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Booklet 5 :

# Managing Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Classrooms



Inclusive  
Learning-Friendly  
Environments

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## TOOL GUIDE

This Booklet will give you practical advice about managing diverse classrooms. It explains how to plan for effective teaching and learning, how to use resources effectively, how to manage group work in a diverse classroom, as well as how to assess your students' progress and thus your own progress.

### Tools

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### Managing Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Classrooms

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## Tool 5.1 Planning for Teaching and Learning

Juan is a teacher in the Philippines who works in a small school in the mountains. He has not had much training, but he volunteered to teach when there was no teacher willing to work so far away from the town. Although he loves children, he finds teaching very challenging. There are so many things to think about: what to teach, what materials to use, where to get the materials from, how to teach a large class with different grades, how to plan lessons for different grades, etc. How can one teacher do everything?

In many countries, and particularly in rural areas, teachers may find their work especially challenging. Although we should be able to react to children's interests, we also need to be well organized. We need to **MANAGE** teaching and learning. This Tool will give you many ideas about planning for teaching and learning, maximizing the use of available resources, as well as managing an inclusive, learning-friendly classroom containing children with diverse backgrounds and abilities.

### **CLASSROOM ROUTINES**

Regular classroom activities help children to start work quickly and meaningfully at the beginning of their school day. Children should agree on the rules and routines and, better yet, they should organize them. For example, a student group or committee can be in charge of taking the register and reporting to the teacher about absences.

When developing routines with children, it is important to explain and decide upon: (i) what is to be done; (ii) who is to do it; (iii) when is it to be done; and (iv) why is it important to do this routine activity regularly. Following are some ideas about routines that you can organize with your children:

- ◆ what work they need to do at any one time, particularly for those who may arrive late because they have far to walk, as well as for those children who are waiting for the class to start;
- ◆ how books and other learning materials should be distributed, collected, and stored, and who should take responsibility for these activities (perhaps rotating this responsibility among individual children, girls as well as boys, or teams of children);
- ◆ how children can get help from each other when they need it and the teacher is unavailable;
- ◆ what to do when they have finished an activity;
- ◆ how to get the teacher's attention in a non-disruptive manner;
- ◆ what are acceptable levels of noise;
- ◆ how to move around the classroom in a non-disruptive manner; and
- ◆ how to leave the classroom.

Children should actively develop some of these rules because they are more likely to abide by them if they have participated in setting the rules. However, some rules may be non-negotiable, especially when they are intended to protect children; for instance, rules about when they can leave the classroom, or rules about contacting the teacher before leaving the school grounds, especially if they are being accompanied by an adult who is not their parent or guardian.

## CHILDREN'S RESPONSIBILITIES

**ALL** children should participate in helping with classroom duties and tasks. In this way, you will be helping yourself to manage the classroom while also teaching your children responsibility. Here are examples of some of the responsibilities you can assign to your children:

- ◆ a teacher for younger children or those who may need additional help in learning;

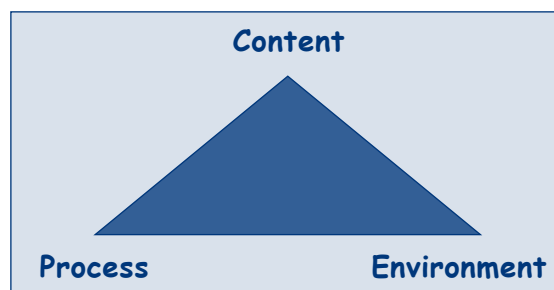
- ◆ a group leader or committee member who makes sure that a learning activity or routine is completed, and who successfully reports back on what has been learned or accomplished;
- ◆ a member of a health committee who makes sure there is water and soap or ash for hand washing and clean water for drinking;
- ◆ taking the attendance register and recording it on an attendance chart; and
- ◆ emptying and recording suggestions in the class suggestion box.

Choosing which responsibilities to give children depends upon their ages and levels of maturity. However, not just the brightest or the most “sensible” children should benefit from being given real responsibilities. ALL children in your classroom should be involved, no matter what their sex, learning ability, or cultural background. Moreover, we need to be careful not to reinforce gender stereotypes by asking girls to water the plants and boys to move the desks. Given the right support, ALL children can participate in and benefit from all classroom tasks and routines.

## LESSON PLANNING

To make the best use of your time and the time available for learning, lessons need to be well planned. Of course, this takes time at first, but it is an important professional skill for all teachers, and a time-saver in the long-run.

One framework that you can use for planning is the curriculum triangle.



In this framework, **content** means what topic has been identified in your national curriculum documents. However, and especially for classrooms containing children with diverse backgrounds and abilities, this topic needs to be meaningful to the children and adapted to fit the local community in which they live.

**Process** is how the content is taught. This may involve using different teaching methods to meet the needs of different learning styles or in order to maximize the time available for teaching and learning (see peer tutoring below).

**Environment** includes the physical environment—including learning resources for lessons that could be available in learning corners—as well as the psycho-social environment; for instance, an emphasis on building self-esteem through cooperative group activities.

**Activities:** Start a lesson with a “name game” to get children to remember each other’s names at the start of the year. This activity helps to build solidarity in the class. Another activity is called “gift giving.” Children work in pairs, talking to each other and asking questions. After a few minutes, they write down what they have discovered about their partner and then report back to the class on their partner’s personal qualities or “gifts.” They can report back like this: “My friend’s name is Maria and she brings the gift of a sense of humour.” “My friend’s name is Joe and he brings the gift of being a good listener.” This activity shows that everyone can bring something to the class and that these personal qualities are valued.

Children learn best when they are active and thinking. They also learn well when activities are based on real life experiences and contexts so that they can apply their knowledge more effectively. Teachers who know their children and community well can more easily include local examples when planning lessons.

Unfortunately, however, many teachers have never been guided towards planning lessons. They have been taught to rely on textbooks. In some cases, this is because a textbook is the only available teaching aid.



In any case, they must plan how to communicate the information in the textbook in a manner that their children will understand. For the inclusive classroom, this planning is not a luxury, it is a necessity because we must consider the needs of children with diverse backgrounds and abilities. We need to know at least the following.

- ◆ What are we teaching (topic, content)?
- ◆ Why are we teaching it (goals/objectives)?
- ◆ How are we going to teach it (methods/process)?
- ◆ What do the children already know (prior learning; pre-testing)?
- ◆ What will the children do (activities)?
- ◆ How will we manage the lesson (including organizing the physical and social environment)?
- ◆ Will activities be appropriate for **ALL** children?
- ◆ Will the children have the opportunity to work in pairs or small groups?
- ◆ How will children record what they have been doing (learning products, such as drawings)?
- ◆ How will we know if the children have been learning (feedback and assessment)?
- ◆ What do we do next (reflection and future planning)?

Some of the ways we can organize ourselves and plan our lessons well is through using a simple lesson planning matrix, a lesson plan outline, or a daily lesson planning format as in the examples here. Try to use at least one of them in planning your lessons; maybe start with just one topic or lesson. They will give you a firm start in organizing your teaching; a way to monitor whether or not children are understanding what is taught; and a chance for you to think about what to do next and how to improve your teaching.

### Lesson Planning Matrix

Topic	Objective	Teaching methods Pretest	Class-room	arrange- ment Children's	activities Learning	products Feed-back	Com- ments	(Reflec- tion)

### Lesson Plan Outline

**Subject:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Class or Teaching Group:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of Children:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Learning Objectives:

What do you want the children to learn in this lesson?

Think about the knowledge, skills, and attitudes you want them to learn.  
Choose two or three to focus on in one lesson.

### Resources:

What resources do you need for the lesson? What materials do the children need? How can the children help to obtain resources?

**Children with More Individualized Needs:**

Are there children in the group who will need extra help?

What kind of support will you need to provide to these children?

Do you need to help them on an individual basis?

Do you need to make sure that they are sitting in an appropriate place in the classroom? (Often it helps to have children who need extra help at the front of the room where you can easily help them, especially if your classroom is crowded.)

**Introduction:**

Tell the children what you want them to learn in this lesson. Some teachers write this on the board at the start of the lesson. Think about how you will start the lesson. Remember to review briefly what the children learned in the previous lesson. Try starting with a problem for the children to solve, with an open-ended question, or with a picture to discuss that can lead on to your main activities.

**Main Activities:**

What do you want the children to do in the main part of the lesson? Make sure that your tasks ensure that the children will reach the learning objectives.

Try to include a variety of activities; for example, try asking the children to work in pairs or small groups.

Decide how you will introduce and explain the tasks.

