten classroom. Classroom teachers should observe and document any learning, behavioral, or physical difficulty demonstrated by a child and be proactive in addressing any issue that might negatively impact the child's school experience. School districts should not suspend or expel kindergartners. With help from the district's intervention team, counselors, and social workers, the teacher should make adaptations to the classroom environment and activities that meet the child's distinct learning or behavioral needs. Collaboration with the child's family, those who know the child best, is essential to identifying potential causes for issues and to developing effective plans for resolution.

Screening

A developmental screening tool, such as the Early Screening Inventory (Meisels, Marsden, Wiske, Henderson 2008), should be administered to each child at the beginning of his or her initial year of school. Children who fall into the instrument's rescreen category should be rescreened after an additional six to eight weeks of acclimatizing to school. Children who fall into the instrument's refer category should receive further diagnostic evaluation.

Positive Behavior Supports

Effective pre-intervention programs can be a valuable tool for working with children with challenging behaviors and a step toward reducing the necessity for special education referrals. Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) is a nationally recognized pre-intervention program for working with young children who demonstrate challenging behaviors in the classroom (Fox et al. 2005). PBS promotes healthy social-emotional development and provides a process for understanding and resolving a child's problem behavior.

The PBS approach involves developing an understanding of why a child is engaging in problem behavior and strategies for preventing the occurrence of problem behavior, while teaching the child new skills. The process includes developing an individualized, written plan for the teacher to use in addressing behaviors that may range from aggression, tantrums, and property destruction to social withdrawal. Extensive PBS resources are available at: http://csefel.uiuc.edu/

Referral for an Evaluation

When the possibility of a behavioral, learning, or physical disability is suspected, a written referral to the school district's child study team will initiate a process of determining if the child is eligible for special education services. The parent, teacher, and child study team

meet to determine the need for an evaluation and to discuss the assessments that will be part of the evaluation. An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed if eligibility is determined as a result of the evaluation. In addition to special education personnel, the IEP team always includes the family and the kindergarten teacher. The team determines what types of support are necessary, including classroom modifications and/or special education services.

Inclusion

To the maximum extent appropriate, kindergartners with disabilities should receive their kindergarten education with typically developing peers. The kindergarten general education environment should always be the first placement considered when determining the goals and areas to be addressed for a kindergartner with an IEP.

The rationale for including young children with disabilities with typically developing children is based on the following:

- The regular education curriculum and access to a typically developing peer group will provide learning opportunities that do not exist in special education classes containing only children with disabilities (Bricker 1995);
- Public law states that, to the maximum extent possible, children with disabilities shall receive a free, appropriate education in settings that are typical and that include same-aged peers. This "least restrictive environment" provision appeared in the original law that ensured educational services for children with disabilities (P.L. 94-142) and the subsequent reenactments of the law (P.L. 99-457, P.L. 102-119); and
- The inclusion of a child in a regular education class in his or her community or neighborhood is usually the most appropriate and ethical placement.

Quality inclusive programming for students with disabilities in general education kindergarten programs means that classroom teachers need:

- Frequent assistance from therapists and specialists including classroom observations, feedback, methods, and techniques to use with children with disabilities;
- Scheduled time to talk with IEP mandated specialists and/or therapists to co-plan activities and interventions;
- A low teacher-child ratio achieved by reducing the number of children in the class or adding in-class assistance;
- Training in the use of performance-based assessment to adjust instruction;
- Classroom space, equipment, and materials that are accessible to the child with disabilities; and
- Family participation.

Pull-out and push-in programs for delivery of therapies are, most often, not the best approach. Whenever feasible, therapies should be delivered in the classroom with

functional goals for the child implemented by embedding therapy in the context of everyday classroom routines and activities.

Five- and six-year-old children with disabilities share the same learning, social-emotional, and developmental characteristics as their typically developing peers. They benefit from the same high-quality programs and resources for the same reasons. Inclusion of students with disabilities in high-quality kindergarten classrooms will provide access to and appropriate modeling of social, behavioral, and academic skills as well as providing opportunities for socialization, friendships, and an overall sense of belonging to a community.

Kindergarten Guidelines for Pre-Intervention and Inclusion

- *Establish collaborative relationships between teachers, pre-intervention teams, child study teams, families, school counselors, school social workers, and providers of therapy services;*
- *Use a proven pre-intervention program as part of the process;*
- *Make inclusion the placement of choice to the maximum extent possible; and*
- *Deliver therapies in the classroom and in the context of everyday classroom activities and routines whenever possible.*

"Young children do not have to give up their first language to learn a second language. Young children can and will learn a second language in a supportive social environment" (Tabors 2008).

Supports for English Language Learners

Bilingualism is an asset in the twenty-first century. Support for continued development of the home language is critical in kindergarten because it impacts a child's basic language foundation as well as his or her content learning. While estimates show that Spanish is the language spoken by the majority of New Jersey's English language learners, more than 150 different languages are spoken by school children across the state.

Research on optimizing the language development of young English language learners

Research examining ways to optimize the language development of young English language learners indicates that educational programs should encourage first language development in addition to English language acquisition. Encouraging continued development of a child's home language facilitates the effective transfer of learning to English (August & Shanahan 2006; Snow 1998). Home language support is also important because a child's first language is intricately tied to his or her concept of self, family, and home (Fillmore 1991).

Early childhood education guidance based on research and expert opinion emphasizes the importance of developmentally appropriate practice specific to five- and six-year-olds entering kindergarten with home languages other than English (August & Shanahan 2006; Tabors 2008; NAEYC 1995; Snow 1998; Genishi 2002). August and Shanahan's work tells us that English language learners' school achievement is positively linked to use of the same instructional practices that are successful with native English speakers, as long as accommodations and enhancements are also present in the learning environment.

Ways to support English language learners

Classroom support for children's language occurs best in the context of natural interactions and environments. Ideal programs for English language learners will provide content learning and interactions in both the child's home language and English, with adults who are competent in standard structures of the home language and the English language. Every classroom teacher should be equipped to support the language learning of every child in the class.

Pull-in or push-out programs provide limited English proficient students with enhancements and accommodations through brief exposure to concepts. However, these programs should be designed to enhance the existing, intensive support associated with systematic and ongoing scaffolding throughout the school day. Isolated periods of ESL (English as a Second Language) instruction cannot have the same impact as a school system

designed for English language learners that brings classroom teachers and specialists together to design curricula, assessments, and instruction.

A school district that has few qualified bilingual educators and/or children who speak many different languages may decide on a program in which the primary language for instruction is English while maintaining a core belief in the value of supporting home language and family culture through instructional activities, classroom materials, family interactions, and communications that are respectful and inclusive.

Other districts might choose a 50:50 dual language program that alternates English with a second language for morning/afternoon or for one week periods of time. This approach can be successful for both native English speakers and those with a different first language.

A third option is for a school district with qualified bilingual staff and bilingual resources coupled with a significant population speaking a second language to implement a dual language program. The program will provide structured English language instruction and instruction in a second language in all content areas for limited English proficient students and for native English speaking students.

While local factors will impact the program options for English language learners, district decisions should always embrace the tenets that:

- Having a second language is an advantage; and
- Diversity is a resource (Espinosa 2010).

Identifying Children's Language and English Proficiency Levels

School districts are required to determine the home language of each English language learner by using a screening process initiated at the time of a child's enrollment. Initially, a home language survey should be used to identify the home language of the child. The survey should be followed up by individual conversation or interview with the family to develop a better understanding of the child's home language environment and to help families understand the school district's language goals for their child.

New Jersey requires school districts to administer a Department of Education approved English language proficiency test (*N.J.A.C. 6A:15)* to determine the English language proficiency of children whose first language is not English and help determine optimal kindergarten placement. Testing results should only be used in conjunction with other sources of information, such as anecdotal records and family interviews. Teachers and teacher assistants should always be informed of the home language of every newly enrolled student.

Young English language learners, exposed to English in their natural day to day interactions, may learn enough to appear competent in social situations. However, this early superficial use of English is not sufficient to support the acquisition of literacy skills. Therefore, it is important for kindergarten teachers to continue supporting the

development of depth, richness, and complexity in the child's home language. (NAEYC 1995; Neuman et al. 2000).

Placement

English language learners should be enrolled in the most appropriate language assistance program available in the school district. Districts are encouraged to develop dual language programs so that children can be educated in their home language as well as in English. Studies have found that children who learn through this approach outperform their monolingual counterparts on state achievement tests. (See the Center for Applied Linguistics website at http://www.cal.org and the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence website at http://crede.berkeley.edu for more information.)

Interactions and Activities to Enhance Language and Literacy

In New Jersey, school districts with fewer than ten limited English proficient students must provide English language services in addition to regular school programming. Districts with ten or more limited English proficient students are required to establish an English as a Second Language program. A bilingual education program must be established in any New Jersey school district enrolling twenty or more English language learners in any one language classification (*N.J.A.C.* 6A:8).

Employ bilingual teachers and assistants:

Increasingly, school districts are employing bilingual teachers and assistants. Every attempt should be made to employ a teacher and teacher assistant who speak the languages of the children enrolled in their classrooms. There should be at least one adult in the classroom who speaks the primary language of the children. Bilingual staff should be encouraged to use children's home languages to fill their environment with rich vocabulary, open-ended questions, detailed conversations, and positive interactions. Care must be taken to ensure that all of the language input available to young children in any language is correct and developmentally appropriate in order to provide good language models for the children.

Develop basic communication skills:

Classroom teachers and teacher assistants should develop some basic communication skills in the predominant languages of the children in the classroom. This should include phrases that address children's basic needs and vocabulary, in addition to phrases that will welcome children and make them feel more comfortable in the classroom. It is also important to ensure that classroom teachers have training in techniques in English as a Second Language (ESL) and deliver instruction in a culturally responsive manner.

Set up the environment:

All children, and especially English language learners, benefit from classroom materials such as puppets, dolls, animals, and telephones that encourage oral language and

conversation. Using authentic literacy materials from each child's culture and/or background is an ideal way to incorporate diversity within the classroom. Learning centers can be stocked with food menus, magazines, empty food containers, and toy packages in the children's home languages. Environmental print, from labels to newspapers and child-constructed stories present home language in everyday, informal contexts. Fiction, information books, poetry collections and other print, audio, and visual materials are all commercially available in children's home languages.

There should be a strong mix of literacy materials that use predictable patterns and simple vocabulary along with high-quality children's literature and materials that foster higher level thinking. Functional print in classrooms should include labeled containers for materials used by children, simple directions posted at eye level, and repetitive text (chants, rhymes, poems) printed on chart paper and labeled with pictures, words in English, and words in the children's home language(s). The school should maintain a library of resources, activities, and materials that teachers can borrow for their classes based on the languages spoken in their classrooms.

Teacher-child interactions:

The teacher should modify his or her teaching style by providing meaningful language experiences. Language and literacy skills should always be taught within the context of the curriculum, avoiding rote learning and isolated drills.

Appropriate strategies that assist English language learners include:

- Using on-the-spot labeling strategies with familiar, culturally sensitive themes and materials;
- Introducing vocabulary for songs and books using pictures, props, and real objects;
- Teaching vocabulary in meaningful contexts;
- Singing songs and reading books in both languages;
- Encouraging bilingual staff to use children's home languages when engaging in individual conversations to enhance early literacy, oral language skills, and content knowledge;
- Creating numerous opportunities for informal English and home language exposure and practice as part of daily routines, including songs and rhymes that repeat, have sentence patterns, and develop phonological awareness;
- Link children's home cultures to reading and writing activities;
- Through discussion, help children make connections between the content of stories read in class and their own life experiences;
- Providing opportunities for children to create and share their own pictures, books, and stories. Child-generated texts can make literacy a more meaningful activity while reflecting the child's individual culture and experience;
- Planning consistent daily activities enriched with pictures, hand signals, body language, and simple words to facilitate understanding;

- Encouraging social interaction between English speaking children and English language learners, inviting them to speak each other's languages, giving them motivation to experiment with their growing language skills, and providing translation; and
- Embracing an approach that celebrates the strengths of each child to build his or her confidence.

Professional Development that Supports English Language Learners

Kindergarten teachers and teacher assistants need high-quality professional development to enhance their background knowledge of students and families from diverse backgrounds and to provide them with knowledge of second language acquisition, strategies, and techniques that are successful in developing both first and second languages.

Particularized professional development for supporting English language learners should include:

- Supporting home language and English development for bilingual kindergarten students;
- Acquiring early reading skills in the context of different languages; and
- Using open-ended questions, rich vocabulary, and conversation in the children's home language.

Support for Families of English Language Learners

The following strategies will provide support for families:

- Using the family's primary language to communicate during conferences and in other communications. Bilingual staff can provide assistance with written, phone, and face-to-face interactions;
- Inviting families to bring home language experiences to the classroom by reading, singing songs, demonstrating crafts and by sharing pictures, games, and food from their country of origin; and
- Offering workshops to emphasize the importance of families reading and talking to their children in their home language every day. Families must be helped to understand that supporting the home language is the best way to help their children succeed in school and make the transition to English.

Community Resources

Districts can also identify local resources:

- Libraries, social service agencies, cultural organizations, local businesses, and travel agents can provide assistance, materials, and information on many languages and cultures to enrich the classroom**;**

- Neighboring school districts that serve similar language groups can work together to network and share resources and translated materials; and
- Electronic media, certified translators, and fluent speakers with some formal education in the particular language can assist with translation.

Kindergarten Guidelines for Supporting English Language Learners

- *Use appropriate tools for identifying and placing English language learners;*
- *Adapt classroom interactions and activities to enhance the transfer and depth of language skills;*
- *Support maintenance of the child's home language;*
- *Embrace families as partners in the process; and*
- *Whenever possible, utilize bilingual teaching staff who speak the children's predominant language(s).*

*Authentic assessment is an essential, everyday process capturing evidence about what each child knows and can do. It is **the** source of information for determining next steps in children's independent and teacher-guided experiences.*

Assessment in Kindergarten

Data from assessments can be used to inform a classroom teacher's lesson planning process, to monitor trends, to screen children for potential issues in learning and development, and for accountability purposes when communicating with families, other school personnel, and the community. School districts should never use child assessment data to recommend a delay in any age-eligible child's kindergarten entry.

