US Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten

December 2014

The Early Childhood Advisory Committee of the Governor's Children and Families Council and the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands

US Virgin Islands

Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten

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THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
GOVERNMENT HOUSE

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It is with great pleasure that I introduce The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten. With our emphasis on quality early childhood education, and its importance to the development of our children, it is critical that we embrace that high-quality developmentally appropriate practices must be incorporated at the primary levels in the K-12 education system. These Guidelines are meant to complement standards and curricula adopted by the Virgin Islands Department of Education, and may be of interest to other school systems.

This Guide's is to be used as a tool for teachers, administrators, and other adults who interact with kindergarten children. It presents strategies and suggestions that research indicates are positive ways to support their development as they begin their journey of learning and being successful in the K-12 education system.

The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten complements two previous publications--The Virgin Islands Early Learning Guidelines (April, 2010) and The Virgin Islands Infant and Toddler Developmental Guidelines (July, 2013) and I highly recommend their use by the practitioners who work with young children. Having these three guides places the U.S. Virgin Islands in line with all the 50 states and outlying territories who have developed similar publications in their commitment to build collaborative and cohesive early childhood systems.

I would like to express my gratitude to the following departments and organizations and the individuals named in the Acknowledgements for their participation in the development of The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten: The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands, the Office of the Governor, The U.S. Office of Head Start, The V.I. Department of Education, The Department of Education's State Office of Special Education, the Department of Human Services' Offices of Childcare and Regulatory Services and Preschool Services/Head Start, the Department of Health, the University of the Virgin Islands, and private childcare providers. Their involvement is testament to the climate of collaboration that has been fostered through the Early Childhood Advisory Committee of the Children and Families Council chaired by First Lady Cecile de Jongh and I am truly grateful on behalf of the young children of the U.S. Virgin Islands and their families.

Sincerely,

John P. de Jongh, Jr.
Governor

Government of the United States Virgin Islands

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MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

The *US Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten* provides kindergarten teachers and elementary administrators with guidance on teaching kindergarten content standards in a developmentally appropriate way. The *Guidelines* also provide teachers and administrators with information on the development of young children academically, socially, emotionally, and physically.

The transition from home or preschool to kindergarten is not an easy one. This is the time for children to leave small, nurturing environments to become part of a larger school campus with many grade levels and many teachers. It is critical to make beginning school experiences both positive and effective for children, and the *Guidelines* provide ideas and examples to make that happen. The *Guidelines* can serve as a manual for teachers to provide the best kindergarten experience possible. They also offer school administrators insights into best practices for this special grade level.

I want to thank the Early Childhood Advisory Committee Quality Education Work Group for their work on this document and thank Ms. Ellie Hirsh for writing the *Guidelines*. Her leadership in this endeavor is what made it possible.

I know this document provides kindergarten teachers and elementary administrators with important information for making the transition to kindergarten and further schooling more successful.

Donna Frett-Gregory
Commissioner

Acknowledgements

The Early Childhood Advisory Committee would like to recognize the dedicated commitment of the Quality Education Work Group, as well as, others who contributed to the creation of this document. The knowledge and expertise of the following individuals is greatly appreciated.

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A warm "thank you" goes to the kindergarten students and their teachers at the following US Virgin Islands Elementary Schools for their cooperation and enthusiasm and who appear in the photographs and show-cased their work:

- Claude O. Markoe
- Evelyn Williams
- Yvonne E. Milliner-Bowsky
- Herbert E. Lockhart

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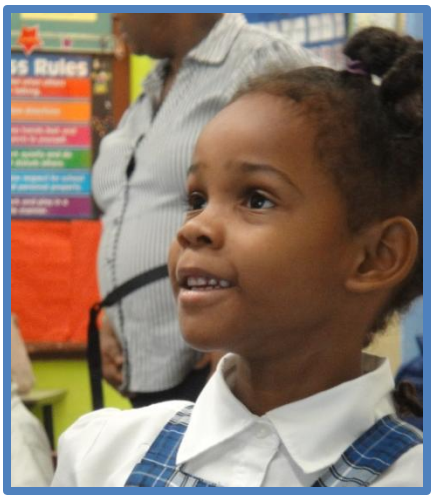
Introduction

Thank you for including *The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten* as a vital part of your educational resources. By showing an interest in our children's early experiences, you join a dedicated group of caring individuals who understand the importance of quality early education for our kindergarteners. Together, with your commitment, we can ensure a good beginning for all Virgin Islands' children as they start school. We hope you find this document useful, and we encourage you to pass along the knowledge you gained here to others who want to make a difference in our children's lives.

The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten provide guidance for implementing the Virgin Islands Department of Education's Education and Learning Standards through developmentally appropriate practices to support children's optimal development. Developmentally appropriate practice results from the process of adults making decisions about the well-being and education of children based on at least three important kinds of information or knowledge: what is known about child development and learning; what is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child; and knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and respectful.[1]

The *Guidelines* focus on how adults can support a child's individual development in ways that enable each child to achieve expected standards and outcomes. They are meant to be used as a tool for kindergarten teachers, administrators, and other adults who interact with kindergarten children by describing strategies and suggestions that research indicates are positive ways to support all children in their development and learning. The *Guidelines* are aligned with the "Virgin Islands Teacher Effectiveness Standards," providing information about how to meet these standards of practice in ways that assist children in meeting learning and developmental standards.



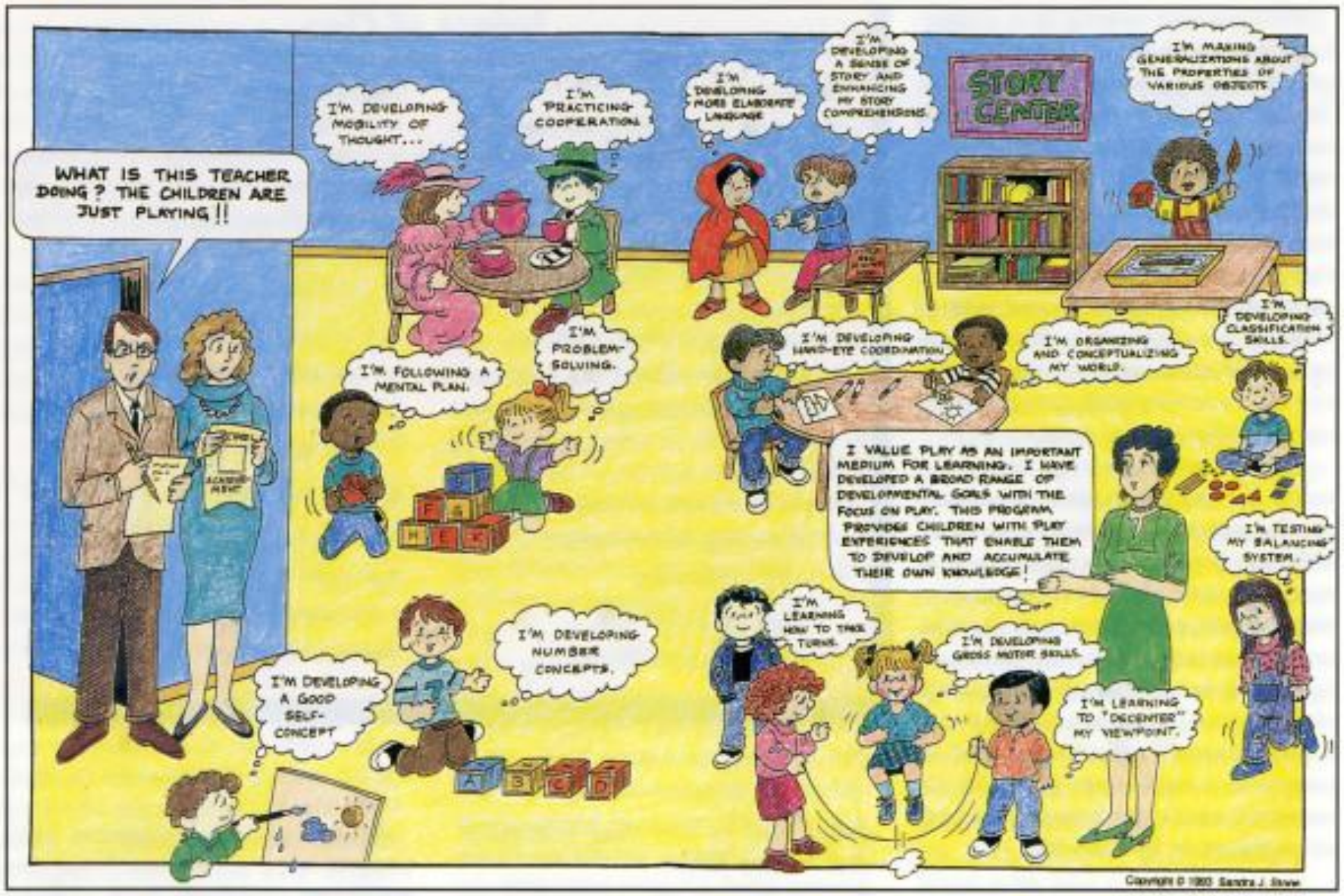
Although *The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten* specifically address the needs of kindergarten-aged children, this does not mean to imply that a child's earliest years are not crucial in his/her preparation for elementary school. In fact, brain research has established that experiences in the first five years of life set the foundation for a child's future social and academic success.[2] The significance of a child's development leading up to

[1] Copple & Bredekamp, 2009.
[2] Shore, 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000.

kindergarten cannot be stressed enough. In order for a child to exhibit behaviors that put him/her on a trajectory to succeed in school, he/she must have access to good health care, supportive social-emotional environments, and a safe, strong community.[3] There is an inherent understanding within this document that learning occurs from the moment a child is born, or even before, and throughout his/her life; and that all stages of development are important and deserve respect.

Although the guidelines are written especially for kindergarten practice, they may also be appropriate for children through age eight years.

[3] Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Rhode Island Kids Count. (2005)..



[4]

[4] Stone, 1995.

Purpose and Goals

Purpose of *The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten:*

The primary purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for practice and implementation of developmentally appropriate strategies for helping children meet the expectations outlined in the kindergarten standards.

***The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten* were developed with four goals in mind:**

1. To increase understanding of the importance of all areas of children's development
2. To recommend developmentally appropriate strategies for supporting optimal development and achievement of kindergarten standards for all children
3. To provide teachers, administrators, and other adults in kindergarten programs and settings with a common conceptual framework and guidelines for planning developmentally appropriate curriculum, instruction, and assessment for young children
4. To assist teachers in interpreting and implementing the "Virgin Islands Teacher Effectiveness Standards" as they relate to achieving high-quality kindergarten programs

Potential Uses

The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten are to be used as a resource for teachers, administrators, other school personnel, community members, and policy makers in ways that are supportive of young children's development.

For Teachers and Administrators

- To guide implementation of curriculum content and effective teaching strategies
- To provide guidance for achieving high-quality kindergarten learning environments
- To provide direction for authentic assessment of young children
- To provide a framework for program standards and program evaluation
- To provide ideas for staff training and development

For Families

- To build awareness of kindergarten expectations and appropriate ways to support and nurture children's learning
- To build awareness of appropriate and effective kindergarten learning environments and teaching strategies
- To encourage families to be active partners in the education of their children

For Community Members

- To provide a framework for needs assessment
- To identify opportunities for community engagement and business investment
- To organize advocacy efforts
- To support and strengthen learning opportunities for children within the community

For Policymakers

- To guide decision-making in promoting early learning and development
- To assess the impact of public policies on young children and their families

Guiding Principles

The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten were written with the belief that all children can become thinking, responsible, contributing citizens who continue to learn throughout their lives, while meeting the challenges of local and global societies. This occurs when families, teachers, administrators, community members, and policymakers share in the collective commitment to foster healthy development of all children. The following guiding principles inform the development and implementation of the *Guidelines*. These guiding principles reflect the knowledge base in scientific research, our values, and our commitment to children and families.

All children should have their basic needs met.
Children learn best when their physical and health needs are met and they feel safe and secure. Children rely on parents and early care and education practitioners to know what to do if their needs are not being met, or are being compromised. They rely on adults to provide the care, resources, and support they need for optimal development and learning.[5]

All children are capable and competent.
Development and learning begins at birth, for all children and in all settings. All children should be supported as life-long learners and as capable individuals and competent learners. They must be allowed to develop a disposition and eagerness to learn in order to find success in their learning experiences. A positive approach to learning has been shown to be a critical determinant in mastering school skills.[6]

Early relationships matter.
The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten acknowledge that beginning at birth, children form relationships with adults who will guide their learning and development. Especially during the early childhood years, a child's growth and development is shaped within the context of those relationships. Positive relationships are essential for the development of personal responsibility, capacity for self-regulation, for constructive interactions with others, and for fostering academic functioning and mastery. Warm, sensitive, and responsive interactions with teachers, administrators, and other staff help children develop a secure, positive sense of self and encourage them to respect and cooperate with others. Children who see themselves as highly valued are more likely to feel secure, thrive physically, get along with others, learn well, and feel part of a community.[7]

[5] Rhode Island Kids Count. (2005); Bowman & Moore (2006).
[6] Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001; NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2002.
[7] Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Robin P. 2000; Standard #3 of the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards

Parents are children's primary and most important caregivers and educators.
Families, communities, and schools all have significant roles to play in terms of what opportunities are available to children, and how well a child is able to take advantage of those learning opportunities. Families are better able to care for, nurture, and help their children succeed when policymakers share in the collective commitment to foster healthy development of all young children. Because a child's first and most important learning occurs in the context of family, it is essential that families have the supports and resources needed to help their children develop in optimal ways. Families are better able to care for, nurture, and help their children succeed if early childhood teachers and administrators share in the collective commitment to foster partnerships with families. All children should expect their families to be involved in all aspects of their care and education. Effective communication with families and their involvement lead to positive effects on development and learning of young children.[8]

All children should have their early experiences acknowledged as important to their further development.
Children come into the world ready to learn, actively engaged in making sense of their world from birth. *The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten* recognize that the first years of a child's life set the groundwork for a lifetime of brain development and must be taken into consideration when planning for further learning.[9] In the early years, children acquire a range of academic and social competencies that form the foundation for later learning, development, and academic success.[10]

A child's early learning and development is multidimensional.
Developmental domains are highly interrelated. *The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten* reflect the interconnectedness of the domains of children's development: physical development and health; social, emotional, and values development; approaches to learning; language arts and literacy; mathematics; science; technology; history and social studies; and creativity and the arts.[11]

Expectations for children must be guided by knowledge of child growth and development.
The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten are based on research about the processes and sequences of young children's learning and development, and the conditions under which children can develop to their fullest potential.[12]

[8] Rhode Island Kids Count. (2005); Lovejoy, 2006; NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2002; Standard #10 of the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards
[9] Shore, 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2002.
[10] Education Commission of the States, 2008
[11] Berk, 2012; Standard #1 of the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards
[12] Berk, 2012; Bredekamp & Copple, 2009; Standard #1 of the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards

Children are individuals who develop at various rates and have individual strengths and needs.

The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten recognize that there are individual rates of development and learning across all ages. These rates may be within typical developmental expectations or may indicate a need for specialized services. All children should receive the supports, resources, and services they need to participate actively and meaningfully in the kindergarten setting. Teachers should employ differentiated teaching strategies to meet the needs of all children. Teachers must be prepared to work together with families to make referrals when children's development appears delayed. Teachers should collaborate with the Basic Child Study Team in the school to modify/adapt program activities and routines, and implement appropriate interventions within the context of the kindergarten setting.[13]

Children are members of cultural groups that share developmental patterns.

The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten acknowledge that children's development and learning opportunities reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of children, families and environments. All children expect that their home, community and family lives will be respected in the educational setting. Children's home language must be respected as the basis for learning a second language. The *Guidelines* recognize that a child's learning is complex and is influenced by cultural and contextual factors.[14]

All children should be cared for and educated in a developmentally appropriate manner.

All children should be treated as individuals with unique strengths, interests, and approaches to learning. Kindergarten teachers must address the "whole child" and be constantly working with each child to meet his/her needs. Early childhood is a unique stage in human development, and must be appreciated as such. *The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten* support the implementation of optimal learning experiences that can be adapted for individual developmental patterns.[15]

[13]Sandall, McLean, & Smith (2000); Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001; Standard #2 of the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards

[14] NAEYC, 1995; Bredekamp & Copple, 2009; NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003; Standard #2 of the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards

[15] Bredekamp & Copple, 2009; NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003; Standard #1 of the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards

Children learn through play, interaction with others, and active exploration of their environment.

All children should expect that their play is respected as a valuable learning tool. Play is how children access the complexities of the world, and is the primary way they learn about the world around them. *The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten* reflect the belief that children should be provided with a rich learning environment in which to explore their world and should be exposed to a variety of experiences to help deepen their understanding. This occurs through child-initiated and teacher-initiated activities and interactions with peers, adults and materials. Teachers and families can best guide learning by providing these opportunities in natural, authentic contexts. Positive relationships and engagement help children gain the benefits of instructional experiences and resources.[16]

Information gained from assessments of young children's progress must be used to benefit children.

Kindergarten assessment should be designed to be used to guide parents, practitioners, and policy makers to improve practices and services for young children so that they can achieve age-appropriate expected standards. They should not to be used to rank, sort, or penalize young children. The responsibility for children meeting kindergarten standards rests on the shoulders of those who provide opportunities and supports for their learning and not on children's shoulders.[17]

All children should expect that their early childhood educator has child development and content knowledge and expertise.

All children need to be assured that their kindergarten teacher has received high-quality professional training with a solid knowledge of child development and early childhood teaching practices. Teachers should seek continuing educational opportunities on the latest developments in the field to improve his or her own practice. Research shows that quality kindergarten teaching and practices contribute to a child's development and learning. Teacher education and experience are determining factors in high-quality programs.[18]

All children should be cared for and educated under the protection of ethical practices.

Kindergarten teachers should understand and follow the profession's ethical guidelines at all times and in all situations. *The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten* support practices that promote development and protect young children from the harm that results from inappropriate expectations and practices. Teachers and

[16] Ginsburg, 2008; Berk, 2012; Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001; NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003; Standard #5 and #8 of the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards

[17] NAEYC, 2003; NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003; Standard #6 of the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards

[18] Bowman & Burns, 2001; Phillips, 1987; NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003; Standard #1 and #4 of the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards

administrators should ensure that practices are aligned with ethical principles of the early childhood profession and the U. S. Virgin Islands Teacher Effectiveness Standards.[19]

All children should be supported and protected by policy makers.
At the school, district, territory, and national levels, decision-makers must always keep in mind the effects that their decisions and actions have on young children.[20]

Responsibility for school readiness lies not with children, but with the adults who care for them and the systems that support them.
Public policies should seek to provide comprehensive information, resources, and support to all who are responsible for children's development. Schools need to be ready for children by providing supports for children's transition to school, responding to children's individual needs, and holding positive expectations about children's abilities to learn and succeed.[21]

All children should expect that the public school system, specifically kindergarten classrooms, will be prepared to meet their needs.
The Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten support the policy that the responsibility for school readiness rests with the adults in children's lives, not the child. Children enter kindergarten with various experiences, developmental skills, and needs. The kindergarten program must be responsive to their needs and development, regardless of previous experience.[22]

[19] NAEYC, 2005; Standard #9 of the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards
[20] Lovejoy, 2006; Children's Defense Fund, 2002
[21] Lovejoy, 2005; NAEYC, 1995; Ackerman & Barnett, 2005
[22] NAEYC, 1995.

Guidelines for Teaching and Learning in Kindergarten

The following sections focus on guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices and strategies, that when implemented, offer kindergarten children opportunities for optimal development and learning. These guidelines respond to current research and what is known about best practices in the field of early childhood education. Included are strategies for helping children achieve standards and goals across all developmental and learning domains in ways that honor the individual strengths and needs of children. These guidelines also recognize that children enter kindergarten with diverse and varied prior experiences that shape their readiness for kindergarten and emphasize that, in order to meet the needs of each child, adults must begin where the child is - that school needs to be ready for children, as opposed to insisting that children be ready for school.

Learner Development

This section of the Guidelines is closely aligned with the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards:

- **<u>Standard #1 states</u>: "The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences."**

For kindergarten teachers, as well as all adults in the school, this means having a clear understanding of the developmental patterns and needs of children ages 4, 5, and 6 years. These early childhood years mark a unique period of development. "Early childhood is the period between birth and eight years of age, a definition based on documented intellectual and emotional development milestones. This definition is grounded in an extensive body of research that documents that young children's ways of knowing differ considerably from those of older children and adults regardless of culture."[23]

In the USVI, we need to pay particular attention to the age of the children in our kindergartens, as one-fourth are 4-year-olds when they enter school and only one-half will turn 6 years by the end of the school year because of our December 31st cut-off date. Four to six months of development is more significant at this age than for older children and adults. It is also important to consider, when planning for this age group, that the results of the most recent kindergarten entry assessment indicate that 55% of children were behind in language development and 40% behind in cognitive development. The developmental characteristics of this age group may then be more similar to the preschool child as children are beginning to make a shift in cognition throughout the ages from 5 through 7.

"The changes associated with this '5 to 7 shift' affect development across physical, social and emotional, cognitive, and language domains. They also affect children's 'approaches to learning' another important domain of development that includes a child's *enthusiasm* for learning (their interest, joy, and motivation to learn) and their *engagement* in learning (their focused attention, persistence, flexibility, and self-regulation)."[24] Once children make this cognitive "shift," they often show greater personal responsibility, self-direction, and logical thinking.

[23] National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (2009)
[24] Copple & Bredecamp (2009)

This developmental transitional period accounts for developmental diversity among kindergarten children, as children develop at different rates and in response to varied prior experiences. Children come to school with a variety of home and school experiences, some from stimulating home environments or with previous child care, preschool, or Head Start - and others with no structured group experiences or limited stimulating experiences at home. Children may have had adverse childhood experiences that shape their behavior. Children also have different temperaments and ways of responding to and interacting with their environments.

Because of this great diversity, teachers are challenged to be responsive to individual and group needs as they design developmentally appropriate experiences and learning environments. Developmentally appropriate practices result from the process of adults making decisions about the well-being and education of children based on at least three important kinds of information or knowledge: 1) what is known about child development and learning; 2) what is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child; and 3) knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and respectful.[25]

What do we know about typical development of 4, 5 and 6 year olds? James Hymes provides an overview of what the young child under six years is like. He discusses the following characteristics which assist us in having realistic expectations and greater understanding of the kindergarten child. [26]

Young children are beginners.
Young children are new in the world and they are relatively new to the classroom environment, particularly the elementary school. They will make mistakes, as any beginner does. They knock over blocks. They run when they should walk. They punch, pinch, and grab at times, even when they "know" they should not. They make errors because their coordination is still uncertain and because they are just learning to control their emotions. They make mistakes because life's big lessons simply take a long time to learn and they are inexperienced. They know a little about these lessons, but have not mastered them yet.

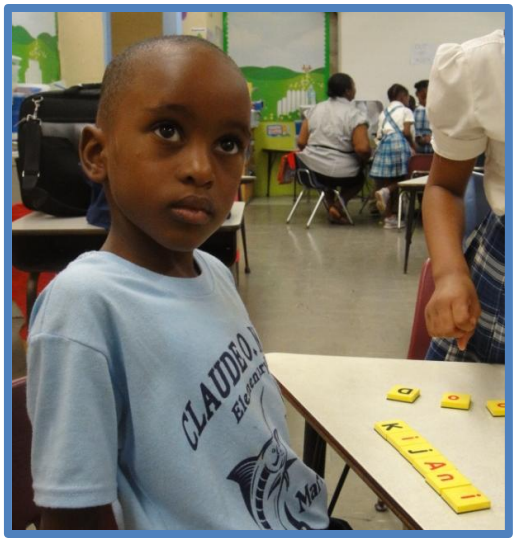
Young children are not good at sitting
They have short attention spans and lots of energy. They can sit for short periods – at the table for lunch or snack, on the floor for a story. Sitting still is not their natural comfortable position. The world around them pulls them to act on it and they have a lot of energy to do just that.

[25] Copple & Bredekamp, 2009.
[26] Adapted from Hymes, J., 1996.

Young children are not good at keeping quiet.
Young children can be quiet for short periods, and often not for a whole story, as the story often reminds them of things and they want to talk about them. Actually, we need to encourage children to engage in conversation, as too many are behind in language skills. They need freedom to talk while they play and work. They like to make noise – hear blocks fall, make a marching band.

Young children are sometimes shy.
In general, young children love people, but prefer familiar faces and small groups. They can get overwhelmed easily and will go to familiar people they feel comfortable with for reassurance. Even a class size of 15 or 20 can be overwhelming, which is why small groups work best.

Young children are egocentric.
They are self-centered, focused on themselves, and often have trouble seeing things from another's perspective. It is all about "my new shoes" "my puppy" "my mommy." As they have more opportunities to play and interact with other children, they begin to see that others have needs and opinions, too; but this social awareness takes time to develop with experience and greater cognitive understanding.



Young children want to feel, proud, big and important
Success matters a great deal to young children and they feel proud about their accomplishments, no matter how small they may seem to us. They are often confronted with things they cannot do – things out of reach or heavy to lift or beyond their understanding. Competition is hard for young children – they take failure hard. A good classroom is challenging, yet finds many ways for children to succeed and work together.

Young children have their own private dream world.
Young children have their own imaginary dream world where they can be in control. In their dream world, they can make things work out and they can be strong and powerful. It is their world of play and pretend, where they can practice new skills without risk of failure or criticism and where they are masters of their own universe.

Young children are sensitive.
They need to know they are loved and loveable. They get their feelings hurt easily and do not always understand humor, an exasperated look, or harsh words. Little signs of rejection cut deeply. Often when they feel they are not loved or being criticized, they behave contrary to what we would expect. Rather than improving their behavior when they are feeling this way, they act out. To perform their best, they need a nurturing environment.

Young Children are hungry for stimulation.
Young children are curious and want to learn. They are interested in the world around them and are eager to explore and discover. They want to touch and handle and use what they see.

Young children learn from doing.
They want to be actively engaged, using all their senses and involving all domains. Actually, this is how they learn best. They do not always understand when we just tell them something. We have to guide them while explaining in many different ways and give them opportunities to try things out for themselves.

Young children are adaptable.
They are born to adapt to any culture or demands – their brains are plastic. This flexibility is what enables children to adapt to any culture or setting. So, we have to be careful about what we demand of them. They go along with whatever adults ask of them, which makes them vulnerable to abuse and poor practices.

Young children want to belong.
Humans are a social species and want to belong, want to be liked, and be included. Because they are beginners, they may not know how to join in the group or how to play with others. So, sometimes they knock down the blocks when they really want to play, because they do not yet know how to enter the game.

Young children are individuals.
Even though young children have similar characteristics, they also have different interests, strengths, needs, and ways of approaching the world. They may develop and learn at different rates. They come from different homes and cultures and have had different experiences before coming to kindergarten, all of which influences who they are as individuals. In a developmentally appropriate classroom, the teacher strives to get to know each child, their interests, and their developmental and learning needs to plan appropriately.

Even though there may be individual differences in development among children, there are some typically expected milestones across the domains of physical, social and emotional, cognitive, and language and literacy development.

Physical Development:
"Kindergarteners are fascinated with learning what their bodies can do - how fast they can run, how high they can jump, how skillfully they can move. They are becoming more sophisticated in their movements, more coordinated in their physical endeavors, and increasingly competent in physical skills such as balance and eye-hand coordination. They use movement to express their feelings, manipulate objects, and learn about their world. They delight in physical accomplishment."[27]

Their longer and leaner bodies, motivation to be more physically independent, improved problem solving and cognitive skills, and desire to participate in activities with their peers all contribute to improved gross motor skills. Although they may enjoy movement activities, most kindergarten children are not ready for the structure and pressure of organized sports, which involve a higher level of competence in specific skills.[28] This is particularly relevant for teachers of physical education. Young children can be exposed to and encouraged to improve ball skills, for example, by playing freely with soccer balls on the playground, inventing their own games and rules as they gain greater proficiency.

Although they may enjoy movement activities, most kindergarten children are not ready for the structure and pressure of organized sports, which involve a higher level of competence in specific skills.

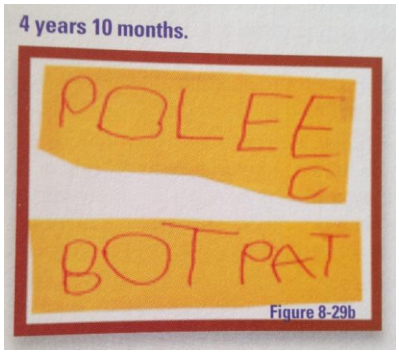
In the area of fine motor skills, "many kindergarteners initially struggle with tasks that require detail, patience, steadiness, and fine motor coordination, such as writing, drawing, and cutting with precision. By the end of the year, however, they will have benefited from activities that allow practice in these areas and that better develop hand muscles, such as writing, painting, working with clay, and constructing with Legos. They improve in activities such as sorting small objects; stringing beads; zipping, buttoning, and tying; using scissors; pouring milk or juice at snack; and setting the table."[29]

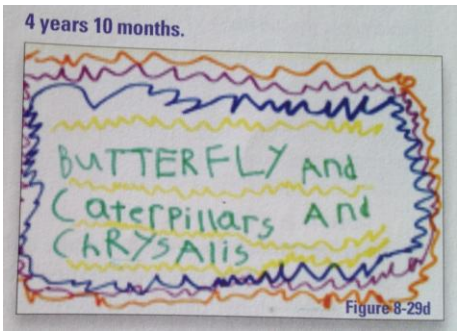
Most kindergarten children, who have had previous experiences with crayons and pencils, have developed a more adult grasp through experimentation and practice.[30] Some children come into kindergarten able to write some letters, including their names, if they have had previous experiences. Usually, these letters are randomly scattered on the page. Young

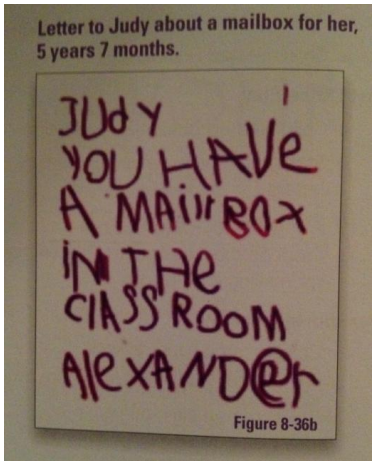
[27] Copple & Bredekamp, 2009.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

children have difficulty with refined fine motor control to form letters within lines.[31] They continue to confuse letters with similar features (such as "b" and "d") and may also write some letters backwards at this age, and even to 7 years old.[32] Less emphasis should be placed on children writing on the lines and more on the content of what is being expressed.

