

Routines for Kindergarten and Grade One Classrooms

When organizing a classroom consider the following routines:

- Entrance Routine
- Attendance Routine
- Dismissal Routine
- Stop and Listen Routine
- Tidy-up Routine
- Routines for Specific Situations
 - Outdoor Play
 - First Day of School
 - Portfolio
 - Borrow A Book
 - Snack
 - Bathroom and Water Fountain

Before school begins, walk through the routines yourself. Children may need to hear the routine, see what it looks like and follow it before it becomes fully understood.

If a routine is not working, it may need to be re-taught or re-thought.

Entrance Routine

Prior to the first day of school, it is important to check with administrators and staff to determine the established entrance and dismissal routines. Consider the following questions:

Where are the children expected to enter the school? Consider safety, especially when entrances are near parking lots or a driveway. Other considerations may be on-site daycare, classes using the same door, bussing, and support for children with special needs.

Who will meet and supervise the entry? Is this to be the responsibility of the teacher on yard duty or the classroom teacher?

Are the children going to enter alone or with their parent/caregiver? *Do you want adults to assist with entry routines? Will the parent/caregiver walk the child to the classroom door? Do they come into the classroom to settle the child? Does this routine change according to the time of year?*

What is the teacher's role during entry time? *Greeting children? Talking to parents/caregivers? Supervising the coatroom? Monitoring a borrow-a-book exchange?*

Where will the children store their belongings? *Do the children put their coats on any hook or on their own labeled hook? Do the children put their hats and mitts in their sleeve or in a bag on the hook? Where do the children get dressed or undressed (consider supervision and available space)?*

What do children do after they have stored their belongings? *Do they find their name card or sign in? Go to a central area? Go to activities? Read books?*

Attendance Routine

What is the school attendance/safe arrival procedure?

Dismissal Routine

It is important to foster independence in young children. Time taken to teach self-help skills at the beginning of the year will save time later.

How will children prepare for home (consider the need for supervision and the amount of space available for dressing)? *Dismissed by groups of children (childcare, adult pick up, sibling pick up, bus) or in a variety of ways (first letter of their name, by age, etc.)?*

Where do the children wait when ready for dismissal? *On the carpet? At the coat hooks? Near the door?*

What is the procedure for children who are picked up late? *Do they wait in the classroom? At the office?*

It is useful to keep a list of names and telephone numbers of parents/caregivers who pick up the children. Include the names of older siblings and their room numbers.

Stop and Listen Routine

There are many times when the teacher may need to have everyone stop their activity and listen. It is critical for children to know and follow a stop and listen routine in case of an emergency e.g., fire drill, evacuation procedure etc.

What is the classroom routine for stopping and listening? *Turning off the light? A chord on the piano? A hand clap? A special noise maker? A xylophone? A bell?*

Teachers need to ensure that children understand what stopping and listening means. The teacher may need to demonstrate what stopping and listening looks like.

Tidy-Up Routine

If materials are organized and simply labeled, children can independently return materials to their proper place. *What are the children's responsibilities during tidy up? Sweeping the sand? Putting the lids back on the markers?*

What do children do when they have tidied up their work place/centre? *Go to the carpet? Read a book? Join in teacher's songs/chants? Help others?*

Where do children place their unfinished work? (see *Establishing Learning Centres* document)

Some of the centres may need to start tidying up before the others (e.g., blocks, dramatic play)

Routines For Specific Situations

Outdoor Play

Kindergarten children need physical activity every day. The teacher must decide whether to use the gym or to use outdoor space for each of these periods. Outdoor play must be supervised at all times.

When is the outdoor play area available? *Is it to be shared with the school's childcare? With other primary classes? At a time other than recess when it is used by older students? Are the children ready for outdoor activity?*

What time of day is most appropriate for the children in the class? *At the beginning or end of the day (consider the amount of time it will take children to dress and undress during the winter)? Will it interfere with the long activity block?*

What are the expectations or safety rules regarding the use of the equipment? *What are the boundaries? How has this information been communicated to the children?*

What other equipment is available for use? *Tricycles? Sand toys? How is it accessed and put away? Where is it stored?*

What signal will be used to gain the children's attention? *This routine must be established from the first day of school.*

What washroom routine will be used? *Is there an exterior door? Do children go into the school with a buddy?*

First Day of School

It is important that children and their parents have a positive first day at school. Plan a program that is appropriate for this very exciting day.

