



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

***Kindergarten School Readiness***  
**Guide to Implementation and Best**  
**Practices**  
**2016-2017**



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## **Introduction:**

The purpose of this Kindergarten Handbook is twofold - to serve as a best practice resource guide when implementing kindergarten programming, and to address the questions that most often arise from districts when implementing school readiness legislation. This Handbook is in no way a directive or mandate for how kindergarten is to be implemented statewide, as Colorado is a geographically vast and diverse state that prides itself on its ability to respond to the unique needs of each local community. Rather, this Handbook has been developed in response to the growing and increasingly vocal interest by Colorado educators and parents for a better understanding of the educational approaches and practices that align with how young children learn best, supported by research. This resource does not comprise all aspects of kindergarten instruction and programming, but attempts to address the informational and “practice-gap” of embedding conceptual rigor with developmentally appropriate practice. Colorado is not alone in this effort and to that end, we’ve included information from other states that are also deeply committed to and engaged in this work. Resources created by New Jersey, Washington, and North Carolina are used throughout this Handbook with their gracious and explicit permission, and we have referenced their contributions accordingly.

We are excited to provide this resource to support your efforts in creating quality and responsive kindergarten classrooms, and have included a wealth of information for the successful implementation of the requirements laid out in *School Readiness* legislation. As Colorado encourages the use of developmentally appropriate practices in classrooms, it is our hope that this resource will serve as a guide for implementing responsive learning environments, appropriately assessing students, reflecting on instructional practices, and planning for future experiences to ensure that all Colorado’s children are given the opportunity to reach their highest potential.

As always, thank you for all your hard work to support great outcomes for young learners and to ensure the future success of Colorado!

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The Kindergarten School Readiness Team  
The Office of Early Learning and School Readiness  
Colorado Department of Education

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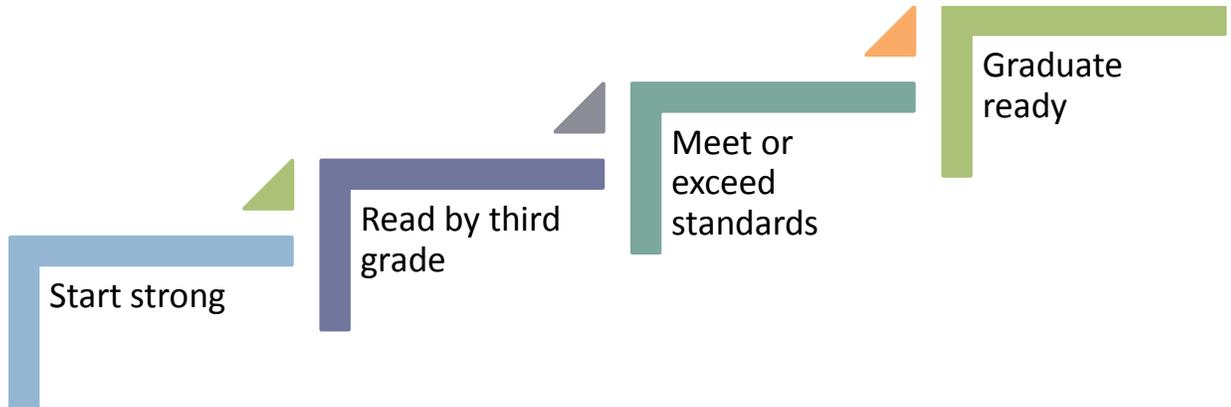
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## Introduction to Legislation: Why School Readiness?



The kindergarten year is critical for laying the groundwork and framework for later successes both in school and beyond. A positive transition to kindergarten has been associated with greater frustration tolerance, better social skills, fewer conduct problems, fewer learning problems, and more positive approaches to learning (LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008). Kindergarten is a place for children to learn and grow, and each child enters school with great potential and the possibility of learning and growth. It is not the job of the child to be ready for kindergarten, but it is the responsibility of the system to be prepared to welcome and respond to each child in an intentional and appropriate way.

Colorado's school readiness initiative is aimed at promoting the school success of each child entering a state-funded Colorado school, recognizing the most current brain research shows that strong early learning experiences are critical in laying the foundation for a successful future and can close gaps early and prevent other gaps from starting. It also shows that executive function skills or self-regulation skills are crucial building blocks for the early development of both cognitive and social capacities and that young children develop these skills by interacting with the world around them. Since children learn best when they have opportunities to explore, discover, invent, create, practice, negotiate, apply and extend on concepts presented in their classrooms in a playful way (Center on the Developing Child 2011), Colorado encourages the use of developmentally practices in the classroom.

Colorado is among a host of states implementing school readiness assessments and individual plans to provide educators and families with tools for identifying and supporting each child's areas of strength and areas for growth.

*Developmentally appropriate practice is defined as meeting children where they are AND helping them to achieve challenging and achievable goals*

*-Phillips and Scrinzi, 2014.*

## Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids: The Source of The School Readiness Initiative

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Senate Bill 08-212, Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), passed in 2008 with the goal of aligning Colorado's preschool through postsecondary education system. The act included provisions related to school readiness for both the State Board of Education and local education providers. The State Board of Education was required to define school readiness and to adopt one or more assessments aligned with the definition of school readiness. The definition of school readiness adopted by the State Board in 2008 indicated the roles schools, families, and communities have in promoting the readiness of children to succeed in school.

Local education providers are required to ensure all children in publicly-funded kindergarten receive an individual school readiness plan. They must also administer the school readiness assessment to each child in kindergarten. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) advised districts to phase-in this provision of CAP4K over the 2013-15 school years, and assisted as districts began fully implementing requirements of this legislation in the 2015-16 school year. The same assistance is available for the 2016-17 school year.

The purpose of assessing and monitoring school readiness is to understand each child's strengths and needs across the developmental and academic domains to provide a responsive learning environment. Information provided by school readiness assessments is intended to help develop an individual readiness plan that informs instruction for each child. School readiness assessments are not designed as a 'ready or not' assessment, but rather an assessment system that helps identify what next steps and supports by adults will provide the greatest opportunity for each child's growth and success. CAP4K clearly states that school readiness assessment information cannot be used to prevent a child from entering kindergarten or advancing to first grade.

### Ready Child, Ready Schools

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Colorado's definition of school readiness promotes the notion of *Ready Child and Ready School*. When passing this legislation, the Legislature understood the importance of high quality classrooms and required that instruction be provided not only in key academic areas, but also asked that teachers address the developmental domains associated with future success, including physical well-being and motor development, language and comprehension, and social and emotional needs of children - ultimately addressing the needs of the "whole child." By monitoring each child's progress across multiple domains, teachers, families, schools, and caregivers can provide needed support to promote each child's success in school. It is imperative for schools to respond to the needs of each child by providing them with coordinated support at home and school in order to facilitate improved academic and behavioral outcomes. A multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) provides a framework to structure the decision making process needed for the selection, implementation, and evaluation of supports to provide children. Student progress encouraged by these practices is systematically

*School readiness describes both the preparedness of a child to engage in and benefit from learning experiences, and the ability of a school to meet the needs of all students enrolled in publicly funded preschool or kindergarten. School readiness is enhanced when schools, families, and community service providers work collaboratively to ensure that every child is ready for higher levels of learning in academic content.*

**Colorado State Board of Education Definition, 2008**

*Section 22-7-1014(1)(b) C.R.S. indicates that local education providers “shall use assessment instruments that are research-based, valid, and reliable to facilitate the systematic measurement of a student's increasing knowledge, skills, and accomplishments within the classroom context.”*

measured, using data, within a structured problem solving process to drive student success.

Children come to school with unique assets in cultural, behavioral, developmental, linguistic, and familial learning experiences that affect their learning and success in school. Some children come to kindergarten having participated in early learning experiences and may make this transition more easily. For many others, kindergarten is a first experience in formal schooling. Improved child outcomes are directly linked to meeting a child where they are, understanding what children bring to school, their experience with school and classroom conditions, teacher practices, and the level of family

and community support in continuing learning outside of school. Quality school readiness assessment provides vital information that identifies children’s strengths and needs so schools are better able to provide appropriate instruction, learning environments, and support to allow each child to learn and thrive.