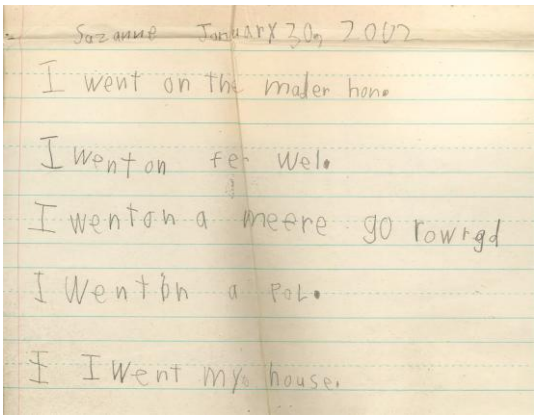
The following examples of writing are taken from Schickedanz and Collins, book, *So Much More than ABCs: The Early Phases of Reading and Writing* and are very typical and should be acceptable for this age group.







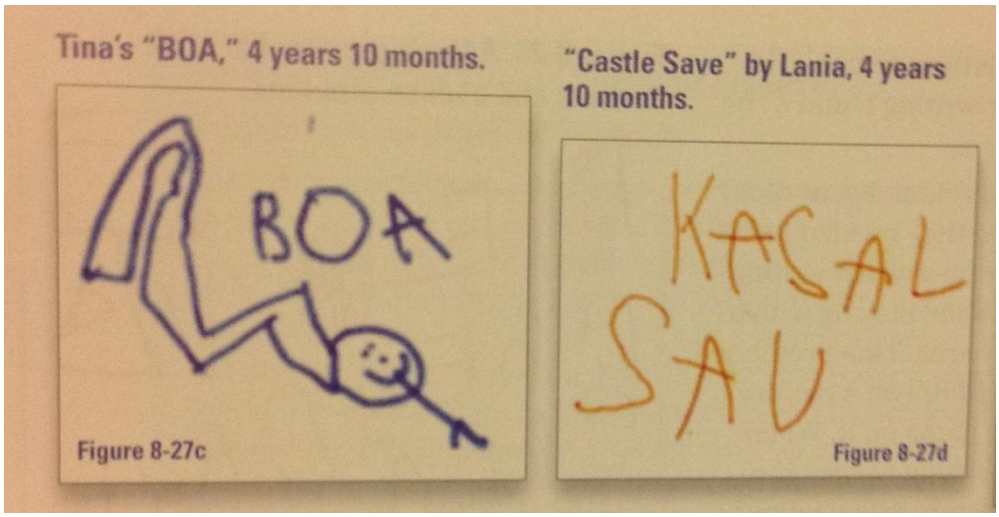
A writing sample from the Common Core State Standards:



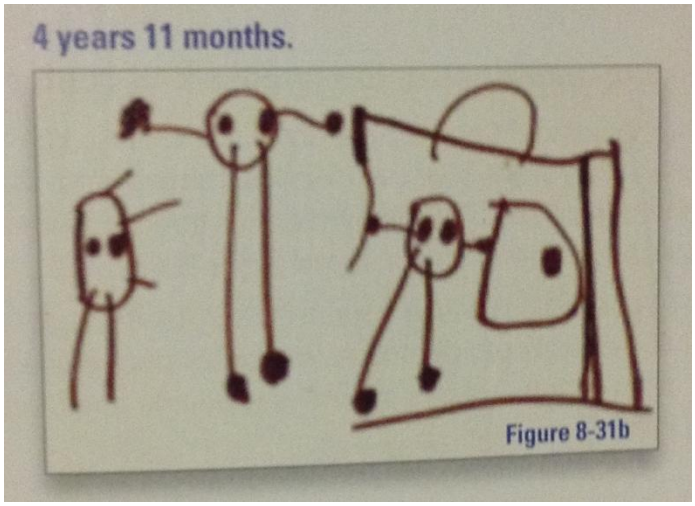
[31] Schickedanz & Collins, 2013.
[32] Berk, 2006.

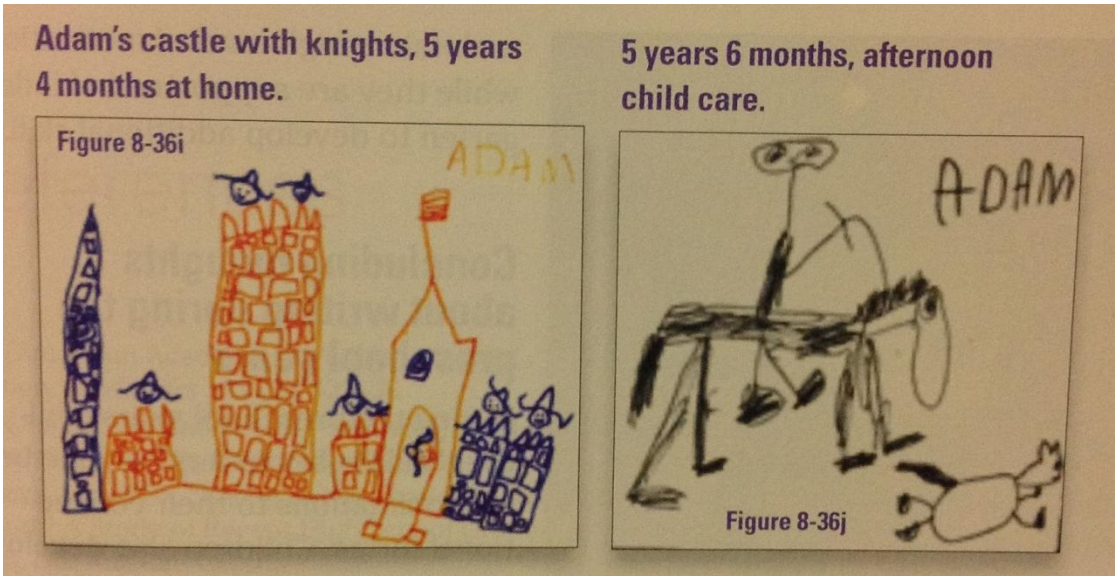
Their drawings can be very simple with arms and legs coming out of a head or with greater detail. Children who have had little or no experience with drawing, go through the same developmental sequence of drawing as children who have had experience at younger ages; so that their initial drawings are more similar to those of younger children, beginning with scribbles and then progressing. With more experience, children's drawings become more complex and more detailed.[33]

The following examples of drawings, which in some cases also includes writing, are taken from Schickedanz and Collins, book, *So Much More than ABCs: The Early Phases of Reading and Writing* and are very typical and should be acceptable for this age group.



[33] Berk, L., 2012.





Social and Emotional Development

"Based on a careful review of neuroscience and developmental science, it highlights compelling evidence that a child's earliest experiences and relationships set the stage for how a child manages feelings and impulses and relates to others. It also highlights emerging and perhaps surprising evidence that emotional development and academic learning are far more closely intertwined in the early years than has been previously understood."[34]

A child who is socially and emotionally ready for school has many of the following characteristics. He/she is:[35]

- confident;
- friendly;

[34] Raver & Knitzer (2002).

[35] Ibid., Peth-Pierce, 2000.

- able to develop good relationships with peers and adults;
- able to concentrate and persist on challenging tasks;
- able to identify emotions in themselves and others;
- effectively able to identify and regulate emotions, such as frustration, anger, and joy;
- able to be attentive and follow instructions;
- enjoy academic learning and approach it enthusiastically; and
- able to work cooperatively in the classroom environment.

The ability to form and sustain relationships with others begins in infancy with attachment to primary caregivers. If all adults are sensitive, responsive, and consistent in responding to young children's needs, children form secure attachment relationships that give them the safety and freedom to explore and learn about their world.[36] Children center kindergarten with varied home and community experiences that influence their individual development and have impact on how well they form relationships in school. "Kindergarteners learn best when they feel valued, needed, and loved by the teacher, are confident the teacher will meet their basic needs promptly, and can count on the teacher to interact in intimate, playful, and personal ways."[37]

"Kindergarteners learn best when they feel valued, needed, and loved by the teacher, are confident the teacher will meet their basic needs promptly, and can count on the teacher to interact in intimate, playful, and personal ways."

Secure attachment relationships also help children develop self-regulation and social skills.[38] "Self–regulation is the ability to regulate or adapt one's behavior, emotions, and thinking according to the demands of the situation. It is the ability to stop or start doing something even if one does not want to do so. For example, a child who stops talking to his neighbor when the teacher starts reading the book is self-regulating."[39] It means being able to take turns and stop playing when it is time to clean up. Being able to self-regulate enables children to meet the demands of the educational setting. Opportunities for pretend play promote the development of self-regulation, because play requires children to regulate their own behavior to accommodate and get along with other children in the give and take exchanges that naturally occur.[40]

Children enter kindergarten with different abilities to self-regulate their behaviors. Some may need more guidance and support than others. With patience, warmth, guidance from adults,

[36] Maxwell, Ritchie, Bredekamp & Zimmerman 2009
[37] Copple & Bredekamp, 2009.
[38] Szalavitz and Perry, 2010
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ritchie, Maxwell, & Bredekamp, 2011.

as well as, a predictable environment with realistic expectations, they usually improve in their ability to self-regulate their behaviors.

Typically, by the time children enter kindergarten, they have a well-developed understanding of emotions. They can correctly figure out what causes emotions, for example, "She's sad because she forgot her snack." They can also predict, with reasonable accuracy, the consequences of many emotional feelings, for example, "He's angry. That's why he knocked down the blocks." They can also figure out ways to help others with their negative feelings, by giving a friend a hug when he is sad. This emotional understanding helps children get along better with others and increases their ability to experience empathy.[41]

"Young children with gratifying friendships are more likely to become psychologically healthy and competent adolescents and young adults. For most kindergarteners, friendships involve sensitivity, caring, emotional expressiveness, sharing, cooperation, and joy - qualities that promote emotional understanding, empathy, sympathy, and positive social behavior. Close friendships also foster positive attitudes toward school. When children attend kindergarten with preschool friends, they adapt more quickly to classroom life. And kindergarteners who easily make new friends perform better academically, perhaps because these new relationships energize cooperation and initiative in the classroom."[42]

Cognitive Development

At four or five years, children have about twice as many neuronal connections as adults do in some areas of the brain, particularly in the frontal lobe, where integration of important information, impulse control, and memory occur. Experience shapes the brain. As children learn and interact with their environment, some connections are strengthened and those that are not used are pruned away. During the first five to seven years, the brain is extremely responsive to stimulation and more flexible than later years, creating the foundation and organizational structure upon which later learning will be built. This makes the preschool and kindergarten years optimal times for development and learning, as well as an ideal time for early effective intervention.[43] The brain's flexibility also makes the children vulnerable to negative influences. All experiences, positive or negative, impact learning and social-emotional development.[44]

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[41] Copple & Bredekamp, 2009.
[42] Berk, 2006.
[43] Shore, 2003; Berk, 2006.
[44] National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2012.

Cognition is reliant on the healthy development of the pre-frontal cortex of the brain where executive function lies. "Executive function skills allow us to retain and work with information in our brains, focus our attention, filter distractions, and switch mental gears. There are three basic dimensions of these skills:

- Working memory — The ability to hold information in mind and use it.
- Inhibitory control [or self-regulation] — The ability to master thoughts and impulses so as to resist temptations, distractions, and habits, and to pause and think before acting.
- Cognitive flexibility — The capacity to switch gears and adjust to changing demands, priorities, or perspectives.

These skills help us remember the information we need to complete a task, filter distractions, resist inappropriate or non-productive impulses, and sustain attention during a particular activity. We use them to set goals and plan ways to meet them, assess our progress along the way, and adjust the plan if necessary, while managing frustration so we don't act on it. Although we aren't born with executive function skills, we are born with the potential to develop them. The process is a slow one that begins in infancy, continues into early adulthood, and is shaped by our experiences. Children build their skills through engagement in meaningful social interactions and enjoyable activities that draw on self-regulatory skills at increasingly demanding levels."[45]

For children ages five to seven years, activities such as imaginary play, storytelling, songs with movement, cooking, games with simple rules, logic and reasoning games support the development of these skills.[46]

"Cognitive skills encompass a rich and diverse range of mental processes. Our natural human inclination to wonder about the world and to look for answers is at the core of all our cognitive functions. Reflecting, observing, applying strategies for comprehending, problem solving, imagining, problem posing, visualizing, evaluating — all these terms describe cognitive skills."[47] Cognitive skills are used in all aspects of our lives, as we interact with others, solve problems, create, reflect, and make sense of our world. These skills support children's academic skills and learning, social interaction, communication, and intellectual pursuits.

[45] Center on the Developing Child, 2014.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Golbeck, 2006.

Developmentally, kindergarteners' thinking is beginning to become more complex. Their improved reasoning and problem solving skills occur because of gains in attention, memory, language, and knowledge through interaction with their world. Improved attention enables kindergarteners to focus more intently on tasks, although they still have relatively short attention spans compared with older children, unless they are pursuing their own chosen play activities that are highly motivating. Kindergarteners show good memory for complex narrative information that is meaningful to them; whereas, they are not as skilled at recalling unrelated information. They can give play by play descriptions of personal experiences in chronological order, which improves with age and with greater opportunities to engage in elaborate conversations with others.[48]

Symbolic representation, which means using one thing to stand for another, becomes more complex and refined between five and seven years. This begins in play, for example using a block as a telephone. "It underlies all of school learning, from understanding the alphabetic principle (that letter symbols are used to represent the sounds of spoken language) to comprehending the symbolic language of that most abstract of subjects, mathematics."[49] Both play and the visual arts promote symbolic representation. Through both activities, children are creating representations of their interpretations of reality.

Kindergarteners' thinking is also becoming more flexible. They have a greater ability to see things from another's perspective and to recognize that others' may have a different point of view. "Children can mentally rearrange or transform information — they are less bound by the first thing they see or hear. For example, a kindergartener can figure out a couple of ways to combine blocks to create a structure of a particular shape....This flexibility in thinking is apparent in geometric, spatial, and mathematical thinking. Children begin to apply visual spatial strategies and mental images to solve problems in the everyday world. Children understand that they can divide things, such as a cookie, so that everyone can have some — one thing becomes many. And they understand that a tangram with ten separate pieces can be returned to its original appearance by putting the pieces together again — many things become one."[50] These cognitive processes are best learned and improved upon through hands-on manipulation and exploration of materials and objects and with repetition.

[48] Berk, 2006.
[49] Bredekamp, 2010.
[50] Copple & Bredekamp (2009).

Language Development

"By about age 6, the typical child's vocabulary is 10,000 words. Children of this age use most of the grammatical structures of their native language competently and are skilled conversationalists who can maintain a topic of discussion over many speaker turns."[51] They are able to ask and answer questions, describe experiences and objects, and tell narratives in chronological order as part of meeting the Common Core State Standards. During the kindergarten year, on average, it is estimated that children learn about 20 new words per day.[52]

A common feature of kindergarteners language includes overgeneralization (saying "foots" instead of "feet"). Kindergarteners also are more concrete than abstract and may miss nuances of language use, especially when words may have more than one meaning. For example, when we say, "The house needs two coats of paint," they are likely to picture a house with two coats on the roof. They have learned their native language well enough to understand that the order of words in a sentence can change the meaning (e.g. "The fat cat ate the yellow bird." vs. "The yellow cat are the fat bird."); as well as, how inflection and emphasis can change the meaning of a sentence.[53]

Language is an interactive social process.

Language is fundamentally social and evolves from the drive to communicate with others. Children in all cultures pick up language automatically and in a universal way. Studies of deaf children provide a compelling example of children's innate drive to communicate, as they will create their own gesture system in an attempt to communicate if they are not exposed to a formal sign language system, as long as they have a communication partner. They will abandon this signing if parents don't respond to it — a clear example of the underlying social nature of language development.[54] Children learn language only when it is socially significant.[55]

Children do not learn language from listening to an audio tape or by watching TV. They must hear language from a real person who is engaging in an activity or conversation with the child. Language is an interactive social process. One study found that even typically developing infants exposed to "educational" baby videos had measurable language delays. For example, the study found that babies who watched "educational" videos such as "Baby Einstein," learned six to eight fewer vocabulary words for each hour of video watching than

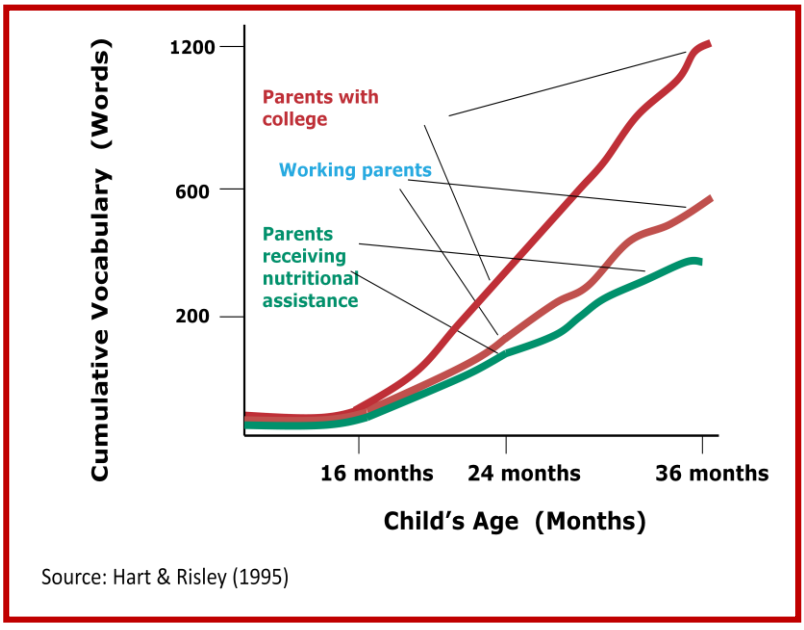
[51] Berk, 2006.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Landry, et. al., 2002.
[54] Berk, 2012.
[55] Szalavitz and Perry, 2010

babies who did not watch such videos.[56] "If you look at the situation without understanding the social needs of the brain, it wouldn't seem like it would be a problem to learn mainly from television. Lots of words are spoken, they are linked visually with actions and objects, and there's a great deal of repetition. Of course, this disregards the primary function of language, which is to communicate with other people."[57] However, children who already have strong language skills, may learn new vocabulary by watching developmentally appropriate TV shows that interests them, particularly when accompanied by an adult who interacts and talks with the child about what they are watching.

A responsive social partner is necessary for language to unfold. The amount we talk to children is important and so is the content of our conversation. We support children's language development when we listen and talk to them, respond to their nonverbal cues, answer their questions, engage them in conversations, sing, and read books to them. It is only through the context of relationships that children get the feedback they need to monitor their formation of words, inflection of voice, and subtle nonverbal cues.[58]

Once children make two-word sentences, at about two years of age, their language takes off, adding more words to create longer sentences. They have already learned the basic rules of their native language, how to use tone of voice and gestures to add meaning. They are now learning new concepts about how the world works and vocabulary to go with it. They will always understand more than they can say.

Children's language development is impacted by early experiences; and children enter kindergarten with varied experiences. Hart and Risley observed conversations in children's homes and discovered that by age three, children of professional parents heard 30 million more words than children in poverty.[59] Since language is learned by exposure and through experience, this translates into huge disparities in vocabulary among children. Disparities in early vocabulary development is predictive of future reading abilities, since



Source: Hart & Risley (1995)

[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Im, et. al, 2007.
[59] Hart & Risely, 2003

understanding vocabulary is key to comprehension. In addition, before entering kindergarten, the average child from a middle class family has been read to for about 1,000 hours compared to a child in poverty who has only been read to for an average of 25 hours.[60]

Hart and Risley not only compared the number of words spoken in the home, but also compared the quality of interaction. They found that in professional families, parents were more encouraging and more engaging in conversation with their children and used six times more encouragements and half as many discouragements than families in poverty.[61] For example, an encouragement would be "Look at that. You are learning to tie your shoes." A discouragement would be, "Let me do it. You take too long." They also noted the difference in how language was used. In families of poverty, language was more directive ("Come!" "Get your shoes." "Sit down."); whereas, in professional families, language was more interactive and descriptive ("It's time to get your shoes, so we can get ready to go see Grandma. Remember the last time we went, and Grandma had baked chocolate chip cookies?"). This information is important in the USVI, particularly in light of the number of young children in poverty. It is also important to take note of the impact the digital world is having on children's language, as it reduces the amount of time spent in verbal interactions.

Communicating this information to families is critical. "It's clear that SES is not destiny. The good news is that regardless of economic circumstances, parents who use more and richer language with their infants [and young children] can help their child to learn more quickly."[62]

"Both lack of nurturing and limited exposure to language can have a serious impact on brain development. Nurturing interactions lay the foundation for language development and for key aspects of self-regulation, including attention, aggression, and impulsivity. But language exposure matters, too. Verbal ability appears to be strongly related to impulse control; we encourage toddlers to 'use your words' when they get frustrated for a reason. Language builds the cortex — and the cortex modulates the lower, more reactive brain regions."[63]
When we look at the long term, early literacy experiences are linked with:[64]

- later success in school;
- emotional and social well-being;
- fewer grade retentions;
- reduced incidences of juvenile delinquency;
- ability to find well-paying jobs; and
- adult productivity.

[60] Berk, 2006.
[61] Hart & Risely, 2003.
[62] Fernald, in Carey, 2013
[63] Szalavitz and Perry, 2010.
[64] Snow, et. al. 1998.

Therefore, language and literacy-rich kindergartens are critical in reducing the risk of failure for all children.

As kindergarten programs become more and more culturally and linguistically diverse, teachers face additional challenges. "To meet the needs of children from a variety of cultures, it is important for teachers to appreciate how children's communication styles and dialects affect their learning. The home language of children provides the foundation for the emergence of reading and writing behaviors. In fact, accepting and encouraging the acquisition of children's home languages can help them transition to the more standard form of English that is an important part of literacy development. Research strongly suggests that native language use is helpful in English acquisition, and that learning to read and write in the child's first language supports success with reading and writing in the second language."[65]

There is a different developmental path for children learning a second language than for children when they are learning their first language. Development of the second language is influenced by the child's motivation to learn the language, the child's ability to acquire a second language, and how safe and comfortable the child feels about taking risks.[66] Second language learning typically proceeds as follows, regardless of the age of the child:[67]

- *Home language use:* Children continue to use their home language with those who understand it and with those who do not, until they realize that they are not being understood.
- *Nonverbal or silent period:* When young children are speaking their home language and are frequently not understood, they begin speaking less and turn their attention to observing, listening, and using non-verbal means of communication.
- *Telegraphic or formulaic language:* Children begin trying out their new language, using simple words or phrases to express thoughts, requests, and directions. They mimic and memorize words and phrases they can use.
- *Productive use of the new language:* Children begin building their own original sentences using words and phrases they have been hearing and practicing.

Understanding this progression of second language learning assists teachers in providing support to English Language Learners in the classroom.

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[65] Parlakian, et. al. (2007).
[66] Tabors, 2008; Teaching Strategies, 2009.
[67] Ibid.

Teacher-Child Relationships

This section of the Guidelines is closely aligned with the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards,

- **<u>Standard #1 states</u>: "The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences."**
- **<u>Standard #3 states</u>: "The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation."**

Nurturing and stable relationships are essential for healthy development and secure attachments with adults, both within and outside the home.

Nurturing and stable relationships are essential for healthy development and secure attachments with adults, both within and outside the home. "Early secure attachments contribute to the growth of a broad range of competencies, including a love of learning, a comfortable sense of one-self, positive social skills, multiple social relationships at later ages, a sophisticated understanding of emotions, commitment, morality, and other aspects of human relationships. Stated simply, establishing successful relationships with adults and other children provides a foundation of capacities that children will use for a lifetime."[68] These relationships are developed through the quality of adult-child interactions.

In the early childhood and elementary years, the acquisition of academic skills and social competencies do not happen independently. "No amount of focus on academics will change the fact that the foundation of classroom life is social and emotional. Teaching is a very human profession, and the social and emotional processes involved in relationships between teachers and children should be considered along with issues such as curriculum and assessment in current policy initiatives designed to ensure that no child is left behind."[69]

Research has shown that "if a student-teacher relationship is negative and conflictual in kindergarten, it is more likely that the student will have behavioral and academic problems in later grades. Also, teacher's interactions with students can directly affect students' behavioral

[68] National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004.
[69] Bowman & Brownell, 2006.

and emotional engagement in the classroom. When teachers support and interact positively with students, then students are more likely to be engaged and behave appropriately."[70]

Key teacher behaviors have been shown to enhance relationships with children. These include being sensitive and responsive to children's individual needs and building relationships that are characterized by warmth, open communication, and intentional responsive teaching.

"Children who develop warm positive relationships with their kindergarten teachers are more excited about learning, more positive about coming to school, more confident, and achieve more in the classroom."[71] Key teacher behaviors have been shown to enhance relationships with children and support their social and academic competence. These include being sensitive and responsive to children's individual needs, helping children to focus their attention, interpreting their emotions, assessing children's learning styles, and using that information to meet children's individual needs.[72] "The highest quality relationships between teachers and children are characterized by closeness (warmth and open communication) and low conflict (hostility and opposition). Research emphasizes the importance of intentional, responsive teaching for children's learning in the context of play."[73]

Generally, the teacher sets the tone for the relationship to develop and the quality of interaction. Some children may have a behavioral style or temperament that poses more challenges and may make forming a close relationship more difficult. Certain behaviors that children exhibit may "push our buttons" — and these may be very individual for each teacher. It is important for teachers to be self-aware and to keep negative emotions and responses in check to better meet the needs of all children in the class.[74] Differences in culture may influence how teachers interact and interpret children's behavior. Teachers need to be cognizant of how their behavior, from their own cultural context, impacts that of the children, as well.[75]

Building positive relationships with children is on-going and grows with every interaction. "Every interaction we have with a child holds the potential to make a positive — or negative — impact on how that child feels about himself and about learning, as well as on what and how the child learns."[76] The following strategies, when used intentionally by teachers, can promote positive teacher-child relationships:[77]

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[70] Thapa, et. al. 2012.
[71] National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004.
[72] Gallagher & Mayer, 2008.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.; Hemmeter, et. al.
[75] Bowman, et. al. 2006.
[76] Dombro, et. al., 2011
[77] Adapted from Epstein, 2014 & Dombro, et. al. 2011.

Welcome children.
Greeting each child every day as he/she arrives in your classroom helps children feel accepted and comfortable as they transition from home to school. Adding a personal comment related to each child makes him/her feel appreciated and special as an individual and helps to form attachment and a bond with the teacher. It also sets a tone of caring and respect.

Respond to and meet children's needs.
From infancy, children develop a sense of attachment, security, and trust from having their basic needs met. Although their needs change as they grow and develop, kindergarteners' sense of security and confidence is dependent on the responsiveness of adults in meeting their physical and psychological needs for health, safety, and comfort. The security of knowing their needs will be met enables young children to be free to explore and learn.

Create a warm and caring atmosphere.

"Teaching staff develop individual relationships with children by providing care that is responsive, attentive, consistent, comforting, supportive, and culturally sensitive."[78]
"Children feel secure and successful when teachers interact positively with them, both verbally (listening, conversing with interest and respect, using a calm voice to problem solve) and nonverbally (smiling, hugging, nodding, making eye contact, getting down to the child's level). Warm, sensitive, and nurturing interactions are more beneficial for children's development than harsh, critical, or detached adult behavior."[79] Teacher behaviors that create a positive emotional climate and promote positive development and learning, and enhance children's emotional well-being include:[80]

- consistently and predictably demonstrating respect for children;
- engaging in frequent social conversations, joint laughter, and affection;
- expressing warmth and physical affection, eye contact, friendly tone of voice, and smiles;
- responding to children's questions and requests;
- responding immediately to children's bullying, harassment, or put-downs to create an emotionally safe environment; and
- conveying sincere liking and appreciation of children.

[78] NAEYC, 2014
[79] Epstein, 2014.
[80] NAEYC, 2014; Hyson, 2008.

Connect with children.
Connecting with children means "observing what is interesting and significant about what the child is doing, saying, and thinking. It means letting the child know that you see her, are interested in what she is doing, and want to spend some time with her."[81] Getting directly involved in what children are doing, communicates to them that the teacher values their interests and activities.

Encourage and support communication.
Supporting children's communication means slowing down and taking the time to listen to what children have to say. It means engaging regularly in meaningful and extended conversations with each child — talking frequently and listening with attention and respect. "Children talk when they have something to say. Providing children with interesting materials and experiences they want to talk about, therefore, is a good way to promote language. A positive classroom climate provides opportunities and encouragement so children feel free to talk"[82] with adults and other children.

Encourage initiative.
"Initiative [means] children are eager to learn. They exhibit curiosity, independence, and self-direction as they learn about relationships, materials, action, and ideas. They take reasonable risks as they investigate the environment."[83] "Initiative is the capacity for children to begin and then follow through on a task — to take stock of a situation, make a decision, and act on what they have come to understand."[84] As children have freedom to make choices, they gain confidence to learn through their own motivations and interests. By scheduling part of the day that allows for children to make choices and select their own activities, teachers encourage initiative and self-directed learning. In group discussions and activities, teachers should welcome children's ideas and contributions to encourage initiative.

Acknowledge children's activities and accomplishments.
Acknowledging children's accomplishments is more than saying, "good job!" Children are often uncertain about what they did that we thought was "good." We need to be specific and clear. Acknowledging children's activities and accomplishments can be as simple as commenting specifically on what the child has done, (e.g. "Terell made an airplane with the Legos."), displaying children's work, or taking photographs of their creations or activities.

"Praise invites comparisons and competition, raises anxiety about taking risks, and limits children's ability to evaluate their own work. By contrast, encouragement promotes initiative

[81] Dombro et. al., 2011
[82] Epstein, 2014.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Hohmann, et. al, 2008

and self-confidence and develops children's ability to look at their own work objectively rather than just doing something to please adults."[85] The same is true when we say "I like the way you...." Children's behavior becomes focused on pleasing adults rather than internalizing expectations. So instead of saying, "I like the way you are sitting for the story," we can acknowledge children specifically for what they are doing and their internal strengths by saying, "Janna is ready to hear the story, because she is sitting patiently."

By being specific, we are letting children know what actions they are doing which are beneficial to their growth and development and help to build a community of learners within the classroom. The strategies of the Virtues Project provide guidance on giving feedback that honors each child's character strengths. Virtues are the best of our character, the inner strengths that enable each of us to reach our highest potential. Virtues, such as "compassion," "integrity," "respect," and "patience," are the spiritual attitudes, the foundation of all cultures, that build confident and happy children and peaceful, healthy, and supportive communities.[86]

We can use the virtues in daily conversation with children. Talk about being "kind" to others, being "patient" when waiting for lunch, and showing "determination" when working on a challenging puzzle. When we speak the language of virtues, we let children know that they are capable of practicing virtues and encourage their attempts. We intentionally use the language of the virtues when we see children practicing a virtue, for example, "You showed friendliness when you made room in the circle for Marla."

Support a sense of community.

"The primary way teachers facilitate peer relationships is by themselves building authentic, supportive, and reciprocal relationships with children. By treating children with kindness and respect and engaging in conversations with them, teachers set the tone for how children interact with one another."[87] Teachers can promote a sense of community by:[88]

- modeling positive interactions with all children;
- respecting the cultural diversity of all children in the classroom and initiating activities and conversations that respectfully explore children's cultural and language heritage;
- respecting the learning diversity and needs of all children in the classroom and designing activities that ensure all children can participate;

[85] Ibid.
[86] Popov, 2000.
[87] Epstein, 2014.
[88] Adapted from Copple & Bredekamp, 2009.

