# Emerging Literacy Checklist

*A Reflective Discussion Tool for School-Based Administrators, Educators, and Support Personnel*

**Purpose**

The Emerging Literacy Checklist is a reflective discussion tool that will support school-based administrators, educators, and support personnel to integrate emerging literacy planning with classroom practice.  The checklist is intended to identify the aspects of the Kindergarten program that support children's emerging literacy learning and development and those areas that may require additional supports.

The checklist has been divided into four areas of focus for school-based administrators to use during classroom visits and educator observations. These areas include:

1. Print-Rich Environments
2. Language-Rich Practices
3. Supporting Families
4. Community Engagement

The checklist is to be considered a guide and can be adapted to meet the needs of the children and the program.

Through referencing the checklist and discussing the questions for reflection using a collaborative approach, school-based administrators can make informed decisions about ways to build on educators' current practices to enhance children's emerging literacy learning.  The checklist will also assist in determining the supports,

resources and materials that best meet the needs, interests, strengths, languages, cultures, and families of the children within the Kindergarten program.

**Supporting a Collaborative Approach**

Collaboration among Kindergarten educators, school-based administrators, and support personnel enhances reflective practices, constructs new knowledge and supports high quality classroom practices.

Collaboration provides opportunities for:
- gaining deep understanding of the ways to support children in holistic development and learning;
- planning successful transitions; and,
- establishing relationships and partnerships in the community.

Successful collaboration between administrators and educators facilitates:
- creating language-rich, print-rich environments;
- articulating the principles of early learning; and,
- ensuring high-quality, developmentally appropriate learning experiences.

It is anticipated that this assessment tool will assist educators in articulating developmentally appropriate pedagogical approaches for Kindergarten and in creating a shared understanding of emerging literacy learning and development in Kindergarten. When school-based administrators use the *Emerging Literacy Checklist* for observing and supporting educators in their professional journey of learning through practice, it will enhance the capacity for planning and developing programs in which children thrive.

# 1. Print-Rich Environments

Date: _____     Classroom: _____     Educator: _____

**Descriptors for Print-Rich Environments –** The environment embeds curriculum within learning centres and invitations for learning. The environment supports emerging literacy learning and development with open-ended materials and a variety of high-quality text types that are thoughtfully presented to and accessible by children.  Text types are meaningful and connect children to their culture, daily life, interests and inquiries.  Educators consider the relevance of posting charts or word walls and whether there are other ways the materials and information could be supportive and accessible for children during inquiry, play-based learning experiences.

**Key:**
**F – Frequently** practiced on a regular basis     **O-Occasionally** practiced on a sporadic basis     **S-Seldom** practiced or not practiced at all

| The following items are evident, accessible and available: | F | O | S | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Functional print is displayed with both symbol/photograph and in written form and is easily accessed by children (e.g. name cards, centre names, visual schedule, morning messages, classroom directory, word cards, labels) | | | | |
| Photographs, charts,  children's work and educator's documentation about the work is displayed at children's eye-level and has relevance to the children, their interests, cultures and inquiry projects | | | | |
| Text types and literacy props, materials, and equipment are evident and | | | | |

| The following items are evident, accessible and available: | F | O | S | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| accessible in all areas of the classroom | | | | |
| A variety of high quality text types are accessed by children on a daily basis including:<br>• Fiction and non-fiction books<br>• Poetry books<br>• Song, chant, and rhyme books<br>• Concept books<br>• 'Real world' text materials (e.g. atlas, maps, phone books, recipe books, flyers, newspaper, magazines) | | | | |
| • Books that range in interest and skill level (e.g. board books, wordless picture books, soft cover, hardcover, lift-the-flap)<br>• Books that reflect the cultures, languages and families of the children in the classroom<br>Books written and compiled by the children (both individually and the whole class) | | | | |
| Books are available for children to take home and read with their families | | | | |
| The classroom collection includes 5-8 books per child located throughout the classroom | | | | |
| New books are added as children's interests change | | | | |
| Space for adults to comfortably sit and read with individual children as well as with small and large groups | | | | |
| Props, materials and equipment essential for supporting oral language development and developing dispositions for literacy learning through dramatic role -play:<br>• Dress-up clothes and props that invite children to dramatize daily living activities (e.g. playing house, a new pet, going on a trip)<br>• Dress-up clothes and props that reflect the cultures and customs of the children (e.g. powwows, new year celebrations)<br>• Props and materials that invite children to dramatize recreational and community activities (e.g. camping) | | | | |