This system based approach emphasizes a school’s ability to provide a responsive environment which is integral in supporting school readiness and success for all children.



## ***Understanding Child Development and How It Relates to Early Learning***

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*“The early years are ones in which all children need to feel successful. This is especially true of the kindergarten year when children are undergoing significant change in their development. The care that teachers, schools and districts take in intentionally managing this change is critical to all children feeling a sense of success.”*

*- David Matteson – Kindergarten: A Transitional Year*

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### **Basics of Child Development**

(Excerpted from New Jersey Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines)

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**Cognitively**, kindergartners show more flexibility in their thinking than younger children as well as greater advances in reasoning and problem solving (NAEYC, 2009). They retain concepts best when

presented in contexts meaningful to them. As a result, active, experience-based learning, while good for all ages, is key to this period of development.

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

Children entering kindergarten vary in their ability to self-regulate by intentionally controlling emotions, behaviors, and thoughts (Tomlinson in Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Since these executive function skills are vital, it is important for their teachers to minimize sources of frustration, overstimulation, and stress in the environment that might be more than young children can handle. However, age and situation appropriate frustrations and stress are opportunities for children to develop problem-solving skills.



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

***Language and vocabulary*** skills of kindergartners vary widely. Kindergartners can generally answer open-ended questions (e.g., "What would you fix for dinner if you were the cook?") with relatively complex sentences, can retell a story or relay details about an experience or event, and can participate appropriately in conversations. Their vocabularies are growing at a fast pace and they still make frequent incorrect generalizations and grammatical errors when they speak (e.g., "Look at all of those deers.") If children come to school with well-developed oral language, it must be expanded. If children come to school with underdeveloped oral language, it must be developed. (Hiebert, Pearson, Taylor, Richardson, & Paris, 2014) Oral language is the foundation for literacy development

Excerpted from New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education, New Jersey Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines, Release Date April 1, 2011, pg 7

## **The Whole Child: The Interconnected Relationship of the Academic and Developmental Domains**

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

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Success in school is measured in terms of a child’s academic progress. Yet academic success is dependent on a child’s progress within key developmental areas or domains. CAP4K outlines the following domains that are, at a minimum, to be included in assessment of school readiness: physical

well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, language and comprehension development, and cognition and general knowledge. Positive approaches to learning are also instrumental to children’s academic success and support the access skills needed to meet grade level expectations. Young children learn holistically, with growth in one area dependent on growth in other areas. Children’s progress in the developmental domains and their ability to focus, manage feelings and behavior, follow multiple step instructions, problem solve, plan, and reflect are critically important to progressing academically, as academic success is only possible when crucial developmental foundations are firmly in place. For example, it is not possible to make good progress in reading and writing unless a child’s oral language skills as well as his/her ability to understand spoken language are meeting grade expectations. This is especially important to consider with children who have developmental delays or disabilities. The following figure illustrates and describes the domains outlined in school readiness legislation as well as highlights the knowledge, skills and behaviors key to future school success.



*Attending to each of the domains enable teachers to “meet children where they are, as individuals and as a group, and help each child reach challenging and achievable goals that contribute to his or her ongoing development and learning”*

-Phillips and Scrinzi, 2014

## Resources from CDE to Support Considerations for Classroom Experiences

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

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As explained in previous sections, the sciences of brain research and child development provide a great deal of context around what young learners know and can do. Understanding HOW children learn is essential in creating responsive classrooms that encourage and support children. Children learn by talking, exploring, practicing, rehearsing, approximating, and making meaning (New Jersey Department of Education, April 2011). Children actively construct their understanding of the world through continuous interaction with their environment. Young children learn best when given ample opportunities to explore, practice, apply and extend on the concepts presented in the classroom. They are eager to discover ideas, to look for patterns and relationships, and to form generalizations. Children learn best through spontaneous activity, play, carefully prepared materials, and guided experiences. Children who have delays or disabilities may need extra time and/or support in order to participate and be engaged in their environment, materials, peers, adults, etc.

In order to meet the [academic and developmental needs](#) of the kindergarten child, a high quality classroom needs to provide a balance of teacher-directed activities, child-initiated play, and focused, experiential learning with daily time for playful, intentional learning centers. Consider if accommodations or modifications are needed for a child in order to be engaged. Play and academics are not an “either or.” For children birth-to-eight, play is an essential element in learning, as play provides the mechanism for children to not only cognitively “show what they know” with regard to the ontological development of abstract and representational thinking, but play also provides the opportunity for children to process and apply what they are learning about their burgeoning self-concept, sense of efficacy, and relational thinking- especially with regard to new academic concepts and skills being taught. It is well documented that play supports children as they learn important concepts and skills in kindergarten, including academic and communication skills, persistence, creativity, curiosity, cooperation and self-confidence, all of which are essential to a child’s future success in school and in life (Phillips and Scrinzi, 2013). We can have high standards for math, language, and literacy, but we must provide experiences for children to reach these rigorous standards through providing space for children to experiment and apply their learning within self-directed play opportunities. Play is the ultimate “processing” mechanism for internalizing complex relationships and concepts and can be a powerful tool when working with children with limited language, background knowledge, and access to enriched experiences during the early childhood years.

Before we can expect different outcomes for students, we need to build and expand upon our own knowledge and skills when working with young children during this unique and critical time period in their development. It is essential that kindergarten teachers have “effective instructional strategies that weave the knowledge base about child development with kindergarten standards and content knowledge in ways that are engaging, meaningful and relevant to children” (Heroman and Copple, 2010). Some current resources are as follows:

[The Professional Development Information System \(PDIS\)](#) is the statewide web-based system supporting professional development for Colorado’s early childhood workforce. The system will be developed with Colorado’s Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators as the foundation and all

professional development offerings within the system will align with these competencies. A wide range of professional development opportunities will be available to users in a variety of formats for both individual and group use. The PDIS will allow early childhood professionals to manage their own career and professional growth using an Individual Professional Development Plan which includes professional experience, education, and training as well as individually constructed growth plans. The PDIS will also issue Early Childhood Professional Credentials at a level reflecting demonstrated competency achievement. The PDIS is designed to support early childhood professionals at all levels of experience and education.

[Colorado's Academic Standards](#) should be supported by a kindergarten program rich in classroom experiences that promote higher level thinking skills, while stimulating curiosity, experimentation, brainstorming and problem solving. **Play** should serve as the driving force for learning, especially with the CAS' emphasis on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. Child-initiated play based activities and teacher-designed experiences that incorporate play should frame kindergartners' learning throughout the school day. Competence and skill development in all learning areas will be optimized from these experiences.

[Content area subject matter](#) should be woven into learning experiences and projects, allowing children to develop new understandings by making meaningful connections during hands-on applications. "A high quality kindergarten curriculum is anchored in state content standards, principles of child development, and age appropriate teaching strategies" (Gullo, 2006). Classroom instruction dominated by worksheet activities, pre-determined topics, and/or scripted themes provides little opportunity for lessons that are individualized to children's needs and interests.

Any assigned homework activities for kindergartners should be experiential rather than rote practice and should be modified based on individual child need and abilities. Home activities could include preparing a show and tell, read alouds, simple science experiments (including those found on-line, in books, or invented by the child) or real life mathematics activities (i.e. reading speed limit signs, or counting the number of plates needed for a dinner party), and drawing or writing in journals carry the message that learning is an important and engaging pursuit. It is not age appropriate for kindergartners to be subjected to negative consequences if home activities are not completed.