Assessment should be used for:

- Screening;
- Planning for children's learning; and
- Evaluating program quality.

Screening Measures

Assessments that aim to screen children for possible referral for further diagnostic testing can provide answers to the question, *"Is there a potential challenge to the child's learning and development?"*

School districts should use a valid screening tool such as the Early Screening Inventory (Meisels, Marsden, Wiske, Henderson 2008) when children first enter the district's program. Information obtained from screening should never be used to determine or deny a child's school placement.

Screening should:

- Be used once, upon first entry to the school district (preschool or kindergarten) to identify children who may be at risk for learning difficulties and require further assessment;
- Be administered in the child's primary language;
- Include a sampling of children's skills across areas of language, reasoning, gross motor, fine motor, and social-emotional development;
- Not be used to determine classroom grouping/placement;
- Only be used for referral for diagnostic assessment when the screening result falls into the "refer" category;
- Never be represented as a pretest/posttest assessment. Screening tools are not designed to show progress over time; and

- Be only one of multiple sources of information when considering any kind of intervention.

Assessing English language learners:

Bilingual education requirements in New Jersey (*N.J.A.C.* 6A:15) include use of a screening process to determine the home language of each English language learner and a proficiency test to determine English language proficiency. Multiple measures should be employed to determine optimal supports for English language learners. Tools to use include a language screening, family interview, a home language survey, and information from the prior year's teacher. Any assessments for young English language learners must be administered in the child's most proficient language. When unsure, the assessment should be administered in both English and the child's home language (Espinosa 2010).

Identifying gifted and talented learners:

School districts in New Jersey may use multiple measures, including performance-based assessment and recommendations from families and/or teachers, to identify gifted and talented kindergartners (N.J.A.C. 6A:8). Pull-in or push-out enrichment is not the best practice for kindergarten-age children. Most identified five- and six-year-old children are accommodated best through curricular and instructional modifications that include project-based learning and differentiated instruction in their regular classrooms.

Planning for Children's Learning

Children's development during kindergarten is marked by variability and change. This makes summative and standardized assessments that attempt to capture skill achievement out of context, unreliable for five-and six-year-old children (NAEYC-NAES/SDE Position Statement 2003).

Performance-based assessment is a more reliable assessment alternative, providing answers to the questions, *"What is the child learning?"* and *"How can I better support the child's learning and development?"*

With performance-based assessment, collections of data about each child are gathered by the teacher over time and from multiple sources, including anecdotes, focused observations, children's self-evaluations, and work samples. The data is interpreted through rubrics and rating scales with reliability and validity achieved by carefully scoring criteria and through training sessions to establish inter-rater reliability.

Information from performance-based assessment can be immediately put to work, with on the spot expansion of children's skills, as well as strengthening the teacher's lesson planning process, serving as a reference when conferring with other school personnel (e.g., support or special services team members, specials teachers), and providing concrete reference points when conferencing with families.

Evaluating Program Quality

Continuous evaluation and assessment is an essential aspect of maintaining a high quality kindergarten program. Administrators must be able to effectively answer the questions, *"How is the program working?" "For whom is the program working?" and "How can the program be modified?"*

Summative assessments and classroom observation instruments provide data that will assist decision makers in determining the level of quality in early childhood programs.

Structured classroom observation instruments provide a lens for examining many components of program quality, from the nature of teacher-child interactions to the availability of materials and activities to support early learning and development.

Using standardized criteria and a scoring scale or rubric, structured classroom observation instruments equip teachers and administrators with the tools to:

- Evaluate kindergarten physical environments, indoors and out;
- Determine what supports and materials are needed in each classroom;
- Support individual classroom teachers in modifying teaching practices;
- Identify areas for professional development at all levels; and
- Track the quality of program implementation over time.

The results are a measure of accountability and a means of communicating to staff, families, and community about the quality of the school district's kindergarten program.

Commonly Used Instruments for Measuring Program Quality:

- *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation* (Miriam W. Smith, Joanne P. Brady & Nancy Clark-Chiarelli). The ELLCO assesses literacy and language practices and materials in five key areas: classroom structure, curriculum, the language environment, books and reading opportunities, and print and early writing supports.
- *Assessment of Practices in Early Elementary Classrooms* (Mary Louise Hemmeter, Kelly L. Maxwell, Melinda Jones Ault & John W. Schuster). The APEEC is designed to evaluate the use of developmentally appropriate practices in the early elementary classroom in physical, instructional, and social contexts.
- *The Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (Robert C. Pianta, Karen M. La Paro & Bridget K. Hamre). The CLASS measures the quality of teacher-child interactions in the areas of emotional support, instructional support, and classroom structure.

Kindergarten Guidelines for Assessment

The tools used for assessment in kindergarten programs should be:

- *Reliable and valid;*
- *Age- and program-appropriate;*
- *Tied to New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards;*
- *Designed to provide answers to relevant questions;*
- *Used to inform ongoing classroom instruction, professional development for staff at all levels, and program improvement; and*
- *Interpreted with caution and used as only one source of information within multiple measures.*

"Give teachers of young children first-rate preparation that emphasizes the full development of the child and the importance of play, nurtures children's innate love of learning and supports teachers' own capacities for creativity, autonomy and integrity" (Miller 2009).

Professional Development

Professional development should be intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice. Time should be built into the weekly school schedule for job embedded coaching and professional learning communities that provide ongoing support for implementing new content and pedagogy in a continuous cycle of improvement (NSDC 2009).

Professional Development to Improve Classroom Quality

Structured Observation Tools

Structured observation tools such as the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) or the Assessment of Practices in Early Elementary Classrooms (APEEC) should be used to gather data about kindergarten classroom quality. Used as a vehicle to drive meaningful, goal oriented professional development, aggregated and analyzed data will determine areas of focus, differentiated large group and small group topics, and individualized activities.

Classroom Learning Walks

Focused classroom learning walks can complement the data gathered from observation tools. Developing a deeper understanding of how teachers are implementing aspects of the program helps administrators make professional development decisions specific to the kindergarten portion of the district's overall plan.

Classroom Coaching

Supervisors and classroom coaches can use information from program quality assessment tools in individual classrooms as part of a continuous improvement cycle. The coaching process begins with a teacher/coach planning conference, during which the teacher and coach agree on an area of practice to focus on and a time for the coach to visit the classroom to observe. An agreed upon curriculum/assessment tool serves as the reference point for all observations and discussions.

The coach's classroom visit occurs, framed by the agreed upon area and observation tool. The coach and the teacher then have a post-conference, reflecting on the teaching and learning that occurred. The curriculum/assessment tool continues to be used as the referent. The post-conference ends with next steps established for teaching/learning practice in the classroom and a time established for the coach's next classroom visit.

The coach's role is to facilitate reflection and next steps. The teacher's role is to grow in the capacity to reflect on practice, plan, and implement change. Used on an ongoing basis, this cyclical, reflective process for individualized professional development can be extremely effective.

Professional Learning Communities

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are groups of educators that meet to identify and focus on improving teaching practices and the impact on student learning. These learning communities can build strong collaborative relationships among teachers (Darling-Hammond et al. in NNSDC 2009) that foster problem solving and the sharing of teaching strategies (NSDC 2009). The New Jersey Department of Education, in partnership with the National Staff Development Council (NSDC), provides school districts with a toolkit for organizing professional learning communities (NJ DOE & NSDC 2009).

Tailoring Professional Development for Kindergarten

Based on the results of structured and unstructured classroom observations, professional development specific to kindergarten might include:

- Incorporating permanent learning centers into the classroom environment;
- Developmentally appropriate scheduling;
- Integrating curriculum across content areas;
- Play based activities within content area;
- Facilitating long term projects;
- Guiding children's cognitive development during Choice Time; and
- Effectively engaging families in supporting children's school success.

Kindergarten Guidelines for Professional Development

- *Collect data with kindergarten assessment tools;*
- *Use analyzed data to drive kindergarten-specific professional development decisions;*
- *Provide for delivery of professional development in a variety of formats, including classroom coaching, job-embedded training, and professional learning communities; and*
- *Whenever possible, use coaching to follow through with professional development.*

Section II

School Structures that Support High-Quality Kindergarten

Understanding the characteristics of kindergarten children will help school districts and teachers to create programs and environments that effectively nurture and foster all children's growth and development (NAEYC 2009).

School Organization

Organizing a developmentally appropriate kindergarten program requires special consideration for the unique characteristics and needs of young children.

Readiness

Kindergarten retention, referrals for testing, and families delaying entry to kindergarten are telling indicators that a kindergarten program is not in tune with the developmental needs of children (Graue 2009).

All age-eligible children should have access to a high-quality kindergarten program that is ready for each child. Kindergartners should not be subject to suspension, expulsion, or retention. Rather, the kindergarten curriculum and corollary school supports should be flexible, fitting each child who is legally eligible to attend (Graue 2009).

Retention of children in kindergarten has been the topic of numerous studies. While some teachers and administrators would argue that delaying kindergarten entrance for a year or adding an extra year of kindergarten prior to promotion to first grade gives children additional time to mature, many studies indicate that retention (even when called junior kindergarten, transitional kindergarten, or pre-first grade) has a negative effect on student achievement, attitude toward school, and attendance. There is also a strong correlation between delayed kindergarten entrance and later student dropout rates (Rudolph 1999; Shepard & Smith 1988; Kenneady 2004; West, Meek & Hearst 2000; Balitewicz 1998; Hong & Raudenbush 2005).

Alternatives to retention include professional development, appropriate class sizes, student support that is individualized and flexible, appropriate student assessments, and family involvement in the school community.

Full Day Kindergarten

A range of studies indicate that learning gains from full day kindergarten programs are at least as great as and, in many instances, greater than those of half day programs. Findings from Walston & West (2004) and Housden (1992) indicate that children enrolled in full day, developmentally appropriate kindergarten programs made greater gains in reading, language arts, and mathematics achievement, than those enrolled in half day programs.

A full day schedule allows more time for formal and informal learning activities across the content areas. It provides ample time for projects, engagement in the arts,

individualization, and social interaction with adults and other children. Children have more time to ask questions and explore topics (Brewster 2002; Housden 1992). Full day kindergarten, along with well designed preschool education programs for three- and four-year-olds, has been shown to reduce long term costs for special and remedial education (Housden 1992; Barnett 2002) and reduces the number of children who are held back a grade (Brewster 2002).

Full day kindergarten accommodates the schedules of working families and eliminates the need for children to be transported to alternate child care settings (Housden 1992). School districts with half day schedules often have difficulty arranging after school care for kindergartners.

Class Composition and Staffing

According to the American Educational Research Association (2003), small classes have the greatest impact when experienced in the early grades. Given the nature and needs of kindergarten children, it is optimal that a teacher assistant work alongside the teacher in any kindergarten classroom.

New Jersey Administrative Code regulates:

- Classes of no more than twenty-five children and a full-time teacher (N.J.A.C. 6A:32); except for:
  - Classes of no more that twenty-one children with a full-time teacher and a full-time teacher assistant in school districts with forty percent or more "at risk" students as defined in P.L. 2007, c.260
- Inclusion of children with disabilities to the maximum extent possible.

Staff Qualifications

Teacher qualifications, experience, and skills are important variables in determining classroom quality and the chances of children's school success. In a New Jersey study of kindergarten classrooms in former Abbott school districts (Seplocha & Strasser 2008), teachers who held a Preschool through Grade 3 (P-3) endorsement had, on average, higher scoring classrooms on all measures than the classrooms of teachers who held standard elementary school endorsements. The research also noted that those kindergarten teachers with preschool experience scored higher than those without a preschool background. Those whose experience prior to kindergarten was in teaching higher grades, scored lower, on average.

The National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE) recommends that kindergarten through third grade teachers have:

- An early childhood teaching credential; and
- Professional preparation standards consistent with those established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Teacher Qualifications:

- Kindergarten teachers must be certified according to N.J.A.C. 6A:9;
- Teachers with preschool teaching experience should be given priority for hiring in kindergarten;
- Additional professional development should be provided for any teacher transferring to kindergarten from an upper grade; and
- Districts with a high proportion of children who are English language learners should attempt to hire instructional staff fluent in English as well as the predominant home language of the children.

Assistant Teacher Qualifications:

- Kindergarten teacher assistants must have an appropriate educational background as regulated by N.J.A.C. 6A:9;
- Duties specific to kindergarten should be clearly detailed in the job description; and
- Teacher assistants in kindergarten should be proficient in basic literacy skills and be able to demonstrate standard spoken and written English.

Administrative Qualifications:

- Administrators whose oversight includes kindergarten should have experience, a degree, or certification in early childhood; or
- In the absence of experience specific to early childhood education, should create a multi-year personal professional development plan specific to early childhood education.

School Support Staff:

- All school support staff connected to kindergarten should receive specialized professional development in developmentally appropriate kindergarten practice as well as training in supporting the needs of diverse populations.
- Specialized support staff, including child study team members, therapists, intervention and support team members, and bilingual specialists, should receive training in the kindergarten curriculum to build the school district's capacity to provide appropriate in class supports and services for kindergartners.

Facilities

Kindergarten classrooms can be housed in a variety of settings, but priority should be given to placing kindergartners in P-3 schools or in school buildings designed for preschool and kindergarten. Oversight, regardless of the setting, must be provided by administrators knowledgeable in developmentally appropriate classroom practices for young children.

Classrooms should:

- Have toileting facilities with child sized fixtures that include one toilet and one sink for every ten children and are located in or adjacent to the classroom;
- Be equipped with storage for personal items, outlet covers, tissues, soap and running water for hand washing, covered trash receptacles, windows that open for ventilation, and properly stocked first aid kits;
- Receive regular maintenance and cleaning because children often use the floor for active learning and play. All floor coverings and furnishings should be selected for ease of cleaning and maintenance; and
- Be adapted to the needs of children with disabilities in the room.

