



Planning Early Literacy
Using an Inquiry Mindset





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### **Leading Learning in the Early Years for Today and The Future**

#### Planning Literacy (K-2) Using an Inquiry Mindset

#### What are Literacy Behaviours?

[Language] and literacy behaviours are evident in virtually everything we do, say, and represent... To help meet this challenge, it is important for educators to give pupils many opportunities to use and develop literacy behaviours which are foundational to their development as literate lifelong learners.

#### Literacy Behaviours Are...

- Visible representations of pupils' thinking and learning;
- communicating thoughts, feelings, ideas through gestures, physical movements, words, symbols, and representations, as well as through the use of a variety of materials;
- literacy behaviours, evident in the various ways they use language, images, and materials to express and think critically about ideas and emotions, as they listen and speak, view and represent, to communicate, read and write;
- observed, documented and analysed (assessment for, as, and of learning) across all learning contexts.

#### **Differentiating Learning:**

**Literacy/Language They Are Learning**: Pupils use language (home and/or language of instruction) and/or gestures

- to describe,
- to give reasons,
- to ask questions,
- or to negotiate in a wide variety of contexts...

How learning can be differentiated: during a read aloud, outdoors, in conversations with peers, drawing, painting writing, during an inquiry cycle or focus. In other words, even during a mathematics, science, social justice focus/plan literacy behaviours can be observed. In fact, literacy is assessed in an applied context. Pupils can demonstrate evidence of learning in differentiated ways yet the overall focus for learning is the same central idea from the curriculum (unit of inquiry).

#### What is an Inquiry Mindset?



Inquiry allows pupils to make decisions about their learning and to take responsibility for it. [Educators] create learning contexts that allow children to make decisions about their learning processes and about how they will demonstrate their learning. They encourage collaborative learning and create intellectual spaces for students to engage in rich talk about their thinking and learning. They create a [groups of children] ethos that fosters respect for others' ideas and opinions and encourages risk- taking. ... Collectively, these actions lead to a strong sense of student self-efficacy.

(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 4)

#### An Inquiry Mindset is...

A way of viewing learning and the learner. For example: Incudes pupil voice and choice and processes to determine student thinking about the concepts, knowledge and skills in the curriculum.

**It is a mindset of questioning and wondering –** alongside the pupils, to support their learning as they exercise their natural curiosity.

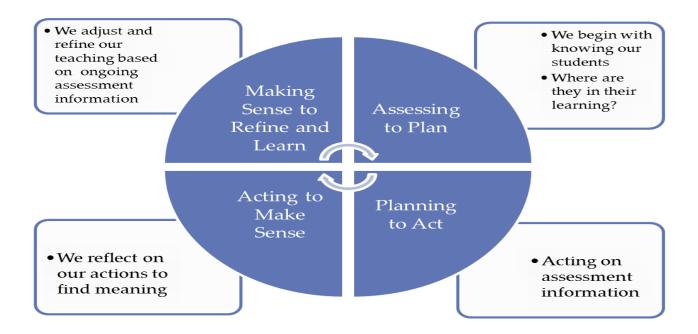
**Educators, as "researchers",** wonder and ask questions *about* the pupil's and the pupil's learning (e.g., "Why this learning for this pupil at this time and in this context?") and about the impact of their

interventions on pupil's learning and growth in learning (e.g., "What will be the impact on the learning of these pupil's if I intervene in their conversation in this way at this time?", "How might changing the way we use the tables in the classroom, or with groups of children affect the way the pupils collaborate?").

Being in an inquiry mindset is critical to creating the conditions required for inquiry learning.

There are many models available for a process of inquiry learning. The process begins with an "Inquiry Mindset" and each phase of the process informs the next phase of the process and then it repeats itself.

#### A Model for Planning Inquiry Learning



The following questions are considerations in each 'phase' of the inquiry. These questions are used to engage in conversations and observations with pupils.

NOTE: The documentation of the pupil's thinking can be used as a text to revisit and revise as thinking grows and changes. For example: Talk with pupils about all the ways people represent their thinking. This documentation provides insights into pupil thinking individually, as a class and about Global Competencies such as Creativity and Communication.