### Considerations for Classroom Environments

(Adapted from New Jersey Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines and from Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide)

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The kindergarten classroom environment should be revered as the "second" teacher. The developmentally appropriate, rigorous classroom provides opportunities for experimentation, exploration, discovery, inquiry, challenge, and interaction. An atmosphere of understanding, concern, and compassion are key components in providing this most important school experience for the kindergarten child.

A safe and supportive environment promotes positive self-esteem and helps children acquire and maintain the skills and attitudes necessary for personal success. A primary goal of the kindergarten year is to develop independent, confident learners who discover the excitement and challenge of learning in their school experience and throughout their lives. The following considerations should be kept in mind:

- Children thrive when they have secure relationships with adults and are supported in environments that are safe, positive, age-appropriate, use purposeful play, and have a balance between independence and structure
- Collaboration among families, schools and communities supports each child's growth and development
- All children are capable and competent learners
- Children learn best through active participation and when provided opportunities to learn through discovery, interaction, creativity, problem-solving, conversation, and play
- A high-quality kindergarten provides developmentally appropriate and academically rigorous learning opportunities that are balanced between child-initiated and teacher guided
- Concepts are best taught when tied to a topic or theme, introduced in a variety of formats, and embedded across curricular domains
- A high quality kindergarten recognizes and supports differences in the needs, skills and abilities of children as they develop as individuals
- Kindergarten is a transition year, a bridge between early learning experiences and the K-12 system
- Leaders of high-quality kindergarten programs have an understanding of child development and appropriate instructional practices to effectively support teachers

When children are in environments where learning is occurring in a meaningful context, where they have choices, and where they are encouraged to follow their interests, learning takes place best (Singer, Golinkoff, & Hirsch-Pasek, 2006, p. 9). The kindergarten environment, including its physical, social, and organizational attributes, can play a critical role in a child's learning. Children feel more secure and learn more readily in programs that:

- Are well organized
- Provide predictable routines
- Have consistent expectations
- Represent the children culturally
- Demonstrate mutual respect
- Foster positive relationships with teachers and peers

Adapted from New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education, New Jersey Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines, Release Date April 1, 2011, pg 11.  
And Washington State Department of Education, Early Learning, Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide, Release Date January 2016, Version 2.2, pg 6-8.

## Physical Space

(Excerpted from Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide)

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Classroom organization should reflect the needs of five-year olds and reflect a best practices teaching style. The classroom should be intentionally designed so that purposeful and intentional play-based activities can be supported as a vehicle for a child's learning.

A rich, well-organized classroom environment is an essential part of the curriculum. The manner in which a room is arranged can promote choices and provide direction to children using both materials and space productively. Both the room arrangement and the materials within it send an important message to the learner that affects both engagement and behavior. Teachers need to continually evaluate and monitor the environment ready to make changes, adjustments, [modifications, or accommodations] to meet the needs and interests of their students, [keeping in mind the variability among young students]. As children grow and change, materials will change along with the needs of the children.

The classroom is organized to provide settings for large groups, small groups and individuals. The room is arranged so children can self-select materials, plan activities, and work independently. To accomplish this kind of learning, interest centers or work areas should be clearly defined. Care should be taken to arrange centers so that activities do not interfere with one another but support each other.

Considerations for activity areas are:

- Place the art area near the sink, if possible, to allow for easy cleanup
- Locate computer and listening areas next to electrical outlets
- Separate noisy and quiet areas (i.e. blocks away from the reading area)
- Locate the areas and arrange furniture to allow easy visual monitoring and [accessibility] around the classroom
- When building things, children need large spaces, so having the block area close to your large group area allows children to expand their creations

The physical arrangement of the room should allow children to see and easily move through all areas with purpose. It is important to be mindful as well as to what the arrangement is saying to children. If a teacher sets his/her classroom up like a racetrack, the children will use it as such; however, if the teacher creates dynamic spaces that allow children to question, create, and explore then that is the type of learning that will take place.

Children should have a variety of activities available to them throughout the day, and provided with time for open-ended choice that is directly aligned to development and standards. Equipment and materials should be easily accessible, in a definite location, and clearly labeled so the children know where to get the materials and where to put them away. The materials should be open to a variety of possibilities so that [each] child can access an area at their level of learning. When putting materials out, always be questioning if there is more than one entry point to the task? Is there enough room for ideas to grow? Are there structures in place where children know how to access new materials as the idea blooms?

At a minimum, each kindergarten classroom should include:

- Meeting Area/Large Group Space
- Block Area
- Literacy Areas
- Dramatic Play Area
- Math Area
- Art Area
- Science Area
- Privacy Area

## Meeting Area/Large Group Space

(Excerpted from Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide)

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In this space whole group lessons can occur such as writing demonstrations, story time, interactive writing, gross motor activities, morning routines, and music. Valuable skills and standards are taught in this space on a daily basis such as speaking, listening, reading, writing, community building, responsibility, mathematical thinking, inquiry, and problem solving.

In this space you may find:

- A rug that defines the area and provides a comfortable place for the children to learn
- A large chalkboard, whiteboard, or interactive board
- An easel and stand to hold chart paper, big books, and pocket charts
- Student instruments and devices to play music
- Alphabet chart
- Student white boards
- Clipboards



## Block Area

(Excerpted from Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide)

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Block play is a critical element in a high quality learning environment. Research strongly suggests that working with blocks increases a child's spatial reasoning that leads to higher achievement in geography, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Though it is important to have conventional materials such as wooden blocks, it is also important to remember that less obvious materials open up more opportunities for pretend play (Tepyllo, Moss, & Stephenson, 2015).

In this space you may find:

- Wooden blocks of all sizes
- Cardboard blocks
- Legos
- Duplos for children developing fine motor skills
- Writing tools
- Cars and trucks
- Plastic animals and people
- Train set
- Building materials of all kinds
- Books featuring construction concepts such as castles, houses, or bridge



## Literacy Areas

(Excerpted from Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide)

Literacy spaces in a high-quality kindergarten classroom should include a student library and writing area. In these spaces children will work on reading and writing skills by practicing using their growing skills as they develop into readers and writers. Here children have the opportunity to become comfortable with various genres, read or write alone or with a friend, and create stories orally or through print. Though these spaces will be filled with both fiction and nonfiction opportunities, literacy activities will not live in these spaces alone. For example you may find the book How a House is Built (1996) by Gail Gibbons in the block area and a menu from a local restaurant in the dramatic play center. Thinking about reading and writing in terms of the whole child will allow the teacher to incorporate the concept of playing with words into every area of the room. The benefits of play for children's literacy development are well documented, showing that a literacy enriched play environment exposes children to valuable print experiences and lets them practice narrative skills (Christie & Roskos 2003). Research shows that a literacy-in-play strategy is effective in increasing the range and amount of literacy behaviors during play, thus allowing children to practice their emerging skills and show what they have learned (Neuman & Roskos 1992).

In this space you may find:

- Books (nonfiction, fiction, wordless, board books, leveled library)
- Listening center
- Student computers
- Magnetic letters and numbers
- Various colors and textures of paper
- Clipboards
- Letter stamps and stamp pads
- How to draw books (basic)
- Magnadoodles
- Stencils
- Student whiteboards and/or chalkboards
- Storytelling props
- Reading pointers
- Big books
- Pencils, markers, colored pencils
- Stationary



## Dramatic Play Area

(Excerpted from Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide)

The obvious skills that children engage in within the dramatic play center is the use of their imagination to bring to life places in their world such as a home, store, post office, restaurant, or a pet shop. The dramatic play area also is a powerful place for teachers to intentionally scaffold social skills for children. The power of taking turns, including others, patience, and problem solving are all skills that children will engage in while using this space. Children will be making connections in math as well while they are measuring, pouring, comparing, counting, and possibly dealing with money. They will deepen their understanding around reading and writing when they take an order, read from a recipe, write a grocery list, or make a birthday invitation. The children will engage in imaginative play by exploring different roles from those of a family member, or an interpretation of a community helper. They will increase their vocabulary and orally rehearse a familiar story or create a new one that can be developed over time. It also becomes a place where children work through their feelings and emotions that they are processing from personal experiences outside of school. To maximize the value of the dramatic play area, it needs to include a mix of student-initiated and teacher-guided experiences.