Playgrounds should have:

- Fencing;
- Adequate padding (safety matting) under all climbing equipment;
- Age appropriate equipment conforming to regulations found in the Playground Safety Sub-code of the New Jersey Uniform Construction Code;
- A barrier-free design;
- Convenient access to toilets and drinking water; and
- Storage for portable equipment.

Kindergarten Guidelines for School Organization

- *All age-eligible children should have access to kindergarten;*
- *The program should have a no retention policy;*
- *The merits of a full day program should receive careful consideration;*
- *Ability to meet the developmental needs of five- and six-year-old children should be a criterion when choosing kindergarten instructional staff; and*
- *Physical environments, indoors and out, should feature settings designed for kindergartners.*

Teaching the whole child means engaging in consistent, high-quality health, safety, and nutrition practices.

Health, Safety, and Nutrition

Careful consideration should be given to ensuring kindergartners' daily health and nutrition practices. Children should wash their hands after toileting and before eating meals and snacks. Young children should have the opportunity to eat every two to three hours, with food that is served neither too early nor too late during the school day. Ideally, a full day program will offer kindergarten children nutritious choices for lunch and snack, in addition to the option of breakfast.

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (2008a) recommends that children have sixty minutes of physical activity, with no more than thirty minutes of vigorous activity at one time, during their waking day. All kindergartners should have daily access to gross motor space and activities, including at least thirty minutes outside. Physical education classes are not a substitute for the independent, self selected play activities afforded during recess.

Important safety practices include:

- Staff trained in emergency procedures;
- First aid supplies accessible in all classrooms;
- Children's medical and emergency information, including information on allergies, seizures, emergency contacts, and emergency telephone numbers available in each classroom and accessible to every teacher and teacher assistant (including substitutes) in charge of the class;
- Poison identification and storage in locked cabinets. This includes cleaning supplies and any other materials labeled, "keep out of reach of children;"
- Playgrounds, playground equipment, and classroom furnishings that are age appropriate, clean, of safe construction, and in good repair. Children should not be allowed to use indoor or outdoor furnishings that are dirty, need repair, or require replacement;
- Careful and consistent adult supervision of children indoors and out; and
- Adaptations for children with disabilities. This includes pathways that safely accommodate wheelchairs and safe storage for aids such as walkers and crutches.

Kindergarten Guidelines for Health, Safety, and Nutrition

- *Sanitation, including regular hand-washing, should be a high program priority;*
- *Children should have nutritious choices for lunch and snack, in addition to the option of breakfast; and*
- *Children should have daily opportunities for outdoor gross motor activity.*

Transition

Taking a developmental approach to transition means considering the interconnected factors that influence development and learning, including family, school, peers, and the community (NAEYC 2009).

Children's varying experiences prior to school entry and schools' increasingly higher expectations at younger ages makes the transition to kindergarten particularly challenging for many young children and their families. While it is important for districts to prepare teachers, children and their families for this transition, it is even more critical that districts intentionally provide seamless supports for all children as they move through each year, including summer, from preschool through third grade.

Studies show that investing in high quality preschool programs is the first step in closing the achievement gap (Barnett 2002; Rice 2007; Graves 2006). In addition, a growing body of research (Graves, 2006; Mead 2009; Bogard & Takanishi 2005) shows that schools with coherent P-3 programs are able to build on the gains made in preschool. School leaders should see to it that their transition plans ensure the continual progress of children, focused not only on academic skills, but also on the physical, social, and emotional development.

The following is a summary of the components of a strong P-3 program, known to improve student success:

School organization:

- Preschool (in district and community settings) for three and four year olds;
- Full day kindergarten;
- District resources reallocated to the early years; and
- Common planning time designated for leaders and teachers to ensure strong communication and alignment at each level.

Program quality:

- Low teacher-child ratios;
- Teaching assistants for preschool and kindergarten;
- A center-based classroom environment;
- A developmentally appropriate curriculum aligned within and across grades and connected to the standards with a focus on the whole child; and
- A classroom observation instrument used for the purpose of identifying areas needing improvement.

Teacher effectiveness:

- Qualified staff certified to teach P-3;
- Staff skilled in teaching young linguistically and culturally diverse children;

- Staff supervised and mentored by school leaders knowledgeable about developmentally appropriate practices and who receive professional development targeted toward kindergarten and the other early elementary grades.

Student progress:

- Valid screening tools to identify children in need of learning supports;
- A system to track progress of children over time using appropriate performance-based assessments; and
- Collaboration with families and child care or preschool administrators to gather information about children prior to school entry.

Accountability:

- Systems for data collection and analysis to provide information about student progress, program quality, and teacher and administrator effectiveness to families, communities, the school district, and the State.

Family and community engagement:

- Opportunities for families to work with teachers toward educational goals for children;
- For families and community members to become involved in the life of the school; and
- For schools to provide comprehensive social services and learning supports.

P-3 Transition Team

- School districts should establish a P-3 transition team composed of families, community agencies and leaders, and preschool and elementary personnel (such as teachers, child study team and PIRT members, bilingual education specialists, curriculum coordinators, and administrators).

- School administrators should identify a transition team facilitator who sets regularly scheduled meetings and is charged with seeing that transition practices are implemented and reviewed annually.

- The team establishes goals to ensure seamless supports for all children, preschool through grade three, and creates transition activities based on those goals.

A checklist for creating a P-3 transition plan is included in Appendix 5. Included in the checklist is important information on the teacher's role in contributing to the transition plan.

Kindergarten Guidelines for Transitions

- *Involve all stakeholders in designing and implementing a comprehensive transition plan for seamless programming from home, child care, or early intervention settings to preschool, from home or preschool to kindergarten and from kindergarten through third grade;*
- *Include supports for children and families at annual school year transition periods as well as during the summer months; and*
- *Align curricula and assessments with learning standards, both vertically and horizontally.*

Strengthening our schools requires a network of school, family, and community working with and for all children.

School, Family, and Community Connections

Every school district should invest in a system that embraces families in the life of the school, invites co-responsibility and involvement in the education of children, and strengthens mutual trust, respect, and sensitivity. Having a welcoming environment helps reassure anxious families leaving their children to the care of others and paves the way for developing trusting relationships with teachers.

Research shows that family involvement in children's education leads to better outcomes for their children (Arndt & McGuire-Schwartz 2008; Knopf & Swick 2008 in Jacobs & Crowley 2010). School personnel should partner with families by making every attempt to understand obstacles families face, enhance their understanding of child development, assist them in reaching their goals, and involve them in their children's educational experiences.

Defining Family

A family can be composed of parents, guardians, stepparents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, and others living in the household. Families come from a variety of cultural backgrounds, values, and traditions, each with a unique perspective on their child's education. Schools must be careful not to interpret differences as indifference to children's education.

Engaging Families

Family engagement should begin prior to a child entering school. The first point of contact most families have with school districts is during registration, a prime time for building rapport with families and understanding their needs. A family survey can be used to invite each family to share general background information, availability to attend conferences and meetings, and expectations of school. After registration, school districts can follow up with personalized postcards from the classroom teacher, phone calls, and home and/or classroom visits.

During the school year, there are a variety of ways to effectively engage family members in their child's educational experience, from helping at school to taking an active role in educational decision-making processes. Family engagement activities should be intentional and substantive.

A System for Family, School, and Community Partnerships

Implementing a systematic plan for family, school, and community partnerships involves coordinating the work of guidance counselors, social workers, community parent involvement specialists, instructional staff, support staff, and administrators.

Epstein (2002), Halgunseth (2009), and NAEYC (2009) describe components of a well-coordinated system:

Program standards:

- Ensure that all program guidelines are clear, comprehensive, and emphasize ongoing family/community outreach.
- Provide all district staff, including administrators, teachers, teacher assistants, social workers, counselors, nurses, lunch assistants, and custodial staff with training on cultural awareness, sensitivity, and research-based family engagement practices.

Culture and community:

- Promote the acceptance of all families by integrating daily activities in the curriculum that teach awareness and appreciation of the different cultures, practices, and traditions of children in individual classrooms and within the community at large.
- Encourage school staff' to be aware of how personal experiences influence cultural perspective and shape approaches to child-rearing, development, and learning.

Family engagement:

- Get to know each family and focus on family strengths.
- Based on the comfort level of families, make home visits before and during the school year. Visits made by classroom teachers and/or school social workers can provide staff with an understanding of the home environment, child and family interests, and any particular needs.
- Implement activities and services that promote positive child-rearing skills and an understanding of child development, including the importance of play and experiential learning in effective kindergartens.
- Involve families in learning activities at home with their children, including homework and curriculum-related activities.
- Offer specific, individualized strategies that will help families guide their children to be successful in the school environment.
- Create a browsing and checkout library with books, videos, cassettes, brochures, and magazines.

Communication:

- Greet families during drop-off and dismissal times. Have teachers use these times to share information about a child with families.
- Whenever possible, converse with families in their home language.
- Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through school-to-home and home-to-school communications, including family conferences.
- Focus on verbal communication when written language is an obstacle for the family.

- Send frequent communications to families about both individual children and classroom content.

Volunteer opportunities:

- Provide flexible opportunities for families to volunteer and to attend school programs.
- Ask families to participate in something that is worthy of their time.

Decision making:

- Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through the school advisory council, committees, action teams, and other family organizations.
- Hold meetings at different times of the day to accommodate working schedules.
- Make it easy for families to attend meetings by offering transportation and child care.

Community collaboration:

- Provide families with information related to health and social services, refer families to appropriate community agencies when needed, and follow up with any community referrals.
- Coordinate community resources and services for children, families, and the school with businesses, colleges, agencies, and other entities serving families and the local community.

Kindergarten Guidelines for School, Family, and Community Connections

- *Schools should strive to partner with families in substantive ways;*
- *Create a system composed of multiple means for families to engage in the school community;*
- *Recognize and embrace the diversity present in the community; and*
- *Individualize communications based on families' particularized needs.*

Section III

High-Quality Kindergarten in Action

Overview

Designed to give teachers and administrators a current perspective on best practice, this section of the Guidelines details what a kindergarten classroom should look like and what should be happening in that environment on a daily basis, emphasizing:

- an academic perspective that matches the developmental level of kindergarten-age children;

- a center-based classroom environment that supports hands-on activity in each of the content areas;

- a balanced daily schedule that accommodates play based learning across content areas; and

- an approach to curriculum meeting New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards through purposefully planned experiences that:

    - uses New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards as the basis for curriculum and lesson planning decisions;
    - integrates content areas during each segment of the children's daily schedule; and
    - provides opportunities for longer term investigations and projects.

An Academic Perspective that Matches the Developmental Level of Kindergarten Children

Within the perspective that kindergarten programs should be "ready" for all age-eligible children, administrators and teachers base their academic expectations for kindergartners on:

- an understanding of children's developmental milestones and individual variations;
- New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards; and
- developmentally appropriate practice recommendations issued by The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC 2009).

Academic instruction in the kindergarten year is differentiated with multiple entry points, understanding and accommodating young learners' varying:

- background knowledge;
- life experience;
- home culture;
- prior exposure to school or child-care settings;
- physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development; and
- facility with the English language.

Particular consideration is given to the perspective that all kindergarten classrooms should be inclusive, with structured to support children with disabilities alongside typically developing peers.

The kindergarten year is embedded within a continuum of seamless programming that:

- takes into account preschool through third grade transitions;
- emphasizes developmentally appropriate curriculum coordination between grade levels;
- endorses teaching methods tailored to each grade level;
- views continuous, developmentally appropriate cross-grade articulation as essential to ensure seamless programming; and
- engages families in understanding and supporting developmentally appropriate expectations at every grade level.

A Center-Based Classroom Environment that Supports Hands-On Activity in each of the Content Areas

All kindergarten classrooms should be designed around learning centers to support purposefully designed, play based activity as the main vehicle for children's learning. Some center materials should be changed regularly to support skills and concepts under investigation in each of the content areas. Other materials will change based on longer term projects and/or individual children's interests.

Below is a sample of teaching and learning opportunities in classroom centers. Each section describes some suggestions for materials. The sections also discuss what might occur during individual work, interactions between children, and interactions between children and teachers.

Each kindergarten room should include a:

Meeting Area

Featuring:

- a rug for comfortable floor seating; a blackboard or whiteboard; a stand that will support the reading of large-sized books; an easel to write on or to hold chart paper for teacher-modeled and interactive or shared writing with children; a flannel board, pocket charts, and instruments to use during music and movement.

Where children can:

- preview the day's plans; practice listening and speaking skills through activities such as news from home; develop a sense of time through participation in a brief calendar activity; and explore concepts of print while decoding a morning message.

And teachers can:

- give children a mental map of the day by previewing the day's plans; model writing; engage in interactive writing with children; facilitate a sense of community by structuring morning meeting with familiar daily activities that encourage: responsibility (jobs such as graphing the weather), feelings of competence (singing familiar songs together, chosen from an oversized songbook made by the class), membership (including children in the planning process for the day, implementing class rules that are consistent and developed in concert with the children), turn-taking (preparing a daily morning message for children to decode), listening (posing questions that require critical thinking), and sharing of ideas and feelings (teaching conflict resolution skills when addressing classroom problems and issues).

Block Center

Featuring:

- wooden unit blocks; hollow blocks; non-interlocking sets of small blocks; props (people, animals, signs, vehicles, construction worker hats); plastic piping; cardboard tubes; clipboards and writing/drawing materials; and books, photos, floor maps or blueprints of buildings, roads, and bridges.

Where children can:

- recognize and compare shapes while building a tower; talk about the similarities and differences between and among shapes with peers or the teacher; build a structure from imagination or by using a picture as reference; use different shaped blocks to complete a structure (a triangular prism for the roof of a house); substitute blocks for other blocks (two triangular prisms for a rectangle when building a castle); represent their work by drawing the structure and discussing the process; think about measurement (length: "Which boat is longer?" and area: "Which object, the placemat or the book, takes more blocks to cover up?"); and build ramps to explore velocity and distance.