#### ASSESSING TO PLAN

- How do pupils approach new learning or experiences?
- What prior experiences do they have?
- What are their ideas?
- How do they represent their thinking?
- What materials are they drawn to for representing thinking?

#### **ACTING ON ASSESSMENT INFORMATION**

- When I saw.... It made me guestion is this evidence of...?
- What materials will support this assessment information?
- What was the impact of?
- What other information do I need?
- What experiences best support this information?
- What does the pupil think about their learning?

#### **ACTING TO MAKE SENSE**

- When I saw.... It made me question is this evidence of...?
- What materials will support this assessment information?
- What was the impact of?
- What other information do I need?
- What experiences best support this information?
- What does the pupil think about their learning?

#### MAKING SENSE TO REFINE AND LEARN

- "What does the documentation (assessment information) suggest about the pupil's thinking?"
- "What are some questions we have?"
- What are some assumptions we make about pupils and the learning?"
- What ideas and questions are pupils exploring?
- How did my words/actions influence the experience?
- Were there other influencing factors (e.g. environmental elements, shared learning, and accommodations)?
- What changes am I noticing over time? What do I notice in different contexts?

#### **Using an Inquiry Mindset for Assessment**

A core assessment question for planning learning that results in responsive teaching and meets up with the "edge" of the pupil learning is as follows:

#### 'Why this learning, for this/these pupil/pupils, at this time and in this way?'

In order for teaching to be responsive to pupil's thinking and learning educators are shifting away from the idea of limiting the "gradual release of responsibility" for learning to a specific time in the day or thinking that it must only be a designated time in the timetable. Instead, educators have moved towards planning for the "level of support" that the pupil or group of pupils require, and then finding an appropriate context in which to offer the support. For example, in the case of literacy learning, the responsibility for learning about an aspect of literacy could be gradually released to pupils at any time in the day, such as when the pupils are building with construction materials or engaged in an inquiry. In other words, modelled, shared, guided, or independent learning opportunities are provided according to the level of support that the learner needs, regardless of the context in which the learning is taking place. The level of support needed is informed by the assessment information. In other words, the documentation is analysed to determine the level of support necessary for the context, the pupil or group of pupils.

#### Planning for Different Levels of Support: Responsive Teaching

Level of Support	What Can it Sound Like and Look Like
In Modelled/ Think Aloud Learning Teacher does most of the	Whole Group/Small Group/Individual contexts such as art experiences, building with construction materials at learning areas with literacy materials embedded.
language work, so the student is freed up to think	For example, the teacher models and does a think aloud "When I come to a word I don't know, I use the pictures (teacher models in context) and then I look back and forth at the picture to help me figure it out."
In Shared Learning  Teacher and pupil share responsibility for the	Whole Groups/Small Group/Individual contexts such as art experiences, building with construction materials at learning areas with literacy materials embedded.
language work and the thinking	"I will write this letter and then you can add the one that makes the sound like the one in the beginning of your name"
In Guided Learning  Pupil does more of the language and thinking	Whole Group/Small Group/Individual contexts such as art experiences, building with construction materials at learning areas with literacy materials embedded.
work with the teacher supporting the student with a new strategy on familiar text or context	"How could you use the word wall to help you write?"
In Independent Learning - Pupil does the language and thinking work with	Whole Group/Small Group/Individual contexts such as art experiences, building with construction materials at learning areas with literacy materials embedded.
the teacher supporting with descriptive feedback – noticing and naming what they observe	"I saw you use the word wall to check if you had all the letters for the word 'was'."

In the case of literacy learning, the educators can determine the level of support needed by pupils by observing what the pupils already know. The educators can then use a variety of levels of support throughout the day for individual pupils, small groups, or large groups, and in learning areas indoors or in the outdoors.

#### Making Decisions on Level of Support - Why this learning, at this time, in this way?

Decisions on the level of support needed are based on assessment information and the level of development of each pupil. The goal is to offer support within the zone of proximal development for that pupil—at a level that makes the task neither too challenging nor too easy—and to provide the scaffolding that will enable the pupil to eventually demonstrate the learning independently. Therefore, meeting the pupil at the "edge" of their learning.

The graphic below is intended to illustrate the role of the pupil and the teacher in each level of support.