In order to work together in a dramatic play situation, children learn to use language to explain what they are doing. They ask and answer questions and the words they use fit whatever role they are playing. Personal vocabularies grow as they begin to use new words appropriately and the importance of reading and writing skills in everyday life becomes apparent by their use of literacy materials that are in the area (Cecchini 2008). Dramatic play is where children apply their language skills. Oral language is the foundation for literacy development.

In this space you may find:

- Puppets
- Fabric
- Dolls (multicultural)
- Doll bed
- Pretend food (multicultural)
- Kitchen items
- Wooden dollhouse
- Dress-up items
- Kitchen set
- Child sized table/chairs
- Stuffed animals
- Writing tools
- Office supplies



## Math Area

(Excerpted from Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide)

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Though the area is called the math center, it also is filled with opportunities for fine motor work, language development, and social skills. In this space children will engage in learning opportunities where they will be reasoning, sorting, classifying, sequencing, comparing, counting, measuring, inquiring, joining and separating sets, recording, defining, estimating, and solving meaningful problems at their own level of development and interest. By engaging with the children while in this area, the teacher is able to extend a student's thinking and guide the further development of the child's vocabulary. By incorporating games, puzzles, and open-ended materials for engagement in this space, the children will be able to strengthen not only their ability to work with others in a small group setting, but also their oral language, cognitive development, and fine motor skills as well.

In this space you may find:

- Basic math manipulatives
- 100 chart
- Number line 1–100
- Dice
- Cards
- Puzzles
- Games
- Items for sorting (buttons, shells, junk items)
- Beads and stringing materials
- Tweezers
- Containers of all size
- Lacing cards
- Dominos
- Materials for recording or drawing
- Materials that promote fine motor skills



## Art Area

(Excerpted from Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide)

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Whether a child has had an early learning experience prior to entering kindergarten or if this is his/her first structured environment, art tends to be an equalizer where all children can find a level of success. In the art area children are able to explore a variety of materials and express their experiences and feelings while using their imagination to plan and create. While increasing their vocabulary and developing their fine motor skills, the child is able to deepen their understandings around technique, two and three-dimensional studies, and learn to persist at the open-ended task that lies before them. They will quickly learn mathematical concepts around shape while revisiting a project over and over through choice. Soon child-made puppets will fill the dramatic play area, the block area will be filled with trees and people made of paper, and the walls will represent the budding artists in the classroom.

In this space you may find:

- Painting easel
- Paint brushes and pots
- Play dough
- Tools: cookie cutters, rolling pins, plastic forks
- Scissors
- Staplers
- Hole punches
- Paper: various colors, sizes, textures
- Consumables: paper cups, paper plates, straws, sequins, magazines, cotton balls, paper bags, craft sticks, toothpicks, craft buttons, pipe cleaners, fabric, toilet paper tubes, stickers, glue, glue sticks
- Tape and tape dispensers
- Sensory table and items for exploring such as containers of various sizes, measuring cups, turkey baster, spray bottles, spoons, items to pour, scoop and measure
- Crayons
- Markers
- Colored pencils



## Science Area

(Excerpted from Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide)

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Children are naturally inquisitive and full of wonder. Providing a space where they can ask questions, search for answers, and observe the world they live in provides opportunities for children to make meaningful connections. Providing both living and non-living items for students to observe, explore, compare, and classify encourages children to not only ask deeper-level questions but empowers them to research the answers as well. Using the interests of the children and units of inquiry, the science area creates a space in the room for children to go and further develop their understandings. Here children will investigate problems, compare findings with classmates,



research theories, ask questions, and make predictions. It also is another opportunity for a teacher to build in meaningful vocabulary to a child's day.

In this space you may find:

- Collections of natural materials: rocks, shells, bird nests, hive, bark
- Simple machines: gears, pulleys, and wheels
- Living things: plants and animals
- Notebooks
- Clipboards
- Scale
- Magnifying glasses
- Natural materials to observe, sort, and classify
- Student computer

### Privacy Area or Quiet Place

(Excerpted from Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide)

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Aside from the intentional areas of activity, a teacher should also think about where a child can go for a bit of privacy or quiet time. This is a place where a child who needs a break or wants to be alone can go and still feel part of the classroom community. This space should have different opportunities for the child to self-select this area throughout the day to think, self-reflect, relax, or problem-solve in private. As discussed earlier, kindergarten children vary in their ability to self-regulate, intentionally control emotions, behaviors, and thoughts. Opportunities to ease frustration and or overstimulation will allow students to manage their feelings and resources and support the development of executive functioning skills. Thinking about the sensory needs of the students also can help the teacher to make choices about what should or should not be in this space. Depending on the needs of the students, this can change overtime.

In this space you may find:

- Soft furnishings such as cushions and pillows of various sizes
- Calming colors
- Lamps
- Plants
- Bean bag chairs
- Child-size camping chairs
- Quiet activities for up to two children
- Weighted blankets
- Child size rocking chair
- Squishy toys
- Books



Excerpted from : Washington State Department of Education, Early Learning, Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide, Release Date January 2016, Version 2.2 pg 15-23 <http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/pubdocs/WAFull-dayKGuide-January2016.pdf>

## Additional Resources

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To help teachers and administrators have a better idea of what this looks like in action, CDE has created a [Preschool and Kindergarten Quality Walkthrough Guide for CPP/ECARE Classrooms](#). Though they serve different ages and abilities, elements of high quality preschool programs are similar to high quality kindergarten programs.

For additional resources, including videos, check out these resources from other states:

Learning Environment and Learning Centers Modules, WA State FDK Professional Development Training:  
<http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/ProfDevModule.aspx>

The North Carolina Guide for the Early Years  
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/curriculum/primaryk3/guide4early-years.pdf>

NC Office of Early Learning Demonstration Program  
<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/earlylearning/demo/>

Foundation For Child Development:  
<http://fcd-us.org/whats-new/high-quality-kindergarten-what-it-should-look>

## Adult-Child Interactions

*(Adapted from New Jersey Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines)*

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A key factor in the quality of a learning environment in kindergarten is the quality of the adult-child interactions. The emotional support that teachers give to students provides a solid foundation for developing the motivation and cognitive skills critical to positive long-term academic outcomes (Crosnoe et. al., 2004). High-quality teacher-child relationships foster social development. Indicators of social adjustment in school settings include self-control, emotional regulation, getting along with peers, and enjoyment of school (Birch and Ladd, 1997; Wentzel, 1996).

It is the role of the teacher to be responsive to the needs of his/her students in a caring and respectful manner. Validating a child's feelings and interests, showing children daily that they are cared for, and scaffolding a child's ability to self-regulate will support a teacher in establishing positive relationships with his/her students.

*“Positive teacher-child relationships promote children’s learning and achievement, as well as social competence and emotional development.”*

- Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Settings Serving Children Birth through 8, Position Statement, NAEYC 2009,

Social activities are an on-going part of a kindergartener's day. Through coaching and encouragement the teacher can play a significant role in providing opportunities for a child to engage with others in social problem solving. Children need time and a safe environment to work cooperatively with others.

By demonstrating the skills the teacher wishes for his/her students to emulate, a teacher can support a child in identifying his/her emotions and expressing them in an appropriate manner. While some children require coaching to work in a group situation, problem solve, or enter into a task with peers, other children may need more direct instruction. Knowing the learners allows the teacher to be intentional in the strategy he/she chooses to use.