And teachers can:

- interact with individuals and small groups of children; encourage children to recognize geometric shapes and their particular characteristics (attributes); explore relationships between the characteristics of two and three dimensional shapes; use blocks as units to measure classroom items; explore physics ("What did you do to make your tower so tall without falling?"); expand children's vocabulary and language while talking about constructions ("Do you think your building is strong enough to withstand a hurricane?"); allow block structures to stay up for several days; photograph children's structures; place clipboards, pencils, and paper in the block area; add props (decorative cubes, traffic signs, vehicles, animals, people); and add reference material (information books, pictures, and maps).

Literacy Centers

Featuring:

- a library center with a diverse selection of fiction and non-fiction reading material and floor pillows or other soft seating; a listening center with headphones and books and songs on cassette; a writing center with an assortment of lined and unlined paper, writing implements, and book-making supplies; a computer center with access to appropriate software and websites.

Where children can:

- become familiar with a variety of literary genres, read individually or with a friend; create and recreate stories using puppets, props, and flannel boards; listen to books and songs on audiotape; visit familiar websites; play educational games; and compose and/or illustrate stories on paper and on the computer.

And teachers can:

- facilitate a print-rich environment throughout the classroom (signs, charts, morning message, labels, directions, chants, class-made books); arrange areas of the room to accommodate language and literacy by designing a library with comfortable seating, a listening center, a computer, and a writing area; stock a diverse collection of authentic literature and songs for use with a cassette or CD player; rotate book collections that include fiction, non-fiction, and emergent readers; preview all material and websites prior to children's use on the computer; encourage children to collaborate in pairs while at the computer; stock the writing center with a variety of writing tools (pens, pencils, crayons, markers of different thicknesses), a variety of paper that is lined and unlined, and book-making supplies (cardboard, stapler, wallpaper, tape, scissors, glue); prominently display children's work in the classroom; and provide frequent opportunities for children to share their written work (informally, with a friend or two and formally, with the whole class);

Math Center

Featuring:

- a wide variety of math manipulatives, games, and puzzles; materials (for counting, sequencing, sorting, patterning, measuring); nonfiction books about math as well as fiction with story lines that incorporate math; materials for recording or drawing.

Where children can:

- compare amounts ("Which group of bottle caps has more?"); develop reasoning and classifying skills by sorting collections of small objects (buttons, bottle caps, paper clips, beads) by one or more attributes; explore overlapping characteristics using hula hoops as a Venn diagram; practice joining and separating sets using stones in ice cube tray sections; represent data derived from everyday events. ("Which of these three books provides the most information about bears?", lunch options, favorite healthy snack food, favorite television program on Saturday morning) on wall, floor, and table graphs; write numbers while recording amounts (the number of shells in each sorted group); estimate the number of erasers in a jar, then empty the jar and count the erasers by twos to discover how close the estimation is to the actual amount; play board games with spinners or dice to practice numeral

recognition, counting on, number, addition, subtraction; and represent work by drawing and explaining their problem-solving process to peers or the teacher.

And teachers can:

- scaffold children's mathematical abilities by sorting, classifying, and patterning with individuals or small groups of children; use math vocabulary while talking with children; include objects for children to manipulate that relate to a classroom investigation or study; point out fiction and non-fiction books that relate to a particular math idea being explored by children; regularly rotate activities with a particular focus, such as estimating how many small unit cubes will fit in a clear jar and checking; and incorporate weekly "teacher choice' activities to extend on current whole-class math explorations.

Dramatic Play Center

Featuring:

- props and clothing to simulate a variety of familiar home and community environments such as kitchen, office, grocery, restaurant, laundromat, shoe store, supermarket; materials for writing; and a selection of fiction and nonfiction books that include social studies content.

Where children can:

- incorporate math skills by counting, pouring, measuring, setting the table (one-to-one correspondence), using a cash register (coins); incorporate literacy skills by reading about a range of home and community roles or writing a recipe, making lists, or taking orders (restaurant); role play scenarios (food store, hair salon, school); rehearse roles (father, sister, baby, community helpers, jobs/career choices); and problem solve with peers.

And teachers can:

- facilitate individual children's social skills (turn-taking, patience, manners, entering into play, welcoming another person entering into play in a small group setting); as a co-player, scaffold children's play by role playing walking an imaginary puppy; introduce vocabulary related to the particular play topic while conversing with children; stimulate children's mathematical thinking by asking, "How many plates will you need if you invite two friends to have supper with your family?" and have extended conversations while engaged in play with children to expand speaking and listening skills.

Science/Discovery Center

Featuring:

- science tools for observing, comparing, and measuring; notebooks, clipboards, and writing materials to record observations; living things (plants and animals); collections of natural materials (rocks, shells, bark, etc.); examples of simple machines (gears, pulleys, wheels, etc.); and information books with accurate illustrations.

Where children can:

- observe, question, predict, and investigate a wide variety of living and nonliving things over the course of the year; care for a pet; learn about animal habitats; draw and write observations of a growing plant; classify insects, animals, rocks, and plants by their attributes; explore man made materials and recycled materials (different kinds of paper); use simple machines in classroom applications (a clothesline on a pulley to hang artwork); ask questions, make predictions, investigate problems, and discuss findings with classmates and teachers; use computer technology and concept books to learn about science topics.

And teachers can:

- provide living and non-living things for children to explore, compare, and classify; make available notebooks and clipboards, books, video material, computer software and websites that help answer children's questions; post KWL (i.e., what we know, what we wonder about, and what we learned) charts from class discussions; hang accurate pictures or posters aligned with topics under study; provide opportunities to investigate (exploring light by examining shadows at different times of day, exploring play dough and clay to compare their attributes, exploring sound by listening to rain drops on an umbrella); demonstrate how to use science tools (how to collect an insect in a magnifying container); provide sensory experiences with sand and water; and have science conversations with small groups of children that encourage them to ask questions and reflect.

Sand and Water Center

Featuring:

- a sand and water table or deep dishpans; sand, water, or other materials for filling, pouring, scooping, and measuring with different sized objects; plastic tubes, funnels, turkey basters, sponges, items that sink or float, spray bottles, pumps.

Where children can:

- compare and contrast the characteristics of different substances; explore the properties of water; experience sand mixed with water; investigate the concept of flow by pouring and sifting; think about measurement (i.e., weight: using a balance scale, "Which cup of pebbles is heavier/lighter?," capacity: "Which container holds more cupfuls of sand?"); record work in a journal; and discuss the experience of a particular process/exploration with other children and with the teacher.

And teachers can:

- rotate materials throughout the year to spark children's interest and support concepts under study; introduce tools purposefully to the sand/water table based on the type of exploration being encouraged (i.e., a variety of sieves to encourage exploration of the concept of flow); encourage children to discuss ongoing investigations; encourage children to explain and draw/record their experiences and reasoning; record anecdotes and take photos of children's investigations in progress for discussion at Sharing Time.

Art Center

Featuring:

- an easel with paint; tools (a variety of paint brushes, staplers, hole punches, glue, scissors); clipboards with writing/drawing materials for outdoor drawing); a table with nearby access to materials for drawing (crayons, markers, colored pencils), painting (tempra and watercolor), collage (natural and recycled material), sculpting (clay), and construction (wood, recycled cardboard and plastic); and a variety of visual material featuring art techniques, media, and artists.

Where children can:

- explore a variety of materials; translate experience, imagination, and feelings into art; make two-dimensional and three-dimensional art; become involved in a creative process of making art; learn and use art vocabulary; have repeated opportunities to practice a technique, such as print-making; and see, hear, and talk about art from different people, places, and times.

And teachers can:

- provide children with access to a variety of art materials instead of craft projects or pre-drawn coloring activities; demonstrate the appropriate use and care of art materials; model various techniques (e.g., how to roll clay into a coil); use visual arts vocabulary; use children's work and the works of artists to discuss concepts ("What shapes do you see in this painting?"); make specific observations about children's work ("I see you

drew three big blue circles," rather than, "that's beautiful!"); observe and encourage children's problem-solving and persistence during the creative process ("You worked so hard figuring out how to make your sculpture stand without toppling over."); expose children to a wide range visual art and artists; exhibit children's art work with descriptions, avoiding commercially purchased classroom decorations; provide storage so children can revisit their work over time.

Privacy Area

Featuring:

- soft furnishings and quiet activities for one or two children to use.

Where children can:

- reflect, read alone, and relax while listening to music.

And teachers can:

- foster respect by and for all children regarding use of the privacy area; and encourage children to use the privacy area to think, relax, or problem solve.

A Balanced Daily Schedule Accommodating Play Based Learning across Content Areas

The schedules, shown below, for full and half day kindergarten programs are arranged to permit a predictable flow to the school day. They allow children to fully engage in planned activity without interruption for extended periods of time. The schedules include time for content area-specific experiences, but anticipate that literacy, math, science, and social studies experiences will be blended across segments of the day. They are based on the premise that children spend most of their time in activity that is not sedentary. Rather, experiential, hands-on experience dominates a day that asks each child to explore, apply, and extend on concepts and ideas from each content area through investigations and projects. Quieter and more active times are balanced throughout the day. The earlier portion of the day is scheduled with activities that demand the most focus. Specials (if a part of the program) intentionally occur in the latter part of the day. The sample schedules are intended to be used flexibly, with timing determined as much as possible by children's needs and interests in the course of their activities and investigations.

Full Day Kindergarten Schedule		
8:30-8:45	15 minutes	Arrival
8:45-9:00	15 minutes	Morning Meeting
9:00-9:20	20 minutes	Shared Reading
9:20-10:20	60 minutes	Choice Time with Ongoing Investigations/Project Work and Guided Reading
10:20-10:35	15 minutes	Cleanup and Sharing
10:35-10:50	15 minutes	Snack
10:50-11:20	30 minutes	Outdoor Recess
11:20-12:00	40 minutes	Math Explorations
12:00-12:30	30 minutes	Lunch
12:30-1:00	30 minutes	Rest and Independent Reading or Read-Aloud
1:00-1:30	30 minutes	Writing Workshop
1:30-2:10	40 minutes	Choice Time with Ongoing Investigations/Project Work (timed by actual length of overall school day)
2:10-2:50	40 minutes	Specials
2:50-3:10	20 minutes	Sharing, Review, and Closing

Notes

*With 110 minutes of uninterrupted literacy time, the sample provided meets the 90 minute literacy requirement for at risk districts.

**Guided reading will be used in addition to shared reading as the year progresses, based on teachers' observations of children's behaviors as they participate in literacy activities.

**Social studies and science experiences are incorporated with reading, writing, choice, investigations or project work, mathematics, and outdoor portions of the day.

3 Hour Half Day Kindergarten Schedule		
8:30-8:50	20 minutes	Arrival and Morning Meeting
8:50-9:10	20 minutes	Shared Reading
9:10-10:10	60 minutes	Choice Time and Ongoing Investigations or Project Work
10:10-10:45	35 minutes	Outdoor Recess and Snack
10:45-11:10	20 minutes	Math Explorations alternated with Writing Workshop
11:10-11:30	20 minutes	Sharing, Review, and Closing

Notes
*Social studies and science experiences are incorporated with reading, writing, choice, investigations or project work, mathematics, and outdoor portions of the day.

** As the year progresses, guided reading may occur during a portion of Choice Time, based on teachers' observations of children's behaviors as they participate in literacy activities.

2 1/2 Hour Half Day Kindergarten Schedule		
8:30-8:45	15 minutes	Arrival and Morning Meeting
8:45-9:05	20 minutes	Shared Reading
9:05-9:45	40 minutes	Choice Time and Ongoing Investigations or Project Work
9:45-10:15	30 minutes	Outdoor Recess and Snack
10:15-10:40	20 minutes	Math Explorations alternated with Writing Workshop
10:40-11:00	20 minutes	Sharing, Review, and Closing

Notes
*Social studies and science experiences are incorporated with reading, writing, choice, investigations or project work, and mathematics portions of the day.

** As the year progresses, guided reading may occur during a portion of Choice Time, based on teachers' observations of children's behaviors as they participate in literacy activities.

An Approach to Curriculum that Meets New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards through:

- ***purposefully planned experiences that integrate content areas during each segment of the children's daily schedule; and***
- ***opportunities for long term investigations and projects.***

Each segment of the kindergarten day, from arrival and class meeting, to reading, writing, and math experiences, to snack time and recess, serves a purpose in building the foundation for long term school success. Kindergartners make meaning out of content when contexts for learning draw on their experience and immediate world. They develop a strong sense of purpose toward learning when teachers' skillfully planned and executed experiences integrate content areas throughout every segment of the school day.

Arrival

Arrival is a welcoming time that should transition children to the school day.

Teachers should:

- Convey a sense of warmth and predictability in the school environment by welcoming children with individualized greetings and maintaining predictable settling-in routines that children can manage independently;
- Spend extra time supporting children who need more assistance with routines, teaching them how to manage the start of their day with confidence;
- Design the classroom environment (areas for children's coats, lunches, and other belongings; sign-in procedures; returning library books; transitions to Class Meeting) so that children can independently manage settling-in routines; and
- Simplify arrival routines so that the Class Meeting Time can begin promptly to ensure a smooth start to the school day.

Children should:

- Independently manage their belongings; sign-in, greet classmates and teachers; perform other routines such as returning library books and completing class jobs; and
- Transition to Class Meeting Time through a brief activity such as listening to music in the meeting area; conversing with friends on the meeting area rug; looking at books available from a basket in the meeting area; or drawing and writing in journals.

At the beginning of the school year:

- The daily schedule should be displayed with pictures and words at eye level so that kindergartners develop independence, responsibility, and a sense of order; and
- Children will need additional attention from the teacher to develop the skills for managing this time of day. Reading or drawing and writing in journals can purposefully occupy children who complete routines more quickly.

Class Meeting

Class Meeting Time provides a framework for the school day by building community and giving children the information they need to anticipate what will happen during the day.