Decide how you will spend your time when the children are working on a task. This is often a good time to support children who need extra help.

**Conclusion:**

Choose an activity or discussion at the end of the lesson that reinforces the learning objectives. Ask the children what they have learned.

**Self-Reflection After You Have Taught the Lesson:**

Use this space to write a quick note for yourself on how the lesson went and how you could improve it the next time. Did the children achieve the objectives? Were all of the children involved? What could you do differently next time?

Teacher's Daily Lesson Planning Format		
Date:		
1.	Learning Objectives:	Resources:
	Lesson Structure:	
2.	Learning Objectives:	Resources:
	Lesson Structure:	
3.	Learning Objectives:	Resources:
	Lesson Structure:	
4.	Learning Objectives:	Resources:
	Lesson Structure:	
5.	Learning Objectives:	Resources:
	Lesson Structure:	



## Tool 5.2 Maximizing Available Resources

Successful teachers maintain an interesting learning environment for all children without regard to age, sex, ability, or background. Their classrooms are exciting and stimulating places in which to learn. Even if learning materials are scarce and furniture is poor, the classroom can be well ordered, clean, and made interesting with some creative thought and a willingness to ask for help. Here are some ideas!

If it is possible, desks or chairs should be able to be moved easily to facilitate group work. There may be more than one chalkboard or other suitable writing surface. There should be adequate display space for children's work, so they can take pride in showing others how well they are doing. There may be learning or activity corners for specific subjects or even a small "library."

We may find it hard to maintain an organized and stimulating classroom, especially if animals and vandals can easily destroy classroom materials. For this reason, we need to work with parents and community leaders to protect displays and learning materials. Some materials may have to be put away each day in a secure box or cupboard. Children may have to take responsibility to take things home and bring them back the next day.

Rural schools in Chad, for example, may have a metal chest to store books, since termites and other insects easily destroy these materials for learning.

In Bangladesh, several chalkboards may be found around the classroom at the children's level, so that they can sit in a group and use the chalkboard for planning, discussing ideas, problem-solving, etc. In some classrooms, the lack of desks and chairs is beneficial. A large learning space, covered with a clean, locally made carpet, can be easily changed from a science investigation space to a drama space, and groups can easily be formed and reformed without disturbing other classes.

In a highly populated state in India, the lower wall space is painted black and children use it as their own writing space, drawing and writing with a chalk. This school has been constructed under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) of India that makes schools available to children within 1 km of their residence even in the remotest areas. The school buildings have been especially designed and constructed with child-friendly elements like the above-mentioned children's chalkboard.

## PHYSICAL SPACE

### Room to Move

Children need to be able to move freely between groups of desks or chairs—or even between other children sitting on the floor—without disturbing others. Vary the seating arrangement so that you and the children can find the best seating arrangement for the entire class and small group work.

**Note To Remember:** Can children with disabilities enter and move around the classroom easily? Are children with diverse backgrounds and abilities sitting with all of the others and not segregated? Are boys and girls sitting together or separately?

### Light, Heat, and Ventilation

Arrange the desks so that the children do not have to work facing into direct sunlight. The light should come from the side of the child.

Brains need oxygen! Classroom corners can be very stuffy. If there is poor ventilation in your classroom, you may need to allow children to do some activities outside of the class. Rotate the seating position of children so that they are not always sitting in corners with poor light and ventilation.

Some children may have difficulty in seeing or hearing. Make sure all children have been tested and have an appropriate place to sit.

## LEARNING CORNERS

Children are often curious about the natural world around them. Science and mathematics corners can stimulate children's curiosity and improve learning. Children can collect and organize all of the things that interest them, and these resources can be available for use by **ALL** children. Children may grow seeds in these corners, collect fruits, and display objects they have found, such as seashells. You will need to think carefully where these learning corners should best be located so that **ALL** children can work in these areas without disturbing others.

- ◆ For science and nature corners, living things like fish can be very appropriate in an active classroom. However, children need to learn how to care for living things, to reduce cruelty, and to return them to the wild after study, if possible.
- ◆ In the mathematics corner, empty cans (with lids) and packets can fill the shelves. They can serve as learning materials themselves (for instance, equating numbers with objects), as well as places to keep other materials, such as coins and bank notes. Such "paper money" can be made from cardboard and paper and used in role-playing activities, such as going to the market. Scrap materials can also be stored here for future use, such as cardboard, string, wire, tape, pieces of dress material or other cloth, plastic, etc.

Objects found, labeled, displayed, and used by the children help them to make the link between school, daily life, and the local community. Local craftspeople and musicians can visit the school and talk with children. Perhaps they can leave objects, such as tools and instruments, for children to explore and draw, at least for a short time. When leaving precious items, security is an issue and must be considered seriously.

Children should participate fully in organizing and managing the classroom and learning materials. There can be small groups, teams, or committees that can establish and maintain the learning corners. Their participation will help to manage classroom learning materials, and it will help the children to develop responsibility and citizenship skills. Classroom committees can comprise a coordinator and secretary who are held accountable by the rest of the class to take their responsibilities seriously.

Some classrooms are not large enough to have separate corners. In East Timor, parents weave baskets that are stacked on the floor, full of shells, stones, seeds, and anything else that can be used in science and mathematics lessons. The important thing with all of these learning materials is that they are used by the children.

## DISPLAY AREAS

Proper displays of teaching aids and children's work in your classroom will help children take an interest in their learning and feel a sense of belonging to the class. Parents will also be more interested and will understand better about the work going on in the classroom. The work of **ALL** children should be appropriately displayed to show their unique abilities.

Children like to see their names by their work because it makes them feel proud. Change the displays regularly so the children remain interested and to allow each child to have some good work displayed during each term. Work displayed and then taken down can be used to build children's portfolios for assessment and reflection (see Tool 5.4 to learn about portfolios and portfolio assessment).

An interesting display board can be a good teaching aid, and it will provide a lively focus in the classroom. Display boards can be made from local materials, such as woven palm, with help from the local community. Display boards are important because they give you the opportunity:

- ◆ to give children information;
- ◆ to display children's work and improve their self-esteem;
- ◆ to reinforce the lessons you have taught;
- ◆ to provide feedback information on important activities, such as "finding out" activities at home and inquiry work in the community;
- ◆ to encourage children to work together and support each other, no matter what their background or ability; and



- ◆ to make sure all children can learn from each other's work.

If your classroom does not have solid walls, you can hang children's written work or drawings on strings across the classroom or along the walls. Work can easily be attached to the strings with tape, staples, or thorns. This "washing line" can also be used for language and mathematics information ("hanging learning corners").

In East Timor, teachers have used broken umbrellas as a framework for mobiles, with letters of the alphabet, pictures, etc., for reinforcing language activities. String for hanging visual aids is made from woven palm or banana leaves. Traditional glue comes from a fruit. Parents and other caregivers have helped to provide these local materials, and they have found out more about teaching and learning in the process. They are now better able to talk to their children about their learning at school.

## CLASS LIBRARY

Many rural communities lack library facilities, thus children do not have access to many books. A class library can be created just by using a cardboard box that is decorated and then filled with locally made books. When children create their own books, no matter how simply made, they take pride in seeing their story "in print." They also learn about how books are made, classified, and cared for. You can even have children make "zig zag" books. These books are made from pieces of paper that are folded two or three times, with text on each "page," like a brochure. The children can illustrate these "books," and they can become treasured reading materials when few books are available.

Books made by children can be very effective teaching aids. The explanations or illustrations that children include in their books may help another child to understand an important concept. Children look at problems in a different way than adults; they use language that is easier to understand; and they may communicate important information successfully, even more so than the teacher. Watch for useful books made by your children!

Moreover, books can be used to teach other skills, especially for children who may have difficulty seeing. For example, a "book" can be made by gluing objects onto pages. A child learns what these objects are by feeling them; for instance, a triangle is pasted onto a page so that children with sight impairments can learn what a triangular shape feels like. Even children who can see well may enjoy creating such "feeling books," and they can practice using them by closing their eyes. "Feeling posters" that rely on touch rather than sight can also be made and put in display areas.

In some countries, a classroom or school library is an important community resource, especially when children "publish" the results of their community data collection projects (such as school-community maps as presented in Booklet 3). Information about weather, rocks and soils, agricultural calendars, the locations of specific houses, etc. can oftentimes be used by community workers and non-governmental organizations when planning community development activities.



### Action Activity: Assessing Resources

Look around your own classroom and identify what resources you have now, as well as what you and your students may be able to make during this school term or year. Ask the children what they would like in their classroom and add it to the table below.

