

Facilitator's Guide
for
Learning Module:
The Learning Environment

The learning environment



Overview:

The ***Learning environment*** module invites educators to reflect on what the learning environment tells us about our beliefs about children and our role as educators. Explore how the learning environment acts as a “third educator” and facilitates learning in the four frames.

Duration of the professional learning opportunity: 60 minutes

Audience: Educators

Materials:

- projector and computer with internet access and functioning speakers
- screen and extension cord
- appendixes A and C
- chart paper and markers

Preparation:

- Before the professional learning opportunity, send a notice to all participants to either bring hard copies or a device to access online *The Kindergarten Program, 2016*.
- Request participants read pages 29-35 of *The Kindergarten Program, 2016* re The Learning Environment.
- Photocopy appendixes.
- Prepare four chart papers each with a heading from the four frames: Belonging and Contributing, Problem Solving and Innovating, Demonstrating Literacy and Mathematics Behaviours, and Self-Regulation and Well-Being.
- On the day of the professional learning opportunity, arrange the venue so the participants are sitting in at least four groups.

Purpose:

The goal of this professional learning opportunity is to deepen educators' understanding of the learning environment and its impact as reflected in *The Kindergarten Program, 2016*.

Objectives:

Educators will:

- Co-construct the learning environment with children
- Encourage a learning environment with space, time, materials and resources that reflect beliefs about children
- Incorporate outdoor learning into the classroom environment and flow of the day and
- Use the environment to support children's emerging ability to self-regulate.

Procedure:

Welcome

The facilitator welcomes the group and gives an overview of the purpose and objectives of the professional learning opportunity explaining that the content involves a learning module; work with various documents; and individual, small group and large group activities.

Introduction

The facilitator invites the group to view the photo of a student engaged with his environment in slide 1.

Question to engage the group:

What does the term environment mean?

The facilitator brainstorms with the whole group to come up with a list of things that are part of the learning environment. The facilitator may divide the list into tangible/non-tangibles. The participants' responses can be written on chart paper and added to as the professional learning opportunity goes on.

Part I – The partners involved in education

Please Note: Part I has slides that are common to all seven learning modules. If your participants have already attended some of the learning module professional learning opportunities, this section can be used as a review only section.

Pre-viewing activity (individual)

To give context to this professional learning opportunity, the facilitator begins with the partners that are involved a child's learning.

Each participant is asked to complete appendix A as a warm-up activity. Before taking up the activity, begin the slide deck.

View

Slides 3-5. The facilitator can elaborate on the slides' message using the slide notes included.

Post-viewing activity (whole group)

Discuss characteristics of the partners in education: educators, parents and children.

Questions: Where do educators, parents and children intersect?

How is our view of assessment linked to our view of children?

Extension: View slide 6 that introduces "environment" as one of the partners. Discuss view of the importance of environment.

Discuss relationships between families, educators and environments (degree of importance, significance, positive and negative impacts).

Expand on relationships by viewing and discussing slide 7.



Part II – What's new for educators

Pre-viewing activity (small group sharing)

The facilitator asks participants to discuss in their small groups ideas for high quality learning environments and their wish lists for following:

- Space
- Time
- Materials

View

Slide 9: re high quality learning environments.

Post-viewing activity (whole group)

The facilitator asks the groups to assess the learning environments they see in slide 9.

Questions: What do they see?

What would they hear if these environments had children in them?

Extension: View slide 10 re the four frames and elicit examples of how the environment encourages learning particular to each frame.

The facilitator hangs the four chart papers (each with a heading from one of the four frames) and invites all participants to populate them with environmental materials, time or space ideas that could contribute to learning in each frame. For example, under Problem Solving and Innovating, participants could write the sand box or water table, outdoor education, etc. See these pages of *The Kindergarten Program, 2016* p. 13-15, 49, 51, 57, 73-74, 85-86, 92-93 for more information.

