Making Thinking and Learning Visible: Flow of the Day
Making Thinking and Learning Visible: Flow of the Day

Narrator: Throughout the video you will hear how full day early learning kindergarten teams across the province are rethinking, removing, and repeating practices in relation to the flow of the day. Each team, school, and school board will consider their local context when making decisions and planning the flow of the day. The kindergarten teacher and early childhood educator are partners in planning the children’s’ learning. In their planning they consider the various contexts for learning, the kinds of materials that will be provided, and how learning can be co-constructed with, and made visible to the children. This planning is based on assessment information in the full day early learning kindergarten program document. The following are examples of the different contexts that teams plan as part of the flow of the day.

Team One:

Speaker2: It was very important to me that I built that trusting relationship with the parents right away. Like I didn’t know them, they didn’t know me, plus, they’re walking into a full day program, so that was a really important thing for us to do. So right away I noticed, just even having Karen there, that I could spend more time with the parents and really talk to them, connect with them, talk about what’s important as they came in, touch base with them, and share experiences together, and that really helped ease into the program. Karen would be with the children, I’d be talking, or vice versa, often Karen would talk and I’d be with the children. And the parents had that need right at the beginning, and I wanted them to know that they are a partner in this, and that we value what they have to say. A full day is a long day, and we need to touch base with them, I think much more often because of that, as well.

Speaker1: Yes, and I don’t know how you feel, but I don’t mind when they come in, in the morning, you know, for a minute or two, or sometimes five minutes. And sometimes it’s a great opportunity just to keep that relationship going, because you don’t want it too sporadic, so I don’t mind it at all.

Speaker2: And the other thing is, sometimes we’ll often pull them in to share a quick experience, like a success their child’s had. We bring them in and say, look at what they’ve done, and they bring their camera and they’ll take a couple pictures and off they go. And especially for those parents that we don’t see often that are working parents, if they show up, we really try to greet them and touch base with them, as well.
Team Two:

Speaker3: What was happening was, that when the bell rang, all 28 children were coming into the cubby areas, and they were trying to then put everything away, give you notes, give you things that had to happen, and then go and meet at the gathering area. And what you're finding is, that you don't have to wait for the whole class to be ready for everything now.

Speaker1: That's right. And when they come in, in the mornings, because they have the routines, they know that they empty their backpacks, they put their mail bags away, they put library books, they change their snuggle up and read, and if they have an important note to say, I'm going away on vacation, one of the team is always inside, the other person is outside, so they quickly will go and say, oh, I have a note for you. So you're getting all those things early anyway, and then once we're all inside and we get to the carpet, it's not so confusing, we're actually ready to start our day, we've gotten rid of the mundane tasks that must be completed.

Speaker3: Yes, I really noticed that it was a very smooth transition on how you were able to. The children knew exactly that routine now, that they came in, and they didn't even spend a lot of time here, they were very focused. They arrived, did what they had to do, and it was like they wanted to go outside and play with their friends, and socialize with their friends. When we were talking, you had said that it isn't now the 28 children coming into the classroom all at once, what happens now?

Speaker1: Well, now, it could be one individual child arriving, or could be two children arriving at the same time. As they arrive, those children individually would come over, enter the classroom, go to their cubby, do the routine of putting their things away, and then go back outside. Some might decide to take their mail bag out first, so they don't all follow the same script, but they know that tasks that have to be completed. They might do them in a different order, and then once they're done that, then they go right back outside and they're ready to socialize. If it's just walking around talking to their friends, or actually enjoying the play equipment that's outside, they'll get a game of soccer going, or just throwing the ball around to each other. One of the things that we also noticed was, that when we had all the children coming in at once, they would like to share things that happened the night before, so you would have 28 children all trying to compete for your attention and to share their good news with you, or to hand you notes that they have. This way, with just one or two children arriving, coming in, and with one of the team member inside, those children can then go to the teacher who's inside and
share their good news, or give them what they need to hand over to them. So you don’t get a large gathering at once.

Speaker3: So it's starting your day in less chaos, and a much more smoother and calmer way, and I think that's maybe part of why we're not having those criers, and those children that are even coming in late aren't feeling frustrated, because they know they have some time out in the yard to run around, and get some energy off of them before they enter into the classroom.

Speaker2: And they really like that, the one on one with the teachers when they want to share something with us.

Speaker1: For sure.

Speaker2: If they're going away and we know how many sleeps it is before they're going on their trip, every day we get an update when they're in here, so they really enjoy that. And so do we, actually, because we're not having 28 of them talking to us at a time.

Speaker1: Exactly.

Team Three:

Speaker1: Or what did you find you had to adjust from day one, in terms of, things like entry, or scheduling, or whatever?

Speaker2: We had to give the children a lot of choice, because if we had everyone doing something all at the same time, we would end up with giant line-ups of 26 children waiting for our attention. So what we designed from the beginning was, a very free flow to the room, where kids were making their own decisions. And so we found that we had kids in different areas all the time, no one was waiting because they knew that they could just go to another area, and then they could come and get the two of us when they were ready to share. So we took out things like, everyone must sign in, everyone must write at the same time.