Classroom Resources	When should we start this project?	What resources are needed, and where can they be obtained?	What help can we get?	How will children use or learn from these resources?
Display board for children's work				
Learning corner or basket for mathematics and science .				

Classroom Resources	When should we start this project?	What resources are needed, and where can they be obtained?	What help can we get?	How will children use or learn from these resources?
Language area for storytelling, a small library, etc.				
More than one chalkboard				
Class committees established to organize learning materials				
Small class library containing books or other materials made by children				



## Tool 5.3

# Managing Group Work and Cooperative Learning

### APPROACHES TO GROUP WORK

Effective teaching means combining different teaching and learning approaches. This provides for children's individual needs and makes the classroom a lively, challenging, and friendly place. You can use four possible approaches.

- (1) **Direct teaching to the entire class.** This approach works especially well for introducing topics, provided that you prepare questions in advance to ask children at different grade levels and different abilities. You can use whole class teaching for telling a story or making up a story together with children, for writing a song or poem, for problem-solving games, or for doing a survey. Since every class has children at different developmental stages, you have to choose and adjust the content to make it suitable for all of the grades and abilities you are teaching.

To encourage **ALL** children to participate in all learning activities, we may have to provide different tasks for different groups of children. For example, you can give story-writing to one group, completion of sentences to another, and model-making to yet another. It is also possible to give the same task to all of the students, but you should expect different results. Remember: No two children, or groups of children, are the same. All classrooms are diverse. For instance, for the same task, one group of children can produce a story, another a list of corrected sentences, and yet another a model or poster.

- (2) **Direct teaching to a group of one grade (especially in multigrade settings).** While you are teaching one group, the other groups do their own work. Peer teaching can be especially useful here when children are confident. At first, groups will not have developed the skills to

be able to work consistently without guidance. But with practice and specific skills-based activities, they can learn to work cooperatively.

- (3) **Individual teaching** is when you work with a child on a one-to-one basis. This may be to help a child who has fallen behind because of absence, who has learning difficulties, or who is new to the class. You may also need individual teaching to assist "gifted" children and encourage them to do tasks that are more challenging. However, you need to keep individual teaching brief during lesson time so that you can teach the majority of children in the class.
- (4) **Small group teaching** is when you divide your whole class into small groups for learning. This is a very effective strategy, but you need to be well organized and well prepared. It can be time consuming in terms of preparation, and children also have to be prepared to work together. However, this is a very effective way of meeting the needs of diverse classes.

## USING DIFFERENT CLASS GROUPINGS

You can group children in many different ways; for example, single grade groups, mixed grade groups, same sex groups, mixed sex groups, same ability groups, mixed ability groups, interest groups, social or friendship groups, pairs, threes, or fours. Children gain a great deal from being grouped in different ways and at different times.

**Be flexible. Move children between groups.** Children need to be given the chance to sit and work with as many of their classmates as possible, younger or older, as well as those with diverse backgrounds and abilities. This helps to teach them patience and to recognize the talents of all of the children in the class.

**Beware of labeling children as slow learners.** Some children may be slower than others in mathematics, but they may be particularly bright in doing practical, hands-on work, such as conducting science projects or making children's books. We need to be careful because children who feel they are failures in their teacher's eyes will soon feel that they are actually failures. They may lose interest in school, because they don't receive any

rewards from learning. They begin to believe that they simply don't have the ability to do better, so they might as well drop out and earn money for their families.

**Prepare materials to facilitate group work.** Remember that games, work-cards, and other materials, though they may be time-consuming to make, can be used over and over again. They can be exchanged or copied during school cluster meetings. Don't forget that your children can help you to make these materials, which will reduce your workload while giving them a valuable learning opportunity and greater self-esteem.

**Think about your classroom layout.** How best can the furniture be arranged quickly and easily for effective group work? Children will have to learn to organize and re-organize the classroom depending on the activity. Work with them to decide the best classroom arrangement for everyone.

**Make sure routines are firmly established.** Children need a clear understanding of how to move to a group, how to get started, what to do when they have finished their task, etc. Develop routines as early as possible.

**ALL children should be given the responsibility of leading groups.** Group leaders have a key role to play in helping the teacher, such as passing on instructions, distributing materials, leading the group through the activity, and reporting back to the teacher.

In Colombia, a large sheet of paper for monitoring progress is put up on the wall. Children sign it when they have completed an activity, and the teacher will add a grade later. This prevents a queue of students forming at the teacher's desk, waiting for their work to be marked.

## COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Cooperative learning occurs when children share responsibility and resources, as well as when they work toward common goals. The development of cooperative group skills involves time, practice, and reinforcement of appropriate behaviours. The teacher plays an important role in establishing

a supportive environment, one in which children feel they can take risks, and an environment where all children's opinions are valued.

Cooperative group work can help all learners by increasing their understanding and promoting enjoyment and positive attitudes towards work and about themselves. But in order for **ALL** children to benefit from cooperative group activities, they need opportunities to develop a variety of skills and roles. For example, many girls may need experience as presenters, and many boys may need experience as scribes (note takers). **ALL** children need to develop positive speaking and active listening skills.

Some children may not have learned how to value the ideas of others. This can be particularly obvious when children work in mixed groups. Girls will often accept the ideas of boys in order to avoid conflict. Many boys tend to dismiss or ridicule the ideas of girls. This same situation can occur among children who are from minority groups or do not speak the language of instruction well. They will tend to follow the larger group of children.

If some children continually dominate discussion time, other children miss out on opportunities to express their ideas and clarify their opinions. How can children with diverse backgrounds and abilities become confident in asserting their ideas? In some cases, it may be necessary to have single groups of children (for instance, same sex groups) at first so that skills and confidence are developed. These groups can then be mixed later on as children develop their communication and interpersonal skills.

In some cultures, people believe that real learning comes only from the teacher. Hence, they do not see the value or the benefits of working in cooperative groups. While this belief should be acknowledged, the skills children develop through cooperative learning will be useful to them regardless of their different backgrounds. It is important to inform parents of changes in teaching and learning approaches. They can also help with producing visual aids or games, for example, so that they understand what the teacher is trying to do.

Cooperative skills can be most effectively developed within meaningful contexts. Activities that are open-ended and require divergent thinking (such as problem-solving tasks) are particularly suitable for developing cooperative group skills.

## INTERPERSONAL SKILLS FOR LEARNING

Building group spirit leads to the success of the whole class. Competitions that divide girls from boys, segregate children with diverse backgrounds and abilities, or promote favouritism hinder the learning of **ALL** children. As a teacher, you can help children to think of themselves as a **learning team** or a **learning community** in which the success of one child helps everyone to succeed.

Effective communication involves listening, speaking, and taking turns. These are skills needed for cooperative group work and skills for democratic citizenship. A good teacher **manages** communication to be sure that no child or small group of children always answer all the questions or dominate the discussion.

Active listening, in which children take responsibility for hearing and understanding what each other says, is a vital part of the learning environment. Clear speaking is equally important, as well as stating thoughts and feelings without interfering with the rights of others. Accepting and using the local language in class will also help all children to participate.

### In summary:

- ◆ Cooperation enables learners to work together, as well as share responsibilities, materials, roles, and learning opportunities.
- ◆ Small groups of children can divide roles and share responsibilities. In a science activity, one child might weigh different materials, while another might record results. Halfway through the activity, the children might exchange roles. Cooperation must be practiced if groups of children are to work independently.
- ◆ Problem-solving and negotiation help learners resolve conflicts and make decisions. Children have to learn and practice conflict management skills that are based on good communication skills and patient attitudes.



- ◆ To learn how to think, children need to be encouraged to agree upon goals, to assess alternatives, to make decisions and support them, and to follow through to learn the outcomes of their choices. All of these processes depend on group-spirit, communication, and cooperation.

## ESTABLISHING GROUND RULES FOR GROUP WORK

Guidelines for participation, or “ground rules,” can help you to organize discussion sessions with your children. These guidelines provide the basis for open, respectful dialogue and allow **ALL** children to participate. The best way to create ground rules is to allow the children to generate a list.

1. Listen actively, respect others when they are talking, but participate fully.
2. Speak from your own experience (“I” instead of “they”).
3. Do not make personal attacks; focus on ideas, not the person.

It is also important to set a ground rule for how participation will be managed. For instance, so that everyone has a chance to speak, the group can use a “magic microphone.” This can be a shell or stone that is passed around, and when someone receives the shell, it is their turn to speak if they want. If they would prefer to “pass,” then they pass the shell onto the next person. This can reduce domination by one or two confident speakers.