Guidelines to consider when interacting with children:

- Teachers foster children's trust, security and social development through warmth, caring, and responsiveness to individual children's interests and feelings
- Teachers recognize that academic learning occurs in a social context
- Teachers use space and materials, encouragement for socio-dramatic play, cooperative work experiences, problem-solving activities, conversations, and group discussions as ongoing opportunities for children to practice social skills
- Teachers accentuate children's pro-social behaviors while actively supporting self-regulation and learning
- Teachers maximize positive behavior and social interactions through careful design of schedules, activities, and classroom space
- Teachers who are present, connect, and extend children's learning create powerful interactions
- Teachers make modifications and accommodations as needed for children with varying abilities

A child's ability to self-regulate happens gradually through strong adult-child interaction and opportunities for learning. It is important that the teacher understands child development and sets appropriate goals for his/her students [based on student ability, developmental level, strengths, and needs]. True acceptance of [each] student is the first step in creating a safe environment in which children can learn to manage their emotions and behaviors. General strategies that a teacher can engage in that will support all students may include:

- Focusing on the strengths of [each] child every day
- Making sure that when talking with children you are at their eye-level. (Try getting down on your knees and looking at the world from their level)
- Modeling social skills (not interrupting, saying "please" and "thank you", etc.)
- Stating directives in a positive way (instead of saying, "No running," say "Walking feet." Or instead of "Be quiet" say "Inside voices"). [Tell students what you want them to do – not what you don't want them to do]
- Acknowledging children as unique individuals (every child has something to offer to the class)
- Enjoying and appreciating the children (smiling and laughing sharing in their discoveries and milestones. The classroom should be filled with joy)
- Offering choices and respecting their choices. If you need a child to write his/her name, provide them [choices] about what tool they use or the type of paper
- Greeting children every day with a warm smile and genuine care that he/she is there.
- Talking with children about what is of interest to them, and incorporating that into the classroom environment and curriculum
- Being aware of the impact of [your] tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language and utilizing these as teaching tools

As the teacher, model making mistakes and how to respond; mistakes often lead to the greatest learning. Effective adult-child interactions are an essential ingredient for children's social and academic development. Changes in how adults interact with children do not happen overnight. Quality improvement efforts that focus explicitly on teacher-child interactions maximize impacts for children. Carefully designed and implemented professional development support can improve the quality of teacher-child interactions.

## Additional Resources

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*Powerful Interactions: How to Connect with Children to Extend their Learning*. 2011. Washington, D.C.: NAEYC.

*Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS™) Implementation Guide* (Hamre, Goffin, & Kraft-Sayre, 2009).

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning: <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>

Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention (TACSEI):

<http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/>

## Classroom Management- Developing Behavior Patterns

(Excerpted from Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide)

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Establishing a pattern of working within a group as a positive member is the educational focus during the first months of kindergarten. Learning this pattern teaches the child a set of group work skills such as:

- Individual decision-making
- Independent problem-solving
- Responsible group membership behavior

These skills are transferred to other large or small group or individual learning situations, thus providing a foundation for future schooling. For this reason it is particularly important to provide each child with time for developing these skills and practice.

Listed below is a sample pattern routine that will fit many of the learning situations provided in a typical kindergarten day:

- Choose a job/activity/center and work at it appropriately
- Work for a reasonable period of time
- Clean up when your work is completed
- Choose another job and go to work

Establishing the routines, structures, and expectations begins the very first day of school and the materials you have available will influence your success in teaching these elements. Begin by putting out items that are familiar and easy to clean-up (i.e., playdough, paper and crayons, simple puzzles — no scissors or glue yet). Slowly introduce new materials and/or work areas and their use when you feel the children demonstrate understanding of appropriate classroom behaviors. In the beginning of the year, use shorter blocks of time for the components of the day. Transitions from job-to-job will take time. Allow time to “re-do,” to practice, and to have a short review. Following the whole group review, take time to read a story, sing a few songs, and then send the children back to work again.

Teachers have the ability to set the tone of the classroom. A teacher who is relaxed, happy, and speaks softly, is more likely to draw similar responses. The use of positive reinforcement is better than dwelling on misbehavior. For example, “I see you are being very careful to put the blocks back in their proper

places. That will make it really easy for the next person to find the ones they are looking for.” Notice and comment on specific behaviors and respond with encouragement rather than praise.

## Classroom Management- Establishing Classroom Rules and Procedures

(Excerpted from Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide)

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It is important for the students to understand the teacher’s expectations. The student needs to know what behaviors are acceptable in the classroom and what behaviors are not. Children need to be taught how to:

- Use classroom materials
- Work with classmates
- Make appropriate choices
- Move about the classroom (including using the restroom)
- Use an appropriate voice level
- Sit on the rug in a group

In best practices classroom there is shared control. Teachers consciously give students some control and decision-making opportunities (e.g., self-selected projects during work time, daily classroom job).

Classroom agreements (rules) are clear, concise, and consistent. Students have age-appropriate choices and non-negotiables are known to all. Every classroom has non-negotiables. Non-negotiables will always include health and safety rules, but also will include school and teacher standards and expectations.

In addition to introducing classroom patterns, it is important to establish building rules and procedures. Rules should be discussed, demonstrations given, and time provided for practice.

## Classroom Management- Positive Discipline Classroom Management Tools - Fostering Cooperation and Mutual Respect

(Excerpted from Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide)

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A teacher can create a positive classroom environment by incorporating the following into his or her instruction:

- **Limited Choices:** Help students succeed by offering an appropriate choice between at least two acceptable options
- **Classroom Jobs:** Assigning classroom jobs gives students opportunities to contribute in meaningful ways, which builds their self-esteem and sense of belonging
- **Problem Solving:** Actively teach the problem-solving process so students have the skills to negotiate and solve problems independently
- **Follow Through with Dignity and Respect:** When you say something, mean it and follow through with kindness and firmness holding students accountable for their part in an agreement
- **Redirection Questions:** Ask questions related to the behavior you would like to change to invite students to think about their behavior and what needs to be done to help students become aware of what is needed

## Classroom Management- Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution Strategies

(Excerpted from Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide)

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(Adapted from *Bringing The High/Scope Approach to Your Early Years Practice*. Nicky Hott, Routledge, New York, NY. 2007, pg. 49.)

- Approach Calmly
- STOP hurtful behavior, get to calm
  - Stay neutral if a toy or object is involved, neutralize it by holding on to it
- Acknowledge Feelings
  - This is essential...enables moving on to the solution process (i.e. “Sarah you sound angry,” or “Peter, you look sad”)
- Gather Information
  - Stay in the now and use “What” questions to get the facts and details
- Restate the Problem
  - Briefly and clearly focus on the problem and not the person (i.e., “You both want the stapler.” NOT who had it first, etc.)
- Ask for Solutions and Choose One Together
  - Support the children in coming up with a solution and accept the agreed upon solution
- Be Prepared to Give Follow-Up Support
  - Check in as activity resumes or stay in proximity
  - Encourage children to see themselves as problem solvers

## Elements of the Day

(Excerpted from Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide)

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High-quality kindergarten classrooms will have a healthy balance of child-initiated and teacher-led learning opportunities throughout the day. Offering choices to young learners provides deeper engagement in learning. However, a heavy emphasis on child-initiated activities should never lead to a “free for all” environment. It is in the intentional planning on the part of the teacher in the materials, room arrangement, adult-child interactions, and structure in how the children engage with peers. Teachers need to plan their daily schedule to keep that ‘just right’ balance of child-initiated and teacher-led activities for each group of children.

In a best practices classroom, the daily schedule includes a mix of whole-group activities, small-group workshops, and independent area/centers.

