

Considerations When Providing Families with Supplemental Learning Opportunities for Children in Prekindergarten and Kindergarten

Outlined throughout this document, are some key areas to consider when educators begin developing supplemental learning opportunities that are developmentally appropriate and culturally respectful to the unique experiences, knowledge, talents and parenting styles of families with young children. For specific or individualized supports for children in Prekindergarten and Kindergarten, please confer with the school-based team of learning support professionals in your schools.

While this is not an exhaustive list of suggestions, it is hoped that it will serve as support for educators to ensure all families and their children have access to engaged, active learning at home.

Supporting Children in Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Requires a Collaborative Team

There are a number of professionals that educators can collaborate and confer with, when looking for ways to provide families with supplemental learning opportunities for their young children, ages 3 to 6 years of age. Each of the professionals have a specific area of expertise and specialized knowledge that can provide teams with suggestions for resources and supports specific to each child's areas of strength and need. These professionals include:

- Early Learning educators
- Education Support Teacher (EST)
- Dream Catcher Coach
- School-based Administrator (SBA)
- Intensive Supports Consultants & Coaches
- Curriculum Consultants & Coaches

“Collaboration is a dynamic interactive process, where there is genuine shared ownership for decision making, action taking and outcomes. It recognizes that shared goals can be better achieved by working together in an interdependent and reciprocal manner.”

(Responsive teaching, practice and assessment in early learning programs, 2017)


Early Learning/Early Childhood Educators (ECE)

Early Learning educators have a unique knowledge base. Early Learning educators have participated in a number of professional learning opportunities that have provided them with a repertoire of researchbased, developmentally appropriate and responsive resources for supporting children in Prekindergarten and Kindergarten. All of the educators have specialized knowledge in early childhood development, knowledge of curricular expectations and have established quality and effective practices for planning, instruction and assessment when educating young children in Prekindergarten and Kindergarten.

Early Learning educators have an extensive list of responsibilities as they are also a direct support for families and have dynamic portfolios that often extend into two or more teaching assignments.

School-based Teams

Early Learning educators have access to a team of professionals that are available to assist them with supporting children directly in the classroom. This team can also be a resource when developing supplemental learning opportunities for children at home. These professionals include: Education Support Teachers, Dream Catcher Coaches, Intensive Supports Consultants and Coaches (e.g., SLP, OT, Psych) and Curriculum Consultants & Coaches. Please see the following list.



Inclusive Learning Team (I.L.T.) – 2019-20

Early Years (PreK – Grade 3) Early years consultants <ul style="list-style-type: none">Inclusive learning – Kathleen SchwartzbergerInclusive learning – Student Support Services – Callie Bruner Early years coaches <ul style="list-style-type: none">Kami KarakochukMichelle Blais-CourtDarlana Harding	Indigenous Perspectives Consultant Jodi Letendre Coaches Tyson Fetch Heather Tibbs
Middle Years (Grades 4 – 8) Middle years consultants <ul style="list-style-type: none">Inclusive learning – Stacey MonetteInclusive learning – Student Support Services Lambert Schwartzberger Middle years coach <ul style="list-style-type: none">Ron Fines	Psychology Heather Jeancart Randy Krammer
Secondary Years (Grades 9 – 12) Secondary years consultants <ul style="list-style-type: none">Inclusive learning – Patricia BibbyInclusive learning – Student Support Services - Kelly Gerhardt	Speech Language Pathology Jan Kulpa Bryn Michalchuk Cheryl Mullner Kate Pashovitz Kendra Sittler-Gane Gerri Woods
	Behaviour Management Coach Tracy Rouault

Talk with your school-based administrator to assist you in figuring out the best way to collaborate with the school-based team of professionals, when seeking additional supports for developing supplemental learning opportunities for families.

If something very specific in meeting the needs of Early Learning families and their children is required, please contact your schools Ed. Support Teacher.

It Starts with Beliefs...

Foundational to working closely with families are the perspectives found within a strengths-based approach that values families as a child's first and most important teacher; being respectful of their beliefs, cultures, languages, time, access to learning materials, and valuing family knowledge/talents/skills as a significant resource for supporting their children. Families are valued for having unique knowledge and skills that will contribute to enhancing their children's learning and development. Educators have specialized knowledge of child development, curricular expectations, developmentally appropriate teaching approaches and ways families can learn alongside their children

through engaging learning experiences that nurture parent-child connections and promote children's development.