Re-visit the ground rules occasionally and, if time allows, ask whether the children would like to add any new rules or change old ones.



### **Action Activity: Assessing Interpersonal Skills**

Observation is a key skill for assessing interpersonal skills. Try to analyze the way one particular group works.

Skills	Child A	Child B	Child C
Listens well			
Expresses clearly			
Takes a leadership role			
Supports others			

Based on your observations, you can provide extra activities for some children in order to develop a particular skill that is necessary for group work.

## MANAGING PEER LEARNING

### Peer Tutoring

Peer tutoring, also known as peer teaching and child-to-child learning, occurs when more able or older children finish their own work and then they help younger or other learners to finish their assignments. Tutors help these children with their work, they do not do it for them! A special time each day may also be set aside for children to help each other to learn mathematics or language, either one-on-one or in small groups.

Peer tutoring is very a worthwhile educational technique because it helps to meet the individual needs of children. It also promotes a cooperative, rather than a competitive, approach to learning. Mutual respect and understanding are built between the children who are working together. The child "tutor" takes pride in teaching, while he or she also learns from the experience. It also helps to solidify what they have learned, and they benefit greatly from being given responsibilities in the classroom. When they are learning with their "peer tutor," the learners also develop a better ability to listen, to concentrate, and to understand what is being learned in a meaningful way. Children's explanations to each other can sometimes succeed where the teacher has failed. Children look

at problems in a different way than adults, and they use language that is more learner-friendly.

### **Peer Teaching in Reading**

In reading, peer teaching often is used to help slower readers or to provide extra reading for all of the younger children in the class.

- ◆ It can have a positive effect, both educationally and socially, on the child teacher or tutor and the child learner.
- ◆ It can be a very practical way of bringing individual help to reading.
- ◆ Also, perhaps surprisingly, the child tutor's reading level often improves!
- ◆ The amount of time the younger child is actively involved in reading is increased by using this technique. The younger or weaker reader benefits greatly from the undivided attention of the other. The teacher often does not have enough time to give this kind of individual help to every child.

However, it is necessary to explain carefully to the child tutor exactly what you want him or her to do. Tutors must understand what you expect of them. They should work with the youngster in a quiet, friendly, and supportive way. Impatience should be avoided. Here is an example of a peer-teaching technique in reading.

**The paired reading technique.** This technique is based on reading that:

- a. alternates between joint reading aloud by both tutor and learner, and independent reading by the learner; and
- b. uses positive comments to promote correct, independent reading.

**The child tutor is trained:**

- ◆ to introduce the book in an encouraging way;

- ◆ to delay correction of errors until the learner has tried to correct them by himself or herself;
- ◆ to discuss the passage after it has been read; and
- ◆ to check up on his or her own performance as a teacher, and on the progress of the learner, by completing report cards and check-lists.

This approach follows the Shared Reading idea that is gaining popularity in many Pacific Island schools through the introduction of initiatives like Ready to Read. The Shared Book experience often involves large books with print that is large enough for the entire class to read with the teacher. Some island teachers have attended in-service training in this technique and have written and constructed their own big books."

Pacific Literacy and the Essential Dimensions of Reading  
[http://www.learningmedia.com/html/cr\\_us\\_pl-share.htm](http://www.learningmedia.com/html/cr_us_pl-share.htm)

## SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

Self-directed learning is important because children need to learn independently of the teacher. This allows both the student and teacher to make the best use of the time available. Here are some ideas to help you increase independent learning in your classroom.

- ◆ You can ask children to learn part of a lesson from the textbook or prepare for a new lesson.
- ◆ They can undertake a survey so that they have their own data to work on during a lesson.
- ◆ You can give children in higher grades practical exercises to develop new concepts and introduce new content.
- ◆ You can use the child-to-child approach to get children planning and taking action to improve health or other areas. You can then evaluate their action afterwards.

The purpose of using different teaching approaches and groupings—like peer tutoring and self-directed learning—is to shift the focus of learning from being teacher-directed towards being learner-centred. This promotes the development of children as independent, self-directed learners and releases the teacher to attend to the needs of individual children and groups.

## PLANNING FOR DIFFERENTIATION

Differentiation is simply attending to the learning needs of a particular child or small group of children, rather than the more typical pattern of teaching the entire class as though all the children were alike. Here are some of the fundamental principles that support differentiation.

- ◆ **A differentiated classroom is flexible.** Teachers and children understand that materials, ways of grouping children, ways of assessing learning, and other classroom elements are tools that can be used in a variety of ways to promote individual and whole-class success.
- ◆ **Differentiation of instruction comes from effective and ongoing assessment of the needs of learners.** In a differentiated classroom, student differences are expected, appreciated, and recorded as a basis for planning lessons. This principle also reminds us of the close connection that should exist between assessment and instruction. We can teach more effectively if we are aware of our children's learning needs and interests. In a differentiated classroom, a teacher sees everything a child says or creates as useful information for understanding the learner and for planning lessons for that learner.
- ◆ **All children have appropriate work.** In differentiated classrooms, the teacher's goal is for each child to feel challenged most of the time, and each child finds his or her work interesting for most of the time.
- ◆ **Teachers and children are collaborators in learning.** The teacher assesses learning needs, facilitates learning, and plans an effective

curriculum. In differentiated classrooms, teachers study their children and continually involve them in decision-making about the classroom. As a result, children become more independent learners.

## What Can be Differentiated?

**Content.** Content consists of facts, concepts, generalizations or principles, attitudes, and skills related to the subject and topic being studied. Content includes what the teacher plans for children to learn, as well as how the child actually learns the desired knowledge, understanding, and skills. In a differentiated classroom, essential facts, materials to be understood, and skills remain constant for all learners. What is most likely to change in a differentiated classroom is how children gain access to core learning. Some of the ways a teacher might differentiate access to content include the following:

- ◆ using objects with some learners to help children understand a new mathematical or scientific concept;
- ◆ using texts at more than one reading level;
- ◆ using a variety of reading-partner arrangements to support and challenge children who are working with text materials;
- ◆ re-teaching children who need another demonstration; and
- ◆ using texts, tape recorders, posters, and videos as ways of conveying key concepts to different learners.

**Activity.** An effective activity involves children in using an essential skill to understand a key idea, and the activity has a specific learning goal. For example, you can differentiate an activity by providing various options at differing levels of difficulty (such as option 1 is easy, option 2 is somewhat difficult, or option 3 is very difficult). You can also differentiate an activity by providing various options that are based on children's different interests. You can offer different amounts of teacher and student support for each activity.

**Products.** You can also differentiate products. Products are items a child can use to show what he or she has learned and understands. For instance, a product can be a portfolio of children's work, an exhibition of solutions to a problem, an end-of-unit project, or a challenging paper-and-pencil test. A good product causes children to rethink what they have learned, apply what they can do, and extend their understanding and skills. Among the ways to differentiate products are the following.

- ◆ Allow children to help design products around essential learning goals.
- ◆ Encourage children to express what they have learned in different ways.
- ◆ Allow for varied working arrangements (for example, working alone or as part of a team to complete the product).
- ◆ Provide or encourage use of varied types of resources in preparing products.
- ◆ Use a wide variety of assessment methods.



### Reflection Activity: Lesson Planning

When lesson planning, are you able to differentiate learning content and activities?

Do ALL children have access to information and differentiated activities so that they can learn in their own particular style and at an appropriate level?

Do you use a variety of good "products" to show what each child has learned?

## MANAGING BEHAVIOUR IN THE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

Children may misbehave if they are not noticed or cared for. They may need attention, particularly if they are not receiving adequate care or attention at home. Moreover, we (as adults) may disapprove of certain behaviours, but this should never mean disapproving of the child as a person. It is important to separate the behaviour from the child! Some of the ways to deal with misbehaviour include the following.

- ◆ Classrooms need one main rule, namely: Respect One Another.
- ◆ If we create an interesting curriculum with materials that are meaningful to children, then they will be interested and become involved.
- ◆ We need excellent observation and recording skills to determine what causes a particular behavioural problem.
- ◆ **Most importantly**, we need to create an environment where children are actively engaged and motivated. That will be good teaching for all children. It also means the teacher is not always the person in control, but she is one of a team of problem-solvers including children, parents, and other teachers.

Other common strategies for content area instruction and solving behaviour problems include peer tutoring and cooperative learning, as discussed above.

### Problem-Solving Approach

A problem-solving approach involves a team consisting of the child, parents or caregivers, teachers, and external professionals who ask questions about the classroom's physical environment, social interactions, instructional environment, as well as non-school conditions.