Whole-group times are used to:

- Build community and common experiences; do group problem solving
- Introduce and teach skills and concepts
- Practice and review skills not yet mastered
- Perform—sing, dance, play acting

Small-group times are used to:

- Reinforce skills
- Provide corrective feedback during guided practice
- Provide differentiated instruction

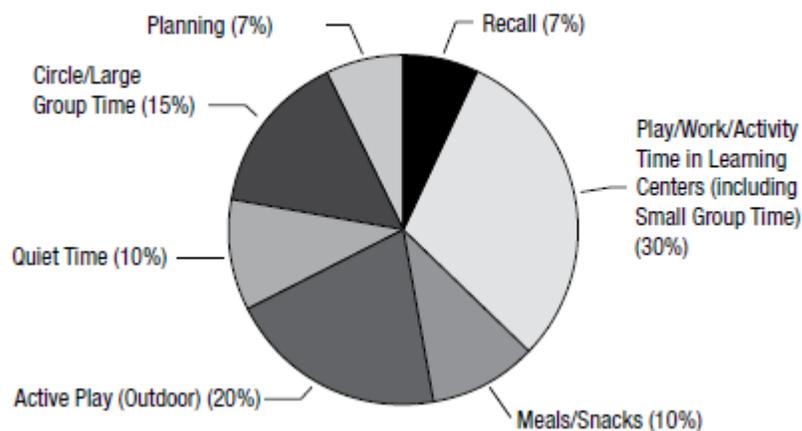
Centers/areas are used to:

- Provide independent practice of familiar skills
- Provide connecting and extending activities
- Build independence and self-reliance skills

The interactive learning style of kindergartners must be reflected in the structure of the schedule. Key considerations include:

- Sedentary components of the day must be separated by the more active elements
- Whole group times should be limited to 20–30 minutes (at the beginning of the year, much shorter)
- A balance of teacher directed and student initiated activities
- A suggested recess schedule may include a 15-minute am or pm recess plus a 20-minute lunch recess
- A recommended 60–70 minutes of uninterrupted student directed learning/center time daily
- As the year progresses, the kindergarten schedule should evolve along a continuum of looking like a preschool classroom to a first grade room.

A balanced daily schedule that accommodates play-based learning across content areas is a key element of a high-quality kindergarten program. A balanced schedule allows children to fully engage in planned activity without interruption for extended periods of time. The schedule includes time for content area-specific experiences, but teachers should anticipate that literacy, math, science, and social studies will be blended across segments of the day. Content learning does not happen in silos. The schedule is based on the premise that children spend most of their time in activity that is not sedentary. Rather, experiential, hands-on experience dominates a day that asks each child to explore, apply, and extend concepts and ideas from each content area through investigations and projects. Quieter and more active moments are balanced throughout the day. The earlier portion of the day is scheduled with activities that require more focus. Specials intentionally happen in the latter part of the day to eliminate the number of transitions. *Consider the following pie chart when designing your daily schedule:*



(NC Department of Public Instruction, *Guide for the Early Years*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Pg.41)

## Plan-Do-Reflect: A Model of Play-Based learning with Intentional Choice, Action, and Reflection\*

(Excerpted from Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide)

When children embark on self-selected projects based on interest, they are able to make meaning of skills that have been presented to them throughout the day and week. The process of “Plan-Do-Reflect” allows children to cement the skills and extend them by making meaningful connections to their own life. When a student is in charge of his/her own learning the highest level of engagement is achieved. The role of the teacher is to create a rich learning environment where taking risks is a value and the students do all the hard work of learning, while the teacher merely serves as a facilitator.

The “Plan-Do-Reflect” model is a **60–70 minute uninterrupted component of the day**. It is a time when the teacher is intentionally engaged with children, working alongside them, extending their thinking, coaching them through both social and academic scenarios, and modeling the highest level of learning and engagement. In thinking about the process, many essential elements of development are foundational.

### Planning: “Choice with Intention”

The process of planning encourages children to articulate his/her ideas, intentions, and decisions. He/she is able to increase not only their self-confidence but it establishes a sense of control as well. It begins the process of engagement in the learning leading to concentrated play that allows a child to move along a continuum with increasing complexity.

### Do: “Develops Competent Thinkers, Decision-Makers, and Problem Solvers”

Through the process of ‘do’ children are able to carry out his/her own ideas with the guided support of a trained adult. Children are able to construct meaning as they engage in key experiences by manipulating appropriate familiar and unfamiliar materials as well as interact with peers and adults. In a risk-taking environment the children are able to explore and extend their ideas while also process new information. The adults are then able to observe, support, and scaffold the students’ play leading to a deeper-level of learning.

### Reflect: “Remembering and Reflecting with Analysis”

By using language and/or props a child is able to share his/her thinking and learning process with his/her peers. In doing so a child is able to describe and review from mental images. The child is able to engage in a conversation beyond the present and evaluate the process in which his/her learning went through. In sharing personal reflections the child is able to enlighten others, pose problems needing collaborative solutions, inspire others, or be inspired him/herself.

Here is an example of the ideal amount of time for the process to reach its highest level of development. During this time it is not the question of whether or not children are engaged in play or rigor. During this time children are actively engaged with **play with rigor!**

As the year progresses the process of Plan-Do–Reflect will become more complex as the children mature in the skills. With that, however, as the children become more independent in their ability to move about the room and between tasks, cleanup will take less time.

<i>Plan</i>	<b>5-10 Minutes</b>
<i>Do</i>	<b>45–50 Minutes</b> (In the beginning clean-up will take more time, but once proficient can be as fast as five minutes)
<i>Reflect</i>	<b>5-15 Minutes</b>

## Plan-Do-Reflect in Action

(Excerpted from Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide)

	What it IS	What it ISN'T
<b>Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adults provide opportunities to have children plan thinking of the student's development</li> <li>Children are provided the time to individually plan and share their plan with an adult or peer</li> <li>Children are able to communicate their plan using pictures, print, or words</li> <li>Each child plans and then gets right to work! Children have the freedom to move between areas during the work period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children are assigned areas to play in or the areas are structured so that there is only one entry point</li> <li>Children are all asked the same rote sentence: "Where are you going to play today?"</li> <li>The adult closes certain areas in the classroom not allowing for them to be used</li> </ul>
<b>Do</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The "DO" immediately follows the plan</li> <li>Children are able to carry out their plan by self-selecting the materials they need and choosing whom to work with</li> <li>Children are free to invent and create since the materials are all open ended</li> <li>The role of the adult is to interact, play, extend a child's thinking by always being at the same physical level. It is a 'with' process</li> <li>The adult-child interactions sound like a conversation and the adults support a child's ideas/learning</li> <li>Student supports are scheduled outside of this block of time</li> <li>Adults attend to the child's social-emotional needs addressing them through problem solving issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The centers are filled with pre-set activities for the children to complete</li> <li>Only a certain number of children are allowed to be in an area at any given time</li> <li>Children are directed how and when to use materials by the adult in the classroom</li> <li>Adults in the classroom are doing paperwork, packing students up, answering email, directing</li> <li>The adults are only supervising the children and passively observe them at work</li> <li>Adults give their ideas of what the children should be doing</li> <li>Adults children how to solve their problem without taking in the child's view or voice</li> </ul>
<b>Reflect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflection follows the plan</li> <li>Adults provide opportunities to have children reflection thinking of the student's development</li> <li>Children are able to share their work using props, words, pictures, writing, and/or re-enactment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflection happens as a detached part of the sequence, for example at the end of the day</li> <li>Children are asked to reflect in a rote fashion: "Where did you work today?"</li> </ul>

## Additional Resources

Dramatic Play Kit Resource Guide – Sumner School District:

<http://www.sumner.wednet.edu/>

Kindergarten: A Transitional Year – DMA & Associates Inc.:

[http://foundationsinliteracy.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=34&Itemid=53](http://foundationsinliteracy.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=34&Itemid=53)

Boston K2 Curriculum Guide:

<http://bpsearlychildhood.weebly.com/kindergarten-k2.html>

## Learning Environment Self-Assessment/Reflection

Source: *Questions to Guide the Arrangement of the Classroom to Support Access for All Children*, Sadao and Robinson 2010

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### Overall Environment

- Are there any large physical barriers that obstruct movement between learning areas?
- Are the pathways from the entrances to the learning areas and other seat locations wide enough?
- Does each table have room for adapted furniture, seats, and wheelchairs?
- Can a child with visual or motor issues navigate the classroom environment with minimal teacher assistance?
- Does each learning area have picture labels and directions to guide students about what to do in that area?
- Are storage containers labeled so that toys and games can be used and put away easily?