- providing opportunities for children to work with each other and develop friendships;
- ensuring there are materials which invite collaboration and cooperative play;
- providing opportunities for children to act as leaders and helpers;
- actively involving children in conflict resolution and problem solving;
- implementing strategies for group problem solving and discussions, such as class meetings;
- providing opportunities and experiences for children to work with partners and in small and large groups; and
- promoting a sense of community involvement beyond the classroom.

Encourage independent problem solving.

"Encouraging children to identify problems and try out solutions on their own helps them develop a range of cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills."[89] By giving children an opportunity to solve problems on their own, you are communicating that you believe they are capable, competent, and able to succeed. Often it's a matter of finding a balance between intervening too quickly, on the one hand, or waiting too long to assist, which may result in children's frustration and discouragement, on the other.

By giving children an opportunity to solve problems on their own, you are communicating that you believe they are capable, competent, and able to succeed.

"Effective teachers use several techniques to find the right balance. First, they encourage the child to acknowledge and describe the challenge he has encountered....By waiting for the child to articulate the problem, teachers foster both cognitive and language development. Second, effective teachers are patient, letting the child generate and try out solutions. Children get more satisfaction and learn more by figuring things out on their own...Finally, effective teachers are sensitive to instances where the child has tried but is unsuccessful after several attempts. A well-timed suggestion can help."[90]

[89] Epstein, 2014.
[90] Ibid.

Engaged Learning and Meaningful Play

This section of the Guidelines is closely aligned with the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards:

- **Standard #1 states: "The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences."**
- **Standard #3 states: "The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation."**
- **Standard #4 states: "The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content."**

"The traditional kindergarten classroom that most adults remember from childhood — with plenty of space and time for unstructured play and discovery, art and music, practicing social skills, and learning to enjoy learning — has largely disappeared. The results of three new studies, supported by the Alliance for Childhood,...suggest that time for play in most public kindergartens has dwindled to the vanishing point."[91] "China and Japan are envied in the U.S. for their success in teaching science, math, and technology. But one rarely hears about their approach to schooling before second grade, which is playful and experiential rather than didactic. Finland's children, too, go to playful kindergartens, and they enter first grade at age seven rather than six. They enjoy a lengthy, playful early childhood. Yet Finland consistently gets the highest scores on the respected international PISA exam for 15-year-olds."[92]

So, what does research tell us about the benefits of play?

Brain development research informs us that experience shapes the brain, that the kind and quality of experiences in early childhood set the foundation for later learning.[93] Brain research also tells us that there is a strong positive link between playfulness and brain size in mammals. In a study of 15 species of mammals, it was found that the species with larger brains, as compared to their body size, played more than those with smaller brains. Play

[91] Miller & Almon, 2009.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Shore, 2003; Shonkoff, & Phillips 2000.

stimulates nerve growth in the amygdala, where emotions are processed, and in the prefrontal cortex, where executive functions (decision-making, problem-solving) are processed. Growth of the cerebellum (where coordination, motor control, attention, and language processing occur) is also stimulated through play.[94]

Scientists ascertain that play most likely has survival value, or it would have been eliminated in the process of evolution. Researchers, thus began to study animals to determine the advantages of play for the animal kingdom in hopes of providing insight into the play of humans. Bob Fagan, who observed bear play for over 15 years, found that the bears that played the most were the ones who survived the best. In studies of cat play, researchers found that those who did not play were still able to hunt, but could not socialize. They could not tell the difference between friend or foe and tended to either be overly aggressive or withdrawn. Play teaches us to make sound social judgments.[95] "Play allows 'pretend' rehearsal for the challenges and ambiguities of life, a rehearsal in which life and death are not at stake."[96]

Research in Germany found that by fourth grade, children who had attended play-oriented kindergartens surpassed those from academic-oriented kindergartens in physical, social, emotional, and mental development. The findings were so compelling that Germany switched all its kindergartens back to play-based curricula.[97]

Play is a difficult word to define, but there are characteristics of young children's play that help us describe the nature of play. First, it is child-centered, coming from within the child and not from external demands or expectations. The child is in control of the direction play takes; it involves free-choice and self-motivation. In play, children choose their own activity and are motivated by their own thoughts and ideas. They select roles, materials, and themes. Play involves active engagement. It is not a passive activity. Play fully engages one's attention, often involves deep concentration, and is physically engaging. In play, children explore, experiment, invent, investigate, concentrate. It can involve people, objects, and events. Play involves the total child – physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language. Importantly, play is enjoyable. Children often pursue play for the

In play, children are actively involved with the process of discovering, exploring, and experimenting. It's the journey — not the destination. Play is often a tool for helping children make sense out of their world, as they experiment with different roles and activities from their culture or attempt to deal with traumatic events in the safety of play.

[94] Brown, 2009.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Brown, 2009
[97] Miller and Almon, 2009.

pleasure of it, not for any reward. You see the joy on children's faces when engaged in play. In play, children are focused on the process not product; they are often unconcerned about having a goal or end-product in mind. It is an open-ended activity in which children just go wherever it seems to lead. In play, children are actively involved with the process of discovering, exploring, and experimenting. It's the journey — not the destination. Play is often a tool for helping children make sense out of their world, as they experiment with different roles and activities from their culture or attempt to deal with traumatic events in the safety of play.

Even the American Academy of Pediatrics endorsed play in their position statement: "Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them. Play allows children to create and explore a world they can master, conquering their fears while practicing adult roles, sometimes in conjunction with other children or adult caregivers. As they master their world, play helps children develop new competencies that lead to enhanced confidence and the resiliency they will need to face future challenges. Undirected play allows children to learn how to work in groups, to share, to negotiate, to resolve conflicts, and to learn self-advocacy skills. When play is allowed to be child driven, children practice decision-making skills, move at their own pace, discover their own areas of interest, and ultimately engage fully in the passions they wish to pursue."[98]

Through play, children develop and learn in all domains:

- *Physically*: They develop their manipulation and movement skills and build healthy bodies.
- *Socially*: Children explore adult roles; they learn about and practice cultural and family expectations. They learn to share, negotiate, resolve conflicts, and develop leadership skills. They learn to see things from others' perspectives and learn what's acceptable behavior and what is not. They learn to communicate their feelings and understand the feelings of others.
- *Emotionally*: Children have opportunities to work through anxiety and stress. They learn to regulate their emotions, to advocate for themselves, and build their confidence and resiliency to face future challenges. They learn perseverance, how to pursue activities to completion. They learn to be more empathetic as they discover how others feel in different situations and how to accommodate to others' feelings and needs. In his research, Stuart Brown found that play is actually critical to healthy social and emotional development and the lack of opportunities for unstructured

[98] Ginnsberg, 2007.

imaginative play is critical for becoming socially adept, coping with stress, and building problem solving skills.[99]

- *Cognitively*: Children build cognitive competence as they engage in problem solving; mental planning; and evaluating, recalling, and sequencing information. They discover areas of interest, invent scenes and stories, think creatively, and use symbols to represent their ideas.
- *Language and Literacy*: "Play is highly beneficial to children's language skills and provides a supportive context for language learning. Specifically, play contains a variety of elements that stimulate the kinds of conditions that grow language."[100]
    - The representational nature of play, as children use props to represent objects in play (such as using a block as a telephone), is similar to the way language represents objects, thoughts and concepts. "Because both play and linguistic communication share a representational character, play provides children with opportunities to practice forming symbolic relationships."
    - When children interact in sociodramatic play, they create scenarios, take on roles, and negotiate to cooperate. They practice their language use and increase their understanding as they listen to others.
    - The amount of language children hear during play contributes to their language development. Increased talking with peers during play is associated with better comprehension and production of language.
    - "...Play might be important for language development because, when children are in control of an interaction, they are engaged. They speak about and listen to what interests them. Similarly, a child is more likely to learn novel vocabulary items when an adult follows her interest as opposed to making the child follow the adult's interest."[101]
- *Mathematically*: "Play is vital to children's development of mathematical thinking. Unlike some forms of knowledge, mathematical knowledge, which deals with the relationship between and among things, cannot be learned by children's hearing adults talk about it. Experimental research on play shows a strong relationship between play, the growth of mathematical understanding, and improved mathematical performance....Mathematical thinking arises when children work first hand with objects, put them into relationships, and think about those relationships at their own pace during play."[102] Studies indicate that children who have opportunities to play with

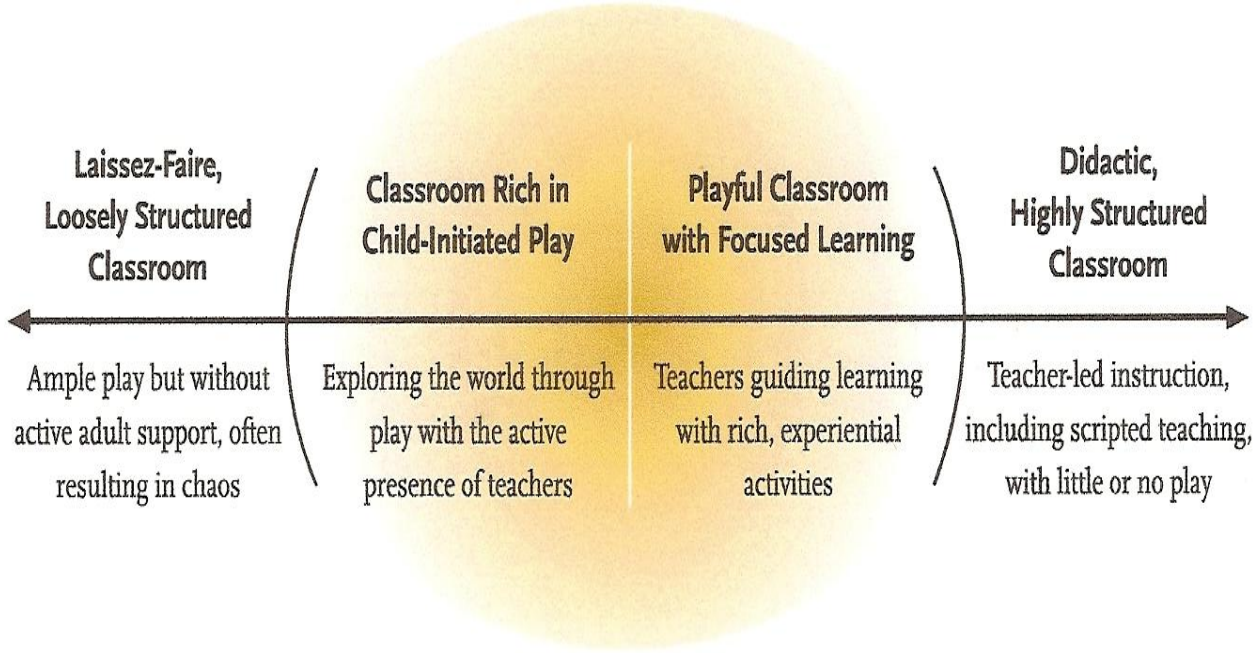
[99] Brown, 2009.
[100] Weisberg, et. al., 2013
[101] Ibid.
[102] Jarrell, 1998.

unit blocks in early childhood do better in algebra in middle school.[103] (Unit blocks are those that have long ones, then blocks half that size, blocks half again, and then half again.) This most likely occurs because young children's concrete experiences with shapes and their relationships enable them to think about them abstractly later on.

The question becomes, does play belong in kindergarten; and if so, how do we support children's growth and development through play?

"Kindergartners need a balance of child-initiated play in the presence of engaged teachers and more focused experiential learning guided by teachers."

"We are not calling for a simple return to the practices of an earlier time. We now understand much better the kinds of rich experiences that young children need in order to become avid learners. Teachers need to understand the ways in which child-initiated play when combined with playful, experiential learning leads to lifelong benefits....In a healthy kindergarten, play does not mean 'anything goes.' It does not deteriorate into chaos. Nor is play so tightly structured by adults that children are denied the opportunity to learn through their own initiative and exploration. Kindergartners need a balance of child-initiated play in the presence of engaged teachers and more focused experiential learning guided by teachers."[104] The balance between the two central curricular and teaching methods highlighted below lead to best practices in kindergarten.[105]



[103] Wardle, 2007.
[104] Miller & Almon, 2009.
[105] Ibid.

"The playful kindergarten relies on child-initiated play with the active presence of a teacher, combined with intentional teaching through playful learning, the arts, and other hands-on experiences....In playful kindergartens teachers are active in many different ways. They closely observe children's play and take cues from it, enriching and enlarging its scope by bringing new materials into the environment. A teacher might develop a theme from the children's make-believe scenarios that will extend their knowledge through artistic and experiential activities. Teachers in playful kindergartens focus on the development of strong relationships with their students, and on the healthy development of each individual child."[106]

To fully take advantage of play as learning and development opportunities for children, teachers need to be intentional. "Intentional teaching does not happen by chance. It is planful, thoughtful, and purposeful. Intentional teachers use their judgment, and expertise to organize learning experiences for children; when an unplanned situation arises (as it always does), they can recognize a teaching opportunity and take advantage of it. Intentional teaching means teachers act with specific outcomes or goals in mind for all domains of children's development and learning."[107]

To teach with intention, teachers ...[108]

- create a learning environment rich in materials, experiences, and interactions;
- encourage children to explore materials, experiences, relationships, and ideas;
- talk respectfully, reciprocally, and frequently with children;
- consciously promote all areas of learning and development;
- know the content (concepts, facts, skills) that make up each area of learning;
- know and use general teaching strategies that are effective with most young children;
- know and use specific teaching strategies that are effective in different content areas;
- match content with children's developmental levels, emerging abilities, and interests;
- are sensitive to the needs of dual language learner, children from diverse cultures and traditions, children who are gifted, and children with special needs;
- are planful, purposeful, and thoughtful;
- take advantage of spontaneous, unexpected teaching and learning opportunities;
- carefully observe children to determine their level of understanding to plan next steps;
- adjust their teaching strategies to work with different individuals and groups;
- neither underestimate nor overestimate what children can do and learn;
- challenge children to question their own thinking and conclusions;
- scaffold learning, with careful consideration about introducing new materials and ideas; and
- reflect on and change teaching strategies based on children's responses.

[106] Ibid.
[107] Epstein, 2014.
[108] From Epstein, 2014.

Learning Environment

This section of the Guidelines is closely aligned with the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards:

- **Standard #1 states: "The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences."**
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Health and Safety

"To benefit from education and maintain quality of life, children need to be as healthy as possible. Health is a state of complete physical, oral, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Children depend on adults (who are also as healthy as possible) to make healthy choices for them and to teach them to make healthy choices for themselves."[109] They also depend on adults to make sure that the environment is a safe place to play and learn, free of hazards. Children who are physically healthy, safe, and secure are more likely to succeed in their tasks and take risks trying new things.

Most safety precautions are established in policy, but it is up to the adults who are with children every day to follow these guidelines and teach children safe practices. Not all safety practices seem logical to young children, so adults need to offer simple explanations, demonstrations, and reminders to encourage compliance. The following strategies help teachers create a safe environment and teach safety practices:

- Model appropriate safety procedures. Children are keen observers and will do what you do.
- Conduct a classroom check periodically, examining materials and equipment for potential hazards and removing or fixing items as needed (e.g., broken toys, exposed outlets, etc.).

[109] NAEYC, 2005

- Be familiar with your school's emergency procedures and policies for injury, fire, and other emergencies. Teach and practice these procedures with children.
- Teach prevention strategies to prevent injuries, such as walking at a safe distance from swings on the playground.
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times.
- Acknowledge when children follow appropriate safe practices, specifically describing what you observed them doing.

As children strive to be more and more independent and seek to do things for themselves, they master self-help skills. The development of fine motor skills enables children to take on greater responsibility in personal care routines. In the process of learning to dress, feed, and take care of their personal hygiene, children develop habits, relying on adult guidance to develop healthy practices.

The following strategies help teachers create a healthy environment and teach healthy practices:

- Model and guide appropriate health and personal hygiene procedures to minimize the spread of disease (e.g. hand washing, covering one's mouth when sneezing). Children are keen observers and will do what you do.
- Ensure materials, equipment, and environments are clean and promote good health.
- Obtain relevant health information about each child from the school nurse and families, so you know about potential allergies or other conditions and how to respond appropriately.
- Promote and teach healthy nutrition and eating habits, refraining from using sweets as rewards.
- Ensure that safe drinking water is available to children throughout the day and children are hydrated.
- Provide opportunities for exercise and gross motor skill development daily.

Classroom Environment - Overview

The physical environment of the classroom is an essential component for defining a high-quality kindergarten as it reflects the goals, values, expectations, and philosophy of the program; supports relationships and development of the children; supports staff needs; contributes to a community of caring; and sets the stage and creates the context for the learning that happens there. It is the place where children's routine needs are met, relationships are developed, skills are learned, abilities are enhanced, and attitudes toward

school and learning are formed.[110] "The physical environment goes beyond the building, the equipment, and the materials. It is an active entity that conveys values and messages about who is welcomed, what is important, and what the beliefs are about how children learn."[111]

Who is Welcomed?

Of course, first and foremost are the children, from various cultures, with diverse abilities, developmental levels, and varying ages, ranging from four to six years. Children need the environment to be set up so that they are safe, healthy, secure, and comfortable and where they can develop and learn. The environment should allow for flexibility to re-organize space to accommodate changing and individual needs of children.

Families, too, need to feel welcomed in a way that promotes their involvement and interaction with the teaching staff and supports transition from home to school and back home again. They need to feel that the environment reflects their cultures in positive ways. The environment needs to accommodate staff needs, as well. It should promote staff health and safety, where materials and supplies are accessible and convenient.

What is important?

The environment reflects the philosophy and values of the kindergarten program and the goals and expectations the program has for children. It is important to be intentional about setting up the environment. Knowing the developmental and individual needs of the children in your class and the goals you have for them determines how you set up the environment, what materials you include, and what activities are available.

What are the beliefs about how children learn?

"The physical environment is a statement about how programs and teachers believe children learn best. Are activities set up for children's active engagement? For example, are there places for them to easily use materials? Are there groupings of materials set up for them to explore? Do activities and learning opportunities change in response to development and interests?" [112] Is there adequate space for individual, small group, and large group activities? Think about the previous section on what research says about the importance of engaged learning and meaningful play, and ask yourself, does the environment enable play and engaged learning to happen in my classroom?

The essential elements of color, light, sound, and air are important considerations as they impact children's behavior and learning. Color should be thought out carefully, as too much can be over-stimulating. The background of floors, walls, and furniture should be neutral.

[110] NAEYC, 2005.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.

Color is then provided through the materials, the children, and their creations. Too often we plan extremely colorful classrooms without considering the impact on children. Once children get involved in the environment, exploring, creating, and playing, the environment becomes busy and there is a great deal of activity. Colorful rugs decorated with shapes, colors, letters, and designs can make the environment overwhelming and over-stimulating. For example, when children take the materials out and use them on the rug, it becomes difficult for them to focus when the background is busy and distracting. To mitigate this problem, you can use solid mats.

The walls should not be covered with multiple posters and patterns, but instead we should display exactly what we want the children to pay attention to and the concepts being presented. When we fill the walls, the children do not really focus on any of it. Much of what is displayed should be the children's own original work.

Ideally, there should be a lot of natural light. Be careful that fans are not hanging below lights because it creates a strobe effect which can be very distracting and can cause concentration problems for all children, especially those with ADHD or autism and can even bring on seizures for children with epilepsy.

Use fabrics and furniture that absorb sound to prevent echoing and to reduce noise. Encourage quiet conversation. Your example has a big impact. Go to individual children when you want to speak to them, rather than calling across the room. Volume is contagious. The louder your voice gets, the louder the children get. It can also work in your favor, because the quieter your voice, the quieter the children's voices will become.

Air quality is important for children and adults, and particularly for those who are prone to allergies. In the tropics, we are more likely to have to deal with mildew and mold.
If you have air conditioners, ask to have them cleaned and for the filters to be changed frequently. Ensure children have opportunities for fresh air. Room temperature should be at a comfortable level. If you use air conditioners, pay careful attention to the temperature for the children. Adults often want cooler temperatures than are comfortable for children.

Structuring the Classroom Environment
Each kindergarten classroom will be different, depending on the space, furniture, and materials available, and the children and adults who will use these. The classroom should change over time in response to children's changing needs and interests. Regardless of their

individual characteristics, all kindergarten classrooms should have certain features that promote development and learning, including:[113]

- space for children to store their work and personal belongings;
- place for group meetings, where children can comfortably sit and see one another, engage in group conversations, listen to stories, and build a classroom community;
- variety of interest areas for working and learning, where materials are easily accessible;
- quiet spaces where children can get away from the hustle and bustle of the classroom or work quietly alone or with a friend;
- places to store materials in interest areas that are organized in a way that children can use them and return them independently, as well as, storage for materials that are not currently in use; and
- places to display children's work respectfully and attractively.

Designing Learning Centers

"Research confirms that one of the most effective developmentally appropriate ways for kindergarten children to learn is through hands-on interactions with engaging materials and the support of a caring adult. This can happen by setting up areas around the room with rich interesting materials where children can have these experiences....Interest areas can be the hub of engaging learning in the kindergarten classroom by allowing children to be actively involved in exploring and providing a place where they can practice the many skills they have been learning. Interest areas are ideal places for children to learn kindergarten standards and encompass all of the subjects included in the standards."[114]

Clearly defined interest areas/learning centers promote development, learning, and active engagement. Large open spaces communicate to children — "run" — which doesn't help children focus on activities. Learning centers provide quieter, smaller groups where children can practice their developing skills. Engaging in activities in smaller groups is also less overwhelming. Learning centers promote concentration and minimize distractions, as children's visual field is limited to what is happening in the center where they are, rather than the whole room. The noise level is lower when children are actively engaged in learning centers. When learning centers are organized and strategically placed, children feel safe and secure. Their environment is predictable because they know where to find things.

[113] Adapted from Heroman & Copple, 2006
[114] Jacobs & Crowley, 2010.

When creating a layout of your classroom and designing learning centers, it is important to consider the following:

- *Entrance and traffic patterns*: Think about where children will be entering the area and whether pathways to that area are clear. Children should be able to enter the different areas unobstructed and to permit a flow of traffic that doesn't disturb others' activities going on in that area. Make sure children can enter learning centers without going through other busy areas to avoid potential conflicts (for example, children bumping into paint easels).
- *Activities*: Noisier areas should be close to each other and quieter areas together. For example, quieter areas such as library corners, listening centers, computer stations, and science areas are placed near each other with block and dramatic play areas closer together.
- *Clear Guidelines*: Provide children with guidance about how to use materials and the expected behaviors in each center.
- *Adequate Number of Centers*: There should be enough centers open each day to permit children to make choices from a variety of activities.
- *Size*: The size of an area depends on what activities you expect to happen there and how many children you anticipate could work/play in the area at a time. Block corners usually need a lot of room for children to work together to build large structures and use props, such as cars, with enough space to avoid knocking each others' structures down as children move around. Dramatic play areas are also areas that may need to be larger to accommodate the props needed or the number of children engaged there at any given time. Library corners are often cozy with soft comfortable areas for children to sit and enjoy books and tell stories using puppets and flannel boards.
- *Boundaries*: Clearly defined learning spaces help children focus on specific activities and materials, create smaller more manageable play groups, and encourage active engagement as opposed to children wandering around the classroom or moving from one activity to another. Areas should be distinct and clearly defined with physical barriers so that children understand that certain activities occur in certain areas. It doesn't mean that children cannot get a book from the library and take it to the block corner to see how a skyscraper is built or a child cannot go to the writing area to get materials to make a sign for the airport they built in the block area — actually these should be encouraged. Creating boundaries and purposes within each center provides the children a way for their environment to be organized and predictable. This enables them to develop independence skills, as they know where to find the things they need to support their learning. Barriers can be made using furniture — shelves, benches, dividers, or

even a teacher's desk (which can also provide a cozy place for reading a book with pillows underneath).

- *Visibility*: Make sure you can see all areas for supervision. Low shelves that adults can see over as dividers are ideal. The children do not need to see over the dividers.
- *Furniture and Fixed Features*: When deciding where each area should be, make a map of your room and first plot the location of fixed features that you cannot change. These would include electrical outlets, doors, windows, sinks, and storage closets. Work with these as you think about where each area should be placed. For example, it makes sense to put messy areas close to water sources — sinks and bathrooms — so children can access them without being tempted to touch things on their way to wash hands. Think about what areas will need tables and chairs. These often include art, writing, dramatic play, and math manipulative areas. They don't need to be grouped together but should go where they are needed. They can stay where they are for other small group activities and snack, as long as there is a place for each child to sit when needed. Consider which areas need rugs and which should have washable surfaces. Blocks often work best on flat carpets that absorb the sound when structures fall; whereas, messy activities, like art and water play should be on tile for easy clean-up. Areas with good lighting should be reserved for the library, writing, and drawing.
- *Materials and Equipment*: Following are suggested considerations when selecting learning materials and equipment. Ensure that they:
    - are designed to encourage exploration, experimentation, and discovery;
    - reflect the diversity of the children and families;
    - promote action and interaction;
    - are organized to support independent use;
    - are rotated to reflect the changing needs and interests of the children;
    - are rich in variety;
    - promote social interaction and play; and
    - accommodate children's special needs.

"Distinctive areas encourage different types of activity and expand the range of content children are enticed to pursue. They also promote thoughtful decision making, as children survey the room and choose where, with what, and with whom they want to engage."[115] Typical learning centers in kindergarten classrooms include:

- *Large Group Meeting Area*: "Essential to a kindergarten classroom is a large group meeting area where all students gather as a community of learners with their teacher. This provides them with an opportunity to communicate with one another and take ownership of their learning environment. This area is also a place for students to respectively share and listen to each other's ideas, accomplishments and challenges. During this time, the teacher provides direct instruction to the whole group, models

[115] Epstein, 2014.

new experiences, facilitates sharing of learned experiences, and provides encouragement for their learning. Time in this area allows children the opportunity to share their opinions and thoughts and establish routines and expectations for daily activities."[116] It's an ideal setting for large group story reading and music and movement activities. Suggested materials include:

- flip chart stand
- big book stand
- rug or individual student carpet mats
- audio player
- flannel story board
- promethean board
- other props as needed

- *Library/Reading Area*: This is an essential area for a literacy-rich classroom and provides an opportunity for children to enjoy books independently or with a friend. It should be a cozy area, with pillows, bean-bag chairs, or mats where children can get comfortable with books. Books should be displayed facing outwards inviting children to pick them up. You may want to display books related to the current theme separately to draw children's attention and interest. Suggested materials include:
  - carpet ends/mats, cushions, pillows, bean bag chairs
  - book display case or rack
  - selection of children's literature that includes a variety of reading materials, such as picture books, informational text, child/class-authored books, concept books, big books, magazines, and newspapers.
  - flannel story board and story pieces
  - puppets
  - "Toobaloo," a phone-like device that allows children to hear themselves as they speak or read

When children do this ...		They are learning to ...[117]
Library/Reading Area	Listen to a story and talk about what happened	• Appreciate books, gain book knowledge, remember details, express ideas (Language Arts) • Sequence the order of the story (Science; Math)
	Play with puppets	• Create their own stories (Language Arts; Creativity and Arts) • Take on roles and develop characters (Social and Emotional)

[116] Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
[117] Adapted from Dodge & Phinney, 2002.

- *Listening Area*: "This area provides rich opportunities for developing oral language. Activities in this area provide opportunities for students to learn how to listen attentively, develop phonological awareness, and to make meaning from the language they hear spoken."[118] A variety of listening experiences can be provided for children's enjoyment including stories with read-along books, music, poems and chants. You can create recordings of students reciting poetry, chants, rhymes, or songs. Suggested materials include:
    - audio player with colored stickers to mark the play button green and the stop button red
    - headphones and adaptors for multiple headsets so children can listen together
    - table and chairs
    - selection of stories with audio
    - variety of CDs that contain various types of music, songs, sounds, and rhymes
    - container for book and audio storage
    - individual folders, plastic bags, or envelopes for each book and audio selection

When children do this …		They are learning to …[119]
Listening Area	Listen and following a story in a book	• Appreciate books, gain book knowledge, build vocabulary (Language Arts) • Sequence the order of the story (Science; Math)

- *Writing Area:* "A designated area and ample time to explore writing is essential in the literacy development of a kindergarten student. Exposure to writing tools and materials will allow opportunities for print exploration and the development of writing skills. Many of the items placed in this area will provide a purpose for children to write. A grocery flyer may inspire a child to make a grocery list while a recycled envelope may create a reason to write a letter to place in another student's mailbox. The stage of each child's writing development will be reflected in his/her work. All children should be encouraged to read their writing and be reassured that their printed message is meaningful."[120] Suggested materials include:
    - table and chairs
    - different types and sizes of paper such as note pads, stationary, copier paper, index cards, sticky notes
    - variety of writing utensils such as pens, pencils, markers, crayons, chalk
    - class set of mailboxes made from milk cartons, shoe boxes, or other materials

[118] Ibid.
[119] Adapted from Dodge & Phinney, 2002.
[120] Ibid.

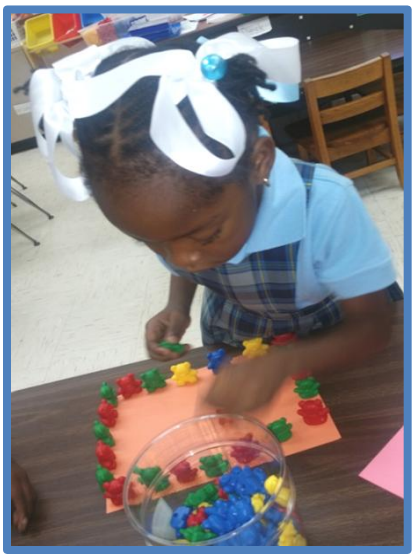
- index box with cards with familiar and favorite words
- word wall with familiar words and words related to current themes or projects
- booklets of paper stapled together for children to create their own books
- individual white boards, markers, and erasers
- sentence strips
- recycled invitations and greeting cards
- used, new, and recycled envelopes
- alphabet chart and number chart
- magnetic letters and boards
- stamps and stamp pads
- student name cards
- picture dictionaries
- bills and receipts
- word books
- clipboards
- stencils
- flyers
- moveable alphabet (letters on small individual cards that children can move around to create words and sentences)
- "story starters" (magazine pictures that may inspire children to write a story)

When children do this ...		They are learning to ...[121]
Writing Area	Write on paper using some letters and tell what their writing says	• Use writing as a way to communicate, make connections between letters and sounds, express ideas (Language Arts) • Express ideas in creative ways (Creativity and Arts) • Coordinate their small muscles (Fine Motor)

- *Mathematics Manipulative Area*: In this area, children should find a variety of manipulatives designed to promote learning outcomes in mathematics. This should include a variety of purchased and home-made materials and collections, that provide opportunities for counting, sorting, comparing quantities, and creating patterns. Suggested materials include:
  - table and chairs, as well as, a carpeted area or carpet squares for children who like to work on the floor
  - containers to hold manipulatives, such as baskets, shoe boxes, plastic containers, dish pans

[121] Ibid.