As we learned in the Tool on bullying, it is not just the behaviour we are interested in but the reasons for this behaviour. We need to know something about children's needs and what they are trying to communicate.



## Needs that Children Try to Communicate

Self needs	What it sounds like
Gratification	I want it now!
Task avoidance	I don't want to!
Panic	I am scared!
Social needs	What it sounds like
Attention seeking	Look at me!
Power seeking	I want to be in charge!
Revenge	I didn't want to be part of this group anyway!



### Action Activity: Analyzing Problem Behaviours

Choose just one child who concerns you because of his or her inappropriate behaviour, and note down why this behaviour concerns you. Is it that it disrupts your lesson? Does it affect the learning of other children? Is the behaviour related to a particular time of day, day of the week, or a particular curriculum activity? How is the situation at home for the child? You might want to consult the child's profile if your school has it (see Booklet 3).

Start to undertake a study of the child so that all of the factors that might affect the child's behaviour are considered.

What actions can you take with the child, their peers, parents, and within your classroom that might help the child to change his or her behaviour? Try out each of these actions.

Which actions appear to help the child? Keep a record of successful actions. You might need them again with other children.

Teachers need to observe children's behaviour and to note it down consistently so that patterns can be observed. Once the classroom is a safer and more cooperative place to learn, there are likely to be fewer difficulties with behaviour.

## Positive Discipline

There are times when discipline is necessary. But the question is, "What type of discipline is the best?" Remember that the goal of discipline is not to control children and make them obey. Rather, it is to give them skills for making decisions, gradually gaining self-control, and being responsible for their own behaviour. Also, remember that misbehaviour is an opportunity for teaching new, positive behaviours.



### Reflection Activity: What is Your Approach to Discipline

Read through each of the boxes in the table below and put a tick in the box that you think you are most likely to use. Be as honest as you can. Use this table to explore your approach to discipline and to maintaining order in your classroom. By reflecting on and confronting your approach, you may discover areas in which you could adopt alternative actions as well as those areas in which you are using discipline effectively.<sup>1</sup>

In a Child-Friendly School in northeast Thailand, a young girl was often

Negative Disciplinary Measures	Tick if Yes	Positive Disciplinary Measures	Tick if Yes
I tell learners what NOT to do, often beginning with a negative statement.		I presents learners with possible alternatives and focus on their positive behaviours.	
I attempt to control the behaviour of learners by punishing bad behaviour.		I focus on rewarding learners for their efforts as well as good behaviour.	

<sup>1</sup> Alternatives to Corporal Punishment: The Learning Experience. (2000) Department of Education, Ministry of Education, Pretoria, South Africa.

My students follow the rules because of fear, threats, or bribery.		My students abide by the rules because they participated in making them and have agreed to them.	
The consequences of breaking a rule are often punitive, illogical, and unrelated to the learner's behaviour.		The consequences of breaking a rule are directly related to the learner's behaviour.	
When I use time out, it is meant to isolate and banish a learner for a set time period.		When I use time out, it is open-ended and managed by the learner. He or she determines their readiness to gain self-control and return to the class.	
I do not take the needs and circumstances of learners into consideration.		I base my actions on empathy and an understanding of the individual and his or her needs, abilities, circumstances, and developmental stages.	
I regard children as in need of control from an external source, for instance, myself, the Principal, or the children's parents.		I recognize that children have an innate sense of self-discipline and can be self-directed. They can be guided to learn self-control on their own.	
Even for minor issues or mistakes, I am constantly reprimanding or punishing my children.		I regard mistakes as an opportunity for my children and myself to learn. I treat my children with empathy and give them opportunities to sincerely regret their misbehaviour.	
I criticize the learner because of his or her behaviour.		I focus on the behaviour, not the learner, and on helping the child to change it in a positive, constructive way.	

disruptive in class, and she stole items and money from her fellow students. She was also classified as a chronic learning falterer because she failed her exams almost continuously. Rather than continually punishing the girl for her misbehaviour, or seeking to have her expelled from school, her teacher began to give her more responsibility. For instance, the teacher asked her to be the class "monitor" when the teacher needed to leave the room for a short time. The teacher asked her to help younger children with their studies and to help to organize learning materials before and after class. Almost immediately, the girl stopped misbehaving and adopted a different personality. She became calm and caring towards her fellow students and attentive in class. Moreover, her learning performance improved dramatically.

## Approaches to Positive Discipline

How can you establish a positive disciplinary environment in your classroom? Here are some ways to create a positive culture of learning and teaching.<sup>2</sup>

**Adopt a whole school approach** and make sure that your classroom discipline reflects the school's policies.

**Establish ground rules** in your classroom and get your children to participate in setting them. Be serious and consistent in implementing these rules.

**Know your children** and focus on developing positive relationships with them.

**Manage the learning process and the learning environment enthusiastically and professionally.** Be always one step ahead through good planning. For example, anticipate that some children may finish their work before others, and have something for them to do while they wait, such as involving them in setting up classroom displays. Be self-critical. If something doesn't work, consider all of the reasons why this may be so, including that perhaps you could have done something differently.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from: Alternatives to Corporal Punishment: The Learning Experience. (2000) Department of Education, Ministry of Education, Pretoria, South Africa, as well as the MCH Early Childhood Development and Parent Education Program at <http://www.health.state.ok.us/program/mchecd/posdisc.html>

**Develop learning materials, teaching methods, and classroom management practices** that include conflict management, problem-solving, tolerance, anti-racism, gender sensitivity, and so on.

**Be inclusive.** Leaving learners out, or not understanding their needs and circumstances, can alienate them.

**Give learners the opportunity to succeed.** Learners who feel positive about themselves and their ability to succeed will make better learners.

**Allow learners to take responsibility.** Provide them with opportunities to be responsible, be it in the way they conduct themselves in class, in running a community project, in taking care of a class pet, or in filling in the class attendance sheet for the teacher.

**Give attention seekers what they want - ATTENTION!** Even if a learner constantly seeks attention through misbehaviour, find ways that you can engage him or her in a positive way, even if it is through simple strategies like giving them a task to do, sending them out of the room for a few minutes on an errand, giving them responsibility for something, or anything else that will acknowledge them.

**Be a model.** Children always imitate the adults in their lives. They will copy manner, tone of voice, language, and actions, both appropriate and inappropriate. The most powerful teaching skill you can learn is to model the behaviour that is expected from the child. Setting a good example is critical in teaching. For instance, how can we expect children to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner if adults use physical punishment to punish children?

**Focus on solutions instead of consequences.** Many teachers try to disguise punishment by calling it a logical consequence. Get children involved in finding solutions that are related, respectful, and reasonable.

**Talk respectfully.** Communicating with a child cannot be done effectively from a distance. The time spent talking to a child and making eye contact with him or her is quality time. Many teachers have noticed a dramatic change in a "problem child" after spending five minutes simply sharing what they both like and do for fun.

**Tell them what you want.** Children respond better to being told what to do rather than what not to do; for example, instead of saying, "Stop kicking the desk!" say, "Please keep your feet on the floor."

**Give choices.** Giving a child choices allows him or her some appropriate power over his or her life, and it encourages decision-making. The choices offered must be within acceptable limits and the child's developmental and temperamental abilities. As children grow older, they may be offered a wider variety of choices and allowed to accept the consequences of their choices.

**Use professional assistance.** If there are learners who display particular difficulties in class, and especially if it involves bullying or other aggressive behaviours, seek help from your colleagues and, if necessary, from professionals, such as psychologists or counsellors.

## MANAGING THE ACTIVE AND INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

Managing active learning involves many different elements. When there is a balance among self-directed learning, peer tutoring, group work, and direct instruction, it makes our jobs easier, and it helps children learn along many pathways. Here are some of the key items that you can consider as you increase the active learning levels in your classroom.

**Planning.** Create a weekly plan scheduling classroom activities. Indicate whether children will be working independently, in groups, or as a whole class. In a multigrade classroom, each group may be working on a different activity.

**Preparing.** Prepare for each classroom activity by reviewing your teaching manual or outlining a lesson plan. Check to make sure that ALL children can participate in the learning activities.

**Gathering resources.** Collect or create the resources that are needed for the activity. These could be stones or sticks for use as mathematics objects, seashells for use in an art activity, or beans to be sprouted in science to study plant growth.

**Connecting learners to activities.** Whether the learning activity is a whole-class discussion or projects pursued by groups, you can introduce it to your class through direct instruction. Try to make the information or skills to be learned meaningful to children.

**Connecting learners to each other.** Take advantage of the ways children can help each other learn in pairs and groups. Promote peer tutoring whenever possible.

