

What to Look for in a Play-based Kindergarten Classroom

This document outlines key actions that visitors should see during various times in the schedule in a play-based, developmentally appropriate kindergarten. Many of the examples are from the [2013 Danielson Framework for Teaching](#) with early learning examples.

A developmentally appropriate kindergarten classroom using a play-based learning model

- Is purposefully and intentionally planned by the teacher to address standards.
- Balances teacher-directed and child-led activities.
- Provides active, hands-on experiential learning.
- Integrates learning across multiple domains.
- Allows sufficient time for child-initiated activities.

When Visiting a Classroom	The teacher is likely to...	The students are likely to...
Arrival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Model pro-social behavior with warm greetings to individual students by name (2a) ● Remind students of class expectations (2a) ● Listen to and inquire about students' background and lives outside the classroom (1b, 2a)□ ● Collect social and communication evidence with anecdotal notes, photos, checklist (1e, 1f, 3d) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Follow arrival routines such as sign-in, Question of the Week (2c) ● Self-manage their belongings (2c) ● Express thoughts and needs to the teacher and peers (2a)
Morning Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage students to build off each other's ideas (2d) ● Use rich language (3a) ● Use music and movement (3a) ● Explain the learning plan for the day, including special events, etc.(3a) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gather in assigned spot and participate in waiting activities (books, conversations, etc.) (2a) ● Actively participate (3c)
Whole Group Instruction (Literacy, Writing, Math, Social Studies or Science)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Link the instructional purpose of this lesson to current unit of study or curriculum (3a) ● Limit the large group time to 15-20 minutes with frequent brain or body breaks (3c) ● Use the cycle of <i>I do, We do, You do</i> (3c) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Model new learning ○ Use students to model the new learning ○ Give time for students to practice ● Use Turn and Talk and Think, Pair, Share to discuss a topic (3b) ● Offers prompts to scaffold learning during partner work (3b) ● Collect evidence on communication and cognitive skills during partner work (3d) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engage in listening and speaking behaviors (1e, 2a) ● Share ideas (1e, 2a) ● Participate in partner conversations (1e, 3a)
Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prepare students for a transition (2c) ● Use music, chants, visual signals for transitions (2c) ● Monitor student behavior (2d) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Echo the teacher's stated expectations and remind friends (2c)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use proximity and signals to silently or subtly remind students of expectations (2d) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Follow directions with minimal reminders (2c)
Learning Centers (Literacy, Math)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Guide small groups in oral language, reading, math (1a, 1e, 2c) ● Collect data on student levels (1f) ● Teach the students the tasks in the center, providing visual models, center signs, flowcharts as needed (2e) ● Have intentionally planned the center tasks to be integrated with the current unit of study/theme (1e, 2b) ● Have set up hands-on, minds-on, meaningful activities and not worksheets (3c) ● Provide visual reminds of strategies that have been taught and remind students to use them (2a) ● Provide extension activities to support all students (3c) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be cognitively busy in meaningful activities (2b) ● Monitor and support each other in completing literacy activity with limited support from the teacher (2c) ● Explain what they are learning (3a) ● Explain concepts to their peers and suggest strategies (3a) ● Explore related materials if they complete a center task (3c)
Independent Work (Reading, Writing, Inquiry Projects)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Circulate among the students to question, prompt, advance high-level thinking and promote metacognition (3b, 3d) ● Ask children to explain their thinking (3b) ● Conference individually with students to scaffold learning and collect evidence of their learning (3d) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work on assigned tasks that are challenging yet achievable (1e)
Choice Centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Model and encourage problem solving, releasing responsibility to students to solve problems (3c) ● Have frequent conversation with students, inquiring about their interests (2a) ● Ask students to reflect on and evaluate their work (2b) ● Provide multiple methods for the students to engage with a variety of materials (3a) ● Provide a differentiation of materials that support the range of students abilities, interests, needs (2c) ● Follow student- initiated activities and support learning through extension (3c) ● Keep track of students' learning progress through note-taking, photos, videos, collecting work samples (3d) ● Seize on opportunities to enhance learning, building on a spontaneous event or student interests (3e) ● Ask open-ended questions to deepen thinking (2b) ● Allow wait time for students to formulate and share their thinking (3a, 3d) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Choose which center they will work at, following their interests (1e, 2b) ● Have reciprocal conversations with peers (2d) ● Initiate inquiry into learning topics (1e, 3c) ● Organize play with peers, negotiating roles and scenarios (2b) ● Contribute evidence of learning for their portfolios with photos, dictation, drawing or writing work samples (3d)
Reflection Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Give opportunities for reflection and closure on the lesson to consolidate student understanding (3c) ● Share observations with the students about learning that s/he saw happening (3c) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share and explain their completed or work in progress (3d) ● Give summaries of their play scenarios (3c)