- variety of objects for counting and sorting
- sorting trays, muffin pans, ice cube trays for sorting and classifying
- counters that vary in size and shape
- patterning materials such as beads with string and patterning blocks
- objects to sort, such as buttons, shells, and other everyday items
- snap cubes, small blocks, large Cuisenaire Rods, and other building materials
- set of 3D Geometric Solids and 3D objects
- magnetic numbers, dice, number cards
- matching, sorting, and sequencing games
- printed wallpaper patterns
- dominoes
- puzzles
- pencils, colored pencils, and paper
- rulers and other materials for measuring
- calculator with large numbers
- abacus
- counting books and other math-related picture books



When children do this ...		They are learning to ...[122]
Mathematics Manipulative Area	Finish a puzzle, group objects that are the same	• Complete a task (Approaches to Learning) • Match, classify, compare, and count (Math) • Coordinate their small muscles (Fine Motor)

- *Science/Discovery Area*: A science/discovery area should be designed to encourage exploration, experimentation, and inquiry. It should provide opportunities for children to discover, and observe things in their environment using all of their senses while manipulating materials. To keep this area interesting and to increase children's opportunities to learn through discovery, it is a good idea to change materials regularly. You may want to position this area near a window where plants can grow with natural light and children can look out to observe the weather and other features of nature. Suggested materials include:
  - table and chairs
  - magnifying glasses and tripod magnifier
  - natural materials, such as shells, rocks, seed pods, leaves, flowers

[122] Adapted from Dodge & Phinney, 2002.

- classroom pet or aquarium
- plants and materials to care for them, such as a watering can and spray bottle
- materials for measuring, such as balance scale, rulers, thermometers, measuring cups and measuring spoons
- magnets with objects that are attracted to them and objects that are not
- water table or bins for water play with objects for pouring and measuring
- sand table or bins for sand, seeds, rocks, leaves or soil with objects for pouring and measuring
- cups of water with food coloring and eye-droppers
- simple machines, such as pulleys, ramps, wheels, pendulums
- spinning tops and wind-up toys
- sorting trays, muffin tins, ice cube trays for sorting and classifying
- children's own collections from home, field trips, and outdoor explorations
- books and nature magazines that reflect the current topics set up in the area
- jars for insects
- wrenches, bolts, screws, nuts, pliers, screwdrivers, tweezers, chopsticks, scoops, tongs, and other tools
- bubbles and wands

When children do this …		They are learning to …[123]
Science/Discovery Area	Plant seeds and measure their growth, pick up objects with a magnet, use an eye-dropper to add colors to cups of water	• Measure (Math) • Discover the properties of objects and liquids (Science) • Coordinate small muscles (Fine Motor)

- *Block Area*: The block area helps children learn skills that support them in meeting standards in all domains — as they cooperate in building structures with friends, they develop social and emotional skills; as they use blocks of various sizes and recognize that when they run out of the longest blocks, they take two of the next size, they learn math skills; as they interact with their peers and discuss their ideas, they develop language skills; and as they build and experiment with balance in their structures, they learn science concepts. Suggested materials include:
  - wooden unit blocks of assorted shapes and sizes, enough for a group of children to use at a time
  - large hollow blocks, cardboard blocks, or other large building materials
  - building materials, such as PVC pipes with connectors
  - props for enriching the building experience, such as toy animals, people representing various cultures, transportation vehicles

[123] Adapted from Dodge & Phinney, 2002.

When children do this …		They are learning to …[124]
Block Area	Use blocks and people to create rooms in a house, make bridges for cars	• Make maps of their world (Social Studies, Math) • Carry and build with large blocks (Gross Motor) • Use shapes to build (Math) • Re-create structures they've seen (Memory, Problem Solving, Creativity) • Work and cooperate with other children (Social and Emotional)

- *Art Area*: The Art Area should be a place where children can be free to express themselves designing their own original creations and using their imaginations with a wide variety of materials. "The completion of original creations prompt students to use their ability to problem solve and think creatively. Opportunities for children to use their imagination are not maximized when they are required to complete identical crafts made from reproducible templates. An art area should provide opportunities for students to explore, experiment and represent their feelings and ideas through their own creations. The blank page is powerful."[125] Suggested materials include:
  - table and chairs
  - newspaper or plastic table cloth to protect table when using messy materials
  - wide variety of paper including plain paper, butcher paper, newsprint, construction paper, tissue paper, sticky notes, etc.
  - wallpaper, leftover laminating film, and aluminum foil

  - long-handled brushes, sponges, flat brushes, round brushes, roller brushes
  - feathers, fabric scraps, beads, glitter, pom-poms, buttons, ribbon, yarn, pipe cleaners
  - easel, paint pots, and brushes with a shower curtain or plastic table cloth underneath to catch drips and spills
  - smocks for children to protect clothing
  - crayons, people crayons, colored pencils, markers, chalk, pencils, pens and other drawing utensils

[124] Adapted from Dodge & Phinney, 2002.
[125] Ibid.

- variety of paints, such as tempera paint, water color paint, finger paint
- clothes line to hang wet pictures to dry
- paper cut into shapes
- play dough
- scissors
- glue, glue sticks, and tape
- variety of cardboard boxes, toilet paper tubes, and paper towel tubes for making 3-D structures

When children do this ...		They are learning to ...[126]
Art Area	Gather paper, scissors, and glue for a project, draw a picture of one's family	• Plan and complete a project (Approaches to Learning) • Use symbols to represent ideas (Language Arts) • Understand the concept of "family" (Social Studies) • Share materials and take turns with other children (Social and Emotional)

- *Dramatic Play Area*: This area should be transformed throughout the year to respond to a new project or study. You may begin the year by creating a play-house and later turn it into a doctor's office, pizza parlor, or airport. "This area encourages children to interact, experience or re-create real or imaginary situations. Outcomes pertaining to adult roles in the family and the community are achieved as students develop the social skills required to interact in these social roles through imaginary play. Literacy and numeracy experiences are rich as children engage in real-life experiences through role-playing such as designing table settings in a restaurant, recording orders, tabulating a bill for a customer, changing a tire in a garage, or checking groceries in a grocery store."[127] Materials and props will vary depending on the theme or project.

When children do this ...		They are learning to ...[128]
Dramatic Play Area	Use a stethoscope to examine a doll and write a prescription, go shopping to buy food to cook for dinner	• Pretend with objects (Abstract thinking) • Write for a purpose (Language Arts) • Act out roles of workers in their community and family (Social Studies, Creativity and the Arts) • Cooperate in joint activities (Social and Emotional)

[126] Adapted from Dodge & Phinney, 2002.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Adapted from Dodge & Phinney, 2002.

- *Technology Area*: Opportunities for children to use technology can extend and enrich learning in all academic areas. It is important to select software carefully to ensure that it is developmentally appropriate. The availability of a digital camera and recorder can provide opportunities for children to document their experiences and activities. Suggested materials include:
    - table with two chairs to promote cooperative learning
    - computer with mouse
    - iPads/tablets, promethean board, smart table, and other devices
    - printer and paper
    - high-quality and developmentally appropriate software
    - selected appropriate internet sites
    - digital camera
    - recorder
    - container for storing software

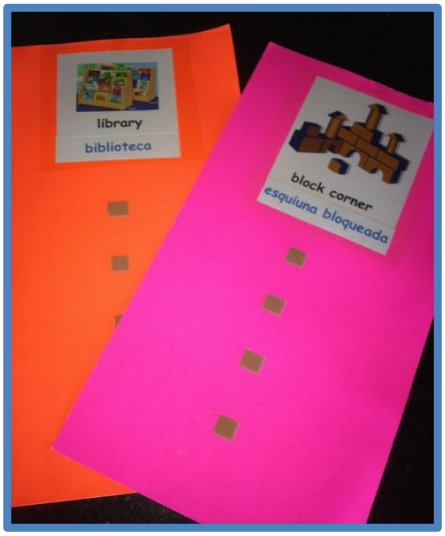
When children do this ...		They are learning to ...[129]
Technology Area	Use a computer program with another child, type the letters of their names, take pictures of their work, use the mouse to make selections	• Share and cooperate (Social and Emotional) • Recognize and use the alphabet (Language Arts) • Use tools (Science) • Coordinate small muscles (Fine Motor) • Press buttons for results (Science - Cause and Effect)

Tips for Successful Free-Choice Time

There are many routines and supports that can be established to ensure that free-choice time is productive, conflicts are minimized, and children's independence is promoted.

[129] Adapted from Dodge & Phinney, 2002.

- *Selecting Interest Areas*: Before "free choice" time begins, give each child an opportunity to select the area in which he/she would like to work/play. Kindergarten children are concrete thinkers, so visual cues help them know which centers are available and which have room for them to enter. Be sure the number of places to play is more than the number of children, so that they can move to different areas and have choices and don't get "stuck" with their first choice. Here is an example of center signs that provide visual concrete cues. The way center signs work is that each center is labeled with a visual and the written word, telling children the name of the center. The brown squares you see are actually velcro. You put the number of velcro spaces on the sign that indicates the number of children who can work in that center at a time. The limits you set are determined by the amount of space, number of children who could work there either individually or together cooperatively, and amount of materials you have in that center that can accommodate the number of children. In this instance, there are 4 children who can be in the block corner at one time. As a child selects a center to work in, he/she places his/her name card on the sign. When all the spaces are filled, another child wishing to go there has to choose a different center and wait until someone comes out and there is a space. Children can move from one center to another throughout the "free choice" time as their interests change. That is why there needs to be more available spaces than children. Children learn to do this independently, freeing the teacher from the need to police the centers. The visual cue helps them to understand that the number of children in a center isn't somehow arbitrary or discriminating against them. They learn that it is part of the routine. Even when they may be disappointed, it helps them to learn patience and self-regulation when they have to wait, as well as, the mathematical concept of one-to-one correspondence.



- *Storage and Labeling of Materials*: Store and label materials to promote a "find-use-return" cycle, which encourages independence and a sense of responsibility. Store materials that go together near each other. For example, store the pegs with the pegboards, cars near the blocks, and collage materials near the glue and paper. Label each

container with a picture and the name of the object and label the shelf where the materials are stored, so that children will know where they go and can return them independently. You may use colored contact paper to cut the shapes of the different blocks to label the shelf where each shape goes. This promotes literacy, math concepts, constructive use of materials, and organizational skills. Containers, with materials thrown in, invite disorganization and chaos. Children have a tendency to dump everything out looking for the object they want. Materials should be displayed in a way that children can see what they are, choose, use, and put away.

Tips for Successful Teacher -Initiated Group Time

Recall that "kindergartners need a balance of child-initiated play in the presence of engaged teachers and more focused experiential learning guided by teachers."[130] Regardless of the size of the group, teachers should plan activities that encourage active engagement using multiple senses and hands-on participation.[131]

- *Whole Group Time*: Large group activities in which children are engaged in teacher-initiated activities can provide rich learning opportunities for music, discussion, story-time, introduction of new concepts and projects, and a sense of community. In a study on the effects of whole group activities, predictors of positive outcomes for kindergartners were identified, which include:
    - "a well-organized large group time with planned activities and prepared materials;
    - cognitively challenging teacher talk, such as content-rich explanations and thoughtful questions;
    - a use of higher-level vocabulary by teachers; and
    - avoidance by teachers of lengthy conversations with just one child (which risks losing the attention of the other children)."[132]

  It can be a challenge to get and maintain children's attention in large group activities. Singing a song to gather the children together or leading them in finger plays can help to draw them in. The more engaging the activity, the longer children will be attentive and involved and, ultimately, the more learning will occur. It is important to be observant of each child's style and level of participation. Some will want to respond to

[130] Miller & Almon, 2009.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Schickedanz, 2008.

every question posed, while others may sit back quietly. Setting up similar activities with the same learning goals during choice time will give children an opportunity to practice and also enable you to observe individual children to determine if each has mastered the new skill or concept. During group discussions, on such topics as what we saw on the field trip, ensure that each child has a turn to contribute.

- *Small Group Time*: Small group activities, simply because of the smaller number, provide children with greater opportunities to participate and enable the teacher to be more focused on individual children and their learning needs. "Teachers often use this format for planned, focused experiences in which they might introduce a new skill or concept or reinforce skills and concepts the children have recently encountered."[133] Small group teacher-initiated activities can occur during free-choice time, when the other children are engaged in center activities or while they are involved in focused activities, such as writing/drawing in their journals. Small group activities are easier to implement when the teacher has the support of another adult in the classroom.

Daily Schedule and Routines

A consistent daily routine is important for children's sense of security and trust in the kindergarten environment. Children at this age may not be able to tell time, however, the predictability of a daily schedule of activities helps children know what will happen next and what the expectations are for their behavior and participation. Posting the schedule with words and pictures and using it as a teaching tool helps children become familiar with the routine and your expectations. Each part of the day has the potential for learning and building relationships. The order of activities depends largely on school schedules for buses, specials, lunch, and availability of outdoor recess areas during cooler times of the day. Below is an example of a daily routine.[134]

[133] Heroman & Copple, 2006.
[134] Adapted from Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

Activity	Examples of Linking Daily Routines to Learning Standards/Outcomes
Arrival & Welcome • Greet each child • Allow children an opportunity to sign in upon arrival by placing their name on an attendance chart. • Children may be given an opportunity to respond to a question of the day posted in a designated place in the classroom. For example, they may be asked to find something in the classroom that is red and bring it to the opening circle time or they may be asked their favorite color to create a class graph.	*Students will have an opportunity to :* • Build a positive relationship with the teacher (Social and Emotional Skills) • Understand that print carries a message. (English Language Arts) • Compare quantities using one-to-one correspondence. (Math) • Begin to recognize some high frequency sight words. (English Language Arts) • Respond to and give simple directions or instructions. (English Language Arts) • "Sign-In" (Fine Motor)
Group Meeting or Circle Time • This is a great way to establish routine and expectations. This time could include whole group instruction, shared reading, music, modeled/guided writing (morning message or helper news), sharing, daily plans and schedules (calendar and weather chart). • You can introduce new projects, themes, or activities. • Students can be involved in selecting which areas they will visit as circle time ends.	*Students will have an opportunity to :* • Participate in conversations and discussions (English Language Arts) • Understand basic concepts of print including directionality, word, space, letter and sound. (English Language Arts) • Demonstrate an understanding of repeating patterns. (Math) • Develop an awareness of rules and why they are made. (Social Studies) • Use personal observations when asked to describe weather characteristics. (Science). • Identify traditions, rituals and celebrations connected to their personal experiences. (Social Studies) • Begin to ask and respond to questions, seeking information. (English Language Arts; Cognitive and General Knowledge) • Listen to the ideas and opinions of others. (English Language Arts; Social and Emotional Skills) • Respond to and give sample directions or instructions. (English Language Arts) • Practice taking turns (Social and Emotional)
Free Choice or Work Time (See previous sections on "Engaged Learning and Meaningful Play in Kindergarten" and "Learning Environment" on pages 37-42 and 43-67, respectively.)	*Students will have an opportunity to :* (See previous sections on "Engaged Learning and Meaningful Play in Kindergarten" and "Learning Environment")

Activity	Examples of Linking Daily Routines to Learning Standards/Outcomes
Snack and Meal Times • This is an appropriate time to incorporate health and nutrition, learn self-help and communication skills, and interact cooperatively.	*Students will have an opportunity to :* • Identify and practice skills that will help them resolve conflicts and interact (Social and Emotional Skills; English Language Arts) • Understand that healthy foods give the body energy and help it grow (Health and Science) • Understand that one's interaction affects one's feelings and those of others (Social and Emotional) • Identify and practice personal hygiene and their contribution to a healthy body (Health) • Discuss healthy food and beverage choices. (Health)
Activity or Small Group Time • This may be small groups or individuals actively engaged in selected learning areas or projects. • These activities should be play-based and promote active engagement. • This is often a teacher-guided playful and engaging activity and can vary from a cooking activity, shared reading, science experiment, or other focused more structured teacher-initiated activity.	*Students will have an opportunity to :* • Demonstrate and engage in cooperative learning and play; take turns (Social and Emotional; English Language Arts) • Understand that one's interaction/play affects one's feelings and those of others (Social and Emotional) • Follow directions (English Language Arts) *Depending on the activities being explored, many additional cross-curricular links may be achieved.*
Outdoor Play • This is a time when children can play freely outdoors or engage in semi-structured physical games and activities.	*Students will have an opportunity to :* • Demonstrate and engage in cooperative learning and play (Social and Emotional; English Language Arts) • Understand that one's interaction/play affects one's feelings and those of others (Social and Emotional) • Engage in physical activities that support the development of gross motor skills (Health and Physical Education) • Explore features in the natural environment (Science)
Closing Group Meeting or Circle Time • Ending the day with a group meeting provides opportunities for the teacher and children to bring closure to the events of the day. • Children recall and comment on the activities of	*Students will have an opportunity to :* • Recall and reflect on activities and participate in conversations and discussions (English Language Arts; Cognitive) • Listen to the ideas and opinions of others and

Activity	Examples of Linking Daily Routines to Learning Standards/Outcomes
the day, share learning, and help plan for the next day. The teacher engages the children in reflection and encourages children to share their thoughts and ideas.	engage in taking turns (English Language Arts); Social and Emotional Skills) • Planning and understanding the expectations of the next day (Cognitive; Math)
Dismissal • This is a time to establish a routine, encourage children's independence, and reinforce safety practices. • This is also a time when teachers can connect with children as they leave for the day and transition to home.	*Students will have an opportunity to :* • Follow a simple procedure when instructions are given one at a time (Science) • Detect consistency and patterns in weather events and use language to describe these patterns (Science; English Language Arts) • Identify appropriate safety practices in, on, or around motorized and non-motorized vehicles. (Health) • Demonstrate concern for the safety of self, others and surrounding environment (Physical Education; Social and Emotional Skills) • Build a positive relationship with the teacher (Social and Emotional Skills)

Outdoor Environment

"Outdoor play is essential for children's health and well-being. The sense of peace and pleasure children experience when they take in fresh air, feel the warmth of the sun on their backs, and watch a butterfly land gently on a flower is immeasurable. What is very evident is how much children enjoy running, jumping, climbing, and playing outdoors. The time children spend outdoors every day is just as important as the time they spend in the classroom. For teachers, the outdoors offers many ways to enrich their programs and support children's development and learning."[135]

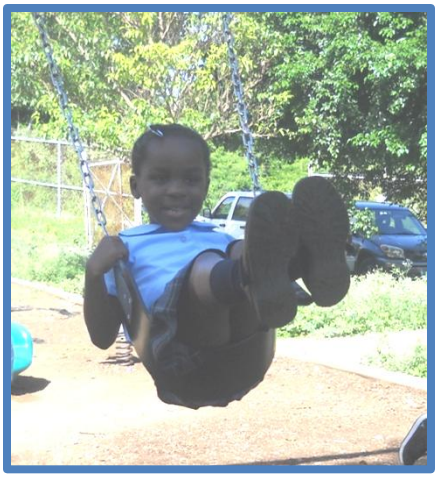
The lack of opportunities for children to play outdoors has put our children at risk and limited their experiences to enhance critical skills. In recent years, many programs have become pre-occupied with young children learning specific skills and have narrowed their goals for young children, thus abandoning a holistic approach to early childhood education that research tells us is so critical. With the over-emphasis on skill development, other essential areas of development and learning have been sacrificed — such as creativity, problem solving, communication, and interpersonal skills.[136]

[135] Dodge, et. al., 2010.
[136] Nelson, 2012.

Lack of exercise has contributed to the rise of obesity in children and adults. It is now a national epidemic. Ensuring that children have opportunities to play outdoors assists in obesity prevention and promotes lifelong habits of health and exercise. Just getting children outdoors increases the opportunities for them to be more physically active. Lack of exercise and movement also limits young children's learning. Physical activity not only facilitates brain development, but also fosters learning and understanding as children are exposed to a broader range of experiences.

The U. S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends the following guidelines for children's physical activity to promote health and wellness:[137]

Children and adolescents should engage in 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of physical activity daily.



- Aerobic: Most of the daily physical activity should be either moderate or vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity, and should include vigorous intensity physical activity at least 3 days a week.

  Aerobic activities are those in which young people rhythmically move their large muscles. Running, hopping, skipping, jumping rope, swimming, dancing, and bicycling are all examples of aerobic activities. Aerobic activities increase cardio-respiratory fitness. Children often do activities in short bursts, which may not technically be aerobic activities.

- Muscle-strengthening: As part of their daily physical activity, children and adolescents should include muscle-strengthening at least 3 days per week.

  Muscle-strengthening activities make muscles do more work than usual during activities of daily life. This is called "overload," and it strengthens the muscles. Muscle-strengthening activities can be unstructured and part of play, such as playing on playground equipment.

- Bone-strengthening: As part of their daily physical activity, children and adolescents should include bone-strengthening activity at least 3 days per week.

  Bone-strengthening activities are those that involve impact with the ground, such as running, jumping, hop-scotch, and basketball. Bone-strengthening activities can also be aerobic and muscle-strengthening at the same time.

For many families, neighborhoods may not be as safe as they used to be and many playgrounds have been taken over by criminal activity. Parents have become more concerned about what might happen to their children, and therefore, limit outdoor play

[137] Department of Health and Human Services, 2008.

opportunities. Taking children to safe places to play takes time, energy, and transportation — things that may be difficult for many parents. The school can provide that opportunity for outdoor play that many children may not otherwise have.

The first consideration is safety. Remove hazardous objects, such as broken glass. Ensure that surface materials are well-maintained; there are safety surfaces under climbing structures; and equipment is well-spaced for appropriate fall and use zones as recommended by the US Consumer Product Safety Commission. Poisonous and injurious plants, such as oleander and stinging nettle, should be removed. Check to ensure that equipment:

- is clean and in good working order;
- has no jagged edges, peeling paint, or other hazards;
- is size appropriate for the age-group, so that it is both challenging and not dangerous;
- is designed with multiple uses;
- does not get too hot in the sun, so that the surface will not burn children; and
- has no entrapment openings in equipment.

We have a tendency to think about the outdoors as recess, as an opportunity for children to run and let off steam and a time for adults to sit in the shade to monitor so no one gets hurt. Traditional games should be taught, demonstrated, and encouraged. You are also invited to think about the outdoors as an extension of the indoor classroom — with the same quality of planning, teaching, and learning. We need to recognize and make use of the unique opportunities for learning that are available outdoors. Outdoor activities can promote as much development and learning in all domains as indoor activities do.

- *Gross Motor Skills*: Opportunities for children to climb, jump, balance, run, throw, carry
- *Fine Motor Skills*: Opportunities for children to manipulate objects as they use sand or water (such as pouring, digging, filling) and as they manipulate objects and explore (such as leaves and pebbles)
- *Social and Emotional Skills*: Opportunities for children to play together, creating their own roles and rules, taking turns, and negotiating and resolving conflicts
- *Cognitive Skills*: Opportunities for problem-solving, thinking creatively, observing, applying strategies, reflecting, and making sense of the world. Science, in particular, can be enhanced through children's explorations and observations of the natural world - gardening, watching insects as they move, and making collections of natural objects
- *Language and Literacy Skills*: Opportunities to interact with teachers and other children, learn new vocabulary words connected to their experiences, and reflect on their activities

It is the reality that many of our elementary schools do not have playground equipment or separate play areas for kindergarteners. However, efforts should be made to ensure that there are opportunities for constructive play with developmentally appropriate equipment

and materials. Ideally, playgrounds for kindergarteners should be separated from those for older children.

We often think about playgrounds as being very costly with expensive equipment, but there are many ways to have stimulating outdoor environments that provide opportunities for movement and physical play that incorporate low-cost and natural elements. Since "pictures say a thousand words," the following photos illustrate creative ways to provide these features.

Promoting Social and Emotional Competence

This section of the Guidelines is closely aligned with the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards:

- **Standard #1 states: "The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences."**
- **Standard #3 states: "The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation."**

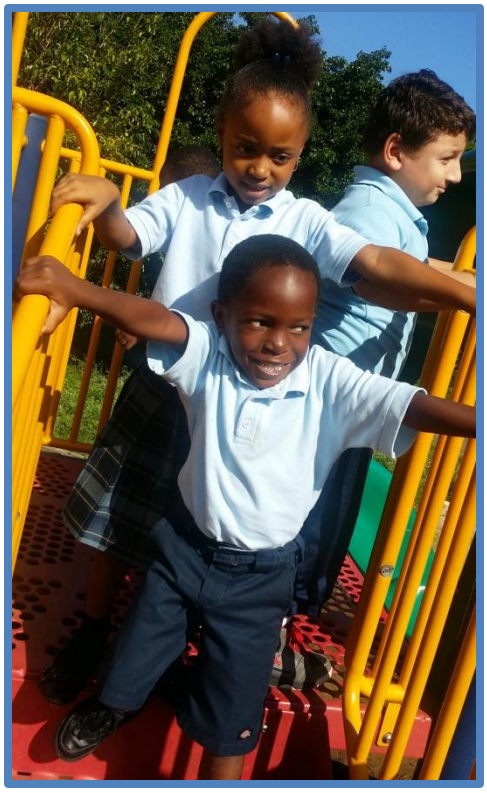
The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines social and emotional learning as "the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions." CASEL has identified five social and emotional core competencies:[138]

- **Self-awareness:** The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.
- **Self-management:** The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.
- **Social awareness:** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures; to understand social and ethical norms for behavior; and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
- **Relationship skills:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.
- **Responsible decision making:** The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

[138] CASEL, 2014

Adults can support children in developing these social and emotional competency skills. There is a tendency for adults to assume that children acquire these on their own, without intervention or support, that somehow children learn how to get along with others and manage their own emotions as an automatic process of growing up. Think about the following:[139]

"If a child doesn't know how to read, *we teach*.
If a child doesn't know how to swim, *we teach*.
If a child doesn't know how to count, *we teach*.
If a child doesn't know how to tie shoes, *we teach*.
If a child doesn't know how to behave,
we…….. …….teach? ……punish?"



Why can't we finish the last sentence as automatically as we do the others? When we tell children to "behave," what do we really mean? Behaving in one situation may be different than in others. For example, behavior on the playground is very different, with different expectations, than behaving in the classroom, or on the school bus. This means that our focus should be on teaching children expectations for their behavior and supporting their learning of these skills.

The Center for the Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning provides guidance for early childhood educators in their Teaching Pyramid Model, a model for implementing Positive Behavior Intervention and supports (PBIS) with young children, depicted on the following page.[140]

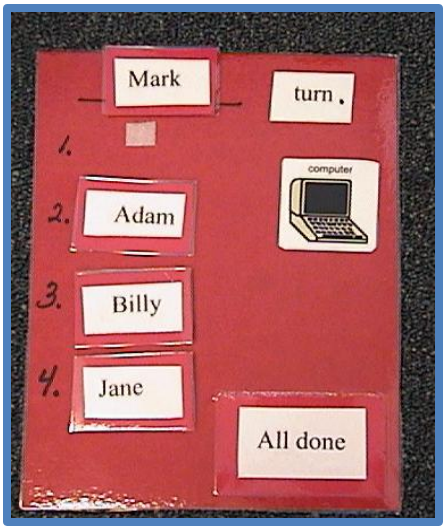
[139] Hemmeter et. al.
[140] Ibid.

Nurturing and Responsive Relationships

As you can see from this model, nurturing and responsive relationships are the foundation for everything we do, especially for promoting social and emotional competence in young children. This was discussed in great detail in a prior section entitled "Teacher-Child Relationships," beginning on page 31. As we discussed, results of brain research indicates that children develop best and learn more in the context of positive relationships. When we form positive relationships with children, it helps each child feel accepted in the group and worthy and confident, as well as encourages empathy and mutual respect among children and adults.

High Quality Supportive Environments

We can establish well-designed high-quality environments that support children's social and emotional competence and make it more likely that they will engage in appropriate behaviors. Much of this was discussed in the previous section on "Learning Environment," beginning on page 43. A well-designed environment minimizes distractions, provides structure and routines within which learning occurs, and supports children in understanding expectations. Creating meaningful and engaging learning centers, labeling materials, and having a clearly defined schedule gives children these supports. When we provide visual concrete examples of expectations, we avoid problem behaviors and give guidance for expectations. Following are some examples of visual cues that support routines and support positive behaviors:



Sign to promote turn-taking at the computer

Sign to promote steps for hand-washing

Signs to show the schedule of weekly activities.

Signs to promote orderly lining up at the door

It's important for children to have a clear understanding of our expectations for their behavior in the various settings within the classroom and throughout the school. Guidelines about how to create these 'rules" we establish include:[141]

- State them clearly in positive words.
- Keep them simple and few in number.
- Ensure that they are developmentally appropriate.
- Post them with pictures.
- Teach children the rules.

An example of class rules may look like:[142]

- We will be peaceful with our words and our actions.
- We will be gentle with people and things.
- We will be respectful of people and things.
- We will be enthusiastic learners and always work with excellence.

We then need to teach what these look and sound like when children are doing these things. What does it mean to be peaceful, gentle, respectful, and enthusiastic? What does it look and sound like in the block corner, the library, the playground, and on the bus? At circle time, it may be the following:[143]

- Look with your eyes.
- Listen with your ears.
- Sit on your mat.
- When someone is holding the "microphone," it is their turn to talk.

We can provide props, special cues, and pictures to help children understand our expectations, such as using a block as a "microphone" when children are taking turns in a large group conversation; asking children to make a "fish" with their hands when they have paint on them and they are heading to the sink; or posting a "stop" sign to indicate the exit of the block corner telling children not to "drive" their cars and trucks beyond that point.

As we teach the rules, it is important to give children positive specific feedback for following the rules and encouragement and guidance to children who may need more assistance. There is a tendency to react to those who do not follow the rules and who may be disruptive. We need to monitor ourselves to make sure we are spending more time using positive descriptive language in response to those who are meeting expectations. Remember, by being specific, we are letting children know what actions they are doing which are beneficial

[141] Adapted from Hemmeter et. al.
[142] Feldman, 2013.
[143] Adapted from Hemmeter et. al.

to their growth and development and help build a community of learners within the classroom.

Targeted Social and Emotional Supports

Designing and implementing targeted supports involves teaching social and emotional skills to children. Often, we attempt to teach social and emotional skills at the height of crisis, when the child is emotionally distraught or acting out. This can be futile, because that is just the moment when the child is less attentive and responsive to instruction. When we teach skills, it is best to do it at a time when children are most attentive, calm, and receptive. The most effective teachable moments for teaching social and emotional skills are ahead of time and when we can catch the situation before it escalates. It means being proactive rather than reactive.[144]

We can teach social and emotional skills such as — friendship skills, following rules and directions, emotional vocabulary, strategies for controlling anger and impulses, and problem solving and conflict resolution skills. We can intentionally teach friendship skills by designing activities that involve cooperation with a partner. Often, the child who consistently knocks down another's blocks is a child who has not learned how to initiate friendships and doesn't know how to enter the play in a constructive way. Instead, we can teach children to say "Can I play?" or to offer suggestions, such as, "I'll build a gas station for your car." We can teach them constructive ways to get another child's attention, by calling their name or tapping them gently on the shoulder. We can teach these and other skills using puppets and role play scenarios as part of circle time, small group activities, or during center work/play times.