Speaker1: So we were talking about the schedule, and this looks really like a full day. What did you have to do with scheduling, if anything?

Speaker2: It was something that was decided with the children, as we got into the flow of our days, and they got a sense of what was going to happen for them, we talked to them about what it looked like, and what would help them to be able to keep track of the day. And so
we came up with a schedule that's actually on Velcro, and amazingly, they check it every single morning, and if we have not changed it, we are informed.

Speaker3: They let you know if the clip is in the wrong spot.

Speaker2: The clip moves down as the day goes through, they notice right away if something has been moved around. But it's also a good way for us to let them know if there is a change at the beginning of the day, so they can expect that if something gets moved around.

Speaker1: I know that you usually start with a welcome circle. It's not very long, but I know that you do start with that. Why do you have a welcome circle?

Speaker2: The decision there was made to build community, primarily. We have a wide range of ages and abilities in the class, and so we wanted a chance for everyone to come together, even for a short time, to get to know each other, to feel good about the learning we're doing together. Sometimes it's a whole group experience, like this morning when Lisa created a compost with the kids. It was sort of something that we all needed to do together to have a communal experience. But it's often a chance for us to do some drama and movement things that allow them to interact with each other within a whole group in a certain amount of space, and we found that that's really helped with self regulation and self control as they move through their day.

Team Four:

Speaker2: Through observations and interaction we just learn so much from them, and we just adjust our methods of teaching to meet unique needs of your child. We extended our program, our activities, we made so much changes in the classroom just to extend their thoughts.

Speaker1: So we started off in the beginning whole group. It's what we knew and what we thought would be best for the students, but I think we quickly learned that not everybody needed what we were planning on talking about at the time, I guess is safe to say. And so it was nice because we could talk and it's just a quick chat, but going, you know what I noticed, so and so needs help with this, and so and so needs help with that, so why don't we pull small groups and give them what they need?
Team Five:

Speaker2: We look a lot at what is developmentally appropriate for the children. So whether it is something like calendar, whether we feel that is appropriate for the children to participate in. We also think about what's appropriate for a whole group, versus what's appropriate for a small group or individual. And so in terms of removing a lot of our whole group explicit instructions, so that we can look at the small group explicit instruction, and meeting the children where they are.

Speaker1: And looking at things to remove, some of that thinking was done before we entered into the program. Really being open to being able to remove things. Again, if you have the children foremost at the centre of the program, and the practices that are in place to look at the different developmental areas, what's in the curriculum and what doesn't work, don't be afraid to remove things. Try it, see what happens. If it's working fine, the kids will let you know very quickly. So just because some things worked before in the past doesn't mean it's the best thing to do in the future. So remove yourself from stereotypes and things being set in concrete. You have to be flexible.

Speaker2: So recently we've changed the physical layout of our classroom, looking at the classroom environment, within the flow of the environment, how the children are moving in and around the furniture. And looking at some new learning areas that we wanted to introduce the children to. The change really came about just through that communication, that talking about some new things we wanted to bring into the class, and really about opening up the classroom a little bit more. We're very aware of the different learning areas, and the different activities that may be going on in those learning areas, and reflected on which types of learning areas are best beside one another. How we're going to organize the classroom so that the children can spread out, so that they have room for noise and space for their learning, also.
Speaker1: The classroom is not the same as it was in September, it has changed many times. The children change, so you have to be able to keep up with where they are, and where they're going.

Team Six:

Narrator: You will hear from teams about how they were making the flow of the day visual for children. As they describe their planning, you will hear the things they consider, and observations they have made when they rethought the flow of the day, and repeated opportunities to engage the children in the visual flow of the day.

Speaker2: So this is an interactive flow of the day, it's a visual way for the children to know exactly where we are, it helps with transitions to show what's coming next, but again, very loose, we don't run by periods here, it's just a loose flow. And it changes every day, today we happen to have library, where another day we may not. And the teacher helper, again, is able to take this and show us where we are now, so right now we're on learning areas. So that's where we have that, but again, it changes every day. And we have a whole bunch of different other features.

Speaker1: And what's so wonderful is....

Speaker2: We have our actual students doing the areas, so it's not just a random picture. This is pictures of them in these areas, so again, it's another connection for them, and way for them to relate to this.

Team Seven:

Speaker1: Snack time can be any time, but that's our lunchtime over there. If children want to go to sleep, they get their blanket or towel out and they have a nap. After that, play areas are open again to them. The children know what they're going to do next.

Speaker2: Something else as well, this is so inviting and inclusive, because it lets me know that, if I'm tired during my day and I need to have a little rest, I need to do something quiet, it's there and available and you're very flexible about what the children's' physical needs are in terms of that rest, and being refreshed.
Team Eight:

Speaker3: So I'm noticing your visual schedule here. Can you tell me about how this came to be, and sort of, what your thinking was around the creation of this schedule?

