

Evaluation of Learning at the Preschool Level

Intervention at the Core of Evaluation

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In preschool education, it is not possible to talk about evaluation without referring to intervention. In this context, free play and workshops are the best times to intervene, since these activities provide opportunities for teachers to observe the transfer of the learning (knowledge, strategies, processes) offered to the children.

It should be recalled first of all that in preschool, observation is the favoured means of evaluation, since it makes it possible to follow the progress of children as they develop competencies. Teachers therefore need to observe the attitudes, behaviours, processes, strategies and achievements of the children in action in order to model their interventions with them.

According to the *Guide général d'interprétation et d'instrumentation pédagogique pour le programme d'éducation préscolaire* (MEQ, 1982, p. 8-13), the purpose of intervention is:

- to stimulate, i.e. encourage the child to be open to change, to apply an idea, to try something new or to use a familiar situation differently
- to support the child or the group in what they are thinking, feeling or doing
- to confront, i.e. criticize, judge, impose a rule or take an attitude that places the child in front of a reality he or she does not like, but which must be faced

The role of teachers is therefore crucial, since, through their actions, they motivate the children to go farther in their learning. In order to take appropriate action, teachers must always keep in mind the focus of their observation and the evaluation criteria for the competencies to be developed according to the [Québec Education Program](#).

Teach by asking questions

The best way to understand children and take action to help them develop their competencies is to ask questions. The children can thus structure their thoughts and go farther in their exploration and learning. Teachers should therefore get involved in free play, workshops and activities in order to observe children in action and question them appropriately. The questions teachers ask should be related to what they are aiming to observe. The children's answers should enable them to garner information on the development of competencies and thus guide their actions.

To choose which questions to ask children, teachers need to refer to the evaluation criteria. The teachers first define all the observable criteria, then, they question the children about those that cannot be observed. The question chosen should refer to something in the child's zone of proximal development.

Here are a few examples of questions related to each of the evaluation criteria for the six competencies of the Québec Education Program and their context for learning:

Competency 1 – To perform sensorimotor actions effectively in different contexts

Context for learning: This competency is developed in motor and sensory play, art activities and activities outside the classroom or school. (Québec Education Program, p. 54)

Execution of various gross motor movements and execution of various fine motor movements

- "Where can you go?"

Adjustment of actions to the environment

- "Look around you." (Teach them to use the space with consideration for others.)

Recognition of factors that favour well-being (health and safety)

- "How do you feel?"
- "What did you do to make sure you're safe?"
- "What could you do to feel better?"

Competency 2 – To affirm his/her personality

Context for learning: This competency is developed through the children's everyday experience in play, projects, creative activities and relations with others. (Québec Education Program, p. 56)

Use of appropriate means to meet his/her needs

- "What do you need to continue doing what you're doing?"

Appropriate expression of his/her tastes, interests, ideas, feelings and emotions

- "Why do you think this is interesting?"
- "What do you like most about it?"
- "What would you like to do?"

Demonstration of autonomy in games, activities, projects and everyday life in the class

- "Why did you play this game, do this activity, this project?"
- "How did you pick it?"
- "What are you missing?"

Various manifestations of emotional security (setting challenges for himself/herself, speaking up)

- "What challenge have you given yourself for the next few weeks?"

Competency 3 – To interact harmoniously with others

Context for learning: This competency is developed in everyday classroom life through play and projects. (Québec Education Program, p. 58)

Demonstration of openness to others

- "What's your idea here?"
- "What could you do here?"
- "Does your friend agree? If your friend doesn't want to, what do you do?"

Participation in the group and observance of the group's rules of conduct

- "What would happen if we changed the rules?"

Application of a conflict-resolution process, with help

- "What could you do to make things work?"

Personal involvement with others

- "What role are you playing?"
- "What do you want to do?"
- "What can you do to help the other children?"

Competency 4 – To communicate using the resources of language

Context for learning: Communication is developed in real, meaningful, complex everyday situations, through the regular use of a variety of sound, visual or digital productions (documents, films, sketches, poems, songs, etc.) and children's literature. Symbolic games stimulate children's verbal expression. (Québec Education Program, p. 60)

Interest in communication

- "Why did you take this book?"
- "Why are you drawing this, painting this?"

Demonstration of understanding of the message

- "Can you tell me the story?"
- "Tell me about your favourite character."

Production of messages

- "Show me the different parts of your message."

Competency 5 – To construct his/her understanding of the world

Context for learning: Children develop this competency in everyday life, in both ordinary situations and those in which problems must be solved. They construct their understanding of the world as they discover the arts, the social sciences, mathematics, science and technology. (Québec Education Program, p. 62)

Demonstration of interest, curiosity and a desire to learn

- "What are you doing now?" "Why?"

Experimentation with various ways of exercising thinking

- "What could we do to change what you're doing and make it better?"
- "Can you do the same thing with a different material?"
- "What is this used for in everyday life?"

Use of pertinent information to learn

- "What do you see in this picture?"
- "How will this help you do your work?"

Description of the process and strategies used in learning

- "How did you make this?"
- "How did you get ready to do it?"
- "What did you start with?"
- "What did you do next?"
- "What problems did you have?"
- "What did you change along the way?"
- "What did you do to solve your problem?"

Competency 6 – To complete an activity or project

Context for learning: Children develop this competency by exploring their physical, human and cultural environment, and through work in the different subject areas. (Québec Education Program, p. 64)

Involvement in the activity or project

- "What do you want to do?"

- "What do you know about this?"
- "Who could help find out more about this?"
- "What's your plan?"

Use of his/her resources in carrying out the activity or project

- "Next time, how would you do it?"
- "What do you need?"

Perseverance in carrying out the activity or project

- "What else would you like to do?"
- "What's your project?"
- "What do you see?"
- "How are you doing with your project?"

Description of the strategies used in carrying out the activity or project

- "Are you doing okay? Do you need help?"
- "What have you done so far?"
- "What did you do to find out how to do your project?"
- "What did you try?"
- "What could you try?"

Assessment of the learnings acquired and difficulties encountered

- "What did you do to finish your activity?"
- "What did you find hardest to do?"
- "Who helped you?"
- "What do you know now that you didn't know before?"
- "Would you be able to do the activity again using other things?"

Expression of satisfaction with the activity or project

- "What are you the most proud of?"
- "How could you use what you know now?"
- "What did you like the best?"

A useful site

The Web site of the [Service national du RÉCIT à l'éducation préscolaire](#) contains a lot of resources for school staff, including many documents produced by MELS.