When we teach sharing we have to be cognizant about what we are really asking children to do. Often, when we tell children to share, we are telling them to give something up — to give it away. Sharing involves using something together or giving some of what you have (such as, some of your play dough or blocks). When we say "share the doll," we are often really saying, give it to the other child. There is no indication that the first child will get it back. We need to give children a choice. We can teach children how to refuse sharing in positive ways by saying, for example, "You can have it when I'm finished."

[144] Hemmeter, et. al.

An important part of teaching social and emotional skills is helping children develop emotional literacy. "Emotional literacy is the ability to identify, understand, and express emotions in a healthy way."[145] Emotional literacy helps children have a better understanding of their own and others' feelings and behaviors. Children with a strong foundation in emotional literacy:[146]

- are better able to tolerate frustration;
- have fewer fights with peers;
- engage in less destructive behavior;
- are healthier;
- have friends;
- are less impulsive;
- are more focused; and
- have greater academic achievement.

When we teach emotional literacy, we teach children the vocabulary of feelings, such as happy, sad, frustrated, embarrassed, proud, and angry. One can use feeling words in our interactions with children, such as, "Tanya and Maria appear to be happy playing together because they are laughing, smiling, and sharing their clay." We can teach emotional literacy by doing a morning check-in — "How do you feel today?" Or by discussing scenarios, such as, "How would you feel if...?" Children's literature is an excellent way to build emotional literacy, by asking, for example, "How do you think Baby Bear felt when he saw his broken chair?" In the same way, we can teach the vocabulary of virtues, the strengths of character, discussed earlier. For example, "The Three Bears showed patience as they went for a walk to let their porridge cool."

Intensive Intervention and Responding to Challenging Behaviors

Research indicates that the majority of children will develop social and emotional competence when adults develop nurturing and responsive relationships with children, establish high quality supportive environments, and implement targeted social and emotional supports.[147] Some children may present more challenging behaviors that warrant more intensive intervention and support. As stated previously, certain behaviors that children exhibit may "push our buttons" — and these may be very individual for each teacher. It is important for teachers to be self-aware and to keep negative emotions and responses in check to better meet the needs of all children in the class.[148] Differences in culture may influence how teachers interact and interpret children's behavior. Teachers need to be mindful of how their behavior, from their own cultural context, impacts that of the children,

[145] Ibid.
[146] Adapted from Hemmeter, et. al.
[147] Hemmeter, et. al.
[148] Ibid.; Hemmeter, et. al.

as well.[149] When we talk about "challenging behaviors" here, we are referring to those that are a "repeated pattern of behavior that interferes with learning or engagement in prosocial interactions with peers and adults and behaviors that are not responsive to the use of developmentally appropriate guidance procedures."[150] Examples include prolonged tantrums, physical and verbal aggression, disruptive vocal and motor behavior (e.g., screaming), property destruction, self-injury, noncompliance, and withdrawal.[151]

All behaviors communicate a message - I am bored, I am sad, I am scared, you hurt my feelings, I need attention. It becomes the adult's role to try to figure out what the child is trying to communicate. There may be many variables that contribute to children's challenging behaviors that need to be explored. These may include those above, as well as health issues such as tooth decay, allergies, low sugar, low iron, lack of sleep, poor nutrition or hunger, or different expectations between school and home. Children often demonstrate challenging behavior when they do not have the social or communication skills they need to engage in more appropriate interactions. Children with little language skills often get frustrated easily because of their difficulty expressing themselves and their needs. As children gain language skills, often their social behaviors improve.

All behaviors communicate a message - I am bored, I am sad, I am scared, you hurt my feelings, I need attention. It becomes the adult's role to try to figure out what the child is trying to communicate.

There is a tendency to blame the child and label him as stubborn or disgusting. Generally, young children do not engage in challenging behaviors on purpose, to "get back at us," or to make our lives miserable. We often need to re-frame how we interpret the behavior. For example, we may react to a child who destroys another's art work by thinking, "That was a mean thing to do." To re-frame helps us think about what may be happening for the child. Perhaps, she doesn't understand how to use the materials, or she wants to connect with other children and doesn't know how, or she wants the attention and support of a nearby adult and this action will get her the attention she desires.

Many children have experienced trauma, witnessing or experiencing violence first-hand. Challenging behaviors are often symptoms of unresolved trauma. What may appear as poor attention skills or hyperactivity may be a child who is hyper-vigilant. Others may act out or withdraw. How these traumatic experiences are handled can have long term effects. Without the support and mitigation by caring adults, these traumatic experiences can cause toxic stress and have long term health, social, emotional, and learning consequences.[152]

[149] Bowman, et. al. 2006.
[150] Hemmeter, et. al.
[151] Ibid.
[152] National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2012; Center for Disease Control

Teachers can help by promoting healthy secure attachment, being patient and calm, finding what is comforting to the child, and providing emotional support.[153] Teachers can also help to alleviate stress by providing:[154]

- controllability, helping children feel a sense of control during stressful situations, for example, giving a child the space and time to remove himself from a situation that is especially stressful;
- predictability, establishing a predictable environment and daily schedule which helps children feel safe and more secure and the importance of telling children when there will be a change in routine so they can prepare for it; and
- social support, by talking with them, empathizing with them, comforting them, and helping them understand the situation and develop coping mechanisms.

Even when controllability and predictability are not possible and the stressor is unavoidable, strong social support can dramatically reduce the experience of stress.

Sometimes the challenging behavior works for the child by helping him get what he wants or avoid doing something he doesn't want to do, for whatever reason. Behavior that persists over time is usually working for the child. It is helpful to focus on teaching children what to do in place of the challenging behavior and provide emotional support. With careful observation, a sensitive adult may learn what triggers the challenging behavior for the child - Is it a loud noise? Crowded area? Change in routine? A frustrating task? Knowing a child's triggers, can help a teacher to re-direct the child, adjust the environment, be present to support the child, or help the child cope or respond in more appropriate ways. When responding to challenging behaviors, it is important to have a plan so that all adults are consistently responding in the same way.

There are times when teachers should seek the support of other professionals through the school's Basic Child Study team or outside resources for both the child and/or the family. The school counselor or special education services may be able to assist.

[153] Gilkerson & Klein, 2008
[154] Ibid.

Content Knowledge

This section of the Guidelines is closely aligned with the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards:

- **<u>Standard #4 states</u>: "The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content."**
- **<u>Standard #7 states</u>: "The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context."**

The content is the subject matter being taught. It includes the knowledge and skills that are the focus of the curriculum. The kindergarten standards describe the goals and outcomes expected for children as they complete kindergarten. These are outlined in the kindergarten standards, which can be found in the Appendix. It should be noted, however, that in the Virgin Islands, some children enter kindergarten as young as 4 years 9 months and only half will have turned 6 years by the end of kindergarten. This may mean that not all children should be expected to achieve all the goals in the National Standards, as these were designed for children who enter kindergarten at age 5 years.

The Virgin Islands Department of Education has adopted the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics, as well as the New Generation Science Standards. In addition, Physical Education and Health, Social Studies, and Technology Standards have been developed.

The adoption of kindergarten standards provides the goals and outcomes for children. The curriculum is how teachers help children achieve them. With the knowledge of the individual children in the class and best practices, teachers can use district-adopted curricular materials as starting points from which they can use a variety of strategies to design and customize appropriate teaching techniques. Teachers can:[155]

- *<u>Engage</u>*: Teach the concepts that are the focus of a particular lesson, and use different materials or approaches to help children achieve the objectives. For example, instead of a worksheet, turn the information

The adoption of kindergarten standards provides the goals and outcomes for children. The curriculum is how teachers help children achieve them.

[155] Adapted from Goldstein & Baumi, 2012.

into a game or other hands-on activity that is more engaging and interesting to the children.

- *Extend*: Add interesting materials to the lesson to engage or allow for hands-on activities that are relevant to the children in your group. For example, "bring in books at various reading levels with help from your school librarian (and, when possible, in the home languages of English language learners); offer a broad range of learning experiences; add new materials; integrate meaningful opportunities for children to engage with technology; and incorporate the visual and performing arts."[156]
- *Enrich*: "Add depth, complexity, and opportunities for creative thinking and expression to mandated lessons."[157] Provide opportunities for children to explore, investigate, practice, and use the concepts in a variety of settings and ways.
- *Adjust the Pace*: Provide time for children to fully explore activities and materials. Incorporate materials into learning centers to give children opportunities for further exploration and engagement for deeper understanding. Accelerate the pace when appropriate, when you know that children have mastered a concept and are ready to move on without additional practice.
- *Integrate* : Ensure that as many standards as possible are aligned with and packed into integrated thematic units or projects. Plan centers and provide materials in centers that can be used in a variety of ways to help children achieve the standards.

These *Virgin Islands Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten* are designed to provide suggested practices for meeting the standards in developmentally appropriate ways. When implemented along with intentional and responsive teaching, children will have opportunities to fully achieve the many goals established for them.

[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.

Application of Content and Instructional Strategies

This section of the Guidelines is closely aligned with the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards:

- **<u>Standard #4 states</u>: "The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content."**
- **<u>Standard #5 states</u>: "The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues."**
- **<u>Standard #7 states</u>: "The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context."**
- **<u>Standard #8 states</u>: "The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content and their connections and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways."**

Teaching encompasses the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and skills teachers employ in their work with children. No matter how good, or poor, a curriculum may be on paper, the teacher has the power to make the difference between high-quality and poor quality. Teachers make a profound difference whether a child will have a desire to learn and whether the information learned is valued and used or simply committed to memory. Children look to their teachers as role models. They strive to be recognized by their teachers. They strive to please. Every teacher, holds in his or her hands the power to shape a child's future. The teacher-child relationship cannot be underestimated. The teacher sets the tone for everything that happens in the classroom.

No matter how good, or poor, a curriculum may be on paper, the teacher has the power to make the difference between high-quality and poor quality. Excellent teachers know it's *both* what you teach (the content and goals*) and* how you teach (the attitudes, strategies, activities, and experiences).

Excellent teachers know it's *both* what you teach (the content and goals*) and* how you teach (the attitudes, strategies, activities, and experiences). "Whenever you see a great classroom, one in which children are learning and thriving, you can be sure that the teachers (and the administrators who support them) are highly intentional. In everything that good teachers do — creating the environment, considering the curriculum and tailoring it to

the children as individuals, planning learning experiences, and interacting with children and families — they are purposeful and thoughtful. As they make myriad decisions, big and small, they keep in mind the outcomes they seek. Even in responding to unexpected opportunities — 'teachable moments' — intentional teachers are guided by the outcomes the program is trying to help children reach and by their knowledge of child development and learning."[158]

As discussed in the section entitled "Engaged Learning and Meaningful Play" beginning on page 37, the most effective teaching is "a balance between child-initiated play in the presence of engaged teachers and more focused experiential learning guided by teachers."[159] "The division between child-guided learning and adult-guided learning is not a rigid one. Rarely does learning come about entirely through a child's efforts or only from adult instruction.... For example, young children begin to build their speaking and listening skills through spontaneous and natural conversations (child-guided experience). However, they also learn syntax and vocabulary from the adults around them, and teachers often make a point of introducing new words and more complex sentence structures (adult-guided experience). Children also differ individually in how they like to learn. Some do a lot of exploring and thinking through problems on their own, while others very readily ask adults for information or help. But every child learns in both ways."[160]

Intentional interactions between the teacher and children are the primary ways that teachers can provide instructional support for cognitive and language development.

An intentional teacher is intentional about his/her interactions with children, whether supporting child-initiated play or during adult-guided experiences. Research on children's cognitive and language development "highlights the distinction between simply learning facts and gaining usable knowledge — learning how facts are interconnected, organized, and conditioned on one another — noting that gaining usable knowledge is the more important of the two when it comes to cognitive development. The development of metacognitive skills, or the awareness and understanding of one's thinking processes, also is critical to children's academic development."[161] Intentional interactions between the teacher and children are the primary ways that teachers can provide instructional support for cognitive and language development. The following dimensions of teacher instructional support predict student academic functioning and are associated with increased student engagement:[162]

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[158] Copple & Bredekamp, 2009.
[159] Miller & Almon, 2009
[160] Epstein, 2014.
[161] Pianta, et. al., 2008.
[162] Ibid.

- *Concept Development*: How teachers use instructional discussions and activities to promote children's higher-order thinking skills in contrast to a focus on rote instruction. This includes discussions and activities that encourage analysis and reasoning — by asking "why" and "how" questions, making predictions, evaluating and making comparisons, brainstorming and planning, connecting concepts and integrating them with prior knowledge, and making connections to the children's lives and the real world.
- *Quality of Feedback*: How teachers extend children's learning through their responses to students' ideas, comments, and work. This includes scaffolding children's learning to assist them in moving to the next level; engaging in back-and-forth interactions; offering follow-up questions to deepen and expand children's understanding; providing information that provides an explanation, clarification, or specific feedback; and providing encouragement of children's efforts that increases their involvement and persistence.
- *Language Modeling*: The extent to which teachers facilitate and encourage children's language. This includes frequent conversations and exchanges; open-ended questions that require more than one-word responses; repetition, expansion, and elaboration of children's language; self-talk (when the teacher describes his/her actions); parallel-talk (when the teacher describes the child's actions); offering advanced language and vocabulary.

Much of this occurs through what is termed "Powerful Interactions," which are intentional and purposeful interactions between a teacher and child that extend the child's learning.[163] It means recognizing that teachable moment and using the information you know about the child and the goals of the curriculum to extend learning. "When you extend a child's knowledge and understanding hand-in-hand with nurturing a positive relationship with that child, you create the optimal condition for you to teach and the child to learn....Children are [then] open to your adding to their knowledge, encouraging them to try new things and think in new ways, modeling language, introducing interesting new vocabulary, and other learning possibilities."[164]

Intentional teaching means recognizing that teachable moment and using the information you know about the child and the goals of the curriculum to extend learning.

[163] Dombro, et al. 2011.
[164] Ibid.

Asking yourself the following three questions will help you make effective decisions about how to extend a child's learning:[165]

- *What is the right content to teach in this moment?* Focusing on the child and observing what the child is doing and is interested in at the moment will help you decide how to extend and enrich the learning experience for the child.
- *What is the next step in this child's learning*? This is where you draw on your knowledge of the child, where she is developmentally, and your knowledge of the typical sequences of development across domains and content areas so that you know how to scaffold the child to the next step. Your role is to continue to build a positive relationship, keep the child engaged, and help her feel successful and motivated.
- *How do I make learning meaningful for this child*? "Learning is meaningful to children when it relates to their prior experiences or their interests. You can make learning meaningful by considering what you already know about the child - her knowledge, skills, interests, and life experiences - and paying attention to what's engaging her at the moment."[166]

Here are three examples of powerful interactions designed to extend children's learning:[167]

1. Deidre uses red playdough and cookie cutters to make a series of shapes. She lines them up in a row from left to right. Rhonda, her teacher, watches and recognizes that this is a good moment to extend Deidre's understanding of geometry (because of the shapes) and spatial thinking (because of how she's carefully placing them in a straight row on the table). Using the strategy of [parallel talk], Rhonda says, "Wow, I notice you've carefully placed the playdough shapes in a straight line from left to right." In this way, Rhonda lets Deidre know that she sees her and validates the effort she's made. Rhonda also calls attention to organization and direction, while giving her language to describe what she's done. Knowing that Deidre often thinks systematically, Rhonda decides to extend her learning a little more by inviting her to use language to describe her plan. Rhonda says, "I'm curious, Deidre. How did you decide to organized your shapes this way?"
2. Desi is at the art table. He is cutting out pictures from a magazine and gluing them onto a piece of construction paper to make a collage. Another child, Jacquie, is sitting beside him, and they're taking turns telling each other about the pictures in their collages. Desi says, "I have a car." Jacquie says, "I have a skyscraper." Ms. Isabel takes a turn. "I see both of you have different animals in your collages." Both children scan their collages and Desi speaks up, "Yeah, I have a pony and a giraffe and a bird." Jacquie chimes in, "I've got a panda and a horse and a butterfly." Ms. Isabel sees an opportunity to extend their phonological awareness a little bit. "Hey, I heard

[165] Adapted from Dombro, et al. 2011.

[166] Dombro, et al. 2011.
[167] Ibid.

something similar about your animals! Desi has a pony and Jacquie has a panda. Listen carefully as I say each word. *Pony*. . . *panda*. What sound do you hear at the beginning of each word?" Both children make exaggerated /p/ sounds with their lips and say, "P!" The next time, it's her turn, Ms. Isabel helps them hear the matching initial sounds of bird and butterfly. After she leaves, Desi and Jacquie continue the game and find a few other pictures that begin with matching initial sounds.

3. Ms. Hillary: "Hey Petra, can I accompany you on your little hike around the playground?"
   Petra: "I'm looking for bugs and I can't find them."
   Ms. Hillary: "Okay, let's be entomologists together and find some insects to study! Where have you searched already?"
   Petra: "I've searched by the slide and the swings."
   Ms. Hillary: "Well, let's think. If you were an insect, what would you like for your habitat - maybe some trees and tall grasses?"
   Petra: "Yeah, let's go look by the [mahogany] tree. That would be a good habitat.
   Ms. Hillary: "I agree, that would be a fine insect habitat. Let's check it out!"

Kindergarten Learning Experiences

This section of the Guidelines is closely aligned with the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards:

- **Standard #4 states: "The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content."**
- **Standard #5 states: "The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues."**
- **Standard #7 states: "The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context."**
- **Standard #8 states: "The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content and their connections and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways."**

"With the present emphasis on standards and testing, early childhood teachers are challenged to teach more and more information and in the same amount of time. Integrating the curriculum reflects our knowledge of how the brain functions in the early years. It also supports learning in all developmental domains and content areas."[168] The concept of an integrated approach refers to a teaching strategy which links all developmental domains (physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language) and all content areas (language and literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and creativity and the arts) to a central theme or project. The theme or project can begin from the teacher or emerge from the children's interests. The teacher offers engaging and meaningful activities and experiences and children work at their own level, pursuing their interests in greater depth. "When children are engaged they are excited, curious, and intensely involved in learning experiences that are meaningful to them; they take responsibility for their own learning and feel energized. They develop and practice strategies for learning and become collaborative."[169] The curriculum expands in response to inquiry as children and adults explore a topic of interest together.

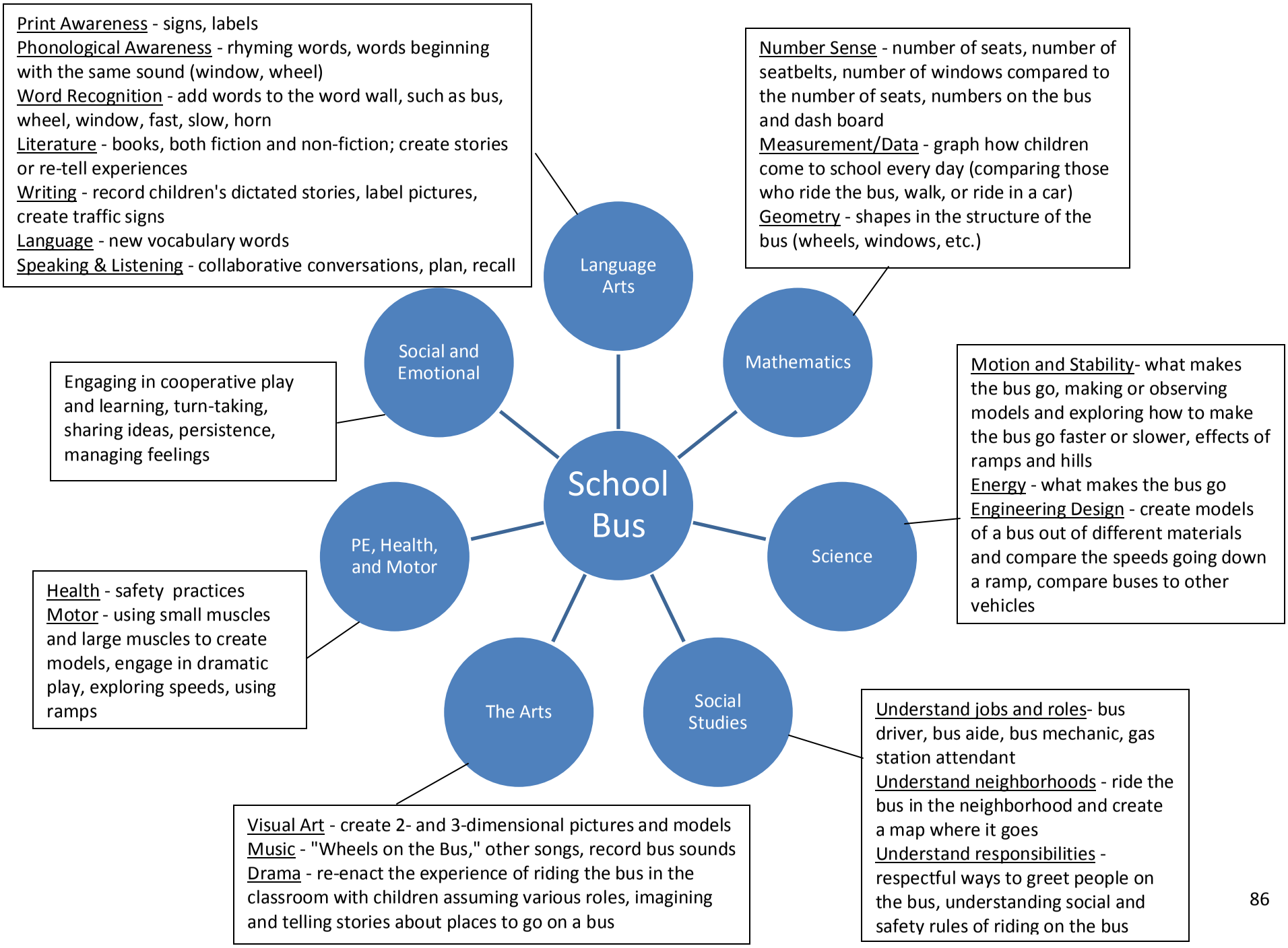
[168] Hurless & Gittings, 2008.
[169] Helm, 2008.

It is possible and often more effective to teach required content and standards through integrated project work and child-initiated learning experiences. This approach involves a great deal of careful planning with a thorough knowledge and clear understanding of the standards and outcomes the teacher intends for children to develop and learn. The next step involves anticipating how they could learn these through the project's experiences.[170]

Next, the teacher may create a planning web that includes the knowledge and skills from the standards and required curriculum goals that could be learned from the project. "Creating anticipatory webs when preparing for project work makes it easier to integrate required curriculum in response to children's interests and lessens the chance that teachers will miss opportunities for skill building and practice."[171] The web helps you design engaging learning activities and experiences related to the theme of the project that are aligned with the concepts, knowledge, and skills to be learned.

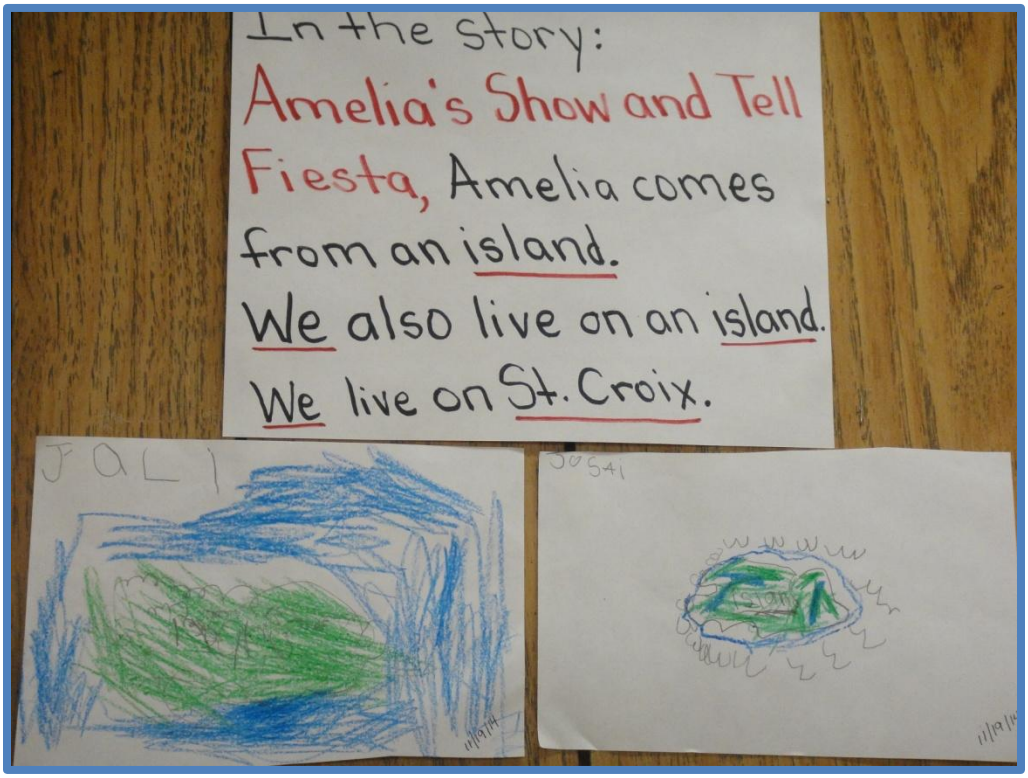
The following page illustrates an example of a web focused on the study of a "school bus" that demonstrates how the kindergarten standards can be aligned to a project. Please note, this is not an exhausted list of possibilities.

[170] Helm, 2008.
[171] Ibid.


School Bus
Language Arts
Print Awareness - signs, labels
Phonological Awareness - rhyming words, words beginning with the same sound (window, wheel)
Word Recognition - add words to the word wall, such as bus, wheel, window, fast, slow, horn
Literature - books, both fiction and non-fiction; create stories or re-tell experiences
Writing - record children's dictated stories, label pictures, create traffic signs
Language - new vocabulary words
Speaking & Listening - collaborative conversations, plan, recall
Mathematics
Number Sense - number of seats, number of seatbelts, number of windows compared to the number of seats, numbers on the bus and dash board
Measurement/Data - graph how children come to school every day (comparing those who ride the bus, walk, or ride in a car)
Geometry - shapes in the structure of the bus (wheels, windows, etc.)
Social and Emotional
Engaging in cooperative play and learning, turn-taking, sharing ideas, persistence, managing feelings
Science
Motion and Stability- what makes the bus go, making or observing models and exploring how to make the bus go faster or slower, effects of ramps and hills
Energy - what makes the bus go
Engineering Design - create models of a bus out of different materials and compare the speeds going down a ramp, compare buses to other vehicles
PE, Health, and Motor
Health - safety practices
Motor - using small muscles and large muscles to create models, engage in dramatic play, exploring speeds, using ramps
The Arts
Visual Art - create 2- and 3-dimensional pictures and models
Music - "Wheels on the Bus," other songs, record bus sounds
Drama - re-enact the experience of riding the bus in the classroom with children assuming various roles, imagining and telling stories about places to go on a bus
Social Studies
Understand jobs and roles- bus driver, bus aide, bus mechanic, gas station attendant
Understand neighborhoods - ride the bus in the neighborhood and create a map where it goes
Understand responsibilities - respectful ways to greet people on the bus, understanding social and safety rules of riding on the bus

When introducing a project, whether the topic is teacher-initiated or initiated by the children, it is often important to plan the course of the project with the children to find out what their interests are related to the project. A helpful technique is to create what is called a K-W-L chart with input from the children. You begin by asking the children what they "***K****now,*" in this case, about a school bus, recording their answers. Then you proceed to "***W****hat they would like to know,*" recording these, as well. This becomes the starting point as children explore and discover the answers to their questions. The web helps you stay focused on your goals aligned to standards that you can incorporate as the study progresses. Finally, at the end of the project, it's important to reflect with the children about "*What they* ***L****earned*."

Implementing these or similar techniques and approaches ensures that children are actively engaged in meaningful activities of interest to them and at the same time are focused on meeting appropriate standards and outcomes. A casual observer may question whether children are learning and meeting standards through what appears to be play (see the drawing on page 6). It is important to showcase children's work that demonstrates their progress and achievements.



Learning Differences

This section of the Guidelines is closely aligned with the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards:

- **<u>Standard #1 states</u>: "The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences."**
- **<u>Standard #2 states</u>: "The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards."**

Kindergarten programs in the Virgin Islands must address the individual needs of a diverse population of children. This includes children with special needs, children from diverse cultural backgrounds, children from all socio-economic groups, and children whose first language is not English. Children with disabilities and children who do not speak English develop best in inclusive environments, those in which teachers welcome all children and provide flexible programming that can meet individual needs and include children with a wide range of backgrounds and abilities.

English Language Learners (ELLs)

Families transmit values, beliefs, and a sense of belonging to their children. Because they do so primarily through their language, support of the development of home language is strongly encouraged by all involved with the child and his/her family. Many families speak languages other than English at home. Young children need to continue learning and speaking their family's language as they learn English. This helps them stay close to all the important people in their lives. Children, who lose their home language, are at risk of not being able to communicate with other family members. This can be very detrimental and traumatic to the parent-child relationship. When they see that their home language is important and valued, they are less likely to leave it behind. Parents need to be reassured and informed that learning two languages does not come at the expense of either language; and that young children are capable of learning two languages early in life. Learning and maintaining the home language lays the foundation for learning English.

Support for children's home language is important to their cognitive development. Most of what young children know when they come to school has been learned in the home — in their home language. Supporting young children's continued use and development of their home language enables them to have full use of what they know while they are also building concepts and connections in English. When children are in environments that provide opportunities to

use their home language, it is easier for them to use their foundation of knowledge to learn new things (for example colors). Research shows that children who are strong in their home language will be able to develop fluency in speaking and reading a second language, such as English, more easily. The ability to communicate in more than one language supports children's cognitive flexibility and an awareness of their own cognitive processes.[172] When a child comes to school and doesn't hear his home language, he may feel as though there is something wrong with his language or that it's not valued — and that has an impact on how he feels about himself.

Even if you are not familiar with the child's home language, there are things that you can do to make the adjustment to the school English environment easier and to communicate your respect for the child's language and culture. Learn a few words that are important to the child or that can help the child adjust to routines. Display pictures and books that illustrate the child's culture in positive ways. Labels throughout the classroom can include those in the children's home languages. When teachers demonstrate acceptance and respect for children's home languages, the other children will, too.

Language is a powerful tool we use to pass along our traditions, knowledge, and history. When children who speak different languages are in school together, they are learning to respect each other to get along. When classrooms provide an environment that celebrates diversity, all children learn to see each other as important and equal. Knowing more than one language has many advantages. Bilingual children are able to navigate both cultures and, have more marketable skills when joining the workforce, as our society becomes more and more diverse.