Has the school decided to stagger the entry of the Junior Kindergarten students during the first week of school? *How has the school*

communicated to the family what day the student is to start school and what time they are to arrive and be picked up?

Will you communicate with the children before school begins? *Send a postcard? Make a telephone call? Visit?*

Where will the children be met and greeted? *How is this communicated to families prior to the first day of school?*

What are the expectations regarding parents accompanying children into the room? *How long will they stay?*

Portfolio Collection

Begin this dated collection of the children's work (paintings, drawings, recordings) at the beginning of the school year to show growth over time. The child, as well as the teacher, will have to decide what samples of the child's learning will be placed in each child's portfolio.

How is work/information sent home to parents? *In a special bag? In a plastic bag?*

When is finished work sent home? *Daily? Weekly?*

How are parents informed about classroom schedules such as gym, library visits, and classroom program? *Through a calendar? Newsletter? Displays? Photographs? Visits?*

Borrow-A-Book

Is there an established book borrowing programme in the school? *When should the Borrow-A-Book program start? How will parents be informed? Newsletter? Borrow-A-Book information booklets? Curriculum Night?*

What materials will be available for children to borrow? *How will you supervise the tracking of the books? How will the books be carried home? In a special bag?*

Snack

What is the school procedure for snack? How will snack be provided? Who prepares the snack? How is snack served? Is it included as a centre? What are the expectations for clean-up?

Using the Bathroom or Water Fountain

The children will need to know what the routine is for using the bathroom or the water fountain.

What do the children do when the bathrooms are not available in the classroom? Does an adult supervise the children? Do they go in pairs? Sign out?

Other Considerations

Parents need to know the specific routines around celebrating children's birthdays, if this is appropriate for the school population.

How and when will parent volunteers be incorporated into the classroom?

How will classroom expectations be communicated to any adults working in the classroom e.g. through educational assistants, student teachers, parent or community volunteers?

Learning Centres for Kindergarten and Primary Classrooms

When establishing Learning Centres in the classroom, consider the centres that need to be available in the classroom and the routines associated with each centre. The following is a list of possible centres:

- Big Block and Construction Material Centre
- Dramatic Play Centre
- Reading Centre
- Listening Centre
- Sand and Water Centre
- Visual Arts Centre
- Writing/Drawing Centre
- Mathematics Centre
- Science and Technology Centre
- Word Study (Alphabet) Centre
- Special Interest Centre

Centres will develop in relation to different curriculum areas, e.g., hatching of ducks, wheels, seasons. The materials and activities at the centres need to be changed to meet the developing needs and interests of the children.

When organizing a centre consider traffic patterns, quiet and noisy areas, the location of the water source, and electrical outlets.

Decide how many children can be comfortably and safely accommodated at a centre. Some of these decisions can be made in negotiation with the children or predetermined at the outset.

When problems arise at a centre, revisit these questions to analyze what needs to be changed, re-taught or re-thought.

The following questions may be used as a guide in thinking about the organization and the routines that need to be in place to minimize disruptions and ensure the effective use of the centre:

Big Blocks and Construction Materials Centre

Where will the blocks be stored when not in use? *In a cart? On a shelf? Against a wall? In a specific order?*

What is the organization for putting the blocks away? *By size? By function? Will children use pictures or diagrams to assist with putting blocks away?*

What materials are available to extend the learning? *Paper and pencils? Books? Pictures and signs? Are there enough materials to create complex structures? Science and Technology materials and models? Materials related to a specific interest such as a fire station e.g. plastic fire fighter's hats, rubber boots?*

What is the expectation about unfinished structures or returning to complete structures at another time? *A child's Please do not touch sign? Leaving a name card with the structure?*

Is there ample space for children to comfortably build? *How many children can work at this centre at a time?*

Dramatic Play Centre

Are there enough materials for the number of children at the centre? *Are materials of good quality and safe for children to use? Do the materials reflect cultural diversity?*

How are the materials organized? *Sorted by type? Put in labelled containers? Put on an outline on a shelf?*

What props will be added to extend the play? *Large pieces of cloth for clothing or shelter? Puppets? Models? What role do children play in changing and creating the focus of the Dramatic Play Centre?*

What literacy materials are available for children to incorporate into their play? *For a house centre: magazines, a telephone, telephone book? For a restaurant: notepads, pencils, menus?*