| The following items are evident, accessible and available: | F | O | S | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Props and materials that invite children to role play various occupations within the community (e.g. post office, hospital)<br>• Dress-up clothes, props and materials that promote retelling familiar stories as well as creating new stories<br>• Puppets, finger puppets, shadow puppets<br>• Flannel board/felt board characters<br>• Musical instruments<br>• Props that are reflective of the children's cultures (e.g. chopsticks, ethnic play food and containers) | | | | |
| A variety of writing materials included in a writing centre and infused throughout other learning centres (e.g. clipboards, paper/journals, writing tools in the block centre):<br>• Assortment of paper:<br>   ○ Blank<br>   ○ Lined<br>   ○ Construction<br>   ○ Bristol board, manila tag board<br>   ○ Tissue and tracing paper<br>   ○ Newsprint<br>   ○ Finger paint paper<br>   ○ Pads of paper/notepads/notebooks<br>   ○ Graph paper<br>   ○ Chart paper<br>   ○ Post-it notes<br>   ○ Recycled paper<br>   ○ Wrapping paper<br>   ○ Brown craft paper<br>• Calendars (e.g. personal day timers, wall)<br>• Clipboards<br>• Chalkboards | | | | |

| The following items are evident, accessible and available: | F | O | S | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Dry-erase boards<br>• Easels<br>• Boxes<br>• Stickers and labels | | | | |
| A variety of writing/drawing tools:<br>• Pencils (e.g. primary, HB, coloured)<br>• Pens<br>• Crayons<br>• Markers<br>• Specialty pens  (e.g. charcoal, pastels, chalk, dry erase, highlighters, watercolours)<br>• Paint (e.g. tempera, water colour)<br>• Plasticine, play dough, clay<br>• Wikki sticks, pipe cleaners, wire<br>• Stencils<br>• Rulers<br>• Compass<br>• Tracers | | | | |
| A variety of equipment to explore, document, share and display children's writing:<br>• Camera<br>• Video Camera<br>• Ipad<br>• Tape recorder and tapes<br>• Slide and overhead projector<br>• Screen<br>• Light table | | | | |

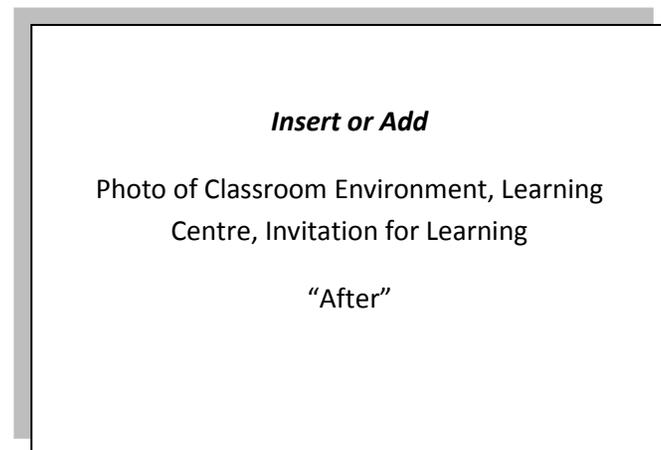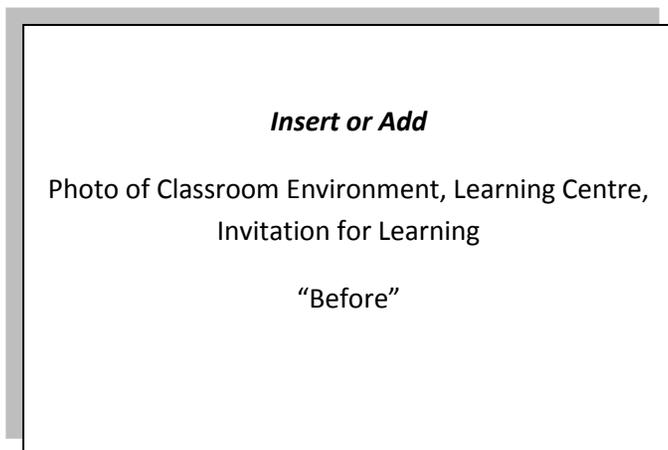| The following items are evident, accessible and available: | F | O | S | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Picture frames<br>• White board<br>• Computer<br>• Smart board | | | | |

**Questions for Reflective Discussion**

*How can materials and experiences be used to support children's emerging literacy learning and development?*

*How can the environment engage and support children's dispositions for reading and writing?*

*What areas of the environment demonstrate a print-rich environment?*

*What are the materials and supports needed for developing a print-rich environment?*