**Guiding and observing.** When children are working on activities or projects (whether on their own, in pairs, or in groups), move throughout the classroom. Make yourself available for answering questions and guiding learners in overcoming obstacles. Use this time also for assessment; for instance, assess how well children are concentrating and the ways that they are interacting.

**Focus on participation.** All of these methods and ideas help create opportunities for active learning for all. For instance, in these classrooms girls are not dominated by boys, younger children are not dominated by older children, and children with diverse backgrounds and abilities are not ignored nor left out of any activity or learning opportunity.



**Reflection Activity: How Do You Rate Your Classroom?**

My classroom	1 Yes	2 Could do better	3 Needs a lot of improvement
My classroom is tidy.			
I make good use of the space in my classroom.			
There is plenty of light in my classroom.			

My classroom	1 Yes	2 Could do better	3 Needs a lot of improvement
There are interesting things in my classroom: (i) on the walls, and/or (ii) in the mathematics and science corners.			
ALL children have access to practical materials for mathematics.			
ALL children are free to move around the room to get learning materials.			
ALL children are interested in their learning.			
ALL children can work easily (i) with a partner, and/or (ii) in small groups.			
ALL children often ask questions.			
ALL children feel confident in answering questions.			
Children who have sight and hearing difficulties have access to materials that can help them.			
Learning materials have been adapted to remove gender or ethnic bias.			
ALL children in my class can take responsibility.			





### Reflection Activity: Taking Action

Think about what you have been reading and consider how you can apply some of the ideas to your classroom. Once you have thought about the questions and examples in the table below, identify a possible activity that would work with your class.

**At the end of a week:**

Self reflection	Example	Possible planned activity
Have I planned activities where ALL children have been given the opportunity to express their feelings?	After reading a story, ask the children how they feel about what happened. Do they think it was a sad or a happy ending?	
Have I planned activities where ALL children are physically active?	Give opportunities for games or take a walk around the school grounds to see if all children are playing.	
Have I planned activities that will challenge both girls and boys intellectually?	Give the children time to work on a problem-solving activity.	
Have I planned activities which allow ALL children to interact socially?	Organize children in groups to build a model, solve a problem cooperatively, work in the garden, be a member of a class committee, etc.	



## Tool 5.4

### Active and Authentic Assessment

Mala sits in the corner crying. She has failed her exam at the end of Grade 3. She tried very hard all during the year and gained good marks when doing practical investigations and weekly tests. Three weeks before her examination, her mother fell ill and Mala took all the responsibility for looking after her brothers and sisters. She had to miss some days from school while everyone else in her class was preparing for the exam. The night before the exam she stayed up all night looking after her mother. During the examination, she could not concentrate and could not remember much of what she had learned because she was so tired. Her crying helped her to express her disappointment. She would have to repeat the whole year again. She would not continue with her friends. She felt like dropping out of school.

Many children, and especially girls and children from poor families, drop out of school due to demands from home and, sometimes, because they do not enjoy school. The story above illustrates this problem, and it also highlights the problem of testing children just once a year to assess their progress. As teachers, we need to understand children better and to learn how to assess their learning in many ways. Consequently, a more complete picture of children's development and achievement can be created.

#### **WHAT IS ASSESSMENT?**

Assessment is a way of observing, collecting information, and then making decisions based on that information. Continuous assessment means making observations continuously to identify what a child knows, what he or she understands, and what he or she can do. These observations are made at many times during the year, for instance, at the beginning, middle, and end of terms, or even more frequently. Continuous assessment can be achieved through: observations; portfolios; checklists of skills, knowledge, and behaviours; tests and quizzes; and self-assessment and reflective journals.

Continuous assessment ensures that **ALL** children have opportunities to succeed in school. By using continuous assessment, the teacher can adapt his or her planning and instruction to the needs of learners so that all will have the chance to learn and succeed.

In continuous assessment, all learners have the chance to show what they know and can do in different ways according to their different styles of learning. Continuous assessment can tell you which children are falling behind in their understanding of particular topics. You can then design new learning opportunities for those particular children. The continuous feedback that children receive by this process helps them to know if they are learning well, as well as what actions they need to take to make progress.

Continuous assessment can help you to talk with parents and caregivers about the strengths and weaknesses of the child so that they can participate in an integrated programme, such as one that links classroom activities with those in the home. Usually, the results of end-of-year exams arrive too late for parents to help a child who might not be learning well.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

As we learned in the last Tool, each learning activity should have an objective that needs to be assessed in some way. The assessments should describe learning outcomes; that is, they should tell us how well a child has developed a set of skills, knowledge, and behaviours over the course of a learning activity, topic, or a larger curriculum unit. Descriptions of learning outcomes are often called learning standards or objectives, and they may be identified for specific subjects, skills, and grade levels.

Learning activities and assessments improve when the teacher identifies specific learning outcomes. When planning a new learning activity, begin by identifying the learning outcomes. You may wish to answer the following three questions when planning your activity.

- ◆ What skills will be used or developed by the children?
- ◆ What information will be learned?

- ◆ What behaviours will be practiced?

The answers to these questions can be phrased as learning outcomes. For example, if you create a unit in which fifth-graders learn about time-distance equations in mathematics, you might develop the following outcomes.

- ◆ The learner working independently will use multiplication and division to solve time-and-distance equations as a homework assignment.
- ◆ The learner working in a learning pair will write his or her own mathematics story problems that express time-and-distance equations in space-travel scenarios.

**We can see that these learning outcomes specify:**

1. Who,
2. What will be done, and
3. Under what conditions.

**These elements are then combined, as in:**

1. The learner working in a small group,
2. will create a map of the school grounds, and
3. in one-inch scale.

**Other examples include:**

- ◆ (1.) The learner (2.) will be able to use simple addition to solve a problem (3.) in a realistic context.
- ◆ (1.) The learner (2.) will be able to work as a member of a group to complete research activities and present findings (3.) in writing.

When we are looking at specific outcomes, such as in science or mathematics, it is helpful if we have a guideline stating the different levels of outcome we expect for a specific activity. Below is one such guideline.

#### **Outcomes for a Classifying Activity**

- 4** - The child puts the items into meaningful groups. The child discusses each group's important characteristics. The child makes conclusions.
- 3** - The child puts the items into meaningful groups. The child discusses each group's important characteristics.
- 2** -The child puts the items into groups that do not have much meaning.
- 1** -The child puts the items into groups that do not make sense.
- 0** -The child does not try to do the task.

## **AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT APPROACHES AND TECHNIQUES**

Authentic assessment means involving the child in evaluating his or her own achievements. Authentic assessments are performance-based, realistic, and instructionally appropriate. Observation, along with talking with children about their learning, can take place at any time.

### **Observation**

During systematic observation, young children should be observed when they are working alone, in pairs, in small groups, at various times of the day, and in various contexts. Observations can include the following.

**Anecdotal records.** These are factual, non-judgmental notes of children's activities. They are useful for recording spontaneous events.

**Questions.** A useful method of gathering information is to ask children direct, open-ended questions. Open-ended questions, such as “I’d like you to tell me about ...”, help you to assess the child’s ability to express himself or herself verbally. In addition, asking children about their activities often gives insights into why they behave as they do.

**Screening tests.** These tests are used to identify the skills and strengths that children already possess, so that teachers can plan meaningful learning experiences for their students. Results should be used along with more subjective materials, such as that contained in portfolios as discussed below. Assessment information should not be used to label children.

Observation can reflect learning successes, learning challenges, and learning behaviours, as in this example of a teacher’s observations of the progress made by Francisco, an East Timorese boy who is learning English as a second language.

### Francisco

12 March. Francisco is writing an autobiography about his family in East Timor. He is organizing his information logically, but he is using incorrect verb tenses in his writing.

16 March. Writing clinic with Francisco and four other students focusing on the use of the past tense in recount writing (writing about past events). Francisco is editing his draft.

20 March. Francisco is now overusing the past tense in his recount writing. Needs more explanation and work on this.

1 April. Francisco and Joe working well together using an encyclopaedia to research facts about East Timor. Francisco taking brief, accurate notes of important information.

## Portfolio Assessment

### Content

One method of authentic assessment is to create and review a portfolio of the child's work. A portfolio is a record of the child's process of learning, that is, what the child has learned and how he or she has learned it. Portfolios enable children to participate in assessing their own work. The portfolio keeps track of a child's progress; it follows the child's success rather than his or her failure. Moreover, the portfolio should follow the child if he or she moves to different schools.