#### **Modelled Level of Support**

Shared Level of Support  Teacher Pupil  Guided Level of Support  Teacher Pupil  Independent Level of Support	Teacher		Pupil	
Guided Level of Support  Teacher Pupil	Shared Level of Support	t		
Teacher Pupil	Te	eacher	Pupil	
<u> </u>	Guided Level of Suppor	t		
Independent Level of Support	Teacher		Pupil	
Teacher		upport		

The provision of appropriate levels of support does not always unfold in a linear way from modelled through to independent learning contexts – for example, educators may use a shared learning context to give support to pupils who bring a significant level of prior knowledge to their learning.

Educators make decisions about the provision of appropriate levels of support many times throughout the day. The analysis of the pedagogical documentation is critical to the decision-making process. Educators collaborate with each other and with the pupils to analyse their observations, and then negotiate the context and timing of learning opportunities with the pupils. Often, as a result, the same pupil may receive different levels of support in different contexts. (Adapted from Ontario Ministry of Education 2016 p.74-75)

#### **Making Decisions Using an Inquiry Mindset (Some Examples)**

How can assessment information support how I respond to pupil thinking and make learning explicit?

How will I use this information to match books to readers?

What in this text is supportive?

How will I develop deep knowledge of texts?



#### Using an Inquiry Mindset to Plan for Progression of Early Literacy Learning

The following provides some examples of how foundational literacy skills begin to develop. Pupils come to school as unique individuals shaped by their particular cultural and social background, socioeconomic status, personal capabilities, and day-to-day experiences, and at different stages of development. All of these factors influence who they are and how they learn.

Pupils will be in various stages of learning within a grade and across a K-2 Continuum The following chart provides examples that can be used in Kindergarten and in Primary Classrooms to differentiate and meet the diverse needs of pupils. The charts include questions for planning using an "inquiry mindset"

Teachers Plan For:	Evidence of Pupil Learning:
Teachers observe, document and Analyse (assessment for and as learning)	

**Planning with an Inquiry Mindset:** Teachers place materials talking with pupils about where and why the materials are placed. Materials such as:

Letters (e.g. magnetic letters), Words Both Familiar and Unfamiliar, Texts for Read Aloud, Shared and Independent Learning

Where Pupils Can:

- Manipulate them
- Refer to them
- Talk about them

Materials are placed throughout the indoors and outdoors in learning centres (e.g. blocks and construction materials, sand, art area) writing areas, library corners, areas for meeting with groups and outdoors.

Using an Inquiry Mindset Teachers observe: What do pupils say and do? What letters do they already know? How do they identify the letter? "By the sound it makes." "It starts like..." "By the letter name "That is a t" How do they use the letters in their writing?

In the earliest stages of literacy development, pupils:

- ask simple "what" and "where" questions;
- mimic the reading process;
- begin to understand what reading is and how it works;
- learn that what they say can be written down;
- use simple vocabulary to describe things;
- engage in pretend play that includes language listen to stories
- How do they identify the letter?
   "By the sound it makes." OR "It
   starts like... OR" By the letter
   name "That is a t"

#### **Asking questions Using an Inquiry Mindset**

- How can we find out what this pupil might be thinking?
- Why have we chosen this learning for this pupil at this time, in this context?
- How is this pupil constructing knowledge with other pupils? In what ways does the pupil participate and contribute?

As they assimilate and progress in their thinking and learning pupils:

# Teachers Plan For: Evidence of Pupil Learning:

Teachers observe, document and Analyse (assessment for and as learning)

# Planning with an Inquiry Mindset NOTE: even as pupils become more experienced the same kinds of materials are available as they are open-ended, and the range of text complexity progresses as the pupils

develop and progress in their learning.

Teachers place materials talking with pupils about where and why the materials are placed. Materials such as:

Letters (e.g. magnetic letters), Words Both Familiar and Unfamiliar, Texts for Read Aloud, Shared and Independent Learning

#### Where pupils can:

- Manipulate them
- Refer to them
- Talk about them

Materials are placed throughout the room in learning centres (e.g. blocks and construction materials, sand, art area) writing areas, library corners, areas for meeting with groups and outdoors.