Teachers should:

- Plan each part of the meeting to emphasize an active exchange of ideas and information through conversation between and among the teacher and children;
- Integrate content area skills and concepts by activities including morning message, calendar, and preview of the day's events;
- Emphasize a participatory atmosphere by including music/movement, interactive reading and writing; and
- Emphasize collaborative social skills to build classroom community.

Children should:

- Interact verbally with peers, teachers, and content during the meeting process;
- Practice, extend, and apply content area skills during morning message, calendar, and discussion of the day's events;
- Participate in music/movement, interactive reading, and interactive writing; and
- Rehearse developing social skills in a group setting.

At the beginning of the school year:

- Additional time and emphasis should be invested in building a classroom community where children can practice social skills, particularly skills that foster an environment that values collaboration in group settings; and
- Special consideration should be given to the attention span of kindergartners. Teachers should be sensitive to cues from the children, planning and pacing whole group times so that children's developmental needs for active engagement are met.

Shared Reading

A time of day for a variety of literacy activities, Shared Reading builds a foundation for reading competence while providing expanded opportunities for language development and exposure to literature.

Teachers should:

- Use on-going, performance-based assessment to inform decisions around which literacy skills to emphasize;
- Use quality literature from different genre;
- Explore concepts, functions of print, and the reading process daily, using a combination of poems, songs, charts, large and small format books featuring authentic literature, as well as reading material with simplified text;
- Promote interest, enjoyment, and motivation by emphasizing classroom conversations and discussions, revisiting familiar stories, and regularly introducing new written material;
- Instill confidence in developing skills by providing multiple opportunities for children to apply language and literacy skills in classroom learning centers and during longer term investigations or project work;
- Differentiate instruction to provide multiple entry points based on the needs of the children in the class; and
- Maintain an atmosphere that is interactive, lively, and non-competitive to build children's confidence as language and literacy learners.

Children should:

- Develop language and literacy skills appropriate for kindergarten-age children, based on New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards for Language Arts Literacy;
- Be working at a level that matches their individual development based on information derived from performance-based assessment;
- Learn concepts and functions of print while experiencing a rich variety of literature and language experiences on a daily basis;
- Value and enjoy exploring language and books;
- Feel confident in their developing abilities through expanded opportunities for applying language and literacy concepts and skills in classroom learning centers and during longer term investigations or project work;
- Experience instruction and support at individual levels of language and literacy development; and
- Participate actively in the process by exchanging ideas and information with classmates and the teacher.

At the beginning of the school year:

- New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards should be carefully reviewed to ensure that the curriculum and lesson planning process for language arts literacy matches the developmental level and appropriate academic expectations for children;
- A systematic process of collecting information within a performance-based assessment system should be initiated for each child. Teachers use this information to plan instruction that meets the particular needs of the children in the class; and
- A tone should be set for Shared Reading that allows for purposeful instruction while maintaining a relaxed, informal, highly interactive atmosphere that invites and motivates language and literacy learning.

Guided Reading

Guided reading will be gradually integrated into the day as the school year progresses. Kindergartners in small groups of two or three will participate in ten minutes of individualized instruction with the classroom teacher once or twice a week. By the end of the school year all children should be participating in some guided reading, with some groups meeting two or three times per week. Groupings are based on teacher observations of individual children's developing literacy behaviors. More formal than Shared Reading time, Guided Reading helps children who are on the verge of reading make the shift to approximating and, then, reading leveled books with a line or two of simple text on each page.

Typically, guided reading occurs within Choice Time. Choice Time should also offer all children the opportunity to practice, apply, and rehearse their developing language and literacy skills through interactive, manipulative activities (teacher choice and child choice) embedded in the classroom learning centers.

Teachers should:

- Establish strong, consistent schedules and learning routines that teach children how to manage their time and activities;
- Form small Guided Reading groupings based on observation/performance-based assessment of children's individual literacy behaviors;
- In late fall (depending on children's literacy behaviors), gradually begin guided reading;
- Individualize reading instruction with each small group of two or three children with similar instructional needs.
- Use beginning leveled books with simple text and natural language for each small group of children;
- Maintain an atmosphere that is interactive, lively, and non-competitive to build children's confidence as language and literacy learners;

- Use observation/performance-based assessment to guide how often each group should meet;
- Embed authentic language and literacy activities (teacher choice and child choice) in classroom learning centers e.g., listening center stories, letter/sound/ word work with manipulatives, writing center activities related to literature or topics under study, charted chants/songs/poems/language experience activities for re-reading, poetry boxes, featured selections in the classroom library, individual student reading boxes containing collections of previously read leveled books, read the room activities, puppet and dramatic play opportunities that encourage oral language;
- Avoid rote worksheet activities; and
- Draw all children into some guided reading by the end of the school year.

Children should:

- Develop language and literacy skills appropriate for kindergarten-age children, based on New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards for Language Arts Literacy;
- Participate in a small group and at a level that matches individual literacy development based on information derived from teacher observation/performance-based assessment;
- Learn and practice reading strategies during Guided Reading by relating story topics to their own experiences, using pictures and language to interpret and elaborate on a story, recognizing language patterns, recognizing frequently used words, predicting and solving unknown words, discussing story plot/language/meaning to predict and solve unknown words, and rereading independently or with a buddy.
- Value and enjoy exploring language and books; and
- Develop competence in their growing literacy abilities through expanded opportunities for practicing, applying, and rehearsing language and literacy concepts and skills in classroom learning centers.

At the beginning of the school year:

- New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards should be carefully reviewed to ensure that the curriculum and lesson planning process for language arts literacy matches the developmental level and appropriate academic expectations for children;
- Teachers should develop a literate classroom environment that includes shared reading, singing, discussions about featured literature, listening to and reciting poetry, responding to stories (through retelling, innovating on text, dramatic reenactment, and artistic creations), independent and buddy "reading," daily writing opportunities (shared and interactive writing, journals, bookmaking, process writing/writing workshop);
- Children should have ample opportunities to develop and practice social skills with peers in classroom learning centers; and

- Children should be carefully coached by teachers in how to navigate choice time routines, including managing teacher and child choices on a choice chart.

Choice Time

Choice Time requires careful orchestration on the part of the teacher. During this segment of the day, there will be some literacy and math activity "teacher choices" that children must complete within the span of a week. The remainder of daily Choice Time is devoted to project work and/or longer term investigations occurring within centers and "child choices," giving children the important opportunity to self- select learning centers and activities. Using a chart to record their individual choices for each day of the week helps each child learn to track completion of "teacher choices." The chart helps teachers track completion of required work and where children are choosing to spend their "child choice" time.

Working in learning centers that are designed to meet New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards gives children an important opportunity to engage in play based activity while practicing content across curricular areas. It is a time for children to practice (rehearsal) and to demonstrate what they know (performance).

Teachers should:

- Design and implement permanent learning center areas;
- Rotate materials throughout the learning centers based on concepts and skills introduced in curricular areas;
- Facilitate children's understanding and participation in Choice Time routines;
- Interact with children during Choice Time as a demonstrator, modeler, and co-player to scaffold children's learning in centers without dominating their activity;
- Incorporate opportunities for learning social skills as children practice negotiating, cooperating, and collaborating;
- Ensure that, throughout the school year, Choice Time is not shortened or subject to ongoing interruptions;
- Purposefully plan weekly "teacher choice" activities that give children specific opportunities to practice and expand on concepts and skills introduced in the content areas of reading, writing, and math through hands-on activities located in centers throughout the room;
- Avoid rote paper and pencil practice in math and language arts literacy in favor of work with manipulatives; and
- Spend part of each Choice Time taking anecdotes about children as part of a performance-based assessment system.

Children should:

- Have access to materials in each center that reflect the goals of New Jersey's Core Curriculum Standards through opportunities for hands-on play based experiences;

- Have the support of a teacher who will scaffold without directing child- chosen activities during Choice Time;
- Learn how to manage time, space, and materials in a group setting under the guidance of a supportive teacher;
- Engage deeply in self-selected activity for an extended period of time; and
- Practice and apply concepts through "teacher choice" activities that are hands-on and play based.

At the beginning of the school year:

- The classroom should be arranged to feature the learning centers. Work tables should not dominate the kindergarten classroom environment. Rather, tables that can also be used during Math Explorations, Writing Workshop, Snack, and Lunch times should be located within centers throughout the room;
- Careful planning should go into a "choice" system and chart that features the children's names and, in pictures and words, the teacher-initiated choices for the week. As children complete a teacher choice, they can make a check mark or use a Velcro tab to keep track of their weekly responsibilities;
- Teachers should spend ample time introducing children to the "choice" system and to each of the centers. This includes demonstrating some ways materials can be used in each area and how to clean up when finished with materials in a center;
- Teachers may want to initiate a system of asking children to articulate their initial plans for Choice Time as part of the transition to this segment of the day; and
- A system for performance-based assessment should be organized and ready to implement when school starts.

Investigations/Project Work

Longer term investigations or project work gives children the opportunity to engage in activity that integrates content areas around a central question, idea, or topic. Social studies and science content provide optimal starting points for longer term investigations and project work in kindergarten. Engaging in longer term projects means that Shared Reading, Writing Workshop, Math Explorations and Choice Time can incorporate elements of the question, idea, or topic under study.

Teachers should:

- Use social studies and science content, explorations of new materials, and problem-solving opportunities as springboards for longer term investigations and project work;
- Embed language, literacy, and mathematics concepts and skills;
- Integrate the arts;
- Employ an approach that emphasizes critical thinking skills in the process of learning or exploring something; and

- Document the children's process with work samples, anecdotes, photographs, audio, and video recording.

Children should:

- Have opportunities for extended explorations in social studies and science topics that raise questions about natural and man-made things in their environment, about naturally occurring events, and about people and places in their immediate world;
- Practice and apply language arts literacy and mathematics concepts and skills in the context of the project or investigation;
- Experience the arts in by representing their project/investigation work through drawing, painting, three-dimensional constructions, music, movement, and dramatization;
- Engage in making predictions, collecting and analyzing information, drawing conclusions during the project/investigation; and
- Regularly discuss questions, ideas, observations, and findings with and as a class.

At the beginning of the school year:

- Teachers should begin observing and collecting information about children's interests to inform planning for longer term investigations and project work; and
- Potential community resources and events should be surveyed.

Cleanup

Cleanup should be considered as part of the kindergarten social studies curriculum. This time of day builds community by designating group responsibilities for maintaining the classroom's physical environment.

Teachers should:

- Organize the class into teams with rotating responsibilities for maintaining classroom areas;
- Systematically teach teams how to accomplish the task; and
- Highlight the positive outcomes of a well-maintained classroom community.

Children should:

- Practice responsibility in caring for their classroom environment;
- Practice working cooperatively in a group to achieve a common goal; and
- Feel a sense of pride and accomplishment in a well-maintained classroom community.

At the beginning of the school year:

- Additional time should be invested in helping children understand why classroom maintenance is important. Supporting children in learning what is expected to maintain each area, in developing the skills to accomplish the task, and in cooperating with classmates to get the job done is critical to implementing a system that will run smoothly for the entire school year.

Sharing

Sharing allows children to describe and explain the experiences they engaged in during Choice Time.

Teachers should:

- Communicate the value of sharing the thoughts, ideas, processes, reasoning, and outcomes of one's work;
- Teach children different ways to discuss their writing, paintings, constructions, activities, investigations, and projects;
- Ask children what they noticed, observed, and appreciated about classmates' work; and
- Encourage children to use discussion as a springboard for continuing a process, expanding on an idea, or embarking on a new exploration.

Children should:

- Experience the value of communicating their thoughts, as well as listening to the thoughts of others to begin to understand that people can have different perspectives about the same event or situation;
- Practice communicating effectively and with different purposes, depending on what they are describing to the class;
- Expand their ability to observe and notice the activity of others; and
- Develop plans based on their discussions with the group.

At the beginning of the school year:

- Ample time should be spent helping children understand what Sharing means, demonstrating, and practicing what the process looks and sounds like, and encouraging children to develop their listening and speaking skills when sharing in a group.

Snack

Having a snack, even in a half day kindergarten program, gives the teacher and children an opportunity to participate in a mealtime ritual that includes the important element of conversation.

Teachers should:

- Be proactive regarding nutritious food choices;
- Plan an informal atmosphere that encourages social conversation;
- Rotate during the week to engage in conversation with small groups at their tables; and
- Ensure proper sanitation with any food handling and distribution, hand washing, table cleaning, and garbage disposal.

Children should:

- Experience a nutritious lifestyle;
- Converse socially with classmates;
- Have opportunities for conversation with the teacher; and
- Learn and practice mealtime sanitary procedures, including hand-washing, food handling, and garbage disposal.

At the beginning of the school year:

- School districts should implement carefully considered snack food guidelines for families sending snack from home. School supplied snack foods should be nutritious food choices; and
- Teachers should intentionally plan and model an atmosphere that invokes a family mealtime convention of conversing while enjoying food together.

Outdoor Recess

Every kindergarten program should be committed to daily Outdoor Recess where children can be physically active, build gross motor skills, and freely choose from a variety of activities that promote fitness and well-being.

Teachers should:

- Be committed to daily outdoor recess as essential to a healthy lifestyle;
- Be proactive in teaching and maintaining safety, using rules developed with the children;
- Consider outdoor recess as a time when children can freely choose their activity;
- Make available a variety of ancillary equipment (balls, jump ropes, sand toys, tricycles);

- Facilitate cooperation and collaboration during play;
- Engage in supporting children to acquire and refine skills such as skipping;
- Scaffold children's play by engaging with, but not dominating play activity; and
- Consider enhancing outdoor recess time throughout the year with materials such as a science backpack, bubbles, or paint brushes and water.