### Student Cubbies

- Does each cubby have a student's picture and name on it?
- Do students have easy access to hooks for clothes and backpacks?
- Does each cubby have a small shelf or additional box to hold the student's work and journal?

### Areas

- Is there appropriate storage space for blocks?
- Do some blocks have self-sticking fabric strips for added balance during stacking and building activities?
- Is the art area stocked with a variety of adapted scissors, pencil and paintbrush grips, and colored tape?
- Are the materials in the room open ended, allowing for extensions?

### Whole Group Lesson Area

- Is a schedule posted with picture cues?
- Are individual schedules posted for students who need further individualization?
- Are pointers and flashlights available for pointing out and highlighting important information presented during large-group activities?
- Is a rain stick or timer available for providing an auditory cue when transitions occur?
- Is there a defined space for large-group activities identified by a large carpet or carpet squares?
- Are there a variety of props and other instructional materials to actively engage students in large-group learning?

### Does the environment:

- Encourage and support purposeful play?
- Engage the senses and children's interests?
- Foster curiosity and intellectual engagement?
- Encourage a variety of ways of representing and reflect on learning?
- Support the worldviews of children?

### Are the conversations:

- Authentic and meaningful?

- Supporting language development and learning?
- Inviting and encouraging children to think deeply about ideas?
- Providing information enabling educators to scaffold children’s learning?
- Exploring connections?
- Sharing stories about culture to develop an understanding and appreciation of diversity?

**Do the relationships:**

- Support the development of strong, positive and trusting relationships?
- Foster a personal connectedness to nature and one another?

**Does the play:**

- Reflect, reinforce and result in children’s development?
- Stimulate inquiry?
- Contribute to the achievement of curricular outcomes?
- Promotes self-expression and identity

Excerpted from : Washington State Department of Education, Early Learning, Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide, Release Date January 2016, Version 2.2 pg 27-37 <http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/pubdocs/WAFull-dayKGuide-January2016.pdf>



## Guidance for Implementation in Colorado’s Kindergartens

### Why School Readiness Assessments?

*Assessment, however, does not refer simply to the tool being utilized; it refers to an interconnected system of decisions and activity (Snow 2011).*

*Assessment is not something you do on top of teaching- authentic assessment IS teaching!*

-Illinois State Board of Education

Educators often collect data and report progress by separate domains or subject areas, yet progress in each domain does not occur in isolation. Children learn and develop as whole beings. In fact, development in one domain directly influences development in other domains. In order to create individual learning plans that offer each child the greatest potential for success, it is essential that teachers understand what children know and are able to do in both developmental and academic domains.

Teachers must pay extra attention to children who may have a delay in one area of development and consider how that impacts other areas of development. Holistic, observation based, authentic assessments offer children an opportunity to demonstrate who they are, what they know, and what they need next. They offer adults a way to capture and organize a child’s progress.

## Colorado’s School Readiness Assessment Choices

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The Colorado State Board of Education has approved three kindergarten school readiness assessment tools: *GOLD*® by Teaching Strategies, REAL- Riverside Early Assessment of Learning (only available for districts currently using), and Desired Results Developmental Profile for Kindergarten (DRDP-K). Other tools are reviewed periodically for use as school readiness assessments. The three kindergarten school readiness assessment tools all function in similar ways. They measure the required areas of development and learning defined by school readiness legislation: early literacy, mathematics, social, physical, language, and cognitive development. Results are measured against research based age expectations and can show student growth over time.

Some of the assessment tools have additional optional areas that can be assessed at teacher discretion. Specific information about each tool is available on our website, [www.cde.state.co.us/schoolreadiness](http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolreadiness)

*Section 22-7-1014(1)(b) C.R.S. indicates that local education providers “shall use assessment instruments that are research-based, valid, and reliable to facilitate the systematic measurement of a student's increasing knowledge, skills, and accomplishments within the classroom context.”*

## Implementation Requirements for Readiness Assessments

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CDE recognizes both the value of the school readiness initiative and the initial effort required to learn and implement new assessment tools and practices on the part of district and school leaders and individual teachers. CDE is not issuing specific requirements for the use of the assessment systems, nor the development of school readiness plans. Furthermore, the department is neither requiring teachers to complete a given number of observations nor to collect specific types of documentation in providing ratings for each child. Instead, CDE is providing the following information regarding legislative requirements and options for districts to consider as they plan for and implement the school readiness initiative:

*HB 15-1323 provides a 60 calendar day window at the beginning of the school year for districts to assess and complete kindergarten entry information in the areas mandated by CAP4K legislation (Social-emotional, Physical, Cognitive, Language, Literacy, and Math). Districts determine and set the initial 60 day window in accordance with their individual student start dates. Districts also determine to what degree, if at all, they assess additional areas within the tool beyond the minimal legislative requirements. Finally, districts may choose to implement school readiness assessments after the first 60 days, in accordance with local needs and goals*

## Ideas for Observation and Collecting Documentation

*"I love the developmental aspect of GOLD®. It both verifies and charges with me to keep developmental nature of our young children in mind... in every aspect of my teaching. I appreciate being able to focus on student strengths and observing them over time with each domain and checkpoint. We really grew in terms of the report card and how to roll it out."*

*"This has definitely made me look at my students- as a whole student. It has also made me be more intentional at looking at and being more aware of the standards."*

*"I grew this year in becoming a child observer- very important to see the needs of each child and the examples in GOLD® help me see what lay ahead for the development of the students."*

-Quotes from Colorado teachers using GOLD® across all domains throughout the year.

The following table contains ideas collected from teachers during School Readiness Summer Trainings who were experienced in the practice of authentic, observation-based assessments. Teachers discussed times during the day that worked to collect meaningful observations in each of the six required domains.

<b>Social Emotional</b>	<b>Physical</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Cognitive</b>	<b>Literacy</b>	<b>Math</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centers</li> <li>Playground/ Recess</li> <li>Welcome/ morning routines</li> <li>Daily Routines</li> <li>Transitions</li> <li>Snack/Lunch Time</li> <li>Clean Up Time</li> <li>Special Occasions (birthday's, field trips, special guests, new classmate)</li> <li>Cooperative Learning opportunities</li> <li>Character Ed. lessons and activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centers</li> <li>Playground/ Recess</li> <li>Gym</li> <li>Brain Breaks (Simon Says, Stretches, cross body)</li> <li>Movement activities (motions to song/rhyme)</li> <li>Simon Says</li> <li>Handwriting lessons</li> <li>Snack/Lunch Time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centers</li> <li>Partner Talk</li> <li>Large Group discussions</li> <li>Small group discussions</li> <li>Snack/Lunch Time</li> <li>Games(Simon Says, I spy)</li> <li>Story Retell</li> <li>Story Telling</li> <li>Puppet Shows</li> <li>Show and Tell</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centers</li> <li>Project Plan</li> <li>Projects</li> <li>Student Goals</li> <li>Math Stations</li> <li>Math Journals</li> <li>STEM projects/units of study</li> <li>Maker Spaces</li> <li>Art Projects</li> <li>Projects with recycled/ found items</li> <li>Recess</li> <li>Snack/Lunch Time</li> <li>Calendar morning routines</li> <li>Games</li> <li>Read Aloud</li> <li>Field Trip</li> <li>Guest Speaker/ Assembly</li> <li>Student Writing</li> <li>Dance/Drama</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centers</li> <li>Poems</li> <li>Songs/Rhymes</li> <li>Read Aloud</li> <li>Word/ Name games</li> <li>Large Group</li> <li>Small Group</li> <li>Partner Talk</li> <li>Literacy Stations</li> <li>READ assessments</li> <li>Letter/ word board games</li> <li>Sight Words</li> <li>Partner Reading</li> <li>Small Group reading</li> <li>Library</li> <li>Story Telling</li> <li>Puppet Shows</li> <li>Writing</li> <li>Story Retell</li> <li>Snack/Lunch Time</li> <li>Environmental Print</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centers</li> <li>Partner Talk</li> <li>Large Group discussions</li> <li>Small group discussions</li> <li>Snack/Lunch Time</li> <li>Math Games</li> <li>Math Stations</li> <li>Calendar morning routines</li> <li>Math Journals</li> <li>Question of the Day</li> <li>Daily Routine</li> <li>Art Projects</li> <li>STEM projects/units of study</li> </ul>

## Individual School Readiness Plans: Requirements and Recommendations

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Much like a puzzle, pieces of the Individual School Readiness Plans are put together throughout the school year. Pieces are added as information is shared from early learning and care environments and from families and caregivers.