**Documenting Learning into Practice:**

*Insert or Add*

Photo of Classroom Environment, Learning Centre, Invitation for Learning

"Before"

*Insert or Add*

Photo of Classroom Environment, Learning Centre, Invitation for Learning

"After"

# 2. Language-Rich Environments

Date: _____    Classroom: _____    Educator: _____

**Descriptors for Language-Rich Environments –** Kindergarten programs support children's language development, build vocabulary and increase conceptual knowledge resulting in higher level language skills that lead to competencies in reading and comprehension.  Educators are literacy models providing rich demonstrations, interactions and shared literacy experiences.  Positive, trusting, caring, relationships are supported with meaningful conversations, open-ended questions and reflective discussions.  Shared reading and writing experiences happen throughout the day with individuals, small and large groups.  Children have many opportunities to explore text types and real-world materials through inquiry and literacy-based play experiences.
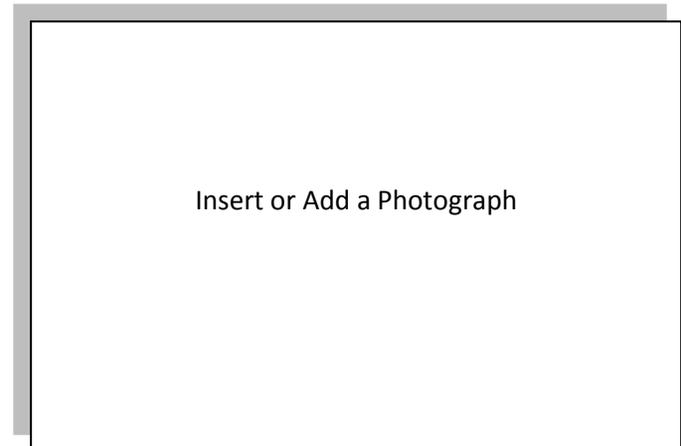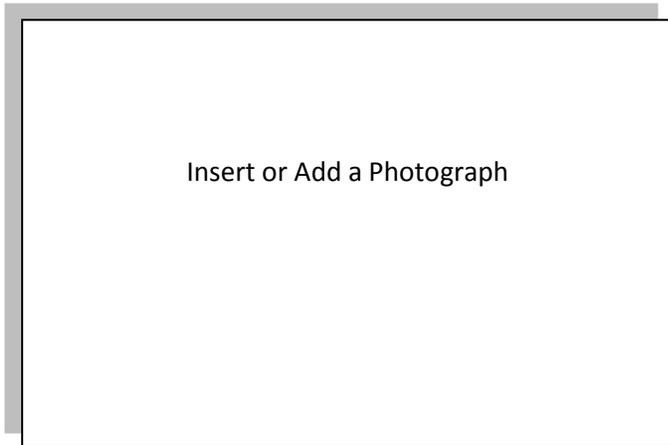
**Key:**
**F – Frequently** practiced on a regular basis    **O-Occasionally** practiced on a sporadic basis    **S-Seldom** practiced or not

| The following opportunities, experiences and practices are evident and occur: | F | O | S | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A supportive, interactive and engaging environment and children have conversations with their peers and adults in the classroom throughout the day | | | | |
| Children listen to, interact, and share stories and ideas | | | | |
| Large blocks of uninterrupted time scheduled every day for inquiry, play-based learning | | | | |
| Time is given for each child individually and in groups to express ideas or feelings during an activity, routine, and throughout the day | | | | |
| A dynamic mix of approaches that are used in building and enhancing communication (oral language development) skills.  Words are expressed orally, visually and physically for clarity and understanding through:<br>• Symbols<br>• Photographs | | | | |

| The following opportunities, experiences and practices are evident and occur: | F | O | S | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Signs<br>• Gestures<br>• Concrete objects<br>• Songs/chants/rhymes/rebus poems/raps<br>• Facial expressions<br>• Assistive devices | | | | |
| Props, materials, and equipment that build on the interests of children and encourage conversation | | | | |
| Access to musical instruments | | | | |
| A listening centre (e.g. tape recorder, head phones) | | | | |
| A variety of recorded books and music (with accompanying words, books) for children to listen to | | | | |
| To support and extend oral language development educators use a variety of strategies and approaches:<br>• **Simplify and slow down** language<br>• **Repeat and expand** on child's language<br>• **Use consistent words** for objects and activities<br>• **Use reflective/active listening**<br>• **Use key words and phrases from the languages spoken by children** and families in the program<br>• **Teach key words and phrases** from the languages spoken by children and families to other children, families and staff<br>• **Limit use of slang**<br>• **Use open-ended questioning**, inquiry and inferencing to scaffold learning (e.g. Bloom's Taxonomy)<br>• **Model** conversational skills<br>• Use some strategies from language development training such as the Hanen Program: *Learning Language & Loving It or ABC and* | | | | |