Children should:

- Experience outdoor physical activity as a routine part of daily life;
- Consistently practice safety, using rules they develop with the teacher;
- Freely choose their activities;
- Have access to equipment such as balls, bowling pins, hula hoops, jump ropes, sand toys, and tricycles in addition to gross motor structures;
- Practice cooperation and collaboration while playing with classmates;
- Have adult support, when appropriate, to acquire and refine gross motor skills; and
- Have opportunities to engage with the teacher as a co-player during recess.

At the beginning of the school year:

- All playground equipment should be thoroughly checked prior to the beginning of the school year;
- Teachers should be proactive at the start of school, assuming that every child needs to learn how to safely use outdoor equipment;
- Safety should be discussed, demonstrated, and practiced consistently when on the playground; and
- Simple, positively stated playground rules should be developed with the children.

Math Explorations

Daily math time begins with a whole group mini lesson followed by teacher-planned, small group explorations. In two or three small groups, working either independently or with teacher/assistant teacher guidance, children deepen their understandings of mathematical concepts. Explorations in mathematics, both whole and small group, focus on interactive, hands-on activity emphasizing rich teacher-child conversations and use of a wide variety of manipulatives.

Teachers should:

- Plan mathematics content appropriate for kindergarten-age children, based on New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards for Language Arts Literacy;
- Use on-going, performance-based assessment to inform daily teaching decisions geared to individuals and groups;
- Use whole group discussion combined with small group and individual hands-on explorations with manipulatives as the daily vehicle for mathematics instruction;

- Engage children in the processes of reasoning, problem solving, communicating verbally, and recording math experiences;
- Instill confidence in children's developing skills by providing multiple opportunities for children to apply mathematics in classroom learning centers and during longer term investigations or project work;
- Differentiate instruction to provide multiple entry points based on the needs of the children in the class; and
- Maintain an atmosphere that is interactive, lively, and non-competitive to build children's confidence as mathematics learners.

Children should:

- Develop mathematical understandings appropriate for kindergarten-age children, based on New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards for mathematics;
- Have focused opportunities to represent, compare, and order whole numbers; join and separate sets; describe, manipulate, and pattern shapes and objects; analyze data, and measure and compare using manipulatives that are standardized in size (unit cubes, paper clips, straws);
- Be working at a level that matches their individual development based on information derived from performance-based assessment;
- Explore mathematics daily through discussion and hands-on manipulative explorations;
- Enjoy engaging in, talking about, and recording mathematics explorations as a process within a variety of everyday problem solving contexts;
- Feel confident in their developing abilities through expanded opportunities for applying mathematics concepts and skills in classroom learning centers and during longer term investigations or project work;
- Experience instruction and support at individual levels of mathematics development; and
- Participate actively as mathematics learners by exchanging ideas and information with classmates and the teacher.

At the beginning of the school year:

- New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards for mathematics should be carefully reviewed to ensure that the curriculum and lesson planning process matches the developmental level and appropriate academic expectations for kindergarten-age children;
- The National Council of Mathematics recommendations and focal points for kindergartners should inform curriculum development;
- A systematic process of collecting information within a performance-based assessment system should be initiated for each child. Teachers will use the information to plan instruction that meets the particular needs of the children in the class;
- Manipulatives used during focused mathematics times should be introduced first as open-ended materials for children to freely explore during Choice Time; and

- A tone should be set for Mathematics Explorations that allows for purposeful instruction while maintaining a relaxed, informal, highly interactive atmosphere that invites and motivates mathematics learning.

Lunch

A nutritious midday meal and the opportunity to socialize with classmates should be part of each child's kindergarten day. Optimally, kindergartners should eat in their classrooms, a setting that minimizes transitions and provides simplified procedures with appropriately sized seating. The guidelines found below are generalized to accommodate classroom and cafeteria settings and should be used where applicable by setting.

Teachers should:

- Be proactive regarding nutritious food choices;
- Ensure that children are taught and able to manage lunchtime routines independently;
- Encourage a lunchtime atmosphere that includes socialization; and
- Model, teach, and monitor sanitary procedures including food handling and distribution, hand washing, table cleaning, and garbage disposal.

Children should:

- Experience a nutritious lifestyle;
- Be comfortable with and able to manage lunchtime routines independently;
- Anticipate and participate in lunch as a social time for conversation with classmates as well as an eating time; and
- Learn and practice sanitary procedures, including hand washing, food handling, and garbage disposal.

At the beginning of the school year:

- School districts should implement carefully considered food guidelines for families sending lunches from home. Any school supplied lunches should be composed of nutritious, well-balanced meal components;
- If lunch takes place in a school cafeteria, kindergartners should receive extra attention so they can learn and feel comfortable with lunch procedures;
- Cafeteria staff and any school personnel attending to kindergartners during lunch should receive training in developmentally appropriate expectations for and interactions with young children; and
- Whether lunch takes place in the classroom or in the cafeteria, the school district should intentionally plan and model an atmosphere that invokes a family mealtime convention of conversing while enjoying food together.

Rest and Independent Reading or Read-Aloud

All kindergarten children should receive a quiet time each day to rest or read.

Teachers should:

- Plan for a quiet period of time each day with an atmosphere conducive to rest, relaxation, and reflection for children;
- Individualize this time to allow quiet reading or listening to soft music as a choice; and
- Be sensitive to cues from the children that rest time should change to a quiet reflection and independent reading or read-aloud time as the year progresses.

Children should:

- Be able to anticipate a time of day that quietly invites sleep, rest, relaxation, and reflection;
- Have the alternative of reading a book or listening to soft music while resting; and
- Continue to experience this quieter time of day even when a transition to a reflection and read-aloud time occurs during the school year.

At the beginning of the school year:

- Children need different amounts of rest. Some children may sleep during this time while others may just rest their bodies and their minds to recharge for the remainder of the day. While the focus may shift from rest to independent reading or read-aloud during the course of the year, the tone for a quieter time of day should be set at the beginning of school.

Writing Workshop

Writing Workshop gives kindergartners an opportunity to express themselves as storytellers, authors, and illustrators. It also provides a time to apply emergent understandings about letter sounds, words, and sentences in functional print contexts.

Teachers should:

- Set the stage for Writing Workshop by using familiar shared reading selections, along with everyday reasons for writing;
- Systematically demonstrate and model literary genre, alphabetic principles, concepts of print, and letter formation;
- Develop a routine for writing workshop that children can manage independently, including demonstration, children's drawing/writing time, and sharing;

- Establish multiple entry points, accepting each child's level of development as a starting point in the process of being a writer;
- Conference with some children every day to support and scaffold their writing;
- Provide time for children to share their writing process and products with the group; and
- Systematically collect and analyze children's work to inform instruction.

Children should:

- Develop an awareness that everyone writes for a variety of purposes;
- Have daily exposure to the literacy skills that enable emergent writing;
- Manage the writing workshop routine independently;
- Feel confident in their emerging abilities as storytellers, illustrators, and authors;
- Have regular opportunities to revisit their work and to conference with the teacher; and
- Have regular opportunities to give and receive feedback while sharing their work with classmates.

At the beginning of the school year:

- New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards for Language Arts Literacy should be carefully reviewed to ensure that the curriculum and lesson planning process matches the developmental level and appropriate academic expectations for kindergarten-age children;
- Consistent Writing Workshop procedures (i.e., illustrating, writing, include your name, and date your work with a stamp) should be implemented; and
- Teachers should ensure that Writing Workshop does not become a handwriting exercise. Kindergarten-age children should practice letter formation in naturally occurring contexts, using lined and unlined paper, and based on teacher modeling. Formalized, rote handwriting drill should not be part of the kindergarten curriculum.

Specials

Specials, if part of a school district's kindergarten programming, should be used to directly support specific aspects of the classroom curriculum. Specials teachers will ideally work in conjunction and consultation with classroom teachers. With the exception of physical education, the content of kindergarten specials is best delivered in the context of the children's classroom and curriculum.

Specialists should:

- Work with children in their classroom learning centers or in appropriate whole group instruction;

- Synchronize lessons with the kindergarten curriculum goals and the classroom's current activity focus;
- Plan experiences in consultation with the classroom teacher;
- Provide resource material to classroom teachers;
- Consider diverse populations of learners when planning lessons; and
- Use teaching methods developmentally appropriate for kindergarten-age children.

Children should:

- Not be required to be sedentary and attend for inappropriate periods of time; and
- Be exposed to content area information, ideas, and activities that complement their curriculum and current classroom investigations or project work.

At the beginning of the school year:

- Professional development for specialists should include the kindergarten curriculum, age appropriate methods for delivering instruction, and support for diverse populations.

Sharing, Review, and Closing

It is important to close the classroom day as it began, with everyone coming together as a community.

Teachers should:

- Develop a consistent closing routine for packing up;
- Briefly reflect on the day's highlights with child input;
- Give children some information that allows them to anticipate and visualize what the next day will be like; and
- Implement an interactive closing ritual (song, story, poem) to preface goodbyes and departure.

Children should:

- Participate in a packing up routine that is consistent and can be managed independently;
- Engage in summing up their school day;
- Be able to anticipate what the next school day will be like; and
- Feel the rhythm of their school day come to an end by transitioning with a predictable, comfortable closing.

At the beginning of the school year:

- Sensitivity to the fact that the end of the class day is yet another transition for kindergartners will lead to establishing a routine that assures children do not leave belongings behind, that the teacher and classmates will be there the next day, and that the flow of activity from one day to the next will remain predictable and consistent.

Snapshot of a Kindergarten Day

Arrival

Ms. Lee greets children individually as family members drop them off at the classroom door. "Good morning Marla." "Have a nice day, Ms. Westin. How did that shoe tying tip work out for Marla?" "Hi, Allen. Did you have fun last night at your big brother's baseball game?" " 'Bye, Miriam. Thanks for dropping Allen off. Have a great first grade day." Ms. Lee is invested in establishing community in her classroom. She knows that offering friendship, sharing feelings, and hearing about family happenings helps the relationships grow. "Take care, Margarita. You don't want to trip over Jamar's backpack. Jamar, let's get that backpack out of the way of your friends." Respect and caring are two important elements taught through teacher modeling. The teacher is fostering a classroom climate where children's respect and caring for each other is as much in evidence as their developing abilities in mathematics and language arts literacy.

Ms. Lee turns to greet three children who appear at the doorway accompanied by the teacher assistant, Mr. Aguilare. "I thought I heard you coming, singing *The Name Game*. Good morning!" During Arrival, Mr. Aguilare always escorts children who ride the bus to school. Aside from ensuring the children get to class safely, he doesn't miss a moment's opportunity for learning. From rhymes, chants, and songs that enhance phonemic awareness, to math story problems, Mr. Aguilare knows which skills Ms. Lee is focusing on and turns transitions into opportunities to extend those concepts. The children put their coats and backpacks away, sign in on the attendance chart and complete a variety of class responsibilities (charting home/school lunch, watering plants, feeding the hamster, exchanging lending library books) while chatting informally with classmates.

The children begin to gather in the meeting area. Mr. Aguilare is on hand to chart any "news from home" that individual children wish to share. Mr. Aguilare is trained in the kindergarten curriculum. He uses this shared writing opportunity to model how to stretch the sounds in words as he transcribes and to demonstrate conventions of print such as spacing, capital letters, and punctuation. As the school year progresses, children become more and more involved in the mechanics of writing their individual news from home sentences. They begin to "share the pen" with Mr. Aguilare, filling in some of the letters in a word that he pronounces slowly, writing sight words, and adding punctuation. During the course of a week, each child will have one or two opportunities to discuss his or her news in more depth with the whole group at morning meeting.

Asking children to work with print in a way that is purposeful is important to Ms. Lee. And news from home is a powerful way to give each child special moments to share, use oral language, practice listening skills, and express and receive empathy and caring in a group, while putting emergent reading and writing abilities to work.

This morning, girls and boys gathering in the meeting area are singing along with a CD while they wait for the Morning Meeting to begin. On other days, they might read or participate in movement activities with music.

Morning Meeting

Ms. Lee likes to start Morning Meeting promptly. Her meeting structure considers both the children's interests and her own expectations for the day. She knows that late or erratic start times keep children (and families who are dropping them off) from establishing routines that get the day off to a good start. If something unusual delays the start of the day, she will ask children to work with math manipulatives, write in their journals, or share a book with a partner.

Mr. Aguilare transitions the children to Morning Meeting by completing the "news from home" routine. Each day, two or three children discuss their news from home in more depth with the class, building confidence, competence, and bridges between home and school.

After a greeting song, Ms. Lee sets the context for the day. She highlights book selections, math activities, and other plans. She draws children's attention to experiences that connect to their current exploration of water.

She then uses a morning message activity as a way to differentiate instruction for less and more experienced readers and writers in her class. On some days, her morning message is teacher directed and used for the purpose of choral reading. The children might participate in identifying letters, sounds, words, punctuation, and concepts of print (left to right, top to bottom, return sweep, spacing). Using highlighting tape, puppets, wands, and clapping or making body movements for various print conventions are all techniques Ms. Lee uses to keep the activity lively and engaging for the class. Other days, morning message will be similar to the news from home process, with children more directly engaged in writing the message with the teacher. Children might "share the pen" by taking turns writing in missing letters and words at the morning message board, use individual whiteboards on their laps to write missing letters and words, or dictate to the teacher what to write next. Later in the year (and depending on the skill levels of individual children in the class), Ms. Lee might begin to involve children in creating the class morning message. For this process, she will give pairs of children the opportunity to compose the morning message sentence during Arrival. The children will use invented spelling along with known sight words and punctuation. Ms. Lee extends on the message activity by leaving it posted for children to reread throughout the day. Each day, she invites a child to draw an illustration to accompany the message.

Next are brief calendar and weather activities. Ms. Lee knows that calendar discussions are most relevant to the mathematical concept of time (yesterday, tomorrow, next week, counting the number of days until a specific event). Today, she asks the children how many days have elapsed since it last rained. Math also takes place during morning meeting when the class uses a number line to count and represent how many days they have been in

school. Exploring base ten, the children take daily turns pulling a straw from a container and then, bundling the straws into groups of ten. Each day's weather is graphed by type on a chart and periodically analyzed by the class.