Samples of work that can be placed in portfolios can include: written samples, such as essays, stories, and reports; illustrations, pictures, maps, and diagrams; as well as mathematics worksheets, other assignments, and graphs. Children's non-curricular activities can also be recorded, such as taking responsibility in a classroom committee.

You can select samples that demonstrate specific aspects of a child's work. You can also invite children to select from their work those that they want to put in their portfolio for their parents to see and, if possible, sign. Then every semester or term, the whole range of work is given to the child's family for review.

When children are advanced to a new grade level, teachers may pass on specific sections of the children's portfolios to their new classroom teachers. This will help these teachers to become familiar with the varied talents and needs of their new students.

Each portfolio entry should be dated and the context of the piece be given. The context might be stated like this: "This was a piece of unaided free writing. Only the theme was given and some basic vocabulary. Thirty minutes were given for this task."

### Using the Portfolio in Evaluation

The material in a portfolio should be organized in chronological order. Once the portfolio is organized, the teacher can evaluate the child's achievements. Appropriate evaluation always compares the child's current work to his or her earlier work. Portfolios are not meant to be used to compare children with each other. They are used to document an individual child's progress over time. The teacher's conclusions about a child's

achievements, abilities, strengths, weaknesses, and needs should be based on the full range of that child's development, as documented by the items in the portfolio and her own knowledge about how the child is learning.

Using portfolios to assess children provides teachers with a built-in system for planning parent-teacher meetings. With the portfolio as the basis for discussion, the teacher and parent can review concrete examples of the child's work, rather than trying to discuss the child's progress in the abstract.

### Case Study

**Active Assessment in the Philippines**, an interview with Marissa J. Pascual, a very experienced teacher from the Community of Learners School for Children in the Philippines. She is also a trainer for the UNICEF-assisted Multigrade Education Programme.<sup>3</sup>

#### Questions:

**How do you go about assessment?**

**How do you integrate the work of assessment into further learning?**

**What do the changes in focus mean to you?**

I usually maximize the first few weeks of classes for gathering valuable information about my students' current levels through a variety of ways.

#### Observation

I have learned over the years that a lot of important information can be gained from simple observations. This valuable information is very useful in helping me set individually- appropriate objectives and choose activities that are suited to my students' needs and capabilities. I usually list down what I need to observe about a child or a group of children for each week. Knowing my focus for the week allows me

<sup>3</sup> [www.unicef.org/teachers/forum/0199.htm](http://www.unicef.org/teachers/forum/0199.htm)



to plan my activities and my schedule for observation. Knowing what to observe and when to observe enables me to do my work in a more systematic and efficient manner.

During the first weeks, I always find it important to observe children in varied reading situations, such as reading independently during silent reading time; reading with a group of children during literature group shared reading; reading orally in class or to a peer or adult in class; and reading to look up specific information about a given topic. It allows me to gain information about my students' ability to construct meaning from text, apply fix-up strategies (such as using pictures and context clues, sentence structure, and substitutions) when they encounter new and difficult words in text, self-correction and to react critically to what they read.

These initial observations also allow me to see how the child views reading and how he views himself as a reader. At the start of the year, I also ask them to answer a questionnaire that allows them to reflect on their attitudes towards reading as well as how they view themselves as readers.

### **Diagnostic Tests for Grammar, Spelling, Vocabulary, Mechanics of Writing**

The results of these assessments, combined with the information I get from my observations, help me decide what changes to make in the curriculum that I initially prepared for the class during the summer. It helps me determine the lessons that I need to teach to the whole class or to particular groups of children in the immediate weeks.

### **First Month Writing Portfolio**

The students' initial entries in their writing portfolio also provide valuable information about their current writing abilities. Their initial entries consist mostly of their outputs during creative-writing activities and short reports they prepare after they do research for other subjects. Again, this helps me determine what lessons to prioritize as well as determine student groupings for the first quarter.

During the year, I make use of both informal and formal methods of assessment. Informal methods are usually built-in to the daily classroom and school activities. Every teaching-learning activity that I provide

each day involves a process of evaluating a student's ability to accomplish a task and fulfill an instructional goal.

I observe both the process and the outcome of my students' participation in an activity or while working on an assigned task. For example, looking at results of short exercises after a mini-lesson gives me an idea as to whether I need to re-teach a particular concept using a different method or give the child more time to do practice exercises related to the lesson. Going over their writing portfolio also allows me to see if they are able to apply grammar concepts taken up in class. Again this informs the decision-making process regarding subsequent learning experiences or strategies.

Since my students' needs and abilities vary, as well as the pace in which they accomplish their work, it is necessary to take these into consideration when planning the lessons and activities that I would provide in class. To facilitate classroom management, an important investment is to determine who among my students have common needs and strengths and then group them accordingly. This enables me to plan my day or week more efficiently while ensuring that their current needs are met.

I also use formal methods of evaluation in class. These include short tests or quizzes, individual tasks and projects (such as writing projects or research papers), and group projects, in addition to the tests given during the Quarterly Assessment Week.

A student's achievement level and school performance is always based on a combination of both built-in/informal evaluation and the more formal and periodic evaluation. In this sense, evaluation is cumulative. I also take into consideration my students' investment in the teaching-learning process based on their potential. After every quarter, I summarize the strengths and needs of each child in my class. I set new objectives for the succeeding quarter and plan new activities that will enable me to meet my objectives. I also revise my groupings as needed.

For me, the evaluation process is not complete without bringing in the input of my students. At the end of each quarter, I give out self-evaluation questionnaires for them to answer as well as hold individual conferences to evaluate a quarter's work together, revisit goals and set new ones for the subsequent quarter. This part of the evaluation process is important to me because it provides me with an opportunity to help my students learn about themselves and their capabilities. This becomes part of the basis for setting new goals for the subsequent quarter. During conferences, I ask a student to bring out his task folder, notebook, writing portfolio or writer's workshop folder and other projects he had worked on during the quarter.

Over the years, I have come to learn that every bit of information that a teacher can gain about a child at different periods within the year—whether through informal or formal means—must be carefully validated and revalidated before one makes important curriculum decisions. For instance, getting good scores in grammar exercises is no guarantee that the child has already mastered a particular skill. In my experience, there have been many instances when a student would be able to get a perfect score in a grammar exercise but would have difficulty applying this concept when writing his composition. When there is a disparity between a child's performance in exercises and in compositions, I have found it helpful to provide more opportunities for group compositions with a teacher serving as a facilitator. This allows me to model the use of a particular grammar concept during composition-writing.

As a teacher, it is important for me to always reflect on whatever new information that I gain about a particular child or group of children at any given time. I always try to analyze the implications of the new information. For instance, if there is a pattern observed in the errors that a student makes in reading or in compositions, it can signal that this child may benefit from re-teaching a particular concept or that he may require follow-up activities to master a particular skill. Every new piece of information sets me to thinking about what help my students need and how I can best help them.

## FEEDBACK AND ASSESSMENT

Feedback is an essential element in assessing learning. Before giving feedback, it is important that a safe, secure, and trusting relationship exists between the teacher and the child.

Children benefit from opportunities for formal feedback through group and class sessions. When this works well, there is a shift from teachers telling pupils what they have done wrong, to pupils seeing for themselves what they need to do to improve, and then to discussing it with the teacher.

Negative feedback is illustrated by: "Why can't you improve your spelling? You're always making mistakes." Negative feedback reduces children's self-esteem and does not lead to improved learning.

Positive and constructive feedback is illustrated by the following: "Sita, I like the way you started your story and the ending was quite exciting. If you use a dictionary to check some of your words, then this will help you with your spelling. If you are not sure about the first letters, ask Joa." Positive feedback acknowledges strengths, identifies weaknesses, and shows how improvement can be made through constructive comments.

### Characteristics of Effective Feedback

- ◆ Feedback is more effective if it focuses on the task and is given regularly while it is still relevant.
- ◆ Feedback is most effective when it confirms that the pupils are progressing well and when it stimulates the correction of errors or other improvements in a piece of work.
- ◆ Suggestions for improvement should act as "scaffolding;" that is, pupils should be given as much help as possible in using their knowledge. They should not be given the complete solutions as soon as they have difficulties. They should be helped to think things through for themselves often in a step-by-step manner.

- ◆ The quality of discussion in feedback is important and most research indicates that oral feedback is more effective than written feedback.
- ◆ Pupils need to have the skills to ask for help and feel comfortable in doing so in the classroom.

## Self-Assessment

### Children need to:

- ◆ reflect on their own work;
- ◆ be supported to admit problems without risk to self-esteem; and
- ◆ be given time to work problems out.