| The following opportunities, experiences and practices are evident and occur: | F | O | S | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Beyond* (e.g. **OWL – observe, wait, listen, POP – point out print**)<br>• **Introduce a familiar item that links** to a new one<br>• **Promotes awareness of the connection** between oral and written language (e.g. stories dictated by children)<br>• **Offer at least 3 shared reading and/or writing experiences** per day (individually, small groups or large group)<br>• **Record children's explanations and narratives** during play, storytelling, projects, and creating art | | | | |
| Provides demonstrations and opportunities for children to practice and develop oral and written language connections through representing ideas using:<br>• Drawing<br>• Painting<br>• Recording<br>• Constructing<br>• Role-play writing<br>• Collaging<br>• Sculpting<br>• Moving to music<br>• Dancing<br>• Dramatizing<br>• Singing/chanting<br>• Making music | | | | |
| Intentionally points out print in the environment and converts it to words | | | | |
| Provides opportunities for children to identify environmental print and includes the print in their inquiry, play-based learning | | | | |

| The following opportunities, experiences and practices are evident and occur: | F | O | S | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Discusses the features of books and other text types (written materials) to support children's book knowledge and print awareness | | | | |
| Includes letters, and other types of print in various learning centres allowing children to learn letters in context (e.g. letter tiles, name cards in the sand table, class directory at the family/housekeeping centre) | | | | |
| Provides opportunities for shared reading and writing experiences allowing children to play with print and practice language (e.g. chanting, singing, rhyming, identifying sounds, patterns, word predictions) | | | | |
| Supports children in learning letters, sounds, and words in context to develop comprehension and dispositions for reading and writing (e.g. learning letters of their name, S-T-O-P in stop sign) | | | | |

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**Questions for Reflective Discussion**

*How can I support children's emerging literacy learning and development through meaningful conversation, open-ended questions and reflective discussions?*

*What are some approaches and strategies that I currently use in the classroom?*

*What are some new approaches and strategies that I would like to try?*

*How can I connect children's needs, relationships, ideas, beliefs, and understandings to emerging literacy learning and development?*

*What professional learning opportunities and resources are accessible and available to support educators' emerging literacy learning practices?*

Observations:
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# 3. Supporting Literacy within Families

Date: _____     Classroom: _____     Educator: _____

**Descriptors for Supporting Literacy within Families –** Families are empowered when educators share information about language and literacy development. With empowerment and new knowledge, families are supported to confidently embrace language interactions and literacy experiences with their children. Families are encouraged to speak their first language at home and are respected as fluent language models for their children. Educators develop a learning partnership recognizing the family as the child's first teacher and involve families in literacy experiences that are meaningful and respectful. Schools recognize the importance of sharing knowledge in a variety of ways and languages that are relevant to children and their families.

**Key:**
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| The following opportunities, experiences and practices occur and are evident | F | O | S | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Educators recognize the importance of children being fluent in their first language before expecting fluency of a second language | | | | |
| Written communication is posted and presented in a family friendly format that will be understood by all families (e.g. letters, notices and signage) | | | | |
| Informal and formal opportunities and facilities are available to accommodate:<br>• Parent networking and mutual support<br>• Parents and children together | | | | |

| The following opportunities, experiences and practices occur and are evident | F | O | S | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The environment displays evidence of the diversity of families, their culture, customs, and languages (e.g. bulletin boards, posters, photographs) | | | | |
| Drop-off and dismissal times are designed to support informal discussion among educator and families | | | | |
| Families are provided with information through direct, face-to-face discussions, by telephone and in writing about their children's emerging literacy learning and development | | | | |
| Families are provided with information about ways to support their children's emerging literacy | | | | |
| Families are provided with information of community events that support literacy learning and development | | | | |
| Literacy events for families are planned on a regular basis | | | | |
| Opportunities for families to share their own language, culture, hobbies and talents with the children ( e.g. guest speakers, classroom volunteers, show and share) | | | | |
| Opportunities are provided to work with each family to identify their children's strengths, goals, interests and possible resources regarding literacy through:<br>• 3 way conferencing<br>• Celebrations of Learning<br>• Documentation<br>• Pamphlets<br>• Website links | | | | |
| Observations and documentation on children's' emerging literacy learning and development is compiled and shared with families on a continuous basis | | | | |
| Resources (strategies and materials) are readily available for families to access in supporting their child's emerging literacy learning and language development<br>• Available through web-site links | | | | |