Ms. Lee paces Morning Meeting carefully. She wants the children's full attention for the next segment of the day, Shared Reading. Giving the children a chance to stretch, she transitions them with a song/movement activity, *Raindrops Are Fallin' on My Head*.

Shared Reading

Shared Reading is a collaborative, whole class activity designed to introduce the children to a variety of genres, authors, and illustrators within the process of developing skills as readers. Ms. Lee's goals for Shared Reading are facilitating children's:

- Understanding that reading is important and enjoyable;
- Interest in becoming readers and writers, themselves;
- Connections to text through their personal experiences and background knowledge;
- Knowledge about conventions of print; and
- Knowledge about using the three cueing systems (semantic, syntactic, and graphophonemic) when reading.

Shared Reading typically begins with singing and chanting some familiar songs and poems printed on large chart paper and previously illustrated by the children. Ms. Lee uses each familiar selection as an opportunity to differentiate her instruction, whether it is conveying to children that as a community of learners, everyone has something to contribute to the conversation, attending to conventions of print, or using one of the three cueing systems. After the class sings, *It's Raining, It's Pouring,* Ms. Lee uses some words from the song to play a phonemic awareness game. "Which word has a different beginning sound: rain, roar, train?" Ms. Lee then turns to a piece of authentic children's literature. She uses books from the school library as well as selections available in big book format. Ms. Lee uses each story for three to five days, exploring literary elements, conventions of print, cueing systems, grammar, and language with the children. During the school year, many re-readings will take place as the children's repertoire of familiar stories grows.

Today's selection is *What Will the Weather Be Like Today?* by Paul Rogers. Ms. Lee reads the title, author, and illustrator; takes the children on a picture walk through the book; and asks them to make some predictions about the story. Ms. Lee rarely interrupts a first reading, allowing children to focus on the content. As the story ends, she poses a question, "How many different kinds of weather can you think of?" Hands go up and Ms. Lee transcribes the children's responses, emphasizing some initial and final consonant sound/symbol connections as she writes. She adapts her instruction to accommodate Soon Yu, a child with an IEP. Each year, Ms. Lee has one or two children in her class with individualized education plans. She works closely with the school's child study team to implement these children's functional goals.

As Shared Reading comes to a close, Ms. Lee transitions the class to Choice Time by asking individuals or groups of children for their initial plans. On some days, the children might use individual whiteboards to sketch or write their plans. A classroom "choice chart" helps the children learn how to regulate their time and activities throughout the week.

Choice Time

During Choice Time the children engage in math, language and literacy, science, and social studies activities embedded in the classroom learning centers. The classroom's materials and resources reflect the home languages of the children in the class. Particular attention is given to labeling, props, and literature in home languages other than English. Ms. Lee is committed to giving children time to engage deeply in pursuits of their own choosing. She carefully balances "teacher choices" with "child choices" by using a choice chart. The chart is a grid containing the days of the week and each child's name. Alongside the chart is a list of the teacher choices for the week. Teacher choice activities always include mathematics and language arts activities that give children time to practice, apply, and extend on curriculum content. These activities are embedded in the classroom learning centers. Teacher choices might also be related to a science or social studies exploration underway.

The rest of Choice Time consists of activities that children choose to engage in at the classroom learning centers. Each child charts his or her completion of teacher choices. By the end of the week each child will complete all the teacher choices. Ms. Lee allows lots of time at the beginning of the year for the children to learn to self-regulate their activity by using the choice chart.

This week's teacher choices consist of: an absorption experiment in the science learning center (Using eye droppers and small cups of water with foil, fabric, waxed paper, and construction paper, children will explore which materials absorb water and record their findings.), a story starter at the writing center ("What will I do when it's raining out?") that will later be compiled into a class book, watercolor paints in the art center (exploring how this kind of paint reacts with water and responds to different kinds of paper), making addition and subtraction stories with weather symbols in the math center, and a write the room activity (With clipboards and pencils to record the words they find, children will search the room for weather word cards with corresponding picture clues prepared by Mr. Aguilare.).

As Choice Time begins, Rose and Luz head for the watercolors. "Let's make purple puddles together," says Rose. "Just like the puddles on the playground yesterday!" says Luz. Ms. Lee spends some time with several children exploring absorption. Tara is recording her findings. Using paper and crayons, she draws a picture of the foil and puts a big "x" on top. Joaquin copies the word "absorption" from the preprinted card on the table. He writes "yes" next to his drawing of a piece of construction paper.

Ms. Lee takes out her pad of sticky notes to jot down anecdotes. She makes a note to herself to add some large turkey basters to the sand and water table to encourage further

investigation of absorption. Ms. Lee also records some of the extended conversation she hears going on between Luz and Rose as they make their purple puddles.

Several children are building a boat in the block area. They study illustrations of boats in information books and, with pencil and paper on clipboards, draw some sketches about their ideas. In the dramatic play area, Robert, Dina, and Vincent are wearing different kinds of rain gear. "My mommy bought me yellow boots and a yellow umbrella," says Dina. Vincent exclaims, "That's a match!" "I don't need an umbrella. My poncho has a hood," says Robert.

In the math center, Mr. Aguilare sits down with Rasa as she makes some number stories using cut-outs of umbrellas on a magnetic board. Eli gets a clipboard and records Rasa's stories using numerals.

Each child places a Velcro tab on the choice chart after completing a teacher choice activity. Ms. Lee keeps an eye on the chart, noting any children who need a reminder to complete their teacher choices by the end of the week.

As the year progresses, Ms. Lee gauges when to begin Guided Reading within this segment of the day. She individualizes the process, providing ten minutes of guided reading once or twice a week for children who are ready to benefit from additional small group exposure to concepts of print and reading strategies. Today, she is working with three children who are early emergent readers. Ms. Lee introduces the title of the story. Combined with information from the cover illustration, she asks the children to predict what the story is about. The children take a picture walk through their copies of the leveled reader. Ms. Lee models the story's language pattern by reading the first two pages. She continues, using cloze technique, while encouraging the children to assume much of the reading. A second, choral reading by the children follows, along with a discussion focusing on story meaning. Whenever possible, Ms. Lee draws parallels to the children's real life experiences. She also embeds mini lessons (e.g., concepts of print, sight words, reading strategies). Tomorrow, Ms. Lee will engage in guided reading with two children who are upper emergent readers. She will target the children's specific needs, and at this level, might include a focus on meaning, structure and/or visual cues. Ms. Lee makes provisions for follow up through regular opportunities for independent practice. Children are encouraged to reread their new leveled reader with a buddy. They are also encouraged to choose selections from baskets of familiar books.

Cleanup and Sharing

Ms. Lee considers Cleanup and Sharing as daily routines that contribute to each child's growing abilities to collaborate, cooperate, negotiate; to develop a strong sense of belonging to and responsibility for the well-being of a small community; and to develop language and critical thinking skills. At the beginning of the year, she organizes cleanup teams that rotate through the jobs required to keep each area of the classroom in tip-top shape. She takes the time to teach each child how to complete the assigned task along with the importance of a job well done. During the year, she continues to draw the children's

attention to the fact that their classroom community is a pleasant and inviting place to be because everyone cares about each other and their environment. As children complete their team tasks, they transition to the meeting area where everyone is engaged in a movement activity, "Susie's galoshes make splishes and sploshes and slooshes and sloshes, as Susie steps slowly, along in the slush," that includes language/word play.

Sharing is considered "performance," an important step in the learning process. Today, Ms. Lee invites Rose and Luz to talk about their purple painting. "The watercolors made puddles on paper," reports Luz, "just like the rain on the sidewalk." "Hey," observes David, "it slooshes, just like Susie's galoshes." He stands up to demonstrate. Ms. Lee makes a note to put paper toweling in the art center. Tomorrow, she will encourage the children to predict and explore what happens when using watercolors on paper towels.

The boat builders from the block area talk about their work in progress, sharing one of the sketches they worked on while brainstorming how the boat should be built. They ask the class for some ideas about how to add a sail.

Newly created pages for the class book about weather are shared. Allen suggests that Marla add some lightning bolts to her drawing. "That's a great idea," says Marla, "I'll do that tomorrow. Will you help me?" "Sure thing," says Allen. "I can make terrific lightning bolts!"

Snack

Snack affords everyone an opportunity for socializing while eating healthy foods. Snack foods provided by the school follow the United States Department of Agriculture standards. The school district provides nutrition education for families and outlines the kinds of healthy foods that families should send to school for snacktime. At small tables throughout the classroom (sanitized by Mr. Aguilare during Sharing), groups of children serve themselves and pour juice from small pitchers. Each child washes his/her hands prior to sitting down. During snack time, Ms. Lee and Mr. Aguilare each engage in extended conversation with small groups of children.

Outdoor Recess

The school district considers daily Outdoor Recess a part of the kindergarten curriculum. The only exception to Outdoor Recess is severe weather alert conditions. Adult playground supervision includes attention to safety, social, and collaborative problem solving skills, in addition to children's developing gross motor skills. "Ms. Lee," asks Sari, "can I jump in the puddles?" Ms. Lee brings over a pair of rubber boots for Sari to put on. She often brings additional materials from home to use in the classroom. Mr. Aguilare helps three children negotiate their pretend play roles. Playing catch, assisting children with hopping, skipping, and jumping rope are other typical teacher-child interactions during outdoor recess. Ms. Lee provides indoor choices for gross motor activity when the children can't go outdoors.

Math Explorations

The math center in Ms. Lee's classroom contains carefully chosen manipulatives that complement the curriculum and provide differentiated opportunities for math explorations. Some materials and activities are rotated to complement the current mathematics focus. Ms. Lee's goals for mathematics learning include:

- Encouraging interest in mathematics by drawing on children's background knowledge and making connections to everyday situations;
- Building on children's problem solving and reasoning processes;
- Integrating mathematics learning with other content areas; and
- Embedding mathematics throughout the school day.

Ms. Lee Math Explorations with a mini lesson. Today's focus is number stories. She shows the class one of the number stories Rasa and Eli created during Choice Time. Then, Mrs. Lee gives seven volunteers rain ponchos from the dramatic play prop box. She tells a number story about four children walking in the rain and three children joining them along the way. As the volunteers dramatize the story, Mrs. Lee emphasizes that there are many ways to approach a math problem. She asks children to share their strategies for solving the problem. As the lesson continues, Mrs. Lee reinforces use of "+," "-," and "=" symbols by asking the class to use their slates record the dramatized addition and subtraction stories. The children then break into three small groups. Ms. Lee tailors the lesson to accommodate different learning styles. One group works independently with magnetic shapes to make number stories, a second group uses slates to practice number problems using the addition, subtraction and equal symbols with Ms. Lee, and the third group invents more rain poncho stories with Mr. Aguilare.

Lunch

Mr. Aguilare goes to pick up the lunch cart from the school cafeteria. The kindergartners in this building eat lunch in their classrooms. The family style meals and setting give children opportunities to develop independence (managing serving routines) and social skills (eating at kindergarten sized tables and chairs, in small groups, and in an environment more conducive to language development and social interactions than the big school cafeteria). Ms. Lee sanitizes the tables while children are washing up. The children take seats at classroom tables located in various areas of the room. Ms. Lee bridges the transition by asking the children to share their small group math experiences. When Mr. Aguilare arrives with the cart, Ms. Lee goes to lunch. Mr. Aguilare sets out the serving bowls of food. The children serve themselves independently. Mr. Aguilare circulates among the children.

Each day, he rotates among the table groups, staying long enough to join in lunch conversation with some of the children. Everyone's thoughts and ideas are valued in Ms. Lee's kindergarten class. Typically, the children have many anecdotes to share with classmates and teachers about their interests and daily experiences. As Lunch draws to an end, soft music is turned on, signaling everyone to clean up and transition to Rest.

Rest and Independent Reading or Read Aloud

Ms. Lee returns and Mr. Aguilare goes to lunch. Ms. Lee is sensitive to the children's varying rest needs. Everyone benefits from experiencing a quiet time of day, but, as the year progresses, many children prefer to engage in independent reading on their mats/blankets with soft music in the background. Ms. Lee might use a portion of the time for a small or whole group read aloud. The children particularly enjoy hearing re-readings of favorite literature.

Writing Workshop

Ms. Lee has four goals for Writing Workshop. She wants each child to:

- Find and develop his or her voice as a writer (i.e., translate what he or she knows, thinks, and feels into oral and written, illustrated stories);
- Develop a process for writing, from choosing topics to starting and ending a piece of writing;
- To learn how to revisit and make changes to a piece; and
- Understand that writing has everyday purposes.

She begins each writing workshop with a mini lesson that focuses on something that writers need to know about as part of the process of writing. Writing workshop mini lessons include workshop procedures and the craft of writing, as well as teaching the children about spelling, punctuation, and usage. The mini lesson is followed by independent writing, and/or individual conferences as children work on self selected topics, teacher selected topics, or topics related to a particular investigation underway in the classroom. Writing workshop ends with sharing. Each day, several children will share their work in process with the rest of the class.

Today, Ms. Lee is modeling how one might brainstorm ideas for an "all about" book. She begins by reminding the class about a recently read information book, *When a Storm Comes Up*, by Allan Fowler. "If you're going to write an "all about" book," she says, "you'll want to begin by thinking about something that you know lots about. For example, I know lots of things about teaching kindergarten, so I might write a book about that. What might you choose to write about?" Rasa raises her hand. "Ms. Lee, I know lots about babies. My grown-up sister just had a baby boy." "Well, then, you certainly must know a lot about babies, "says Ms. Lee. "Let's put that idea on our list." Mateo says, "I know about soccer. I play soccer with my big brothers and my dad every weekend." "All about soccer is certainly something that people would want to read," says Ms. Lee. "On the list it goes!" Cory's hand pops up. "Ms. Lee, my dad knows a lot about painting houses. I could write about that." "Well," says Ms. Lee. It sounds like your dad is a great painter and could tell us lots about how to paint a house. Now that we know what your dad could write about, let's see if you can think of something that you know lots about." Cory says, "I know lots about baking cookies. And my mom gave me my very own recipe book with tons of cookie ideas." "Now that's a really exciting idea, and something that you have investigated at home."