- learn to pay attention to the way print and books work;
- learn that printed letters and words represent the sounds and words of oral language;
- listen to each other with attention and engage in give-and-take conversations (turn taking);
- become aware that some words rhyme or start or end in the same way, and thus begin to develop phonological awareness;
- begin to share their ideas and responses to texts in a variety of ways;
- learn that writing can communicate a message;
- begin to explore different purposes for writing;
- represent their thinking graphically by drawing, painting, dramatizing, sculpting, building, and gesturing;
- Notice and develop patterns in words to use in their writing more conventional spelling;
- express their thoughts and ideas with increasingly extensive and specialized vocabulary;
- ask and respond to questions that demonstrate and require predicting,

making inferences, connecting, and
critiquing.

#### **Questions to Promote and Support Inquiry in Play-based Learning**

In response to pupil's questions and ideas, educators pose questions such as:

- What do you think?
- What makes you think that?
- What would happen if...?
- I wonder why your measurement is different from Hanna's.
- How are you getting sand from the bigger container into the smaller containers? What did you notice? How did you choose the containers?
- How could you showy your thinking? What do you need to show your thinking?
- How will you find out if your idea works?
- Who else share's your thinking? What other ideas did you hear from others?

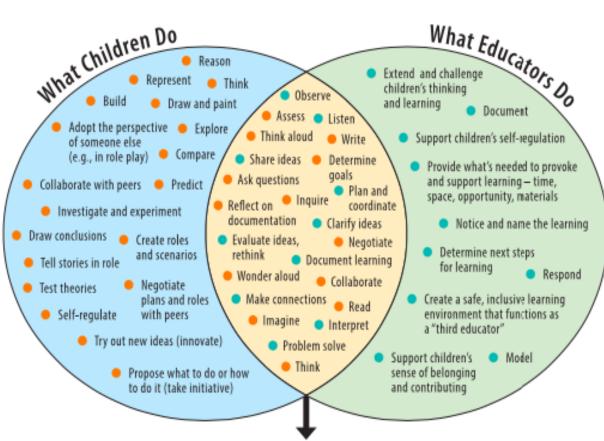
Pupils ask questions that lead to inquiry. For example:

- How could this car go faster down the ramps?
- How can I fit these pieces in here and attach them?
- I am trying to figure out a way to draw...
- I am trying to make all the blocks fit inside
- I am trying make the robot move different directions
- I am trying to make all the sticks into a path so we can make a playground

Pupils communicate ideas and ask further questions while they are experimenting and investigating. They might describe materials they are using, indicate a problem they are having, or ask a question such as "I wonder what would happen if I ...?" They begin to listen to their peers and may offer suggestions to them. Through these interactions and as the educators extend pupil's thinking through their questions and observations, pupils also learn to make predictions and draw conclusions:

- I think if I use a bigger block maybe my tower won't fall down
- I think it will only take six footsteps to go across the blocks
- I think I can make the water fit in two small containers from this big one
- Look, I put all the pictures into my video, and I want to make my voice in the movie

#### Using an Inquiry Mindset to Co-Construct Learning with Pupils



What Children and Educators Do to Co-construct Learning

(The Kindergarten Program, 2016)

#### Using an Inquiry Mindset to Observe for Literacy Behaviours that Support Well Being

Pupils' need for security and care must not be seen as a competing need for learning in the educational process - on the contrary. The importance of relationships for pupil's ability to learn and develop in the early childhood years is absolutely crucial. Through local development work and joint skills development, educators must be enabled to enter into positive, sensitive interactions with the pupils.

https://holmestrand.kommune.no/trygghet-mestring-og-laring-for-alle/handlingsplan-for-kommunale-barnehager-2020-2021/

#### **Questions for Inquiry with Pupils**

- How can we learn about our strengths and come to understand how we belong and how we can contribute?
- How can we contribute our unique knowledge when we engage with others?
- How can we make different contributions in different groups and different contexts?
- How do we learn adaptive, management, and coping skills, and practise communication and critical thinking skills, in order to learn how to build relationships?
- It is important to pay attention to and share various perspectives. Who shares the same perspective as you? Why are different perspectives important to hear?