Adults who successfully work with young ELLs understand that a child may revert to nonverbal observation and listening. Effective teachers are sensitive to numerous factors that influence the rate and proficiency of each child's acquisition of a new language, including the quality of exposure to English; age and culture; motivation and interest in the new language; personality; and whether or not relationships support the child in trying the new language.[173] Understanding that there will be individual differences among children is essential to providing the best possible support for English language learners.

[172] Tabors, 2008.
[173] Ibid.

Child-focused strategies for working with English Language Learners[174]

- Adults are knowledgeable about and respectful of each child's family, culture, and home language.
    - Seek information about the language spoken at home and the child's proficiency in the home language.
    - Ask parents for a few words in the home language that can be used to welcome the child in the classroom.
- Adults establish responsive and accepting relationships to help the child feel confident to engage in receptive and verbal communication in either language —home language or English.
    - Build positive, warm, nurturing relationships with children who are ELLs so that they feel safe and less anxious. Speak English in ways that help them understand: use simple sentences, repeat what is said, use gestures and facial expressions, point to objects, and use everyday vocabulary.
    - Speak English clearly and slowly, but not loudly, simplifying language when needed.
- Adults provide numerous experiences to help children gain understanding of the new language — specifically, hear the sounds of the new language and connect them to people, objects, and experiences.
    - Use predictable, comfortable classroom routines so ELLs know what to expect and use consistent language when referring to activities and objects.
    - Provide pictures to accompany the daily schedule, classroom rules, and other print in the classroom to help children know the expectations even though they may not yet understand the language.
    - Use gestures, modeling, pictures, repetition, body language, and facial expressions to assist children in understanding directions and activities to accompany spoken English.
- Adults provide experiences to encourage and help children practice the sounds and words of the new language and serve as appropriate role models. They consider the stages and patterns of home language and English acquisition, as well as, information about each child's progress in cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development.
    - Encourage the child to repeat words as he demonstrates what objects or pictures he is referring to.
    - Give the child lots of time to think about what she wants to stay. Wait to offer words or phrases when help is needed.
    - Notice words the child says (e.g., "me" or "more") and help the child expand on those words.

[174] *The Child Development Associate National Credentialing Program and CDA Competency Standards: Preschool Edition.* (2013).

- Adults design environments and conduct activities so that children learn about or are exposed to multiple cultures and languages. They provide opportunities for children and families to share their cultures and languages.
    - Books that reflect multiple cultures and languages are available and children are read to in their home language, if possible.
    - Puzzles, dolls, dramatic play props, musical instruments and songs, kitchen utensils and menus, and decorations in the classroom reflect the variety of languages and cultures of the families in the program.

Children with Disabilities

The *VI Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten* apply to *all* children, including children with disabilities and/or developmental delays. Children may meet kindergarten goals at different times and in different ways. A primary function of early intervention and early childhood education is to promote children's learning and development. "Children with disabilities and other special needs are, first of all, children."[175] Therefore, first and foremost in the education of children, developmentally appropriate practices should be implemented for *all* children. Developmentally appropriate practices are defined as "…those that result from the process of professionals making decisions about the well-being and education of children based on at least three important kinds of information or knowledge:

(1) what is known about child development and learning…;
(2) what is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child…;
(3) and knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live"[176]

Practices that promote development and learning for young children with disabilities and/or developmental delays build on and extend the above foundation to meet each child's individual and unique needs.

Teachers make many adaptations to meet individual needs naturally, and often without even thinking about it. For example, you know which child should sit next to you when you read a story, whose hand to hold on a field trip, and who needs help tying his shoes. We make these natural adjustments and accommodations because we know the children and we have learned their individual strengths and needs.

We need to re-think the notion that everyone has to do the same thing at the same time. Each child should be able to participate at his/her own level.

When we include children with developmental delays and/or disabilities, we ensure that all children have an opportunity to learn at their own pace and be successful. It means that all children have an opportunity to participate so that they can get the most out of the experience. We need to re-think the notion that everyone has to do the same thing at the same time. Each child should be able to participate at his/her own level. For

[175] Sandal, S., et. al., 2006.
[176] Copple & Bredekamp, 2009.

example, when we read a story to a group of children, some will focus on the pictures, some will ask questions, and some will relate it to their own experience. At the same time, we tailor our questions to match each child's level of understanding. To some we may ask, "What is that?" pointing to a picture of a dog. To another, we may ask, "What is the dog doing?" and to others, we may ask, "What do you think the dog will do next?" All are getting something out of the experience, although they may not be getting the same thing; all are learning but in different ways.

We need to ensure that children can participate at their own level and get the most out of their experience — so we can then scaffold and assist their development and learning from that point forward. It means that we don't wait for a child to achieve a certain level before he/she can participate. It means that we focus and build on what the child can do – not on what the child cannot do.

Child-Focused Strategies for Working with Children with Children with Disabilities and/or Developmental Delays[177]

Adults design environments to promote children's safety, active engagement, learning, participation, and membership.

- Physical space and materials are structured and adapted to promote engagement, play, interaction, and learning. Adults attend to children's preferences and interests, using novelty, using responsive materials, providing adequate amounts of materials, and using defined spaces (e.g., learning centers).
    - Most materials are accessible to children so that they can get them without adult help, although some should be visible and require the child to ask an adult for access.
    - The classroom has clearly defined learning centers. Visual cues in the flooring (e.g., area rugs, vinyl flooring, and masking tape) or low pieces of furniture (e.g., shelves) define the learning centers.
- Adults help children build social skills and promote engagement, interaction, communication, and learning by providing peer models, responsive adults, and adult models, and expanding children's play and learning.
    - Small groups are arranged so children have peer models and can see one another and interact.
    - Assignment of teachers to children or groups of children remains consistent.
- Routines and transitions are structured to promote interaction, communication, and learning.
    - Clear visual cues, including gestures, photographs, written labels, or objects are used to support children during transitions, to help children understand the routine, and to help children manage their time.

[177] Sandal, S., et. al., 2006.

    - Adults give children time to respond before they intervene and do things for them.
    - Transition times are minimal and are used as learning times by embedding interesting and instructional activities within them (ex: counting the number of children who are lined up).
- Play routines are structured to promote interaction, communication, and learning in dramatic play; which then fosters group friendship activities and interaction and the use of specialized props.
    - Individual picture cues (e.g., photographs of the activities) are used to provide support and structure during free choice time for all children.
    - Adults assist and encourage children to share materials and engage in social exchanges.
- A variety of appropriate settings and naturally occurring activities are used to facilitate children's learning and development.
    - Adults use children's daily routines and activities as learning opportunities (e.g., teachers can prompt children to use new words while eating lunch, walking to the library, or playing outside.)
- Special Education and Related Services are provided within the classroom as appropriate.
    - Special educators and therapists incorporate interventions into activities occurring in the classroom as opportunities promote transfer and generalization of skills.
    - Special educators and therapists provide consultation to classroom staff in how to include children with disabilities in typical activities, providing specialized equipment when appropriate and integrating intervention recommendations into activities and routines in the classroom setting.
- Specialists facilitate children's engagement with their environment to encourage child-initiated learning that is not dependent on the adult's presence.
    - Interesting materials and activities are provided that encourage children to make independent choices.
    - The curriculum and environment are modified and adapted to increase children's meaningful participation. This includes partial participation with support, materials and people (e.g., structuring the physical and social environments; adapting materials; simplifying activities; encouraging peers to support the child; using specialized equipment; using children's preferences).
- Environments are provided that foster positive relationships.
    - Adults model positive interactions by commenting on children's positive behaviors, particularly when they share with, help, and listen to others.

Assessment

This section of the Guidelines is closely aligned with the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards:

- **<u>Standard #6 states</u>: "The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher's and learner's decision making."**

"Assessment is the systematic process of gathering information about children from several forms of evidence, then organizing and interpreting that information."[178] Educators assess young children in order to:[179]

- monitor children's development and learning;
- plan instruction and support learning for individuals and groups;
- communicate with families;
- identify children who may be in need of specialized services or interventions; and
- inform program improvement.

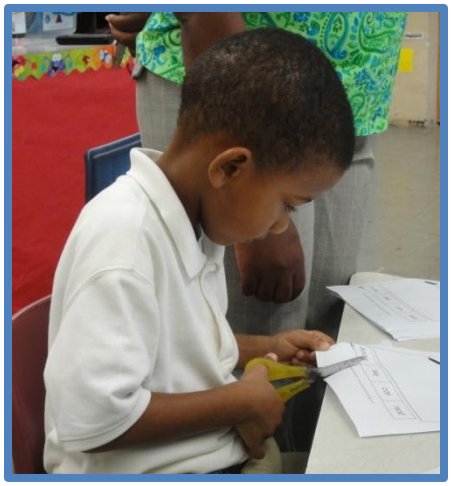
The joint position statement of National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) on early childhood curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation recommends that "assessment should make ethical, appropriate, valid, and reliable assessment a central part of early childhood programs."[180] Assessment should be "connected to specific, beneficial purposes: making sound decisions about teaching and learning, identify significant concerns that may require focused intervention for individual children, and helping programs improve their educational and developmental interventions."[181] To assess young children's strengths, progress, and needs, teachers should use methods that are:[182]

- *<u>Developmentally appropriate</u>*: Assessments should address the total child, including all developmental domains and curriculum content areas. Teachers need to select assessments, paying careful attention to the ages for which the assessment was developed. The younger the child, the more difficult it is to use assessment methods that rely on verbal ability, focused attention and cooperation, or paper-and-pencil methods. Even with kindergarten and primary-age children, the results of single assessments are often unreliable, since children may not understand the importance of "doing their best" or may be greatly influenced by fatigue, poor health, or other distractions. When children with disabilities participate in assessments used for typically

[178] McAfee, et. al., 2004
[179] Ibid.
[180] NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Adapted from NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003.

developing children, the assessments need to be adapted to demonstrate their competence.

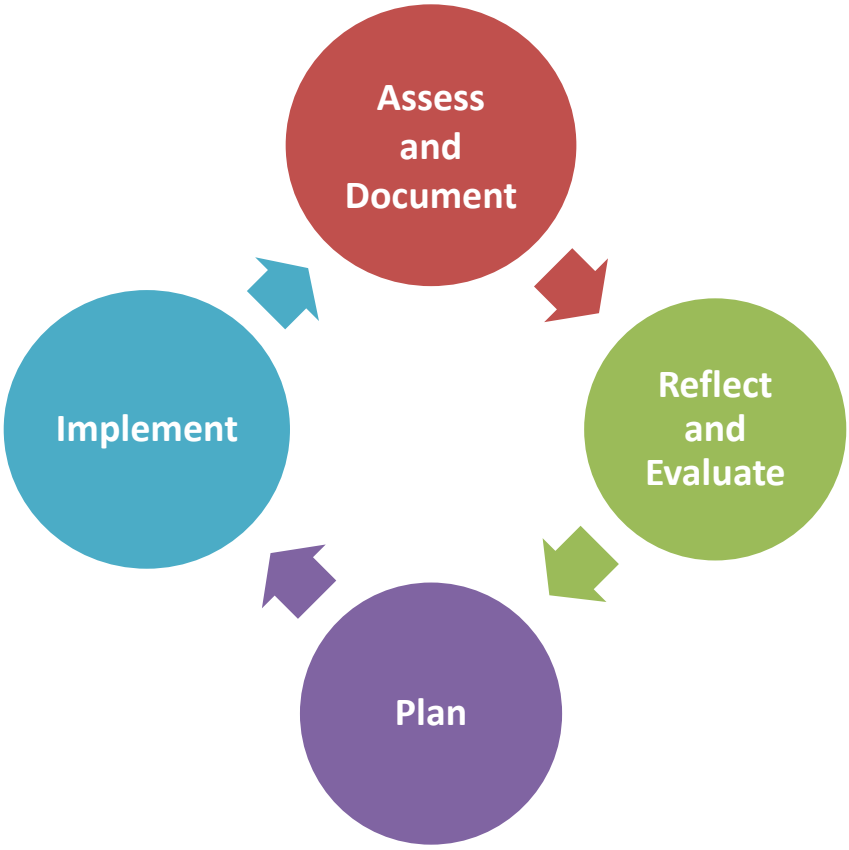
- *Culturally and linguistically responsive*: Assessments should include the teacher's recognition of similar knowledge and skills across cultures and should be tied to children's cultural and linguistic experiences. For example, many assessments may include items and experiences which are unfamiliar to the children. For young children whose home language is not English, assessments conducted in English produce invalid, misleading results. When standardized tests are used, teachers should advocate for children so that their scores reflect their abilities more accurately. When designing teacher-made assessments, teachers need to be cognizant of cultural and linguistic differences and respond appropriately.
- *Tied to children's daily activities*: Assessment should include teacher's observations and recordings of children's performance within both child-initiated and teacher-initiated activities. Assessment evidence should be gathered from realistic settings and situations that reflect children's actual performance, avoiding approaches that place children in artificial situations or are different from the natural ways children learn. Assessment should occur in real – not contrived activities. When children are put into situations that they are unfamiliar with, they may not do their best. Their concentration becomes focused on adjusting to the new situation, rather than on their performance.



- *Supported by professional development*: Professional development should include research-based information regarding information on assessment systems and measures and include opportunities for teachers to refine their observation, assessment and analysis skills.
- *Inclusive of families*: Families should be informed about assessments of their children and the results in ways that are clear, respectful, and constructive. Teachers and families should share information periodically about children's progress. When letter or number grades are provided, teachers should also provide narrative descriptions of children's learning across disciplines and domains. Families have a lot of important information to share with teachers, as well. Children often perform differently in different settings and the family's information can contribute to a total picture of the child.

The objects of assessment should include a comprehensive, developmentally, and educationally important set of goals, rather than a narrow set of skills. Assessments should be aligned with learning standards and program goals. Assessment and curriculum are closely linked. The results of assessment tell teachers what children can do, what they are ready to learn next, and what they may need assistance with. It then allows teachers to modify curriculum and teaching

practices to best meet children's needs. The following pictorial illustrates the relationship between assessment and curriculum.



Assessment and Documentation

There are several ways of systematically gathering information about children to document their development and learning within the natural contexts of daily classroom experiences.[183]

- *Systematic Observation*: To observe systematically, we watch and listen attentively as children work and play and as they participate in a variety of activities, use materials, and interact with others. "As observers, we cannot take in everything, so we focus on certain children, certain situations, certain aspects of a child's development and learning, depending on what we need to find out. At the same time, our lens must be transparent. We must describe exactly what a child says or does, not jump to conclusions about what we think or might mean."[184] For example, "Shawn gave Rachel some of his play dough" is an observation. "Shawn is a nice child" is not. We need to be objective and avoid making judgments.

[183] Adapted from McAfee, et. al., 2004.
[184] McAfee et. al., 2004.

Let's look at the following examples of two different descriptions of the same event:

> "Carlos is being mischievous today. He purposely splashes the water on the floor and on others. He checks to see if I am watching him, then laughs at the other children."

This is not an objective observation. It uses a label (mischievous) and makes judgments. We do not know what is going on inside Carlos' head and do not know what the intention of his behavior is — we only know what we see. Consider the following alternative:

> "Carlos plays with the waterwheel. He splashes the water on the floor and on two of the other children's shoes. He looks at me, then looks at the other children, and begins to laugh."

This is an objective observation. It includes only the facts of what Carlos did and what happened.

- *Study Children's Work Products*: During the kindergarten day, children are actively involved in drawing, painting, writing, constructing, exploring, testing hypotheses, dramatizing, experimenting, and communicating. All of these are rich sources of information that "reveal a child's individual 'style' and development as they give valid evidence of what a child knows and can do. Children's work products can document individual as well as group experiences."[185] Teachers can take photos of children's activities, constructions, and products as evidence of their learning.
- *Elicit Responses from Children*: "We get clues to children's development and learning when we ask children questions, make requests, give directions, lead discussions, assign tasks, set up equipment in a particular way, provide particular materials, and conduct short conferences and interviews." We need to be mindful of the kinds of questions we ask. Open-ended questions give children an opportunity to respond in ways that advance their learning and help us find out the depth of the children's learning and understanding.

It is important to document your observations and collections of children's work as evidence of what they can do or have accomplished. "Records remind us as we plan, report to parents, confer with children, or collaborate with colleagues. When someone asks, 'How do you know that?' or 'What evidence do you have?' we should be able to turn to our documentation."[186] Dated narrative records are recordings of our observations, which when collected over time, give us a clearer picture of the child and his/her progress. We can use checklists to record the achievement of specific skills and portfolios to collect evidence of children's work.

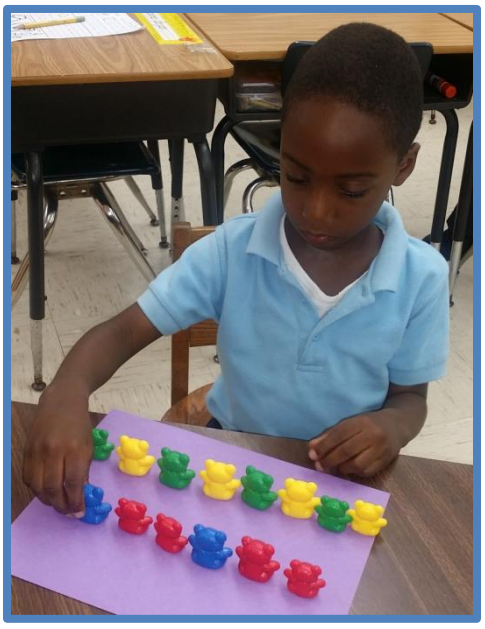
Reflect and Evaluate

Only when you have a collection of observations and evidence gathered at various times in various learning situations can you attempt to draw conclusions about a child's behavior. One

[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.

or two recorded samples do not give a complete picture of the child, but are only snap-shots in time. When observing children over time, think about how the observations relate to each other. Are there trends or patterns in the behavior? E.g., Does Shannah cry when she gets frustrated? Does Jose have more behavior problems just before lunch? Look for trends that help you evaluate growth, learning, and development. For example, "Germaine has learned to …" "Michelle used to… but now she …"

Inferences or conclusions are educated guesses based on many observations and collections and after getting to know the child. Then, you can look for the underlying meaning of what was observed, drawing on knowledge, experience, theories, and research to give you insights into the child's behavior and the causes of his/her behavior. Is this behavior typical for children this age? Make sure you can validate your conclusions with specific observations, for example, "Brenda seems to seek attention from adults because she follows the teacher around the room, calls to the teacher often to show her what she is working on, and often climbs onto the teacher's lap." "Manuel creates more and more sophisticated structures in the block corner, balancing blocks, creating openings, and bridges, as demonstrated from a collection of photos." The same behavior may mean different things for different children. For example, hitting may be because of anger, attention-seeking, resentment, fear, or not knowing how to join the play. Accurate observations and informed conclusions help you to plan for and respond to each individual child in the most appropriate ways that support the growth and development of the child.



Through careful and purposeful observation, teachers can determine what educational standards and goals children have achieved without testing or quizzing. As children match the blocks to the shapes on the shelf at clean-up time, we know they can match shapes; as they place a piece of art paper on the table in front of each chair, we know they understand one-to-one correspondence; as they select their name card from a group of name cards to go to a center, we know they can recognize their written name. During group discussions, we can note which children demonstrate that they are able to "participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups;" "express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly;" and "confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood" (all Common Core Standards), without quizzing in unnatural contrived situations.

Plan and Implement

Assessments should be used to make sound decisions about teaching and learning. "For younger children, information about each child's growth and development is used to make decisions about possible changes in the environment, interactions, and experiences. For older children, assessment information is also used for making decisions about each child's current understanding and skills in content areas, what he or she should be ready to learn next and instructional methods that help the children meet important developmental and learning goals."[187]

Assessment information tells us about children's development and learning, their preferences, interests, and learning styles, as well as their approaches to learning — their curiosity, persistence, problem solving, and creativity. All this information provides us with a direction for scaffolding children's learning, meeting children's developmental needs, and promoting their further growth and development toward reaching the goals the program has established. Curriculum planning and implementation should grow out of what we have learned about each child and the group of children.

[187] NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003.

Professional Learning and Ethical Practices

This section of the Guidelines is closely aligned with the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards:

- **<u>Standard #9 states</u>: "The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner."**

It is strongly recommended that teachers continue to self-reflect, learn, and stay informed of current research and its implications for practice to improve their knowledge, skills, and expertise in meeting the educational and developmental needs of their students. "The time to reflect — to stop and think about what has happened, is happening and what should happen next — is essential to high quality professional practice. Skilled professionals use self-reflection to improve their skills in working with children and families, improve their ability to communicate and work with fellow staff members, and understand how their own experiences and beliefs influence their work"[188]

As you reflect on your work with children, you can ask the following questions as a guide in determining your needs, as you aim to improve your practice.

- How can I better meet the children's needs?
- What are my learning needs?
- What do I already know and what skills do I have?
- What do I want to learn and develop to improve my knowledge and competence?
- How can I accomplish this?
- What strategies have worked?
- What do I already know that I can use to promote improved child outcomes?
- What new information do I need to promote improved child outcomes?
- Where can I turn for assistance?
- What supports do I need to achieve my goals? (For example, feedback on my teaching, coaching, workshops, readings, focused observations of others)

"Reflection may lead to major and complex restructuring of significant components of our professional practice. We may see that for a long time we have been responding in a way that is far from optimal and experience regret over lost opportunities. We may fear the tough work ahead. Reflection is indeed a risky business, but it holds tremendous promise too."[189] As early

[188] Avery, et. al. 2008.
[189] Tertell, et. al, 1998

childhood professionals, we are continuous learners — we continually learn from the children, our colleagues, and new research in the field. Teachers should seek and embrace professional development opportunities including participation in webinars, workshops, and professional learning communities. Self-reflection and continuous improvement requires an openness to new ideas and a willingness to try new things.

It is also critical that as early childhood educators we stay true to our profession's code of ethical conduct. A code of ethical conduct defines the core values of the field and gives guidance for what professionals should do in situations in which they encounter conflicting obligations or responsibilities in their work. Recognizing that those who work with young children often face moral and ethical dilemmas, The National Association for the Education of Young Children developed *The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct*, which offers guidelines for responsible behavior and sets forth a common basis for resolving these issues.[190] The primary focus is on those working with children and their families in programs that serve children from birth through third grade.

"Standards of ethical behavior in early childhood care and education are based on commitment to the following core values that are deeply rooted in the history of field of early childhood care and education. We have made a commitment to:

- appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle;
- base our work on the knowledge of how children develop and learn;
- appreciate and support the bond between the child and the family;
- recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society;
- respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague);
- respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues; and
- recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect."[191]

"The code sets forth a framework of professional responsibilities in four sections. Each section addresses an area of professional relationships 1) with children, 2) with families, 3) among colleagues, and 4) with the community and society."[192]

[190] For the full text of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct see http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/Ethics%20Position%20Statement2011.pdf
[191] NAEYC, 2011.
[192] Ibid

Leadership and Collaboration

This section of the Guidelines is closely aligned with the USVI Teacher Effectiveness Standards:

- **Standard #10 states: "The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession."**

Education is about relationships - not just with each child and group of children, but with colleagues and families, as well.

Working in Collaboration with Colleagues

In the school environment, teachers work among other educational professionals and support staff who are each essential to the effectiveness of the school. Each has a role and together they form a team focused on the vision and the mission of the school. "At its best, teamwork is a process of active participatory learning that calls for a supportive climate and mutual respect."[193] The most effective teams are those that have an equal concern for team productivity and concern for the members of the team.

Communication and interpersonal relationship skills are key. Teams are most effective when there is/are:[194]

- *Shared vision and goals*: The team has articulated its performance goals, there is buy-in from all team members, and team members know how they contribute to the team's success. These performance goals have been translated into well-defined concrete milestones against which the team measures itself.
- *A clear understanding of roles*: Each member of the team has a clear understanding of his/her role and their contributions to the team in achieving the common purpose.
- *A comfortable and relaxed atmosphere*: This occurs when team members feel supported; lines of communication are open; members have a sense of belonging and equality; members have an opportunity for growth and development; and there is respect for individual differences.
- *A lot of discussion in which everyone participates*: The members feel valued and listen to each other. Every idea is heard and people are not afraid to share their ideas.

[193] Hohman, et. al., 2008.
[194] Adapted from Ceridian Corporation, 2007 & Rodd, 1998.

- *Attention to conflicts when they arise and the team resolves conflicts*: It is natural for conflict to arise when people work in groups. Conflict, handled well, can actually produce constructive results. It is important for members to remember to keep conflict focused on ideas rather than on people. It is also important to make sure each team member involved has a chance to explain the problem as he/she sees it and to establish clear ground rules so that people can have their say without being interrupted, rushed, mocked, or intimidated.
- *Group decision-making*: There is an attempt to find commonalities and reach consensus. Disagreements are not suppressed or overridden by premature group action. The reasons are carefully examined, and the group seeks to resolve them rather than dominate the dissenter. Dissenters are not trying to dominate the group; they have a genuine difference of opinion. If there are basic disagreements that cannot be resolved, the group figures out a way to live with them without letting them block its efforts.
- *Group action*: When action is taken, clear assignments are made and accepted and members follow through.
- *On-going monitoring*: This includes not only monitoring and evaluating progress toward achievement of goals, but also monitoring and evaluating how the team is doing.
- *Celebration of success*: The team takes time to celebrate achievement of small milestones, as well as large successes.

Participation as a Member of IEP Teams

In addition to being a member of the team of teachers and staff at your school, you have the potential to be a member of an IEP (Individualized Education Program) team for a child in your class that has a disability or a developmental delay. The Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, requires that when a child is in a general education class, the teacher should be involved as a member of the IEP team. If you have a child with a disability or developmental delay in your class, your class serves as the "general education classroom," which means that you will need to be a member of the IEP team. You are an important member and have a unique set of knowledge and expertise that can contribute a great deal to the team. You see the child every day in a natural setting with other children. You are in a good position to observe the child's strengths and needs.

The IEP has two general purposes: to set reasonable learning goals for the child and to state the services that the Department of Education will provide for the child. The IEP is developed by a team of individuals that includes key school staff and the child's parents. The team meets,

reviews the assessment information available about the child, and designs an educational program to address the child's educational needs that result from his or her disability or developmental delay.[195] Required components of the IEP include:[196]

- *The child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance*, which describes how the child is currently doing in school and how the child's disability or developmental delay affects his/her involvement and progress in the general curriculum;
- *Annual goals* for the child, meaning what parents and the school team think he/she can reasonably accomplish in a year;
- *Special education and related services* to be provided to the child, including supplementary aids and services (such as a communication device) and changes to the program or supports from school personnel;
- *Time*: How much of the day the child will be separated from his/her peers in a general education classroom or other activities and an explanation of why he/she cannot participate in the general education classroom; when services will begin, how often they will be provided, and how long it is anticipated that services will last; and
- *Testing and evaluation*: How and if the child will participate in state or district-wide testing and what accommodations, if any, will be provided to meet the child's needs; how the Department of Education will measure the child's progress toward annual goals and when periodic reports on the child's progress will be provided.

In developing the IEP, the IEP team shall consider the child's strengths; the parents' concerns; the results of the initial evaluation or most recent evaluation; and the child's academic, developmental, and functional needs. The IEP team shall consider special factors for children whose behavior impedes learning, who have limited English proficiency, who are blind or visually impaired, or who are deaf or hard of hearing. Remember, information shared is confidential and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws apply.[197]

Before the meeting:

- Review your observation notes and assessments on the child. Review the child's strengths and needs so that you can share them with others at the meeting.
- Identify and document the positive behavior interventions, supports, and other strategies you have used successfully with the child.

[195] Information from http://idea.ed.gov/download/statute.html
[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid.

- Identify the supplementary aids and services, program modifications, and supports that are needed to help the child make progress toward achieving annual goals and participating in your program and curriculum.
- Make a list of what you think is realistic for the child to accomplish during the year, so you can participate in helping to set the goals and objectives.

During the meeting:

- Remember, you are a valuable member of the team — you see the child every day and know him/her well.
- Remember, you know the curriculum and what children in your program are typically expected to do.
- Share with the other members of the team:
    - what you know about the child's strengths and needs;
    - information about your curriculum and the expectations you have for children;
    - what the child may need to help him/her participate fully in your program; and
    - what support or information you may need to better provide for the needs of the child.

After the meeting:

- Regularly review your copy of the child's IEP to refresh your memory of the details so that you can stay focused on addressing the child's needs and goals.
- Partner with the specialists that are also working with the child to learn how you can support the child in your classroom and help him/her meet goals on a daily basis.
- Communicate the child's achievements or your concerns to the child's parents and specialists — communication is key to helping the child succeed.
- If the IEP needs to be revised to either address lack of progress or great progress, alert the other team members that it is time to meet to make needed adjustments — you do not have to wait until an annual meeting.

Engaging Parents

The importance of a child's family to his/her development and success in school and beyond cannot be overestimated. "Nurturing, warm, and responsive parent–child relationships and parental participation in child-centered activities relate to positive learning outcomes in early childhood."[198] "The quality of the parent–child relationship influences how well children do in school. Child development experts characterize a positive parent–child relationship in terms of support, whereby the parent conveys warmth, sensitivity, and encouragement; appropriate instruction based on the child's development and characteristics; and respect for the child's growing autonomy. Through interactions with parents and other caregivers, children learn to develop social skills that they transfer from the home to the school context. One study of kindergarteners found that a positive mother-child interaction — one that is sensitive and elicits

[198] Harvard Family Research Project, 2006.

prosocial behavior — is associated with children's social and academic performance in middle school. Parents impart the self-regulation skills that have a lasting effect on their children's ability to relate positively with their peers and to attend to and participate in class activities. In a different study with ethnically diverse kindergartners and their mothers from low-income families, child outcomes associated with family educational involvement in the school varied based on the warm and positive nature of the mother–child relationship. Higher maternal school involvement was related to higher mathematics and literacy achievement when the mother and child shared a warm, positive relationship. Furthermore, parents who explain educational tasks at an age-appropriate level and in an emotionally supportive manner, have children who are more likely to participate in class, seek help from the teacher when needed, and monitor their own work. When parents dedicate time, offer praise, show affection, and develop close relationships with their children of varying school ages, their children are less likely to require discipline at school or treatment for social or emotional problems."[199]

"Nurturing, warm, and responsive parent–child relationships and parental participation in child-centered activities relate to positive learning outcomes in early childhood." "Through interactions with parents and other caregivers, children learn to develop social skills that they transfer from the home to the school context."

Families are better able to care for, nurture, and help their children succeed if teachers and administrators share in the collective commitment to foster partnerships with families. These partnerships are based on a relationship of mutual trust and respect. All families deserve to be valued, respected, appreciated, and have their confidentiality honored. It is the educator's responsibility to ensure that the lines of communication are open and that there is an on-going relationship. This is a critical part of our job. To promote the well-being of the child, we must try to find a way to build a positive relationship with each child's family. If and when communication with a parent breaks down, it is up to the teacher to reach out and re-engage. The relationship we form with the family has a powerful effect on the child's development and learning.