### Requirements:

School readiness plans are individualized plans required for every kindergartener; however, CAP4K does not have specific requirements for the content of school readiness plans. Districts have a high degree of flexibility for the design of the plans.

### Recommendations:

CDE recommends that Individual School Readiness Plans reflect a child's strengths and next steps in development over the course of a child's kindergarten year. Also, Individual School Readiness Plans should unify supports for a child's language, literacy, academic, physical and behavioral development. The Individual School Readiness Plan should incorporate all of the elements of other individual student learning plans currently in use, including READ plans (pursuant to legislative requirements), response to intervention (RtI) plans, English language development plans, and advanced learning plans (ALPs) such that kindergartners have a **single** education plan. However, students with disabilities will need to have a separate Individualized Education Programs (IEP). IEPs should inform the school readiness plan such that general educators and special educators can effectively collaborate to meet the learning needs of children with disabilities, and the Individual School Readiness Plan for students with disabilities should provide appropriate connections to the child's IEP.

The Individual School Readiness Plan should be created through collaboration between teachers (general education and when appropriate, special education), families, and caregivers. Readiness plans should address the kindergarten standards as appropriate and the knowledge and skill areas in which a student needs assistance to make progress towards school readiness.

### Individual School Readiness Plan Options:

Many options exist for districts as they consider the most appropriate Individual School Readiness Plan model. For example, Teaching Strategies GOLD® generates reports that could serve as the readiness plan (see next section). Also child information systems (i.e., Alpine) that have the functionality to create individual child plans can be utilized to generate and house Individual School Readiness Plans. Finally, CDE has created a sample template (see below). It is designed to illustrate the type of information that will be important to include in a child's plan. The template includes a "child information" box listing demographic information, as well as any additional plans or special considerations. The rest of the plan is grouped under developmental and academic domains. Within each domain there are two sections: (1) strengths (2) Goals and Next Steps.

Given the flexibility within statute, districts may consider using Individual School Readiness Plans as their report card for kindergarten.

## Sample Individual School Readiness Plan

Child Information		
Teacher Name:	School:	Plan Date:
Child's Name:	DOB:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other programs and supports for this student: _____		

Consider all appropriate goals from the child's IEP, READ plan, or other plans as priority growth areas are identified and strategies are developed.

Developmental Domains	Academic Domains
<b>Strengths:</b>	<b>Strengths:</b>
<b>Goals and Next Steps (including suggested strategies):</b>	<b>Goals and Next Steps (including suggested strategies):</b>

### Reports in GOLD® That Can be Used as an Individual School Readiness Plan

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#### **Report Card**

- Used to share detailed information with families or administrators regarding a student's current and next step of development and learning for a particular objective
- Used to share information regarding widely held expectations information for a particular objective/dimension
- Used to show progress over multiple checkpoint periods

#### **Development & Learning Report and/or Family Conference Form**

- Used to share detailed information with families or administrators regarding a student's current and next step of development and learning for a particular objective
- Used to discuss next steps for the student's development and learning
- Used to provide personalized examples of the student's knowledge and skills

## Implementation Support for Colorado

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The Kindergarten School Readiness Specialists are available to support your school/district's implementation of the ideas found in this handbook. Please contact us to discuss ways we can customize our support to meet your needs.

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The Colorado Preschool Program (CPP), Results Matter (birth-five), and Kindergarten School Readiness share many key policy and implementation features:

- Each is part of a **preschool – third grade (P-3) system of supports** where educators plan instruction and scaffold developmentally appropriate learning opportunities for individual children.
- Teachers within this grade span are considered to be **early childhood educators**, a specialization within the primary elementary grades.
- These initiatives use **observation-based authentic assessments** that inform ongoing lesson planning and program improvement.
- Assessment results yield **formative and summative data** to support each child’s growth.

### What’s different between *Results Matter* and *Kindergarten School Readiness Assessment*?

(Subject to change in future school years)

	<i>Results Matter/Preschool Assessment</i>	<i>Kindergarten School Readiness Assessment</i>
Alignment to Colorado Standards and Guidelines	Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines (ELDGs) <i>Preschool Colorado Academic Standards are embedded in the ELDGs</i>	Kindergarten Colorado Academic Standards
Assessment tool choices (2016-17)	-GOLD® by Teaching Strategies (Birth-Kindergarten Platform) <i>Others reviewed periodically – must meet certain guidelines</i>	Approved by State Board of Education: -GOLD® by Teaching Strategies® (Birth-Third Grade Platform) -Desired Results Developmental Profile-Kindergarten© (DRDP-K©) -Riverside Early Assessment of Learning® (REAL®)
Who is required to be assessed?	Children receiving CPP and preschool special education funding. All other children – optional.	All publicly funded kindergarteners.
Can parents opt their child out of assessment?	No, if child is receiving CPP or preschool special education funding. Yes for all other children.	Yes. School districts should refer to their own internal opt-out policies.
Which checkpoints are required?	Fall, Winter, Spring according to Results Matter checkpoint calendar dates. Summer is optional.	None. All districts must finalize Kindergarten Entry Assessment survey within 60 days after school year begins. School districts may then choose to complete Fall, Winter, and/or Spring checkpoints based on their own needs and timelines.



	<b>Results Matter/Preschool Assessment</b>	<b>Kindergarten School Readiness Assessment</b>
Which areas are required to be assessed?	(In <i>GOLD</i> ®) Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, and Math.	As defined in SB08-212: physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, language and comprehension, cognition and general knowledge [math and literacy].
Is documentation required to be uploaded to the online tool?	Yes.	No, but recommended.
Are pictures and videos required to be entered into the online tool?	No. At a minimum, typed anecdotes must be entered into online tool.	No. Documentation is not required to be entered in the online tool. For <i>GOLD</i> ®, parents must opt in to use of pictures or videos.
Are funding sources required to be marked in online tool?	Yes.	No.
Are individual readiness plans required?	Yes for CPP and preschoolers with disabilities. No for all other children, but recommended.	Yes for all publicly funded kindergarteners.
Ongoing professional development, coaching, and technical assistance provided by CDE	Yes. CDE offers this to all participating teachers and administrators in programs that serve children in CPP or preschool special education.	Yes. CDE offers all public kindergarten teachers and administrators through the duration of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant.
<b>For Programs Using <i>GOLD</i>®</b>		
	<b>Results Matter/Preschool Assessment</b>	<b>Kindergarten School Readiness Assessment</b>
Platform Availability (2016-17)	Birth-Kindergarten platform only.	Expanded Birth-Third Grade Platform only.
Is interrater reliability certification required for teachers?	Yes.	No, but recommended.
Can the limited item set be used with the Kindergarten Entry Assessment survey?	No (Kindergarten Entry Assessment survey only applies to kindergarten).	Yes.
Can parents opt out of picture/video use?	At the discretion of local school districts/programs.	Yes. Beginning in 2016-17, picture/video use will be an active <i>opt-in</i> for parents of kindergarteners.
Are the expanded self-help items required (1.c.1-4)?	Only for preschoolers with disabilities. Optional for all other children.	No. These items will not display for kindergarten teachers.