During Writing Workshop today, let's see if everyone can come up with at least two ideas for an "all about" book.

The children gather their writing folders and scatter to tables or rug areas to draw and write their ideas. Ms. Lee makes certain that everyone is settled in and proceeds to have a conference with two children who are still struggling for ideas. Then, she conferences with Diane, engaging in an animated discussion about whether a book title can contain an exclamation point. With about ten minutes left, the children gather for sharing. Each child has an opportunity to share at least once a week, with the rest of the class serving as audience, editor, or critic, depending on the focus of the discussion. Today, Helen sits in the author's chair and shows the class two pictures of her ideas for an "all about" book. The drawings are accompanied by some invented spelling. "I no abt flwrs" [I know about flowers] draws an enthusiastic response from Luz. "Helen, please write your "all about" on flowers. I would really, really read that one!"

At the beginning of the year, the majority of Ms. Lee's class was making drawings, scribbles and letter-like forms. Due to lots of teacher modeling and regular opportunities for children to practice during writing workshop and at the writing center during Choice Time, the children are now using invented spelling and some conventionally spelled words, accompanied by more intricate illustrations.

Specials or Choice Time and Ongoing Investigations or Project Work

Ms. Lee has a daily prep time during specials. Using a tambourine, Mr. Aguilare signals the transition to physical education, the children's "special" for the day. The physical education teacher, Mrs. Peters, greets children individually during warm-up stretches. She is trained in developmentally appropriate practice for five- and six-year olds and stresses non-competitive activity during the forty minute period. Mr. Aguilare assists Mrs. Peters. When physical education ends, Mr. Aguilare and the children raise their arms in a silent cheer and head back to the classroom.

In a full day kindergarten program that does not have specials, the teacher should schedule a second Choice Time that incorporates project work or an ongoing investigation. In this situation, the teacher's preparation time might occur during Rest.

Sharing, Review, and Closing

Back in the classroom, the children prepare for departure. They follow a regular closing routine that eases the transition from school to home.

Backpacks are retrieved from cubbies. The girls and boys tuck their home activity (ten counting chips with addition, subtraction, and equal symbols to use for making number stories with a family member) into their backpacks along with books chosen from the class library. The book choice might be a leveled reader, poetry, a nonfiction selection, or classic children's literature.

As everyone gathers on the rug, Ms. Lee asks the children to reflect on their day and invites several children to share with the whole group. Everyone will have a chance to share over the course of the week. Interspersed with the children's comments, Ms. Lee reviews the day's important happenings. She mentions concepts under investigation, problem-solving opportunities, interesting moments, and cross-curricular activities.

Closing includes a story or poem and a familiar song or two as an end of day ritual. Today Ms. Lee, uses a wordless book, *Yellow Umbrella*, by Jae Soo Liu. She makes certain to build a bridge to the next school day with a brief preview. This foreshadowing builds the children's motivation for tomorrow's learning.

" 'Bye Ms. Lee," says Rose. "See you tomorrow." She gives her teacher a quick hug and skips out the door.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Indicators of an Effective Curriculum

- Children are active and engaged. They are active cognitively, physically, socially, and artistically and develop positive attitudes toward learning.

- Goals are clearly defined and shared by all stakeholders (administrators, teachers, and families).

- Curriculum is evidence-based. It is based on developmentally, culturally, and linguistically relevant research evidence and organized around principles of child development and learning.

- Valued content is learned through investigation and focused, intentional teaching. Content is tailored to children's ages, developmental capacities, language, culture, and abilities/ disabilities.

- Curriculum builds on prior learning and experience. It is supportive of background knowledge gained at home, in the community, and within the culture, and is inclusive of children with disabilities.

- Curriculum is comprehensive and integrated across content areas. It encompasses critical areas of development, including:

    - Physical well-being and motor development;
    - Social-emotional development;
    - Cognition and general knowledge; and
    - Subject matter areas such as science, mathematics, language, literacy, social studies, and the arts.

- Professional standards validate the curriculum's subject matter content. The curriculum meets relevant professional and state standards

- Research supports that the curriculum is likely to benefit children.

(Adapted from the joint position statement, *Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment and Program Evaluation for Children through Age 8,* from National Association for the Education of Young Children NAEYC and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education NAECS/SDE 2003.*)*

Appendix 2

Planning for Professional Development

Professional Development Checklist for Kindergarten	
The district's professional development plan includes training specific to kindergarten based on the results of aggregated, analyzed data from structured assessment tools.	
Professional development to support child development, developmentally appropriate practice in kindergarten, English language learners, challenging behaviors, inclusion, project-based approaches to teaching and learning, and performance-based assessment is systematically addressed, in addition to training in curriculum content areas.	
Professional development is provided for all educational staff connected with the kindergarten program, including: classroom teachers, teachers of specials, teacher assistants, classroom coaches, counselors, social workers, special education staff, and administrators.	
Other school personnel (including clerical, cafeteria, custodial, and bus staff) receive information about developmentally appropriate ways to interface with kindergarten-age children.	
Professional development is differentiated based on the particularized needs of staff.	
Training sessions include follow up, in class support by classroom coaches or administrators.	
Professional development occurs in a variety of formats, including professional learning communities and classroom coaching.	
Early childhood administrators receive training about leadership in early childhood settings.	

Appendix 3

Learning Center Materials for Kindergarten

Content Area	Materials
Mathematics	❖props, tools, and open ended materials (tape measure, balance scales, rulers, clocks, small objects to use for counting, abacus, number lines, pattern blocks, pattern cards, number and shape table and floor puzzles, interlocking unit cubes, attribute blocks, magnetic and tactile numeral shapes, parquetry blocks, poker chips, tiles, wipe off cards, cash register and money, number stamps and stamp pads, geoboards, tangrams, dominoes) ❖materials to facilitate sorting and classifying (egg cartons, ice cube trays, muffin tins, paper plates, mats) ❖games (bingo, sorting, matching) ❖writing and drawing materials (clipboards with paper, crayons, pencils, markers, journals, notebooks) ❖nonfiction books on counting, patterns, shapes, etc.
Manipulatives and Technology	❖materials to promote fine motor development (beads for stringing, lacing cards, small building toys and blocks, play dough, clay, scissors, hole and shape punches, magazines for cutting or tearing, peg boards with pegs, puzzles, stuffed animals or dolls with snaps, buttons, laces) ❖technology (computers, printers, digital camera)
Library	❖big books ❖wide variety of literature (fiction, nonfiction, nursery rhymes, poems, stories with rhyme, alliteration, and language patterns, interactive/ participatory/ tactile books, alphabet books, wordless books, leveled readers, picture dictionaries, information books, audio books) ❖cassette or CD player and headphones ❖soft chairs, pillows, rug ❖flannel boards, puppets, props for story telling ❖materials for writing and drawing
Writing	❖writing/drawing implements (pens, pencils, colored pencils, markers, crayons) ❖variety of writing surfaces (write on/wipe off boards with erasable markers; sticky notes; lined, unlined, drawing paper in a variety of sizes); index cards, labels, and envelopes ❖materials to make books ❖props, tools, and open ended materials (rubber letter stamps and pads, alphabet strips, journals, clipboards, stapler, large paper clips, magazines, newspapers and junk mail)
Science and Discovery	❖live animals, food, and housing ❖live plants, seeds, and sterile soil for planting ❖collections of assorted objects (purchased, recycled, or natural) to sort, classify, measure ❖props, tools, and open ended materials: (balance scales with items to weigh, magnifying lenses, sensory materials for touch, microscope, kaleidoscope, thermometer, eyedroppers, filled containers with contents to smell, simple machines), nature magazines, pet care books and posters, plant and animal identification cards and charts, seed catalogs and packets writing materials, a variety of paper (graph, index cards, note pads, journals), clipboards with lined and unlined paper, pencils, markers, crayons,

	information books related to science topics)
Music and Movement	❖collection of CDs or cassettes and CD or cassette player ❖song storybooks, cards, charts ❖posters of labeled musical instruments ❖props for movement (scarves, flags, streamers) ❖musical instruments (rhythm sticks, cymbals, bells, sand blocks, maracas, drums, tambourine, xylophone, etc.) ❖information books about music and movement
Art	❖materials to paint and draw on (newsprint, finger paint paper, variety of drawing papers and sizes) ❖tools for painting and drawing (markers, crayons, variety of brushes, pens, pencils, charcoal, chalk, tempera and watercolor paints) ❖materials for molding and sculpting (clay, play dough) ❖materials for cutting and pasting (scissors, paste, glue, construction paper, collage materials) ❖materials for constructing (foam pieces, wood scraps, wire, pipe cleaners, recycled materials) ❖clipboards for use as a portable drawing surface ❖art prints representing cultural diversity (posters, postcards, calendars) ❖art books, art objects and visual reference materials about artists, art topics and illustrated with or describing various media and art techniques (collage, water color, charcoal, pastels, block printing, crayon, black ink, tempera)
Dramatic Play	❖furniture (stove, refrigerator, sink, containers, shelves, table, chairs, mirror, small couch or comfy chair) ❖dress up clothing for both genders, as well as gender-neutral clothing ❖cooking materials (plastic or cloth food, pots, pans, dishes, drinking glasses, utensils, measuring cups and spoons, alphabet cookie cutters, recipe cards and charts, cookbooks, menus, coupons, empty multicultural food containers, grocery store circulars, labels for utensils and ingredients, letter molds, nutritional charts) ❖common household tools and machines (phone, calculators, kitchen and bathroom scale, broom and mop) ❖stuffed animals and multicultural dolls with clothing and blankets ❖play scenario props (doctor's office, shoe or grocery store, post office, etc.) ❖props and open-ended materials (large pieces of fabric, plastic tubing, cardboard boxes, calendar, telephone book, magazines, books, junk mail, address books, appointment books, clipboards with paper and pencil, message boards, keyboard, signs, greeting cards and envelopes)
Blocks	❖unit blocks (small and large, wood, foam, hollow, cardboard) ❖props and open ended materials (road signs, multicultural play figures, vehicles, hats, animal figures, clipboards with writing tools, graph or unlined paper, signs, blueprints, floor plans, repair manuals and information books featuring building, construction workers, tools, bridges, and architecture)
Sand and Water	❖play sand, sterile soil, water ❖items for making bubbles (soap, fly swatters, bubble wands, bubble hoops, plastic berry baskets) ❖props, tools, and open ended materials (sand and water tools to dig, scoop, fill and pour, spray bottles, pumps, kitchen utensils, plastic tubing, funnels, sponges, items that sink or float , small toy animals, play figures, vehicles, boats, street and

	traffic signs, alphabet cookie cutters or sand molds, vinyl bathtub books, recipe charts, sponge and foam letters)
General Classroom Environment	❖print rich environments (functional labeling, printed directions, schedules with pictures, signs, student work, alphabet and number displays, easels) ❖comfortable child sized furnishings ❖safe building, grounds, classroom, and furnishings
Outdoors	❖gross motor equipment (climbing, balancing, swinging, rocking, sliding, crawling) ❖portable equipment (balls, hoops, bean bags, cones, riding toys, sidewalk chalk, traffic signs, nature backpacks with items for observing, identifying, and writing or drawing) ❖place to dig, plant and garden, investigate nature, collect natural materials, play with water ❖room to run, skip, jump, hide, build, hop, dance, play games ❖quiet area to read and tell stories, pretend, have snacks, write and draw

Appendix 4

List of Must-Reads for Teachers

Copple, C & Bredekamp, S. (Eds.). 2009. *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs. (*3rd ed.). Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Epstein, A.S. 2007. *The intentional teacher: Choosing the best strategies for young children's learning.* Washington, DC: NAEYC.

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NAEYC membership at www.naeyc.org/membership

Appendix 5

Preschool through Third Grade Transition Plan

✓	**School District Administrator**
	Establish a transition team composed of families, community agencies and leaders, and preschool and elementary personnel (such as teachers, child study team and PIRT members, bilingual education specialists, curriculum coordinators, and administrators).
	Identify a transition team facilitator who will set and conduct regularly scheduled meetings. Provide time for school personnel to attend the meetings.
	Identify children at risk for learning with a valid screening tool and provide supports targeted to the children's individual learning needs.
	Select an appropriate instrument for measuring program quality and administer annually to monitor progress.
	Plan systems for data collection, analysis, and accountability to provide information about student progress, program quality, and teacher effectiveness from preschool through third grade.
	Create common planning time for teachers within and across grade levels and with specialists to ensure developmentally appropriate standards, curriculum, and assessments that are aligned horizontally and vertically.
	Consider having teachers loop with a class of children for at least two grade levels.
✓	**Transition Team**
	Survey families and the community to identify educational and social services needs.
	Include a process for collaborating with families, early learning providers, and local public and private agencies to fully understand children and families prior to school entry.
	Establish goals to ensure seamless supports for all children as they move through each year, including summer, from preschool through third grade. The focus will be on addressing development of the whole child rather than academic skills in isolation.
	Provide information to families on the transition to and from each level from preschool through third grade, including registration guidelines, placement options, teacher expectations, and health and nutrition information.
	Create transition activities based on the goals created to ensure seamless supports for from the children and families.
	Generate a timeline for implementing the transition plan.
	Revisit and update the transition plan annually.
✓	**Teachers**
	Participate on the transition team or provide suggestions for activities.
	Meet with other teachers within and across grade levels and with specialists to discuss and implement developmentally appropriate standards, curriculum, and assessment that are aligned horizontally and vertically.
	Meet with teachers within and across grade levels to discuss transition activities for spring, summer, and fall for children and families.
	Prepare and disseminate developmentally appropriate home learning activities during the school year and the summer months.
	Get to know each child and family. Contact families prior to the start of school and communicate with them on a regular basis throughout the year.
	Welcome new children and families, let families know how they can be involved in their school and classroom.

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