Relationships with families can sometimes be difficult and challenging. There may be language and/or cultural differences; parents may not be sure how to get involved; or parents may have had their own negative school experiences that create barriers to their involvement with their child's education. Professionals cannot *make* a family do things their way. Pressure impedes relationship building. Begin where the family is, listen to family members' points of view, reflect on what they say, clarify their thoughts and feelings. The following messages communicated to families can facilitate the building of partnerships:

- You are always welcome here.
- We can learn from you.

[199] Harvard Family Research Project, 2006/2007.

- You are entitled to know what is happening in the program and with your child.
- We will share the care of your child.
- We can work together to resolve differences and conflicts.

Tips for effectively engaging families include:[200]

- *Ensure that families are aware of school policies and procedures*: When families understand school policies and procedures, it is less likely that there will be conflicts and misunderstandings. The school should provide a handbook or brochure that explains important information in family friendly terms (avoiding education jargon) and, if possible, in the home languages of families.
- *Welcome all families*: Help family members feel at home by warmly greeting them when they come to your classroom. Post pictures of families, those of the children in the class, as well as, those of people who look like them from similar cultures and ethnic groups. Ensure your library has a variety of books depicting the cultures of the families of the children in your class in positive, non-stereotypical ways. When labeling in your classroom, use the languages of the children as well as English.
- *Avoid stereotypes*: Just because a child is of a particular culture does not mean that all children of the culture are the same or have the same experiences, values, and priorities. Take time to get to know each child's family.
- *Encourage feelings of ownership*: Use words like "our" program rather than "my" program. Invite suggestions from parents about how you can work together to strengthen connections between home and school.
- *Respect families' need for control*: Teachers need to respect their boundaries, recognizing that parents are the primary adults in the child's life and have the greatest influence and control — another reason why it is important for teachers to strive to develop a good partnership with them.
- *Understand family circumstances*: Many families have busy work schedules and other children, so their time to get involved may be limited. School events, classroom activities, and other opportunities to get involved need to be highly motivating and interesting to families for them to attend. Encourage family members to help design and implement activities. Ask them what they want and what will meet their needs. Respond to their interests and needs.
- *Help families recognize their child's many strengths*: Teachers have a tendency to call parents or send notes home when there is a problem. Contacting parents to tell them of their child's successes, interests, and contributions to the class community is an excellent

Contacting parents to tell them of their child's successes, interests, and contributions to the class community is an excellent way to reach out to families and build positive relationships. All families like to hear good news about their children.

[200] Koralek, 2007; Christian, 2007

way to reach out to families and build positive relationships. All families like to hear good news about their children.

- *Offer a variety of family involvement options*: Families appreciate being asked or invited to participate in their child's development and education as long as there are options. Not all parents are free to come into the classroom or attend evening meetings, but they may be able to help collect items for special activities, water bottles, for example, for a special planting project. They may be willing to share a special song or story from their culture, information about their work, or a skill such as wood-working or baking.
- *Guide families in supporting their child's learning*: Share information about current themes or studies in the classroom and how parents can support learning at home. Send suggested activities for parents to do with their child or make homework assignments interactive, such as finding something in the home that begins with the first letter of the child's name; bringing a picture of the family or of the child as a baby to share; collecting leaves, buttons, or bottle tops.

Parent Conferences

Holding parent conferences is an important teacher responsibility. Effective parent-teacher conferences help support the child's development and learning, foster home-school connections, provide an opportunity to share knowledge about the child and child development, and offer a vehicle for establishing and strengthening partnerships with families. "Effective parent-teacher conferences open the dialogue and offer a vehicle for establishing and strengthening partnerships with families."[201]

The following suggested practices help build successful teacher-parent conferences:[202]

- *Offer a flexible conferencing schedule*: Because of parents' varying work schedules, commitments around other family members, lack of transportation, or other issues, not all parents are available during the school day or a particular "parent night." It is helpful if you can provide other alternatives for parents' individual circumstances.
- *Allow enough time*: Back-to-school conference evenings are not meant for individual conferences with parents. When scheduling conferences, ensure there is adequate time to meet with parents.
- *Provide a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere*: Avoid physical barriers, such as a desk between you and the parents. Instead, whenever possible sit side by side. Light refreshments help everyone relax. Take time to find out the parents' names, as often parents have different last names than their children.
- *Be prepared and organized*: Plan ahead and decide what you want to share with the parents. Don't overwhelm them, but provide enough information that will give parents a good idea about how their child is developing and learning. Be prepared to answer the parents' questions and concerns.

[201] Seplocha, 2007.
[202] Adapted from Seplocha, 2007.

- *Be culturally appropriate*: "Effective communication is based on respect for others' values, attitudes, expectations, and culture. Keep in mind that childrearing values and practices are culturally embedded; differences may occur in norms, behaviors, values, role relations, and communication patterns. Conferences provide an opportunity to learn more about diverse cultures and family structures and parents' hopes and dreams for their child. Effective teachers develop an appreciation and understanding of issues of diversity and where parents are coming from. No parent wants to be a bad parent. Suspend judgment and come to a consensus on goals and values for the child."[203]
- *Begin on a positive note by describing the child's strengths, interests, or abilities*: There is always something positive you can say about each child. Be specific. Share an anecdote, something interesting the child did or said, a sample of the child's work, or how their child contributes to the class community. Parents want to know that you have connected with their child in some way and appreciate him/her. Sharing positive examples puts the parents at ease. The child is the link and commonality that you share with the parent and is the focus of your relationship.
- *Stay focused on the child*: Remember the purpose of the teacher-parent conference is to share information about the child and to build relationships. Parents may want to share information about other concerns, but it is important to remember that you are not a social worker or counselor. You may refer them to other professionals on staff or provide information about community resources.

- *Encourage parents to share information*: Use the conference as a way to learn more about the child and family. Invite parents to share their perspectives about their child and how they see his progress. Parents may be able to provide insight about what approaches work best with their child and how to work together in the child's best interest.
- *Share information and examples of the child's work*: Share information based on your observations and examples of the child's work. Discuss progress and what you see as next steps in the learning process, as well as goals of the program and how you will determine if their child is making progress toward goals.
- *Refrain from responding to seemingly hostile or threatening comments*: In this situation, it is best to respond calmly and non-confrontationally. Listen to the parents' concerns and respond to them in a calm manner. All parents want the best for their child. Their reactions may be influenced by their own school experiences or may even be a misunderstanding. The calmer you are, the more calm the parent will become. If you

[203] Seplocha, 2007.

feel that the conference has gotten out of control, end it tactfully and re-schedule another time to meet.

- *Avoid using jargon and "loaded" words*: Use language that can easily be understood by families and avoid using education jargon. Avoid labeling and diagnosing a child's behavior, but describe your observation instead. For example, instead of saying "Ernesto is hyperactive," describe his behavior and say, "During circle time, Ernesto has some difficulty staying focused on the activity and sitting with the group."
- *Share suggestion for at-home activities*: Describe ways that parents can support and enhance their child's learning at home. Discuss the current theme or project. Parents appreciate specific ideas that they can do with their child with readily available household items. Everyone goes shopping and does laundry. You can suggest ways that parents can include their child in these activities and promote learning at the same time. For example, while doing laundry, the child can help separate the dark clothes from the light ones or help measure the detergent. At the grocery store, parents can talk with their child about the colors of fruit, point out signs posted in the store, talk about the ingredients listed on packages, and talk about how the store is organized into categories (fruit together, dairy products together, meat together, etc.)
- *End the conference on a positive note*: Thank the parents for coming and encourage their continued participation and interest in their child's education. Stress the importance of partnering with them and on-going communication. Express confidence in their child's ability to continue to develop and learn. Save at least one positive comment about the child to end the conference so that parents leave with a positive feeling about their child.
- *Take a moment to reflect and document the discussion and plans*: Record some notes about the conference and any follow-up that may be needed. Reflect on your own performance about how you impacted the tone and direction of the conference. Were you well-prepared? Did the parents seem to feel comfortable to share their thoughts and ideas? Did you begin and end on a positive note? Are these parents likely to continued to be engaged? What did you learn that will help you to foster the child's continued development and learning?

Guidelines for Administration and Leadership

"School Principals play a critical role in developing a school's culture, guiding classroom instruction, and promoting student success. Research shows that principals account for at least a quarter of a school's effect on student learning, second only to the role of the classroom teacher."[204] As educational leaders, it is essential for principals to become versed in the research that supports high quality early childhood education and a Pre-K to third grade continuum.

"Research and common sense tell us that the best way to ensure children's long term academic success is to build solid foundational skills during the early childhood and early elementary years. Children who reach 3rd Grade below grade-level in reading and math are unlikely ever to catch up. Educational improvement strategies that focus on the early years — preventing children from falling behind in the first place — have a much better chance of long-term success than those that emphasize remediation later on."[205]

The following sections provide principals, administrators, and educational leaders with guidelines for how they can support best practices through their leadership.

[204] Szekeley, 2013
[205] Mead, 2011.

Creating a Pre-K to Third Grade Culture

There is increasing recognition that the early childhood years encompasses children from birth to age 8. "Early childhood is the period between birth and eight years of age, a definition based on documented intellectual and emotional development milestones. This definition is grounded in an extensive body of research that documents that young children's ways of knowing differ considerably from those of older children and adults regardless of culture."[206] The developmental characteristics of children from five through seven years are more similar to the preschool child, as children are beginning to make a shift in cognition during this time. "The changes associated with this '5 to 7 shift' affect development across physical, social and emotional, cognitive, and language domains. They also affect children's 'approaches to learning' another important domain of development that includes a child's *enthusiasm* for learning (their interest, joy, and motivation to learn) and their *engagement* in learning (their focused attention, persistence, flexibility, and self-regulation)."[207]

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Early gaps in school readiness that are evident in kindergarten are mirrored in third-grade standardized test results.[208] Kindergarteners who enter school behind are likely to remain behind as they move through the education system, and third-graders who are behind are far less likely to graduate from high school on time.[209]

According to the Education Commission of the States, research indicates that there is the potential for preschool achievements to fade over time which highlights the necessity to also provide high-quality kindergarten and early elementary learning environments. Children need aligned teaching and learning experiences within and across grade levels in the primary years. Recognizing the continuum of development and learning from pre-k to third grade, or age 8 years, is based on literature that indicates that by that age children have acquired a range of academic and social competencies that form the foundation for later learning and development.[210]

In the Erikson Institute's recommendations to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) for Early Childhood and Primary Teacher Certification, they stated: "Gains made by children in

[206] Copple & Bredecamp, 2009.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Fiester, 2010.
[209] Hernandez, 2012.
[210] Education Commission of the States, 2008.

high-quality birth-to-five programs are sustained when early learning programs and K-3rd have integrated structures including consistent instructional approaches, learning environments, and academic and social goals. Alignment is more effectively accomplished when early childhood and early primary teachers have similar preparation in using and adapting curricula, assessments, and learning guidelines with young children." [211]

States and school districts throughout the country are beginning to recognize the importance of connecting and aligning Pre-K-3rd initiatives. In her article entitled "PreK-third Grade: A Paradigm Shift," Ruby Takanishi, President of the Foundation for Child Development, outlines five priorities for achieving the vision of designing educational experiences that recognizes children's developmental capacity and supports children to their full potential. These priorities include:[212]

1. "First, we must reframe primary education for the 21st century as starting with excellent preK education for 3- and 4-year-olds, followed by equally excellent full-day kindergarten, and excellent educational experiences at least into third grade."
2. "Second, we must reframe what is shared responsibility or accountability for children's learning by the end of third grade as involving three major partners: PreK/early learning programs, K-3 education, and families..."
3. "Third, we must work on aligning common standards, curricula, and assessment from preK to third grade. The educational experience of children should be well-rounded, including the arts and social competence, as well as reading, writing, mathematics, and dual language learning..."
4. "Fourth, we must seriously invest in preparing and supporting educators during this period, through pre-service and in-service professional development. All teachers should have a preK-3 teaching credential and should be supported by teaching assistants who have a minimum of an Associate of Arts degree or are working toward an education degree as student teachers. A preK-3 teaching credential could also contribute to the necessary horizontal alignment of learning within grades and vertical alignment across grades..."
5. "Fifth, we must rethink family engagement in children's learning. First. we must focus on enhancing the literacy skills of parents, especially when they have not been adequately educated. Second, we must engage parents closely in what their children are learning in the classroom so there is an alignment between what children learn and what parents do to support that learning over the years."

"...Few elementary school leaders have professional backgrounds or training in early education, As a result, principals often are not well equipped to evaluate P-3 teachers, support improvements in teaching and learning, or guide teachers in using curricula and assessment in the early grades. Because the long-term effect of early education depends on high-quality

[211] Erikson Institute, 2006.
[212] Takanishi, 2010.

teaching, it is critical that elementary school principals have the capacity to boost P-3 teacher effectiveness....Expertise in early education can also help elementary school principals avoid practices that can be harmful to early learning. Principals without appropriate training may unknowingly promote classroom strategies that mimic those used to teach older students but are developmentally inappropriate for younger students."[213]

It is hoped that the *VI Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten* offer principals and administrators with a basic background of research and knowledge to inform best practices, and that they serve as a beginning in a continued commitment to professional development in early childhood education to ultimately improve successful outcomes for children.

[213] Szekeley, 2013

Establishing Transition Policies and Practices

"Children who adjust quickly to kindergarten are more likely to enjoy school, show steady academic and social growth, and focus on new content and skill development. Conversely, when children experience a stressful transition, they are more likely to become disengaged, absent, have behavior problems and lack the ability to focus on meeting academic expectations."[214] "When the kindergarten program is developmentally appropriate, children's transitions from preschool will be smoother and more successful."[215]

"The transition [to kindergarten] is associated with challenges and changes for both children and their parents. For children, beginning kindergarten means adjusting to a change from the social and emotional support received from early caregivers and educators to the academic rigor and expectations of a school setting. This transition also involves new peer-related negotiations as students work to maintain existing friendships and form new relationships, and it requires adapting to a new environment with a different (often larger) physical layout, as well as new behavioral boundaries and rules. For families, meanwhile, the transition is usually accompanied by decreased communication with teachers and an increased desire to understand the academic expectations of school. For working parents and families, the transition is also accompanied by challenges in identifying afterschool care and transportation options to meet school schedules, particularly for half-day kindergarten programs."[216]

To maximize positive outcomes for children, collaboration is essential - collaboration with the institutions in the community that serve children prior to kindergarten, particularly child care, preschool, and Head Start programs that feed into the school. Many young children in the Virgin Islands do not attend licensed programs; therefore, special efforts should be made to reach out to families to create a smooth and successful transition from home or informal care to school. A collaborative approach that engages families creates a sense of continuity in children's lives and equips families with the information that they need to help prepare their children for school success. The most successful transition practices focus on continuous activities rather than on singular events.[217]

Promising transition practices that are focused on the interactions among children, families, preschool settings, kindergarten, and the community are discussed in the following chart adapted from the Office of Head Start National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning.[218]

[214] Daily, 2014.
[215] Copple, & Bredekamp, 2009.
[216] Patton & Wang, 2013.
[217] Ibid.
[218] National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning, 2014.

Type of connection	Transition Activity
Child-School	• Establish a connection between the preschool child and kindergarten teacher • Create a connection between the child and the kindergarten using special school functions - during school year or summer • Have children practice kindergarten rituals in preschool • Incorporate preschool activities into the kindergarten year • Encourage the preschool teachers to stay in contact with their former students • Encourage kindergarten support staff to visit preschool children (home and preschool visits) • Schedule spring kindergarten orientation for preschool-age children • Establish peer connections within the preschool class • Establish connections with peers who will be in kindergarten • Establish preschool peer connections with kindergarten peers
Family-School	• Contact families during first few days of preschool and kindergarten • Assess family needs • Maintain periodic contact with the family • Connect the family to community resources • Encourage family participation in home learning activities • Encourage family participation in the classroom and at school events • Hold regular family meetings • Convene family meetings about transition issues • Share information about individual children among the family, preschool teacher, and kindergarten teacher • Create newsletters and resource materials • Send letters home • Set up two way communication strategies • Conduct spring orientation about kindergarten for pre-k families • Plan individual meetings between teachers and families • Hold parent orientation after preschool and kindergarten start
School-School	• Foster inter-school collaboration about programs and classroom practices • Encourage pre-k teacher visits to kindergarten classroom • Encourage kindergarten teacher visits to pre-k classrooms • Foster pre-k and kindergarten personnel communication about curriculum • Facilitate pre-k and kindergarten teachers' connection about a specific child • Share written records • Align curriculum • Align early learning standards
Community	• Build useful policies related to transition • Identify and communicate community expectations for children • Establish policy coordination through inter-agency connections • Establish child-specific coordination through inter-agency connections • Add other community members to the transition team (e.g., pediatricians, pastors, media, etc.)

Standards and Strategies for Principals[219]

Competency 1: Embrace Pre-K-3 Early Learning Continuum

"Effective principals embrace a concept of high-quality early learning from age three as the foundation for children's developmental growth."[220] Effective principals recognize the early years as the foundation for children's future academic success and personal achievement. Principals should support an expanded continuum of learning that includes children from age three through the primary grades and a strong transition to the start of fourth grade, whether or not these grades are within the school or throughout the community. "...Leaders of Pre-K-3 learning communities commit to investments in learning from age three to grade three, knowing that concerted efforts at providing high-quality educational experience for all children at this level is more efficient and can generate more benefits than investments made later in the learning cycle."[221]

Strategies/Indicators:[222]

- "Engage your learning community in understanding the importance of the early learning community in understanding the importance of the early learning continuum and the transitions along it, especially Pre-K, K and K-3.
- Set expectations that the continuum of learning from age three to grade three is fundamental to your school's mission.
- Expand the concept of 'learning community' to include collaboration among external, as well as internal, stakeholders.
- Articulate the long-term value of early learning to parents and all learning community stakeholders.
- Align funding, resources and governance to support the Pre-k-3 framework."

Competency 2: Ensure Developmentally-Appropriate Teaching

"Effective principals ensure quality teaching, supported by a system of standards, developmentally appropriate curriculum and assessments that work together to help foster children's learning and growth."[223] "In a developmentally appropriate classroom, the curriculum strives to help children become lifelong learners, think critically and imaginatively, ask meaningful questions, formulate alternative solutions, appreciate diversity and work collaboratively. Perhaps most important, high quality teaching can help build a child's capacity to form meaningful relationships with others."[224] It means that principals support effective

[219] Adapted from: National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2005 and National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2014.
[220] National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2014.
[221] Ibid.
[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid.
[224] National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2005.

teaching for every child at every level and that teachers understand what constitutes quality teaching for children from Pre-K to Grade 3.

Strategies/Indicators:[225]

- "Align ambitious standards, curriculum, instruction and assessments so that they create a consistent framework for learning from age three to grade three.
- Provide a comprehensive curriculum inclusive of, but not limited to, language arts and math.
- Work with teachers and teacher leaders to develop an interactive, relevant and engaging early learning curriculum.
- Create professional communities of practice to empower teachers to learn from each other and to improve instruction."

Competency 3: Provide Personalized Blended Learning Environments

"Effective principals provide welcoming, collaborative learning environments that support personalized learning, including effective use of technology."[226] "When the interpersonal and physical learning environments are stimulating and supportive, children are able to develop in many ways. Effective principals recognize the key role of rich learning environments for young children and provide the leadership to create them. Principals should be knowledgeable about the key elements of an appropriate learning environment for young children."[227] "The most supportive and effective learning environments create a welcoming physical and emotional climate that is safe, nurturing and developmentally-appropriate. Such an environment promotes wellness, positive interactions and supportive relationships for the children and adults within them....Effective leaders also promote constructivist learning - enabling children not only to acquire knowledge but also to create it - through active, reflective, collaborative and contextual learning that results in authentic tasks and products. Pedagogical practices in constructivist learning environments focus on the learner, with teachers supporting student exploration as guides and facilitators."[228] Appropriate use of technology in early childhood environments can support a play-based curriculum and help teachers meet the learning needs of individual children.

Strategies/Indicators:[229]

- "Promote environments that blend face-to-face and technology-enhanced learning and that are rigorous, developmentally-appropriate and support individual learning.
- Facilitate the use of technology tools for learning and provide instructional leadership in schools on how to use technology effectively.

[225] National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2014.
[226] Ibid.
[227] National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2005.
[228] National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2014.
[229] Ibid.

- Support instructional use of appropriate technology and interactive media to support learning and development — through work and play — in school, at home and in community settings.
- Integrate technology directly and intentionally into curriculum and student learning outcomes.
- Help teachers develop their understanding and ability to use technology effectively to individualize and differentiate instruction for each student."

Competency 4: Use Multiple Measures of Assessment to Guide Growth in Student Learning

"Effective principals use multiple measures to assess student progress and support student learning growth."[230] The ultimate goal of assessment is to improve teaching and learning. Assessing what young children know and are able to do can be challenging. "Principals warn against a narrowing of the curriculum in their schools that takes time away from robust learning experiences and devotes it instead to preparing students to perform will on a battery of accountability exams that do not provide the full portrait of a student's success....Principals encourage and support state and local assessments that include growth models and multiple measures of student performance (both formative and summative) to accurately gauge social and emotional development, language fluency and comprehension, creativity, adaptability, critical thinking and problem-solving skills."[231]

"...Appropriate assessments used in classrooms by teachers and principals are a key ingredient in building high-quality programs and forging paths to students' intellectual growth. Assessments built around teachers' observations and analysis of students' work can help create a true continuum of early childhood learning that allows children to steadily build new skills and knowledge."[232]

Strategies/Indicators:[233]

- "Build understanding throughout the learning community of the various purposes and appropriate uses of different assessments to improve teaching and learning.
- Support teachers in using multiple forms of assessments, along with observation, portfolios and anecdotal records, to guide student learning and growth all along the Pre-K-3 continuum.
- Support open and collaborative discussions about assessment data with parent and community.
- Share information about program effectiveness among schools and other providers."

[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid.
[232] National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2005.
[233] National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2014.

Competency 5: Build Professional Capacity Across the Learning and Community
"Effective principals build collaborative working environments that support the professional growth of all who work in them."[234] It is essential for each member of the learning community, who impact children and are involved in their learning, continue to learn to build their knowledge, skills, and expertise.

Strategies/Indicators:[235]

- "Build principal professional knowledge about what is age- and developmentally-appropriate across the continuum.
- Support ongoing, job-embedded professional learning opportunities for teachers all along the continuum.
- Support professional learning communities that focus on authentic work."

Competency 6: Make Your School a Hub of Pre-K-3 Learning for Families and Communities
"Effective principals work with families, prekindergarten programs and community organizations to build strong Pre-K-3 linkages."[236] Principals know that children begin learning long before they start school, as well as, outside of the school environment; and therefore, recognize the important role that parents and the community play in children's development and learning. "Foremost, principals must create a school culture in which parents and community members feel a sense of belonging and know that they help to form a child's learning network and thus are regarded as essential to the school learning community."[237].

Principals can play a major role in setting the stage for welcoming families and promoting meaningful family engagement and leadership. They can support teachers' efforts to build partnerships with parents as described previously in this document.

Strategies/Indicators:[238]

- "Develop a welcoming environment and sense of belonging and cultivate a shared responsibility for children's learning from age three to grade three.
- Provide meaningful transitions between preschool and elementary school.
- Develop out-of-school and summer leaning opportunities for children from age three to grade three.
- Blend and braid funding to maximize resource opportunities."

[234] Ibid.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ibid.
[238] Ibid.

Principals who know the needs of young children in their communities can play an important role in making the case for expanding high-quality pre-K programs and ensuring high-quality K-3rd programs in their own school. "As leaders in education, principals are well-positioned to speak publicly on behalf of children; they can carry the message about the need for high-quality [early childhood programs] as a central focus of their advocacy....Principals should not underestimate the value of keeping local, state and federal officials abreast of children's needs and school successes."[239]

[239] National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2005.

Conclusion:

It is hoped that the *VI Guidelines for High-Quality Practice in Kindergarten* offer teachers, staff, principals, and administrators a basic background of research and knowledge to inform best practices. These guidelines should serve as a beginning in a continued commitment to professional development in early childhood education and to ultimately improve successful outcomes for children.

Appendix

US Virgin Islands Kindergarten Standards:

- Common Core Standards - English Language Arts
- Common Core Standards - Mathematics
- Virgin Islands Social Studies Standards
- Next Generation Science Standards
- Virgin Islands School Health and Physical Education Standards

Common Core State Standards

English Language Arts

Foundational Skills K.RF

Print Concepts

K.RF.1 Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.

a. Follow words from left to right, top to bottom, and page by page.
b. Recognize that spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters.
c. Understand that words are separated by spaces in print.
d. Recognize and name all upper and lowercase letters of the alphabet.

Phonological Awareness

K.RF.2 Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).

a. Recognize and produce rhyming words.
b. Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables in spoken words.
c. Blend and segment onsets and rimes of single-syllable spoken words.
d. Isolate and pronounce the initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in three-phoneme (consonant-vowel-consonant, or CVC) words.* (This does not include CVCs ending with /*l*/, /*r*/, or /*x*/.)
e. Add or substitute individual sounds (phonemes) in simple, one-syllable words to make new words.

Phonics and Word Recognition

K.RF.3 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

a. Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to-one letter-sound correspondences by producing the primary sound or many of the most frequent sounds for each consonant.
b. Associate the long and short sounds with common spellings (graphemes) for the five major vowels.
c. Read common high-frequency words by sight (e.g., *the*, *of*, *to*, *you*, *she*, *my*, *is*, *are*, *do*, *does*).
d. Distinguish between similarly spelled words by identifying the sounds of the letters that differ.

Fluency

K.RF.4 Read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding.

*Words, syllables, or phonemes written in /slashes/refer to their pronunciation or phonology. Thus, /CVC/ is a word with three phonemes regardless of the number of letters in the spelling of the word.

Reading Standards: Literature

The following standards offer a focus for instruction and help ensure that students gain adequate exposure to a range of texts and tasks. Rigor is also infused through the requirement that students read increasingly complex

texts through the grades. *Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year's grade-specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades.*

Literature	K.RL
Key Ideas and Details	
K.RL.1	With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
K.RL.2	With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.
K.RL.3	With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.
Craft and Structure	
K.RL.4	Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.
K.RL.5	Recognize common types of texts (e.g., storybooks, poems).
K.RL.6	With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	
K.RL.7	With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).
K.RL.8	(Not applicable to literature)
K.RL.9	With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories.
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity	
K.RL.10	Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

Reading Standards: Informational Text

Informational Text	K.RI
Key Ideas and Details	
K.RI.1	With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
K.RI.2	With prompting and support, identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.
K.RI.3	With prompting and support, describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.
Craft and Structure	
K.RI.4	With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.
K.RI.5	Identify the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book.
K.RI.6	Name the author and illustrator of a text and define the role of each in presenting the ideas or information in a text.
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	
K.RI.7	With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the text in which they appear (e.g., what person, place, thing, or idea in the text an illustration depicts).
K.RI.8	With prompting and support, identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.
K.RI.9	With prompting and support, identify basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic (e.g., in illustrations, descriptions, or procedures).
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity	
K.RI.10	Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

Writing Standards

The following standards offer a focus for instruction to help ensure that students gain adequate mastery of a range of skills and applications. Each year in their writing, students should demonstrate increasing sophistication in all aspects of language use, from vocabulary and syntax to the development and organization of ideas, and they should address increasingly demanding content and sources. *Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year's grade-specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades.* The expected growth in student writing ability is reflected both in the standards themselves and in the collection of annotated student writing samples in Appendix C.

Writing	K.W

Text Types and Purposes

K.W.1 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces in which they tell a reader the topic or the name of the book they are writing about and state an opinion or preference about the topic or book (e.g., *My favorite book is* . . .).

K.W.2 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

K.W.3 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.

Production and Distribution of Writing

K.W.4 (Begins in grade 3)

K.W.5 With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed.

K.W.6 With guidance and support from adults, explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

K.W.7 Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of books by a favorite author and express opinions about them).

K.W.8 With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

Language Standards

The following standards offer a focus for instruction to help ensure that students gain adequate mastery of a range of skills and applications. *Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year's grade-specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades.*

Language	K.L

Conventions of Standard English

K.L.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

a. Print many upper and lowercase letters.
b. Use frequently occurring nouns and verbs.
c. Form regular plural nouns orally by adding /s/ or /es/ (e.g., *dog*, *dogs*; *wish*, *wishes*).
d. Understand and use question words (interrogatives) (e.g., *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, *how*).
e. Use the most frequently occurring prepositions (e.g., *to*, *from*, *in*, *out*, *on*, *off*, *for*, *of*, *by*, *with*).

f. Produce and expand complete sentences in shared language activities.

K.L.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

a. Capitalize the first word in a sentence and the pronoun I.
b. Recognize and name end punctuation.
c. Write a letter or letters for most consonant and short-vowel sounds (phonemes).
d. Spell simple words phonetically, drawing on knowledge of sound-letter relationships.

Knowledge of Language

K.L.3 (Begins in grade 2)

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

K.L.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *kindergarten reading and content*.

a. Identify new meanings for familiar words and apply them accurately (e.g., knowing duck is a bird and learning the verb to duck).
b. Use the most frequently occurring inflections and affixes (e.g., -ed, -s, re-, un-, pre-, -ful, -less) as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word.

K.L.5 With guidance and support from adults, explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

a. Sort common objects into categories (e.g., shapes, foods) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent.
b. Demonstrate understanding of frequently occurring verbs and adjectives by relating them to their opposites (antonyms).
c. Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., note places at school that are *colorful*).
d. Distinguish shades of meaning among verbs describing the same general action (e.g., *walk*, *march*, *strut*, *prance*) by acting out the meanings.

K.L.6 Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts.

Speaking and Listening Standards

The following standards offer a focus for instruction to help ensure that students gain adequate mastery of a range of skills and applications. *Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year's grade-specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades.*

Speaking and Listening K.SL

Comprehension and Collaboration

K.SL.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).
b. Continue conversations through multiple exchanges

K.SL.2 Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.

K.SL.3 Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

K.SL.4 Describe familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail.

K.SL.5 Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail.

K.SL.6 Apply audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.

Common Core State Standards-Math

Grade K Overview

Counting and Cardinality

- Know number names and the count sequence.
- Count to tell the number of objects.
- Compare numbers.

Operations and Algebraic Thinking

- Understand addition as putting together and adding to, and understand subtraction as taking apart and taking from.

Number and Operations in Base Ten

- Work with numbers 11-19 to gain foundations for place value.

Measurement and Data

- Describe and compare measurable attributes.
- Classify objects and count the number of objects in each category

Geometry

- Identify and describe shapes.
- Analyze, compare, create, and compose shapes.

Mathematical Practices

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
4. Model with mathematics.
5. Use appropriate tools strategically.
6. Attend to precision.
7. Look for and make use of structure.
8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

Virgin Islands Social Studies Standards

SSK.SFST.1 Know about self.

SSK.SFST.1A Know who he/she is.

SSK.SFST.1.B Know when he/she has grown.

SSK.SFST.2 Describe surroundings.

SSK.SFST.2.A Know other neighborhoods of the Virgin Islands.

SSK.SFST.2.B Understand the geography of the Virgin Islands.

SSK.SFST.2.C Know the relationship between people of the Caribbean, United States and the world.

