What does authentic assessment look like in a play-based program?

Board Developed Inquiry Questions
The focus of our inquiry is assessment *for* and *as* learning in kindergarten. Our initial issues revolved around the gathering and management of assessment information in a busy kindergarten classroom. We were also thinking about how we could assess young students in ways that were more developmentally appropriate, authentic and would give us more accurate information. How could we do this in a play-based program? Some of the ideas presented as being good assessment practice in the *Growing Success* document, such as the use of success criteria, bothered us. Were these practices appropriate for kindergarten? Other practices such as using assessment to plan instruction, collecting ongoing assessment data and making the learning visible to students resonated with us as kindergarten educators. But how would this look in a play-based kindergarten classroom?

Our Inquiry Questions
We began this inquiry with many questions, but decided to focus on documenting children’s learning at learning centres. Out of this question came four sub-questions which we thought had to be answered in order to answer our primary question. As in all inquiries these questions led to more and more questions as our work progressed.

Why this inquiry question matters to us
We were interested in exploring what authentic assessment looked like in a play-based program. We felt there was a disconnect between our assessment practices and the program we were trying to deliver. We were pulling students for “testing” instead of observing them in more authentic ways. We wanted to get away from needing a “product”. Our assessment was not necessarily on-going and we wondered if we were gathering enough information and the right kind of information. Most important to us at the beginning of this inquiry was how to collect and organize all of this information.