Critical to developing responsive learning opportunities that are culturally respectful for families with young children is taking some time to reflect on the strengths, preferences and needs of the family. Ask the family to share their ideas and input to begin to identify the resources they may require at home. Reassure parents that we believe in them and that they are doing their best with the situation at hand. Then begin planning the supplemental learning opportunities that will support parents with learning alongside their children at home, based on what you have learned and the ideas you have gathered in three areas:

- establishing communication methods and translation supports;
- ensuring families have established learning routines suitable for their family's situation; and in,
- providing learning materials and supplemental learning opportunities.

Considerations for Communicating with Families

Reconnect and contact families as soon as possible to identify the preferred method of communication they would like to use for accessing the supplemental learning opportunities that you will be sharing. Assure them that we are all doing our best amidst this unprecedented change and that there will be flexibility within how supplemental learning opportunities are offered. Emphasize that there will not be expectations for families to be formally teaching their children rather, the primary purpose is to provide additional learning experiences for families to explore together. Highlight our vision for teaching and learning with a focus on *being committed to growing engaged learners who experience happy, healthy and purposeful lives as citizens in a changing world.*

Consider the types of communication and the platforms that can be used to provide supplemental learning opportunities at home to ensure accessibility for all families. Some forms of communication/learning platforms may include:

- Apps (e.g., Seesaw) – communicating with families/children or posting videos of lessons, shared read alouds
- video conferencing (e.g., Office 365, Skype) – hosting a morning meeting or facilitating a short learning activity for the children to do at home;
- direct emails – sharing information, providing lesson plans/activities, offering independent activities and project work, links to on-line learning;
- school webpages – posting ideas, video clips, links to on-line learning resources; or,
- mail-outs/postal service/courier delivery (door-to-door deliveries in person) – providing care packages, learning materials and school supplies.

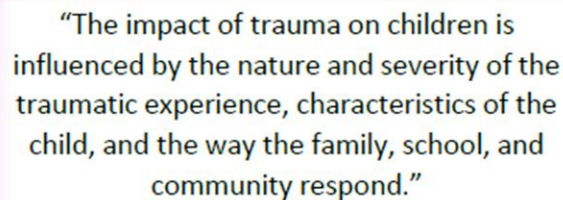
Many educators/administrators have already established methods of communicating with families (e.g., email updates, Seesaw, parent portal) as part of the regular work of schools. Consider the possibilities in how to support learning opportunities at home, by continuing to use the same methods of communication and platforms that families are familiar with (e.g., Seesaw) before adding additional methods for families to try to navigate. If you plan to use a new tool for communicating, provide families with instructions that are easy to follow and very basic.

Be available and accessible to families, within reason, and establish some parameters for communicating with children and their families (e.g., 9:00-10:00 and 1:00-2:00 for individual calls/questions/support requested by families; sharing a post or learning activity idea at 8:30AM, M-WF). Providing some consistency when contacting families will give some assurance that they are supported in the new learning adventure with their children.

Emphasize the Importance of Routines

Discuss the routine that has been established over the past week(s) or remind families of the importance of a routine that works best for them and not what others believe to be the best, as each family will have unique beliefs, skill sets and work responsibilities will need to be considered and respected. After you have established a method for communicating and sharing learning opportunities with families, take some time to highlight the [importance of developing routines](#) at home and how the routines have probably changed (and may continue to change) with the new protocols and public health recommendations currently in place.

During traumatic times or a crisis, it is extremely important to highlight with families that children (and adults) need to have consistency and routines. Routines provide safety and predictability for children in a time of ever-changing adult uncertainty.



“The impact of trauma on children is influenced by the nature and severity of the traumatic experience, characteristics of the child, and the way the family, school, and community respond.”

(Young Children Journal, November 2014)

Educators may want to provide some examples of learning opportunities and times that families can consider incorporating into their day when establishing new routines at home. The examples may include ways to support children with learning and development throughout the day by blocking in time during the day for a variety of engaging learning experiences through play: active play, quiet/solitary play, outdoor play, adult/child play and formalized play/specific learning activities.