SSK.SFST.3 Understand responsibilities.

SSK.SFST.3.A Know and apply the concept of respect.

SSK.SFST.3.B Know his/her role as a member of the family.

SSK.SFST.3.C Know his/her role as a student.

SSK.SFST.3.D Know his/her role as a citizen.

SSK.SFST.3.E Demonstrate cooperation and conflict resolution skills as it pertains to individuals and groups.

SSK.SFST.4 Know culture and traditions.

SSK.SFST.4.A Know Virgin Islands holidays and why they are important.

SSK.SFST.4.B Know the diversity of the people of the Virgin Islands.

SSK.SFST.4.C Know and explain the similarities and differences.

SSK.SFST.4.D Learn about who governs the Virgin Islands.

SSK.SFST.5 Know about families.

SSK.SFST.5.A Know birthdays of his/her parents.

SSK.SFST.5.B Know the birthdays of his/her brothers and sisters.

SSK.SFST.5.C Know the role of the family.

SSK.SFST.6 Know about school.

SSK.SFST.6.A Know the functions of school.

SSK.SFST.6.B Understand why he/she attends school.

SSK.SFST.6.C Know why classmates are alike and different.

SSK.SFST.6.D Know the importance of getting along with others.

SSK.SFST.6.E Understand the role of the teacher.

SSK.SFST.7 Know basic technology.

SSK.SFST.7.A Know what are the various technological tools.

SSK.SFST.7.B Know how to use a computer.

Kindergarten

The performance expectations in kindergarten help students formulate answers to questions such as: "What happens if you push or pull an object harder? Where do animals live and why do they live there? What is the weather like today and how is it different from yesterday?" Kindergarten performance expectations include PS2, PS3, LS1, ESS2, ESS3, and ETS1 Disciplinary Core Ideas from the *NRC Framework*. Students are expected to develop understanding of patterns and variations in local weather and the purpose of weather forecasting to prepare for, and respond to, severe weather. Students are able to apply an understanding of the effects of different strengths or different directions of pushes and pulls on the motion of an object to analyze a design solution. Students are also expected to develop understanding of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive and the relationship between their needs and where they live. The crosscutting concepts of patterns; cause and effect; systems and system models; interdependence of science, engineering, and technology; and influence of engineering, technology, and science on society and the natural world are called out as organizing concepts for these disciplinary core ideas. In the kindergarten performance expectations, students are expected to demonstrate grade-appropriate proficiency in asking questions, developing and using models, planning and carrying out investigations, analyzing and interpreting data, designing solutions, engaging in argument from evidence, and obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information. Students are expected to use these practices to demonstrate understanding of the core ideas.

K-PS2 Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions

K-PS2 Motion and Stability: Forces and interactions

Students who demonstrate understanding can:

K-PS2-1. Plan and conduct an investigation to compare the effects of different strengths or different directions of pushes and pulls on the motion of an object. [Clarification Statement: Examples of pushes or pulls could include a string attached to an object being pulled, a person pushing an object, a person stopping a rolling ball, and two objects colliding and pushing on each other.] [Assessment Boundary: Assessment is limited to different relative strengths or different directions, but not both at the same time. Assessment does not include non-contact pushes or pulls such as those produced by magnets.]

K-PS2-2. Analyze data to determine if a design solution works as intended to change the speed or direction of an object with a push or a pull.* [Clarification Statement: Examples of problems requiring a solution could include having a marble or other object move a certain distance, follow a particular path, and knock down other objects. Examples of solutions could include tools such as a ramp to increase the speed of the object and a structure that would cause an object such as a marble or ball to turn.] [Assessment Boundary: Assessment does not include friction as a mechanism for change in speed.]

The performance expectations above were developed using the following elements from the NRC document *A Framework for K-12 Science Education*:

Science and Engineering Practices

Planning and Carrying Out Investigations

Planning and carrying out investigations to answer questions or test solutions to problems in K–2 builds on prior experiences and progresses to simple investigations, based on fair tests, which provide data to support explanations or design solutions.

- With guidance, plan and conduct an investigation in collaboration with peers. (K-PS2-1)

Analyzing and Interpreting Data

Analyzing data in K–2 builds on prior experiences and progresses to collecting, recording, and sharing observations.

- Analyze data from tests of an object or tool to determine if it works as intended. (K-PS2-2)

Connections to Nature of Science

Scientific Investigations Use a Variety of Methods

- Scientists use different ways to study the world. (K-PS2-1)

Disciplinary Core Ideas

PS2.A: Forces and Motion

- Pushes and pulls can have different strengths and directions. (K- PS2-1),(K-PS2-2)
- Pushing or pulling on an object can change the speed or direction of its motion and can start or stop it. (K-PS2-1),(K-PS2-2)

PS2.B: Types of Interactions

- When objects touch or collide, they push on one another and can change motion. (K-PS2-1)

PS3.C: Relationship Between Energy and Forces

- A bigger push or pull makes things speed up or slow down more quickly. *(secondary to K-PS2-1)*

ETS1.A: Defining Engineering Problems

- A situation that people want to change or create can be approached as a problem to be solved through engineering. Such problems may have many acceptable solutions. *(secondary to K- PS2-2)*

Crosscutting Concepts

Cause and Effect

- Simple tests can be designed to gather evidence to support or refute student ideas about causes. (K-PS2-1),(K-PS2-2)

Connections to other DCIs in kindergarten: **K.ETS1.A** (K-PS2-2); **K.ETS1.B** (K-PS2-2)

Articulation of DCIs across grade-levels: **2.ETS1.B** (K-PS2-2); **3.PS2.A** (K-PS2-1),(K-PS2-2); **3.PS2.B** (K-PS2-1); **4.PS3.A** (K-PS2-1); **4.ETS1.A** (K-PS2-2)

Common Core State Standards Connections:

ELA/Literacy –

RI.K.1 With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text. *(K-PS2-2)*

W.K.7 Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of books by a favorite author and express opinions about them). (K-PS2-1)

SL.K.3 Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood. *(K-PS2-2)*

Mathematics –

MP.2 Reason abstractly and quantitatively. *(K-PS2-1)*

K.MD.A.1 Describe measurable attributes of objects, such as length or weight. Describe several measurable attributes of a single object. *(K-PS2-1)*

K.MD.A.2 Directly compare two objects with a measurable attribute in common, to see which object has "more of"/"less of" the attribute, and describe the difference. (K-PS2-1)

K-PS3 Energy

K-PS3 Energy

Students who demonstrate understanding can:

K-PS3-1. Make observations to determine the effect of sunlight on Earth's surface. [Clarification Statement: Examples of Earth's surface could include sand, soil, rocks, and water] [Assessment Boundary: Assessment of temperature is limited to relative measures such as warmer/cooler.]

K-PS3-2. Use tools and materials to design and build a structure that will reduce the warming effect of sunlight on an area.* [Clarification Statement: Examples of structures could include umbrellas, canopies, and tents that minimize the warming effect of the sun.]

The performance expectations above were developed using the following elements from the NRC document *A Framework for K-12 Science Education*:

Science and Engineering Practices

Planning and Carrying Out Investigations

Planning and carrying out investigations to answer questions or test solutions to problems in K–2 builds on prior experiences and progresses to simple investigations, based on fair tests, which provide data to support explanations or design solutions.

- Make observations (firsthand or from media) to collect data that can be used to make comparisons. (K-PS3-1)

Constructing Explanations and Designing Solutions

Constructing explanations and designing solutions in K–2 builds on prior experiences and progresses to the use of evidence and ideas in constructing evidence-based accounts of natural phenomena and designing solutions.

- Use tools and materials provided to design and build a device that solves a specific problem or a solution to a specific problem. (K-PS3- 2)

Connections to Nature of Science

Scientific Investigations Use a Variety of Methods

- Scientists use different ways to study the world. (K-PS3-1)

Disciplinary Core Ideas

PS3.B: Conservation of Energy and Energy Transfer

- Sunlight warms Earth's surface. (K-PS3-1),(K-PS3-2)

Crosscutting Concepts

Cause and Effect

- Events have causes that generate observable patterns. (K-PS3-1),(K-PS3-2)

Connections to other DCIs in kindergarten: **K.ETS1.A** (K-PS3-2); **K.ETS1.B** (K-PS3-2)

Articulation of DCIs across grade-levels: **1.PS4.B** (K-PS3-1),(K-PS3-2); **2.ETS1.B** (K-PS3-2), **3.ESS2.D** (K-PS3-1); **4.ETS1.A** (K-PS3-2)

Common Core State Standards Connections: ELA/Literacy –

W.K.7 Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of books by a favorite author and express opinions about them). (K-PS3-1),*(K-PS3-2)* *Mathematics –*

K.MD.A.2 Directly compare two objects with a measurable attribute in common, to see which object has "more of"/"less of" the attribute, and describe the difference. (K-PS3-1),(K- PS3-2)

K-LS1 From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes

K-LS1 From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes

Students who demonstrate understanding can:

K-LS1-1. Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive. [Clarification Statement: Examples of patterns could include that animals need to take in food but plants do not; the different kinds of food needed by different types of animals; the requirement of plants to have light; and, that all living things need water.]

The performance expectations above were developed using the following elements from the NRC document *A Framework for K-12 Science Education*:

Science and Engineering Practices

Analyzing and Interpreting Data

Analyzing data in K–2 builds on prior experiences and progresses to collecting, recording, and sharing observations.

- Use observations (firsthand or from media) to describe patterns in the natural world in order to answer scientific questions. (K-LS1-1)

Connections to Nature of Science

Scientific Knowledge is Based on Empirical Evidence

- Scientists look for patterns and order when making observations about the world. (K-LS1-1)

Disciplinary Core Ideas

LS1.C: Organization for Matter and Energy Flow in Organisms

- All animals need food in order to live and grow. They obtain their food from plants or from other animals. Plants need water and light to live and grow. (K-LS1-1)

Crosscutting Concepts

Patterns

- Patterns in the natural and human designed world can be observed and used as evidence. (K-LS1-1)

Connections to other DCIs in kindergarten: N/A

Articulation of DCIs across grade-levels: **1.LS1.A** (K-LS1-1); **2.LS2.A** (K-LS1-1); **3.LS2.C** (K-LS1-1); **3.LS4.B** (K-LS1-1); **5.LS1.C** (K-LS1-1); **5.LS2.A** (K-LS1-1)

Common Core State Standards Connections: ELA/Literacy –

W.K.7 Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of books by a favorite author and express opinions about them). (K-LS1-1)

Mathematics –

K.MD.A.2 Directly compare two objects with a measurable attribute in common, to see which object has "more of"/"less of" the attribute, and describe the difference. *(K-LS1-1)*

K-ESS2 Earth's Systems

K-ESS2 Earth's Systems

Students who demonstrate understanding can:

K-ESS2-1. Use and share observations of local weather conditions to describe patterns over time. [Clarification Statement: Examples of qualitative observations could include descriptions of the weather (such as sunny, cloudy, rainy, and warm); examples of quantitative observations could include numbers of sunny, windy, and rainy days in a month. Examples of patterns could include that it is usually cooler in the morning than in the afternoon and the number of sunny days versus cloudy days in different months.] [Assessment Boundary: Assessment of quantitative observations limited to whole numbers and relative measures such as warmer/cooler.]

K-ESS2-2. Construct an argument supported by evidence for how plants and animals (including humans) can change the environment to meet their needs. [Clarification Statement: Examples of plants and animals changing their environment could include a squirrel digs in the ground to hide its food and tree roots can break concrete.]

The performance expectations above were developed using the following elements from the NRC document *A Framework for K-12 Science Education*:

Science and Engineering Practices

Analyzing and Interpreting Data

Analyzing data in K–2 builds on prior experiences and progresses to collecting, recording, and sharing observations.

- Use observations (firsthand or from media) to describe patterns in the natural world in order to answer scientific questions. (K-ESS2-1)

Engaging in Argument from Evidence

Engaging in argument from evidence in K–2 builds on prior experiences and progresses to comparing ideas and representations about the natural and designed world(s).

- Construct an argument with evidence to support a claim. (K-ESS2-2)

Connections to Nature of Science

Science Knowledge is Based on Empirical Evidence

- Scientists look for patterns and order when making observations about the world. (K-ESS2-1)

Disciplinary Core Ideas

ESS2.D: Weather and Climate

- Weather is the combination of sunlight, wind, snow or rain, and temperature in a particular region at a particular time. People measure these conditions to describe and record the weather and to notice patterns over time. (K-ESS2-1)

ESS2.E: Biogeology

- Plants and animals can change their environment. (K-ESS2-2)

ESS3.C: Human Impacts on Earth Systems

- Things that people do to live comfortably can affect the world around them. But they can make choices that reduce their impacts on the land, water, air, and other living things. *(secondary to K-ESS2-2)*

Crosscutting Concepts

Patterns

- Patterns in the natural world can be observed, used to describe phenomena, and used as evidence. (K-ESS2-1)

Systems and System Models

- Systems in the natural and designed world have parts that work together. (K-ESS2-2)

Connections to other DCIs in kindergarten: N/A

Articulation of DCIs across grade-levels: **2.ESS2.A** (K-ESS2-1); **3.ESS2.D** (K-ESS2-1); **4.ESS2.A** (K-ESS2-1); **4.ESS2.E** (K-ESS2-2); **5.ESS2.A** (K-ESS2-2)

Common Core State Standards Connections:

ELA/Literacy –

RI.K.1 With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text. (K-ESS2-2)

W.K.1 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces in which they tell a reader the topic or the name of the book they are writing about and state an opinion or preference about the topic or book. (K-ESS2-2)

W.K.2 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic. *(K-ESS2-2)*

W.K.7 Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of books by a favorite author and express opinions about them). (K-ESS2-1)

Mathematics –

MP.2 Reason abstractly and quantitatively. (K-ESS2-1)

MP.4 Model with mathematics. (K-ESS2-1)

K.CC.A Know number names and the count sequence. (K-ESS2-1)

K.MD.A.1 Describe measurable attributes of objects, such as length or weight. Describe several measurable attributes of a single object. (K-ESS2-1)

K.MD.B.3 Classify objects into given categories; count the number of objects in each category and sort the categories by count. (K-ESS2-1)

K-ESS3 Earth and Human Activity

K-ESS3 Earth and Human Activity

Students who demonstrate understanding can:

K-ESS3-1. Use a model to represent the relationship between the needs of different plants or animals (including humans) and the places they live. [Clarification Statement: Examples of relationships could include that deer eat buds and leaves, therefore, they usually live in forested areas; and, grasses need sunlight so they often grow in meadows. Plants, animals, and their surroundings make up a system.]

K-ESS3-2. Ask questions to obtain information about the purpose of weather forecasting to prepare for, and respond to, severe weather.* [Clarification Statement: Emphasis is on local forms of severe weather.]

K-ESS3-3. Communicate solutions that will reduce the impact of humans on the land, water, air, and/or other living things in the local environment.* [Clarification Statement: Examples of human impact on the land could include cutting trees to produce paper and using resources to produce bottles. Examples of solutions could include reusing paper and recycling cans and bottles.]

The performance expectations above were developed using the following elements from the NRC document *A Framework for K-12 Science Education*:

Science and Engineering Practices

Asking Questions and Defining Problems
Asking questions and defining problems in grades K–2 builds on prior experiences and progresses to simple descriptive questions that can be tested.

- Ask questions based on observations to find more information about the designed world. (K-ESS3-2)

Developing and Using Models
Modeling in K–2 builds on prior experiences and progresses to include using and developing models (i.e., diagram, drawing, physical replica, diorama, dramatization, storyboard) that represent concrete events or design solutions.

- Use a model to represent relationships in the natural world. (K-ESS3-1)

Obtaining, Evaluating, and Communicating Information
Obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information in K–2 builds on prior experiences and uses observations and texts to communicate new information.

- Read grade-appropriate texts and/or use media to obtain scientific information to describe patterns in the natural world. (K-ESS3-2)
- Communicate solutions with others in oral and/or written forms using models and/or drawings that provide detail about scientific ideas. (K-ESS3-3)

Disciplinary Core Ideas

ESS3.A: Natural Resources

- Living things need water, air, and resources from the land, and they live in places that have the things they need. Humans use natural resources for everything they do. (K-ESS3-1)

ESS3.B: Natural Hazards

- Some kinds of severe weather are more likely than others in a given region. Weather scientists forecast severe weather so that the communities can prepare for and respond to these events. (K-ESS3-2)

ESS3.C: Human Impacts on Earth Systems

- Things that people do to live comfortably can affect the world around them. But they can make choices that reduce their impacts on the land, water, air, and other living things. (K-ESS3- 3)

ETS1.A: Defining and Delimiting an Engineering Problem

- Asking questions, making observations, and gathering information are helpful in thinking about problems. *(secondary to K-ESS3-2)*

ETS1.B: Developing Possible Solutions

- Designs can be conveyed through sketches, drawings, or physical models. These representations are useful in communicating ideas for a problem's solutions to other people. *(secondary to K-ESS3-3)*

Crosscutting Concepts

Cause and Effect

- Events have causes that generate observable patterns. (K-ESS3-2),(K-ESS3-3)

Systems and System Models

- Systems in the natural and designed world have parts that work together. (K-ESS3-1)

Connections to Engineering, Technology and Applications of Science

Interdependence of Science, Engineering, and Technology

- People encounter questions about the natural world every day. (K-ESS3-2)

Influence of Engineering, Technology, and Science on Society and the Natural World

- People depend on various technologies in their lives; human life would be very different without technology. (K-ESS3-2)

Connections to other DCIs in kindergarten: **K.ETS1.A** (K-ESS3-2),(K-ESS3-3)

Articulation of DCIs across grade-levels: **1.LS1.A** (K-ESS3-1); **2.ESS1.C** (K-ESS3-2); **2.ETS1.B** (K-ESS3-3); **3.ESS3.B** (K-ESS3-2); **4.ESS3.A** (K-ESS3-3); **4.ESS3.B** (K-ESS3-2); **5.LS2.A** (K-ESS3-1); **5.ESS2.A** (K-ESS3-1); **5.ESS3.C** (K-ESS3-3)

Common Core State Standards Connections:

ELA/Literacy –

RI.K.1 With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text. (K-ESS3-2)

W.K.2 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic. *(K-ESS3-3)*

SL.K.3 Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood. (K-ESS3-2)

SL.K.5 Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail. *(K-ESS3-1)*

Mathematics –

MP.2 Reason abstractly and quantitatively. *(K-ESS3-1)* **MP.4** Model with mathematics. *(K-ESS3-1),(K-ESS3-2)* **K.CC** Counting and Cardinality *(K-ESS3-1),(K-ESS3-2)*

K-2-ETS1 Engineering Design

K-2-ETS1 Engineering Design

Students who demonstrate understanding can:

K-2-ETS1-1. Ask questions, make observations, and gather information about a situation people want to change to define a simple problem that can be solved through the development of a new or improved object or tool.

K-2-ETS1-2. Develop a simple sketch, drawing, or physical model to illustrate how the shape of an object helps it function as needed to solve a given problem.

K-2-ETS1-3. Analyze data from tests of two objects designed to solve the same problem to compare the strengths and weaknesses of how each performs.

The performance expectations above were developed using the following elements from the NRC document *A Framework for K-12 Science Education*:

Science and Engineering Practices

Asking Questions and Defining Problems

Asking questions and defining problems in K–2 builds on prior experiences and progresses to simple descriptive questions.

- Ask questions based on observations to find more information about the natural and/or designed world(s). (K-2-ETS1-1)
- Define a simple problem that can be solved through the development of a new or improved object or tool. (K-2-ETS1-1)

Developing and Using Models

Modeling in K–2 builds on prior experiences and progresses to include using and developing models (i.e., diagram, drawing, physical replica, diorama, dramatization, or storyboard) that represent concrete events or design solutions.

- Develop a simple model based on evidence to represent a proposed object or tool. (K-2-ETS1-2)

Analyzing and Interpreting Data

Analyzing data in K–2 builds on prior experiences and progresses to collecting, recording, and sharing observations.

- Analyze data from tests of an object or tool to determine if it works as intended. (K-2-ETS1-3)

Disciplinary Core Ideas

ETS1.A: Defining and Delimiting Engineering Problems

- A situation that people want to change or create can be approached as a problem to be solved through engineering. (K-2-ETS1-1)
- Asking questions, making observations, and gathering information are helpful in thinking about problems. (K-2-ETS1-1)
- Before beginning to design a solution, it is important to clearly understand the problem. (K-2-ETS1-1)

ETS1.B: Developing Possible Solutions

- Designs can be conveyed through sketches, drawings, or physical models. These representations are useful in communicating ideas for a problem's solutions to other people. (K-2-ETS1-2)

ETS1.C: Optimizing the Design Solution

- Because there is always more than one possible solution to a problem, it is useful to compare and test designs. (K-2-ETS1-3)

Crosscutting Concepts

Structure and Function

- The shape and stability of structures of natural and designed objects are related to their function(s). (K-2-ETS1-2)

Connections to K-2-ETS1.A: Defining and Delimiting Engineering Problems include:
Kindergarten: K-PS2-2, K-ESS3-2

Connections to K-2-ETS1.B: Developing Possible Solutions to Problems include:
Kindergarten: K-ESS3-3, **First Grade:** 1-PS4-4, **Second Grade:** 2-LS2-2

Connections to K-2-ETS1.C: Optimizing the Design Solution include:
Second Grade: 2-ESS2-1

Articulation of DCIs across grade-bands: **3-5.ETS1.A** (K-2-ETS1-1),(K-2-ETS1-2),(K-2-ETS1-3); **3-5.ETS1.B** (K-2-ETS1-2),(K-2-ETS1-3); **3-5.ETS1.C** (K-2-ETS1-1),(K-2-ETS1-2),(K-2-ETS1-3)

Common Core State Standards Connections:

ELA/Literacy –

RI.2.1 Ask and answer such questions as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text. (K-2-ETS1-1)

W.2.6 With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers. *(K-2-ETS1-1),(K-2-ETS1-3)*

W.2.8 Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question. (K-2-ETS1-1),*(K-2-ETS1-3)*

SL.2.5 Create audio recordings of stories or poems; add drawings or other visual displays to stories or recounts of experiences when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings. *(K-2-ETS1-2)*

Mathematics –

MP.2 Reason abstractly and quantitatively. *(K-2-ETS1-1),(K-2-ETS1-3)*

MP.4 Model with mathematics. *(K-2-ETS1-1),(K-2-ETS1-3)*

MP.5 Use appropriate tools strategically. *(K-2-ETS1-1),(K-2-ETS1-3)*

2.MD.D.10 Draw a picture graph and a bar graph (with single-unit scale) to represent a data set with up to four categories. Solve simple put-together, take-apart, and compare problems using information presented in a bar graph. *(K-2-ETS1-1),(K-2-ETS1-3)*

Comprehensive School Health Education

Standards	In Grades K-3 Students will:
Domain 1: Physical Activity and Nutrition **Standard:** Students will learn the importance of physical activity for life along with incorporating good nutrition in order to maintain good health and manage weight and body composition.	P.1.1. Define a healthy goal P.1.2. Discuss choices that enhance health P.1.3. Describe a healthy diet P.1.4 Describe the benefits of physical activity
Domain 2: Mental and Emotional Health **Standard:** Students will learn how to achieve good mental and emotional health while learning techniques to help decrease and manage stress and anxiety	P.2.1. Identify ways to self-regulate stress (e.g. take a break from playing hard, quiet time); coping with tragedy P.2.2 Develop an appreciation of one's own body P.2.3. Identify emotions P.2.4. Practice using words to identify emotions
Domain 3: Promoting Safe and Healthy Relationships **Standard:** Students will learn skills for healthy family and peer relationships and how to prevent violence.	P.3.1. Identify how families can influence personal health P.3.2. Demonstrate the ability to seek health information from trusted adults (e.g. common health and safety concerns, roles and responsibilities of community helpers) P.3.3. Demonstrate the ability to seek help from trusted adults (e.g. dial 911, ask for help from firefighters or police officers) P.3.4. Identify characteristics of a trusted adult P.3.5. Discuss their roles in the family and the roles of their parents/guardians P.3.6. Discuss positive ways to show care, consideration and concern for others
Domain 4: Personal Care and the Body Systems **Standard:** Students will learn personal care, functions of the human body systems, and healthy behaviors to maintain their bodies.	P.4.1. List personal health behaviors (e.g. hand washing, teeth brushing, independent toileting, use of tissues, explaining feelings, making healthy food choices, daily physical activity) P.4.2. Describe similarities and differences between self and others and understand that the body is good and special P.4.3. Identify and describe functions of body parts (e.g. stomach, feet, hands, ears, eyes, mouth) P.4.4. Demonstrate good hygiene practices to improve and maintain personal health
Domain 5: Growth, Development, and Sex	P.5.1. Recognize how media and technology can

Standards	In Grades K-3 Students will:
Education **Standard:** Students will learn about prenatal development and birth and continuing through the human life cycle.	influence their lives P.5.2. Discuss how families and school influence personal health
Domain 6: Marijuana , Tobacco, Alcohol and other Drugs **Standard:** Students will learn about the use and abuse of marijuana, tobacco, alcohol and other medicines and drugs.	P.6.1 Identify tobacco products P.6.2 Identify alcohol products P.6.3 Identify medicines and other drugs
Domain 7: Diseases and Disorders **Standard:** Students will learn about communicable and non-communicable diseases to include STI, HIV/AIDS. Students will gain a greater understanding and the rights that govern the disabled.	P.7.1. Identify and practice ways to prevent disease and other health problems P.7.2. Discuss germs and their connection to illness
Domain 8: Injury Prevention and Environmental Health **Standard:** Students will learn how to reduce the number of injuries by practicing safe behaviors. They will learn first aid for emergencies and factors that influence our environmental health.	P.8.1. Describe a healthy and safe environment P.8.2. Identify health and safety problems that can be treated early P.8.3. Identify ways injuries can be prevented P.8.4. Identify healthy behaviors (e.g. wearing seatbelts, hand washing) P.8.5. Identify personal behaviors that are health enhancing P.8.6. Identify personal health behaviors that need to be changed

Comprehensive Physical Education

Standards	In Grades K-3 Students will:
Domain 9: Motor Skills and Movement Patterns **Standard:** Students will demonstrate competency in motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities.	P.9.1. Demonstrate coordination in gross motor and fine motor tasks using control, balance, strength and coordination; and demonstrate progress toward the mature form of selected fundamental motor skills P.9.2. Demonstrate the ability to stop and start on a signal; combine sequences of several motor skills in an organized way; and move through an environment with body control P.9.3. Apply problem-solving skills in movement-related activities by solving simple movement challenges involving body parts in isolation or in combination P.9.4. Respond to cues and problem-solve as well as use whole self in personal and general space P.9.5. Acquire initial gross- and fine-motor skills needed for engagement in developmentally appropriate tasks, activities, creative movement, dance, swimming and play
Domain 10: Applying Concepts and Strategies **Standard:** Students will demonstrate understanding of movement concepts, principles, strategies, and tactics as they apply to the learning and performance of physical activities	P.10.1. Demonstrate an understanding of body awareness concepts by identifying large and small body parts; show understanding of quality of movement concepts and apply them to psychomotor skills (e.g., demonstrating momentary stillness in balance activities, distinguishing when to kick a ball softly or with force); and show understanding of space concepts by identifying and demonstrating personal and general space P.10.2. Recognize that some movements, activities and noises are appropriate for indoors/small spaces, and some for outdoors/ large spaces P.10.3. Follow safety and age-appropriate classroom and playground rules and procedures
Domain 11: Engaging in Physical Activity **Standard:** Students will exhibit a physically active lifestyle.	P.11.1. Engage in physical activities when presented with opportunities and with teacher encouragement. Engage in a wide variety of gross-motor activities that are child-selected and teacher-initiated P.11.2. Demonstrate understanding that different movements are performed by different body parts, singly and in combination (e.g., kicking with foot, throwing with hand) P.11.3. Combine a sequence of several motor skills in an organized way P.11.4. Participate in healthy physical activity, and demonstrate understanding that physical activity is beneficial to good health
Domain 12: Physical Fitness	P.12.1 Demonstrate understanding that different physical

Standards	In Grades K-3 Students will:
Standard: Students will achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical fitness	activities have different effects on the body (e.g., running, walking and sitting cause heartbeat and breathing to be faster, not as fast, and slow, respectively) P.12.2 Developmentally appropriate recognition of the effects of physical activity and exercise P.12.3 Use words, symbols and other media to express feelings and sensations about physical activity P.12.4 Collect, describe and record feelings and observations about physical activity and its effects on the body and on how one feels during and after exercise, and before, during and after eating
Domain 13: Responsible Behavior **Standard:** Students will demonstrate responsible personal and social behavior in physical activity settings.	P.13.1. Demonstrate safe behavior for self and toward others by following established class rules, procedures and safe practices with teacher guidance and reinforcement P.13.2. Interact appropriately with peers and familiar adults (e.g., sharing, taking turns, following rules) with teacher guidance and reinforcement; stay on task for short periods with teacher supervision; listen quietly without interruption for short periods with teacher reinforcement; and exhibit self-control in group situations P.13.3. Use age-appropriate conflict resolution strategies; seek help from adults or peers when conflict arises; and engage in developing solutions and work to resolve conflicts
Domain 14: Respect for Differences **Standard:** Students will demonstrate understanding and respect for differences among people in physical activity settings	P.14.1. Demonstrate willingness to play with any child in the class; and recognize similarities and appreciate differences in people
Domain 15: Benefits of Physical Activity **Standard:** Students will understand that physical activity provides opportunities for enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and social interaction	P.15.1. Use words to express feelings and emotions; begin to develop positive feelings about being physically active; and with teacher encouragement, make connections between physical activity and fun P.15.2. Participate in creative movement and dance; identify several activities that are personally enjoyable; and use a variety of means for self-expression P.15.3. Demonstrate appropriate social interactions with peers during physical activity (e.g., sharing, taking turns, following rules, playing cooperatively) with teacher guidance and reinforcement P.15.4 Demonstrate recognition that physical activity is beneficial to good health

Standards	In Grades K-3 Students will:
	P.15.5. Recognize the difference between physical activity levels in different children's tasks (e.g., sitting at sand table compared to playing tag) P.15.6. Develop individual success and confidence by attempting movement skills and activities with teacher guidance

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All I Ever Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten

~by Robert Fulgham~

Most of what I really need to know about how to live, and what to do, and how to be, I learned in Kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sandbox at nursery school.

These are the things I learned: Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Flush. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Live a balanced life. Learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work some every day.

Take a nap every afternoon. When you go out into the world, watch for traffic, hold hands, and stick together. Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the plastic cup. The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that.

Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the plastic cup ~ they all die. So do we.

And then remember the book about Dick and Jane and the first word you learned, the biggest word of all: LOOK. Everything you need to know is in there somewhere. The Golden Rule and love and basic sanitation, ecology and politics and sane living.

Think of what a better world it would be if we all ~the whole world had cookies and milk about 3 o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankets for a nap. Or if we had a basic policy in our nation and other nations to always put things back where we found them and clean up our own messes. And it is still true, no matter how old you are, when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.