Part III – Preparing a quality learning environment

Pre-viewing activity (small group)

The facilitator invites each table group to talk about the environments they have set up in their classrooms. Discuss their priorities for their environment, what they could add to the environment and what they could remove.

View

Slides 11-14: comparing environments.

Post-viewing activity (small group)

The facilitator asks the participants in the group to share their reflections about:

- What they notice in the different environments shown in the slides.
- What beliefs about children are evident in each image?
- How does the role of the educators differ in each image?

Questions: How have you considered the environment as a “third educator?”

Extension: Ask yourself if anything needs to be removed or replaced to promote deep thinking and learning? Discuss with your group.

Part IV – How to set up materials for a quality learning environment

Pre-viewing activity (small group)

With the goal of consolidating some of the learning about play-based learning so far in the professional learning opportunity, the facilitator gives participants time to reflect and complete appendix C (Reflection on the four Rs – repeating, re-thinking, removing, replacing).

View

Slide 15.

Post-viewing activity (small group)

The facilitator asks the participants in the group to share their reflections about how educators in the video co-constructed the learning.

Discuss how the:

- educators promoted deep thinking and honoured their students' voices and
- children responded to materials and learning opportunities in their environment.

Questions: How can I set up a play-based environment that honours my children's curiosity?

How can we become co-constructors of this environment?

Ask yourself if anything needs to be removed or replaced to promote deep thinking and learning? Discuss with your group.

Extension: View and review slides 16 and 17. Can more items be added to our brainstorming page of what an environment is? Or to the four frame chart papers?



Final activity: After viewing slide 18 and 19, the facilitator gives the groups time to prepare a short role-play presentation. Participants role play a conversation between parent(s) and educators. The misconceptions from slide 17 and parents' wonderings from slide 18 can be used or the participants can write their own scripts. The role play will be presented to the whole group with the intention of recreating a scene where:

- parents have an opportunity to build understandings about current pedagogies,
- parent questions are leveraged to build relationships and
- parents are given opportunities to participate and engage in their child's learning.

Wrap-Up

The facilitator presents slide 20 and encourages a group discussion about how participants' understanding of the learning environment has deepened.

Time can be given for further reflection and discussion of appendix C, slide 21.

Opportunities for Further Learning slide 22.

Participants can consider how they could facilitate further conversation through Twitter, board chat room and Teach Ontario.

List of resources

The learning environment

[The Third Teacher: Designing the Learning Environment for Mathematics and Literacy, K to 8 \(Capacity Building Series, No. 27\)](#)

[The Environment is a Teacher \(*Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from Research about Young Children 2013*\)](#)

[Learning environment video](#)

Video: [The Learning Environment](#)

Video: [“Co-construction”](#) and [“Re-imagining Learning Materials”](#)

Appendix A

Instructions:

Sort the characteristics below under the appropriate heading.

Characteristics:

- competent
 - curious
 - caring
 - loving
 - reflective
 - influencers
 - fun-loving
 - rich in potential
 - _____ (add your own)
- experts
 - life-long learners
 - hardworking
 - knowledgeable
 - resourceful
 - creative
 - rich in experience
 - capable of complex thinking

Educators	Parents	Children
<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>

Appendix B

Instructions:

Take a moment to reflect and write brief answers to the questions below.

What do you Know	What do you Want to Know	What do you want to Learn
<i>About the theme in the learning module</i>	<i>About the theme in the learning module</i>	<i>About the theme in the learning module</i>

Appendix C

Instructions:

Reflect on what you are learning about *The Kindergarten Program, 2016*.

	What am/are I/we thinking or wondering about, as a result of this learning?	How might I/we act on my/our wonderings?
Repeating These practices have proven successful and are supported by current research.		
Re-thinking These practices have had some measure of success but may need some modifying to enhance their effectiveness.		
Removing These practices have had little measure of success and are not supported by current research.		
Replacing These practices are based on current research and have proven successful for others.		