Some examples may include:

- setting aside time each day or every other day for language/literacy and math/numeracy activities;
- offering cross-curricular or holistic learning opportunities (e.g., active, creative, experiential, messy play experiences) in the afternoons
- making nutritious snacks or meals together on a regular basis;
- arranging opportunities for independent learning on a regular basis (e.g., hobbies and interests); and,

- celebrating the end of the day with something to do together as a family allowing children choice to select from a selection of options (e.g., outdoor walks, playing a game, watching a movie).

Highlight the importance of allowing children ‘alone time’, where children are in charge of their learning without adult involvement (e.g., playing with toys, exploring outdoors, listening to their favourite music, pursuing hobbies/interests, sports). Emphasize the importance of limiting screen time and having children engage in at least [60 to 90 minutes of physically active play](#) every day. When young children are exposed to stressful situations, they internalize most of the stress. Providing time for physical activity is critical to channeling children’s emotions and supporting their mental health and well-being.

Be cautious, and to try not to impose certain routines or expectations on families. Share opportunities and promote ideal times/topics for families to consider offering to their children at home, informally as they feel is needed. Parent/caregivers should not be expected to be teachers, only positive, caring, and responsive role models that enjoy spending time with their children.

These are just a few examples of ways families can begin to include establishing a new routine at home to enhance children’s learning and development. The possibilities are endless! Encourage families to be creative! Invite families to post their ideas on Seesaw to share what they are doing to work towards building a community of learners.

Ideas for Selecting Supplemental Learning Opportunities

Learning from home provides a natural opportunity for parents/caregivers to connect with their children. Keeping the [Essential Learning Experiences](#), [ECE developmental milestones](#), or [SK curricular outcomes](#) in mind, consider the experiences and activities that children have available in their everyday activities at home and outdoor environments. Invite families to continue to share perspectives from their cultures, languages, talents and knowledge base to connect to learning concepts with the supplemental learning opportunities highlighted, and to affirm the capabilities of parents/caregivers using a strengths-based perspective. Help families understand that there is a lot of learning connected with everyday activities and to relax and enjoy spending time together without an agenda or ‘to do’ list right away.

Some examples that demonstrate learning in everyday experiences include:

- making a favourite family meal together (e.g., Math, ELA);
- going on a nature walk and photographing, drawing, writing about what they see (e.g., Science, Social Studies, Physical Education)
- singing songs, playing instruments and dancing to music (e.g., Arts Ed., Math, ELA, social skills)
- creating with art materials, recycled materials, natural materials (e.g., ELA, social skills, Math, Arts Ed); or,
- playing with toys and board games (e.g., ELA, Math, social skills)

These examples all contribute to children’s holistic learning and development and connect to curricular outcomes in engaging and responsive ways that families can successfully participate in.

Caution families on the impact of too much screen time as a learning activity and how it affects children’s behaviours and development. Limiting screen time to no more than one hour blocks, at the very most, each day is plenty. During stressful times, children need to connect with their families and engage in active learning opportunities to channel their stress. For further information on the importance of limiting screen-time, please refer to the article [Screen Time Guidelines for Preschoolers](#).

Keep in mind that many parents have a variety of beliefs about what learning and teaching looks like, based on their own school experiences. Keep expectations reasonable and manageable for families as many have dynamic responsibilities at home, diverse educational backgrounds, varying employer expectations, different learning resources/materials and diverse supports available. Some families may like having the flexibility to select the learning opportunities and other families may want more specific and scheduled learning opportunities.

Consider establishing a plan that includes the amount of time/day children can be involved in learning opportunities and to help in providing some clarity for families around when to offer the options for supplemental learning opportunities at home. An average of 2 to 4 hours per week for Prekindergarten and 5 to 7 hours per week for Kindergarten, will be a good place to start.

If educators are looking for further support when considering learning opportunities to share with families, relevant to curricular expectations and children’s learning and development at home, take some time to peruse the following links and information listed below. Please do not let the suggestions listed restrict or limit your selections, rather use the ideas as a place to begin. Educators are given choice and autonomy in what they know will best meet the needs of Prekindergarten and Kindergarten children and families in their schools.