| The following opportunities, experiences and practices occur and are evident | F | O | S | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Available for loan/take home<br>• Available through community resources | | | | |
| Alternate forms of communication are provided for families who speak a language other than English or who require other assistive communication devices | | | | |
| Families are encouraged and involved in the development of literacy materials, activities, experiences and events of the classroom and school | | | | |
| Family literacy activities reflect families' lives socially, culturally and economically | | | | |

**Questions for Reflective Discussion**

*How do my words, body language, and actions respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each child and their family?*

*How do I engage and represent the children and families within my program?*

*How do I connect families' understandings, relationships, ideas, and beliefs with children's emerging literacy learning and development to practices found in Kindergarten?*

*What supports are required for families to understand children's emerging literacy learning and development?*

# 4. Building Communities that Support Children and Families' Literacy

Date: _____     Classroom: _____     Educator: _____

**Descriptors for Building Communities that Support Children and Families' Literacy –** Building communities of literacy learners takes time and collaboration among educators, families, the school, and the community. Relationships between the educator, children, families and community groups are thoughtfully developed.  Educators invite community groups into the classroom to share their expertise.  Educators take children and their families on field trips to various community locations that support literacy learning and development.  Educators, schools and communities share resources and supports for literacy learning with children and families.

**Key:**
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| The following opportunities, experiences and practices occur and are evident | F | O | S | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Communities are included in school-wide literacy events | | | | |
| Community groups are invited and encouraged to participate and support literacy events | | | | |
| Community resources and supports are accessible for families (e.g. *Saskatchewan Literacy Network, Read Saskatoon,* provincial literacy hubs, Public Libraries) | | | | |
| Educators and children participate in literacy events | | | | |

**Questions for Reflective Discussion**

*How can I build relationships with community groups to support children and families' literacy learning?*

*How can the school-based administrator support the educator in building relationships with community groups that support children and families literacy learning?*

*What are some community groups that I would like to establish a relationship with? Why?*

**Thoughts and Reflections of the Educator**

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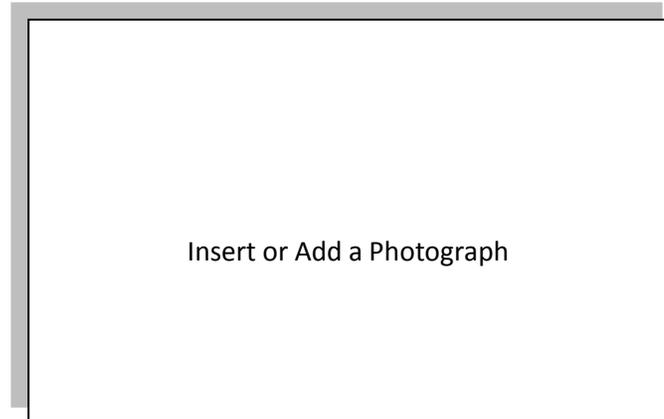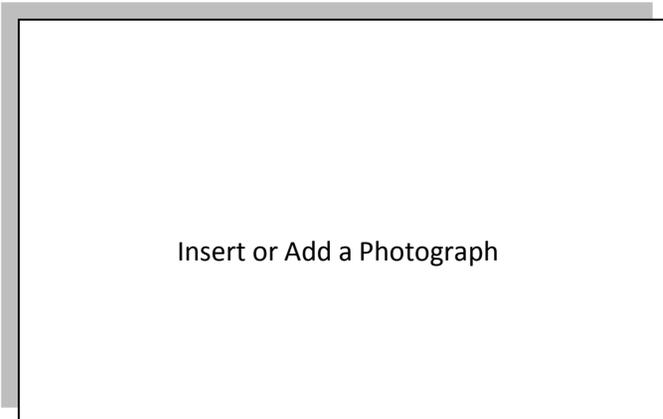
## Supporting Children's Emerging Literacy Learning and Development Action Plan

| Date | Area of Focus | Goals | How to Achieve | Resources Required | Timeline | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Environments | | | | | |
| | Practices and Approaches | | | | | |
| | Supporting Family Literacy | | | | | |

**Date of Visit:** _____

**Date of Follow-up:** _____

**Educator:** _____

**School-Based Administrator:** _____