Self-assessment takes place whenever the learner is to describe his or her own abilities, knowledge, or progress. Self-assessment builds knowledge and the love of learning. In addition, self-assessment can occur in discussions with children or in their own journals.

As soon as children can write, they should be asked to record their learning experiences in journals. When a learning activity or unit of study is completed, you can ask each student to reflect on their progress.

## ASSESSING SKILLS AND ATTITUDES

It is difficult to assess many of the goals in education, yet skills and attitudes are fundamental to children's learning and future development. Consequently, we should try to assess these as best we can. Below are examples of the criteria used to assess four levels of skill and attitude achievement.<sup>4</sup>

**Overall skill: Cooperation.** Cooperation means being able to work with others and accept a variety of roles that involve listening, explaining, negotiating, and compromising.

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<sup>4</sup> This section is based on: Miriam S. (1993) *Learning from Experience*. World Studies. Trentham Books Ltd., United Kingdom.

	Child A	Child B
Level 1: can work with a partner taking turns to listen, speak, and share ideas and resources		
Level 2: can accept and negotiate others' differing and critical viewpoints		
Level 3: can work in a mixed group (age/ability/sex)		
Level 4: can lead any mixed group  can suggest alternative solutions to problems using cooperative strategies		

**Attitude: Empathy** is to be willing to imagine the feelings and perspectives of other people.

	Child A	Child B
Level 1: can accept that there can be more than one side to a disagreement  can share feelings and explain behaviours		
Level 2: can describe the feelings of characters in stories  can recognize that another child or adult has reasons for wanting something different from you		

	Child A	Child B
<p>Level 3: can explain that people do things differently because of their background and situation</p> <p>is able to challenge the use of insults in school based on gender, disability, nationality or poverty</p>		
<p>Level 4: can challenge stereotypical statements made about people different from themselves</p>		

Activities that are often used in continuous and authentic assessment include both performance and product assessment. Performance assessment may include: science investigations; mathematical problem-solving using real objects; a dance performance; a role play with one or two others; dramatic reading; serving in a volleyball game; etc.

Products that can be assessed may include: an illustration or drawing; a model related to a science phenomenon; an essay or report; or a song which has been written and composed by the child.

## WHAT CAN GO WRONG WITH ASSESSMENT?

The final outcome for students should be related to what they could do **before** and what they can do **now**. It should not be related to just a standardized test at the end of a year. Children in the same year group (class or grade) may have at least three years difference in general ability between them, and in mathematics there may be as much as seven years difference. This means that comparing children using one standardized test is unfair to many children.

A teacher, parent, or caregiver should not view this end-of-year test as the most important assessment as far as the child is concerned.

One of the greatest sources of low self-esteem in children is the use of comparisons, particularly in school. The end-of-year test should just be one component of an all-round, comprehensive assessment of children's progress. This assessment is aimed at raising the awareness of the teacher, the child, and their parents or caregivers about the child's abilities. It should also be used to develop strategies for further progress. We should not emphasize a child's deficiencies or weaknesses. Rather, we should celebrate what the child has achieved and decide how we can help them to learn even more.

Authentic and continuous assessment can identify what the children are learning as well as some of the reasons why children may not be learning (sometimes described as "learning faltering"). Some of these reasons include the following.

- ◆ The children have not learned the skills to do the task. Many learning tasks are sequential, particularly in mathematics and language. Children need to learn one skill, such as counting to 10, before they can attempt subtraction of numbers.
- ◆ The instructional method was not the right one for the child.
- ◆ The child may need more time to practice what he or she has learned.
- ◆ The child is suffering from hunger or malnutrition.
- ◆ The child has emotional or physical problems that cause difficulties in learning.

If a child is having difficulties, continuous assessment using authentic methods may reveal these difficulties, thus allowing us to give remedial help to the child. We should understand that not all children learn in the same way and at the same speed. Some children may have been absent during an important step in the sequence of learning. Additional instruction, when used at appropriate times, can provide children who are falling behind with other ways to learn knowledge and skills. "Learning partners," who have attained skills to a good standard, can be asked to help those who have been absent or who need more attention.





**Reflection Activity: Assessing Progress**

Think about last term. Think of one subject, such as mathematics or science. How did you assess your children’s progress? Through observation, weekly pencil and paper tests, something they produced (product), a portfolio, an end-of-term exam, etc.?

How will you report to parents or caregivers? Through an informal discussion, a report card, or at a parent-teacher meeting?

**Awareness to Action.** Now that you are better aware of the value of continuous assessment, what actions can you take to get a better picture of your children’s strengths and weaknesses? Can you establish portfolio assessment at your school, or at least in your class? Try to work out an assessment plan for the entire year. Try to think of ways that are manageable in your context, yet give a full picture of children’s progress throughout the year. Remember also that assessment should be included in your initial planning of topics and lessons.

	Observation	Performance	Portfolio	Diagnostic tests	Others?
Daily					
Weekly					
By term					
Annually					



## Tool 5.5

### What Have We Learned?

In this Booklet, we explored many of the practical management issues that need to be dealt with if our classrooms are going to provide learning opportunities for all children including those with diverse backgrounds and abilities. Some questions we need to consider are:

- ◆ Can parents as caregivers help us to manage the classroom (but not control it)?
- ◆ Can children learn to take more responsibility for their learning in the classroom?
- ◆ Can we make better use of local resources for learning materials?
- ◆ Can children help each other through peer teaching?
- ◆ Can we plan differentiated lessons so that all children can gain success at their own rate?
- ◆ Can we be proactive when we are managing behaviour in the classroom?
- ◆ When needed, can we use discipline as a positive tool for learning?

**If a classroom is well managed, lessons well planned, and all stakeholders have an interest in children's learning, then all children can be successful in their learning.**

We also reviewed some of the ways that children's learning can be assessed over the course of a year. We need to know where each child is starting from, because we know that children of the same age may learn at different rates. We need to provide them with feedback as they are learning (sometimes called "formative assessment"), and we need to know what progress they have made by the end of the year ("summative assessment"). We looked at authentic assessment as a means for providing formative assessment for children and parents or other caregivers.

We learned that authentic assessment involves a variety of ways of assessing children's progress including direct observation, portfolios, problem-solving activities (perhaps in pairs or small groups), presentations (an example of a product of a learning activity), and some appropriate pencil and paper questioning.

Are you confident when reporting to parents or caregivers on the progress of all of the children in your class during the middle of a school year? Are there any ways in which you can include children in the process of assessment, for example, by asking them to choose pieces of work to include in their portfolio?

## WHERE CAN YOU LEARN MORE?

The following publications and Web sites are valuable resources for managing the inclusive classroom.

### Publications

*A Tale of Two Kittens*. A reader for children in primary school to learn about diversity; includes a teacher's manual. Human Rights Education Programme (Karachi/Pakistan). [www.hrep.com.pk](http://www.hrep.com.pk)

*Alternatives to Corporal Punishment: The Learning Experience*. (2000) Department of Education, Ministry of Education, Pretoria, South Africa.

Miriam S. (1993) *Learning from Experience*. World Studies. Trentham Books Ltd., United Kingdom.

UNESCO (1993) *Teacher Education Resource Pack: Special Needs in the Classroom*. Paris.

UNESCO (2001) *Understanding and Responding to Children's Needs in Inclusive Classrooms: A Guide for Teachers*. Paris.

UNESCO (2004) *Changing Teaching Practices Using Curriculum Differentiation to Respond to Students' Diversity*. Paris.

### Web Sites

**Authentic Assessment: a briefing.**

<http://home.ecn.ab.ca/~ljp/edarticles/assessment.htm>

**Classroom routines.**

[http://www.ioe.ac.uk/multigrade/practical\\_advice.htm](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/multigrade/practical_advice.htm)

**Cooperative learning.**

<http://www.jigsaw.org/> and <http://www.co-operation.org>

**Guidelines for Portfolio Assessment in Teaching English by  
Judy Kemp and Debby Toperoff.**

<http://www.etni.org.il/ministry/portfolio>

**Managing group work and cooperative learning.**

[http://www.tlc.eku.edu/tips\\_cooperative\\_learning.htm](http://www.tlc.eku.edu/tips_cooperative_learning.htm)

**Multigrade Teacher Training Materials.**

[http://www.ioe.ac.uk/multigrade/teacher\\_training.htm](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/multigrade/teacher_training.htm)

**Positive Discipline.**

<http://www.positivediscipline.com>

**Quality Education for Every Student. This is a good Web site  
for explaining portfolio assessment.**

<http://www.pgcps.org/~elc/portfolio.html>

**UNICEF Teachers Talking about Learning.**

<http://www.unicef.org/teachers>