Topic/Area	Title of Resource/Link
Language and Literacy / Reading and Writing	
	Supporting Your Child’s Literacy Development (SK MoE) Kindergarten brochure for families
	Your Child’s Language and Literacy Development (SK MoE) Prekindergarten brochure for families
	Hanen Centre Literacy at Home Activities and Ideas for Families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent Tips for Supporting Language Development
	Storytime Chants, Fingerplays and Poems
	Regina Public Library On-line resources for Children
	Dogs on a Log
	Makers of Stories
	Family Literacy Resources (SK Literacy Network)
	Scholastic Reading and Learning at Home
	Literacy activities and on-line learning for Prekindergarten (Saskatoon Public School Division)
	Literacy activities and on-line learning for Kindergarten (Saskatoon Public School Division)
	Tumblebook Library or Unite for Literacy
	Littératout
	I Spy Games
Math/Numeracy	
	Math at Home Toolkit (National Association for the Education of Young Children)
	Math Before Bed activities
	Reggio-Inspired Math
	Counting Collections
	Lego Activities for Kids
	Illustrative Mathematics
	General Math Activities website – We Are Teachers
	Mathology on-line learning program
Cross-curricular/Holistic Learning	
Learning through Play	
	Learning Together at Home: The Inclusion Lab (Ages & Stages Questionnaire)
	Learn, Play, Grow Series of Videos for Families (MoE)
	NAEYC for Families - Activities

	Early Childhood Encyclopedia family brochures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing with Children • The Joy of Play
	Let Them Lead – Kim Goran
	Transform ED Reggio-Inspired Ideas – Joanne Babalis
Science	
	Let's Talk Science
	TinkerGarden Activities for the Outdoors
	Outdoor Learning and Activities – Nature Canada
	Lego Activities for Kids
Physical Education and Health	
	ParticipAction Canada's Site for Active Families • <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 to 4 yrs. • 5 to 7 yrs.
	Motor Development
	Supporting Physical Activity and Nutrition with Children (MoE)
	Preschool Inspirations on Yoga and Movement
Child Development	
	Encyclopedia of Child Development for Families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young Children and Technology, Finding the Right Balance • Executive Functions: Helping Your Child to React • Helping Children Express Emotions • The Importance of Parent/Child Attachment • Your Child's Brain: Building a Great Start through Interactions
	Saskatchewan Prevention Institute – Family brochures
	Resources for Families – Brochures and Posters
	211 Saskatchewan for Families
Curriculum Resource Links	
	STF Supports – Where to Start with On-line Learning for Prekindergarten and Kindergarten
	Emma Stewart Resources Centre
	PVSD InSite – Early Learning Folder
	SK Curriculum Website
	EDOnline Blackboard orgs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Learning Portal • Nurturing Resilience Blackboard for Educators (MoE)

The division office team is working to develop a repository for educators to house ideas and resources for supporting children’s learning at home. This is a document developed by educators, for educators. I would like to invite you to submit your ideas to the [Google Doc](#). Please do not let the samples set an expectation or limit the possibilities in ways to plan and provide families with learning opportunities. Rather, use the samples to inspire you!

As you submit ideas, please make sure that the ideas are relevant to current SK curricular outcomes (K)/*Essential Learning Experiences* (Pre-K) and are developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive to the needs of the children and families.

Supports for Educators

Remember to connect and collaborate with colleagues, learning support professionals and administrators to find solutions with challenges and to celebrate successes when connecting with families and providing supplemental learning opportunities.

Consultants & Coaches can be a great support, so that educators do not need to feel they are carrying the weight of developing supplemental materials on their own. Feel free to connect with consultants for additional resources, a source of support, and/or professional learning opportunities through email, telephone or an on-line teleconference.

We’re in This Together – Stay Strong, Grateful and Positive!

Healthy, supported, educators and schools = healthy students, families, and communities. Take time to practice self-care! Educators are natural nurturers, dedicated professionals and passionate in making a difference in the lives of children and their families every day, regardless of the situation. Check out some of the following links posted on the [Saskatchewan Teacher’s Federation Website: Teacher Wellbeing](#) to support you with your own self-care practices. For a fun challenge while at home, try completing the [Self-care BINGO for Educators](#) developed by Outcomes-based Therapy in Regina.

Closing Thoughts...

Know that the time and support you are unconditionally giving to children and their families at this everchanging time in our world, will impact them for the rest of their lives. Thank you for all that you do and all that you are!

“Use this time to learn, improve and grow. Look for the good. Know that together we will become stronger” – Jon Gordon