Speaker1: At the beginning of the year we did have a pocket chart, and it had the events of the day, and we just had used the board maker program, which just has the little black and white pictures that we printed out. However, we found that it wasn't personal enough for the children, and it was also running from top to bottom, as opposed to left to right, which is of course, how we're trying to teach the concepts of print and reading, and of course, the flow should be from left to right. And once we had the opportunity to take more photos in the room of the children participating in all of the activities, then we were able to print them out, and it made it a lot more personal for them, when they saw themselves on the visual schedule. So throughout the day, the children can go and move the magnet along.

Speaker3: So I guess, that also lends to what you were talking about earlier, around the flexibility, and that these pieces of their schedule can be moved, and changed, and manipulated as the day unfolds, or as things arise in the classroom.

Speaker2: Yes, they are actually just magnet picture frames, so the children are able to take them off and move them around, rearrange them. And for different days of the week we have different items happening. Miss Cornwall visits for music every day two, and so we're able to just stick her in where she would be. And then the children, once they're moving the magnet, they're able to see that, when it lines up, that's when Miss Cornwall's going to be here in order to each the music. And there's a couple different, we have reading buddies, and they know on their days to come and add it to the chart, and take it off, rearrange it, whatever they see fit. Same with the outside time, and everything they can rearrange.

Speaker3: Now, I know you used to do calendar. And that was part of your remove, and that you did remove calendar from the classroom. Can you tell me what the result of that has been?

Speaker1: Well, I think whether you do calendar or not, children still have an opportunity to understand passage of time, both on a daily basis and on a weekly basis, and the children figure out for themselves that, today is Wednesday and we have reading buddies. And most of them say that without us having to say anything. So really, the calendar was just something that everybody did, and so we just all integrated it into our program, yet when you sit down and think
about it, there are other ways of doing what you used to do on the calendar.

Speaker2: And for the amount of time you spend on calendar during an opening circle, there's much more useful ways of introducing different aspects of the day, and time, and month, and weeks into the children's' lives that you can take the time of calendar and actually talk to the children, and see what they're interested in.

Speaker1: Because they were very interested this year in seasonal changes, which was huge for them, so again, that's passage of time, we didn't have a calendar stuck up, and it was in the interest of the children.

Speaker3: I'm hearing that you really try to minimize the transitions in the students' day, and so what have been some of the benefits of doing that?

Speaker2: I find we have a better flow in the day, the children know what to expect because there's no so many transitions, and they're able to continue throughout their day with less interruptions. They're able to, also, leave their creations, or what they're working on, so that when do come back they're able to continue with that, and they don't have to, necessarily, put everything away and tidy up.

Speaker1: Right, they can leave it up, and they can leave it up until the next day, as well. And we also have a visual schedule that they use, which we created with photos of the children, and so they can follow along with that throughout the day. Because we do have a few changes throughout the week, however, the changes are not extreme, 10 minutes here, or 10 minutes there, and they know the schedule very well.

Speaker3: So it sounds like the children have access to the schedule, and then that's something that you really talk about and negotiate with them around what sorts of things happen in their day, and what they can expect as part of their day. But it sounds like you've really re-thought about the frigidness of your schedule in the way that it used to be, and that the children have a lot of input and make a lot of decisions about what their day looks like.

Speaker1: Yes, because at the beginning of the year, a lot of them were very tired. They were starting JK, they were here five days a week, and by Thursday and Friday afternoons they were exhausted, so the last block of the day we played by ear most of the time, for the first few months, until they could figure out what their needs were too, so that they could express them to us, and we would leave it open at the end of the day and we would say to them, what would you like to do? And most of them, we had a few falling asleep here and there,
but most of them chose a quiet activity on their own for the last hour of the day, because they were so tired, and they needed some calmness in their day, as well.

Speaker2: And I think maintaining a flexible schedule, the children are able to go up to the schedule and if it's a beautiful day out, we're able to switch their outside time according to what they want. Today, for example, we knew it was going to rain later, so we talked to the children about that, so instead of going to the gym for gym time, they had all decided that we were going to go outside for gym time. And so it was an easier transition because they're aware of what's happening, and we keep them updated throughout the day with the daily schedule.

Speaker3: And it sounds like they have a lot of input into that daily schedule, as well.

Speaker1: Yes, they do.

Speaker3: It also sounds like you've both been very, very responsive in hearing from the children, and about their needs, and about what's going to work for them in their day. Is that something that's new, or that you start really reconsidering the way that you used to access the information from the children and the way you're doing it now?

Speaker1: Definitely. It's not us talking at them and telling them what to do, it's more of them having time to express themselves, and then we listen to their ideas. And they know that the materials are not limited that are out. They know that if they require something else, that they can come and ask us and that we will find something for them.

Speaker2: And even bringing different items in out classroom to different centres, and being able to utilize them in different ways, we're very flexible in that way, where we listen to them, and they can manipulate their environment as they see fit.