Reading Centre

Are there a variety of books available for children to read? *Wordless, alphabet, number, non-fiction, big books, poetry, charts?*

How is this centre organized? *Can children comfortably read alone? With a partner? Is there a carpet? Sofa? Pillows? Rocking chairs? Is it visually inviting?*

How are the books displayed? *On tables? On a bookshelf? In labelled basins? Can children see the covers of the books?*

Do the books represent the diversity of the classroom and the global community? *Do books in the collection include first languages and/or second languages?*

Are there props to extend the book experience? *Models from the story? Puppets? A flannel board?*

Is the Listening Centre part of the Reading Centre? *Or nearby?*

Are books organized in a variety of ways? *Theme? Author? Reading level? Function?*

Sand/Water Centres

Are the materials organized for easy access and tidy-up? *In labelled buckets on a table? An outline on a shelf?*

What materials are needed for tidy-up? *For the water: a sponge mop, cloths, a basin? For the sand: a broom and dustpan?*

What role do children play in the maintenance of the centres? *Are the centres located near the sink for filling, cleaning and changing? How often will the materials be changed?*

What materials are available to support the curriculum? *To promote exploration and experimentation and the development of math and science concepts? To support literacy? Pictures? Books (fiction and non-fiction)? Are materials available for children to record their findings? Are there materials for dramatic play?*

What is the expectation about unfinished creations or returning to continue? *A child's Please do not touch sign? Leaving a name card?*

Visual Arts Centre: Design and Creation

Do children have easy access to the materials? *Are the materials readily accessible for use in other centres?*

How are the materials organized? *In labelled bins by picture/actual object?*

Do the materials promote creativity? *Experimentation ? Imagination? Cross-curricular extensions?*

Are there sufficient materials for the number of children at the centre? *Pencils, scissors, glue sticks?*

Where do children put finished work? *In a basin? On a table? On a shelf? Where do children put unfinished work?*

What role will children play in the maintenance of the centre? *Cleaning tables? Bringing materials from home? Recycling materials?*

How will work be displayed? *Do the displays reflect all the stages of development in the classroom? What role do children play in making decisions about displaying and sharing?*

Visual Arts Centre: Painting

Are the materials organized for easy access and tidy up? *Where is the painting paper kept? In the paint rack? On a table or shelf?*

What role do children play in the maintenance of the centre? *Cleaning up spills? Helping to mix the paints?*

Are there enough materials available for children to use? *Brushes for the paint? A range of colours? A variety of tools and materials? Surfaces and types of paper?*

Where do the children paint? *On an oilcloth? On the floor? On a table? On easels?*

Are the materials developmentally appropriate for the children? *Size of paper for painting? Size of brushes?*

Where are the wet paintings placed? *In a paint rack? Hung from a clothesline? How will work be displayed?*

What protection do the children have for the clothes? *Plastic aprons? Old shirts?*

Writing/Drawing Centre

Are the materials easily accessible to the children? *Are the materials available for children to use at other centres in the classroom?*

How are the materials organized? *Placed on an outline? Sorted by type and size?*

Is there variety in the materials? *Paper of different colours, sizes and functions? A variety of writing tools? Stapler?*

Are the writing utensils appropriate for the children in the class? *Markers in a variety of sizes, pencils and crayons?*

What resources are available to support children with independent writing? *Charts? Alphabet strips? Word Wall? Picture dictionaries? Letters? Date stamps?*

Where will children put their writing/drawings when finished or unfinished?

What role do children play in the maintenance of the centre?

How will work be displayed?

Do the displays reflect all the stages of development in the classroom?

What role do children play in making decisions about displaying and sharing?

Other Considerations

Do the materials reflect cultural and linguistic diversity?

Are the materials and tools age-appropriate? Have you considered all safety concerns, e.g., goggles for the wood working centre.?

Do the materials provide opportunities for children to apply and extend their learning in a variety of ways? Do the materials and activities provide opportunities for children to independently explore and investigate?

Do the materials and activities provide opportunities for children to develop skills and concepts in *The Ontario Curriculum* and *The Kindergarten Program*? Are materials included to support the development of literacy skills Do the materials and activities provide opportunities for children to develop and refine communication and social skills?

Are there concrete materials for the children to use?

Do the materials and activities provide children with opportunities to make choices?