

Categorizing

This document offers teachers some suggestions regarding the use of categorizing in the classroom.

Supporting Kindergarten

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Categorizing involves grouping objects or ideas according to criteria that describe common features or the relationships among all members of that group. This procedure enables children to see patterns and connections; it develops children's abilities to manage or organize information.

Purposes

- to provide an opportunity to share existing knowledge and understanding
- to extend children's thinking and understanding by requiring them to organize ideas and incorporate new ones
- to encourage children to practice acceptance and understanding of diverse ideas and viewpoints
- to demonstrate that information can be grouped or classified in more than one way

Procedure

- Provide concrete objects such as toys or blocks or leaves and have materials readily available in the classroom environment. Children who are interested in sorting will gravitate towards this invitation.
- Children will develop their own classification guidelines by which objects could be grouped such as size, colour, or shape.
- Encourage children to explain their reasons for placing items in particular categories.
- Scaffold learning for those children who are unable to see and understand the relationships.
- Encourage children to question each other's categorizations.
- Move children from categorizing concrete objects to categorizing pictures.

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2220 College Ave
REGINA SK CANADA S4P 4V9



Ministry of
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www.education.gov.sk.ca

Assessment

- Monitor children's ability to understand and explain relationships among items.
- Observe children's ability to categorize items using more than one criteria or category.
- Interpret the documentation, making connections between the curriculum and observations.
- Note children's ability to categorize items independently.

Teacher's Role

- Provide an environment rich with a variety of materials to sort and categorize.
- Encourage comments and discussions about similarities and differences among classifications and category components.
- Provide a positive environment in which children can take risks in assigning items to categories.
- Scaffold children's learning.
- Encourage participation by all children.
- Document children's experiences with categorizing.
- Involve children in reflective practice.
- Display the documentation and interpretation.