

Evaluation of Learning at the Preschool Level

The Basis for Feedback in Preschool Education

Isabelle Claveau and Christine Pérusset

In preschool, the teachers should pay particular attention to feedback, both oral and written, since certain remarks can be harmful to children. Feedback should above all emphasize the abilities of a child and what the child should improve.

The characteristics of good feedback

Feedback that is in keeping with the development of competencies in the Québec Education Program should:

- be linked to observable facts related to the evaluation criteria and the key features of the competency to be developed
- be constructive, i.e. specify what the children are capable of doing and emphasize their successes
- refer to the child's progress
- mention a child's special talent, where applicable
- describe what the child is doing in positive terms
- be understandable for parents (use concrete examples to illustrate the points being made)
- be timely and stress the element that needs improvement, where applicable
- recognize the work done at home
- ensure follow-up on the elements that need improvement
- involve the child (the child should know what comments have been included in the report card)

What to avoid

For feedback to be constructive, the teacher should avoid generalizations. They can even reflect prejudice since they describe the child as a whole.

Vague expressions such as "make an effort," "pay more attention," "concentrate," "take care in your work" or "apply yourself" should also be eliminated, since they do not indicate what the child needs to improve or how to go about it.

Finally, negative remarks ("lacks attention," "lacks perseverance"), value judgments and observations ("lazy," "stubborn," "not interested") should also be avoided.

Feedback in the report card

So what should be written in the report card? Following this reflection, the feedback given to parents through the report card should at a minimum:

- identify a strength or a newly acquired competency
- focus on a challenge in the child's zone of proximal development
- indicate how the teacher will help the child overcome difficulties (actions to be taken)
- identify, with the parents, the support they can provide to their child
- review the help that needs to be provided at home
- show the child's progress by indicating what has been improved