How Can Learning be Differentiated and Look Different Using an Inquiry Mindset		
Teachers Are Observing For	Plan to observe	
How pupils approach a new context	<ul> <li>Who scans the environment and then makes a choice?</li> <li>Who tries something to see if it works and keeps trying different solutions?</li> <li>Who keeps checking for reassurance their solution is "right"?</li> <li>Who engages in self-talking their way through a process?</li> </ul>	
Verbal and non- verbal contributions	<ul> <li>Moving over or creating space for a new group member</li> <li>Inviting others to participate e.g., Do you want to try? Here you go</li> <li>Using gestures and proximity to join a group (consider cultural influences and contexts)</li> <li>Discussions about the impact of how the material or space supports their learning</li> <li>Discussions "I used to think this, now I think this</li> </ul>	
Offers and assimilates different perspectives	<ul> <li>Discussions "I used to think this, now I think this</li> <li>Discussions or uses gestures (eyebrow raising, nodding)</li> <li>"I disagree with and this is why"</li> <li>"I don't understand why"</li> <li>Scanning texts or environment for information</li> </ul>	

# Reading social Cues Responds to others when given a social message e.g. moves away from a situation, they are uncertain about or questions a situation they are uncertain about

- Offers someone empathy in various ways saying "are you ok?"
- Offering them a place to sit
- Offers a space in a group or knows when someone needs "space"

#### **Assessment Planning and Strategies**

What teachers observe, document and then analyze in what pupils say, do and represent (e.g., graphically, concretely, digitally) serve as insights into pupil thinking and an application of that thinking across and within various contexts. The observations serve as *assessment for learning*. The observations also demonstrate evidence of learning dispositions or in other words how pupils approach learning. This evidence is not only evidence of their literacy skills but can also be used as evidence for the pupil's "Learner Profile." Discussions with pupils about who they are as learners and how they learn best are critical and provide insights for both the teacher and the pupil *(assessment as learning)*. This assessment information provides whole class, group and individual assessment evidence for planning materials, contexts for learning (assessment *for* learning) and individual achievements (assessment of learning).

# Using an Inquiry Mindset to Observe for Literacy Behaviours that Support Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Using an Inquiry Mindset	
Teachers Plan To: Document and Analyse Evidence of Pupil's Thinking	Literacy Behaviours: Ideas to Discuss, Listen and Look for With Pupils
<ol> <li>Observe Pupils</li> <li>Plan for Different Levels of Support such as:         <ul> <li>Think Aloud</li> <li>Model</li> </ul> </li> <li>Think with pupils in Shared, Guided and Independent contexts in learning areas that include Blocks and Construction materials, art materials and In inquiries.</li> </ol>	<ul> <li>How does reading make us think and feel in different ways?</li> <li>How are different texts constructed and for what audience?</li> <li>How can media influence thinking?</li> <li>My thinking has changed now that I have read more of the book</li> <li>How does reading make us think and feel in different ways?</li> </ul>

By planning, noticing and naming the literacy behaviours (ways pupils show they are literate learners) learning is made visible, explicit and gives teachers and pupils a plan for where to go next with learning.

Some of the considerations for planning, listening for and looking for are written as statements and some as questions. This is intentional to provide flexibility in approaches with pupils.

- -providing frequent experiences with various texts (e.g., poems, songs, and rhyme, genres and text forms) and to read stories and non-fiction texts together by noticing and naming specific literacy behaviours (e.g., "Isabel, I notice that you put periods at the end.")
- -incorporating literacy materials in all areas of the room to help the pupils see that reading and writing, and talking about them, are all meaningful aspects of their daily lives
- including the pupils in negotiations about choosing literacy materials that are interesting to them

- How are different texts constructed and for what audience?
- How can media influence thinking?
- How do I know if this a good book for me?
- Is this a good source of information?
- Readers use different strategies (e.g., look at the picture, look for a little word in a bigger word, use letter-sound recognition, think about the context) to decode words.
- How do pupils use language to negotiate, debate, describe, order, count, predict, make suppositions and theorize?

#### Writing:

- How do pupils use drawing and/or writing (graphic representation) to capture and describe memory and experience, represent thinking, list, negotiate, and label, express an idea to various audiences?
- How are pupils demonstrating an understanding that a writer writes for different reasons and purposes?
- How are pupils revealing insights into the knowledge that it is important for others to understand what we are trying to say through writing?
- How are pupils learning that writers think about the purpose and the audience for their writing?
- How do pupils learn that writers choose a form that best conveys their desired meaning to a specific audience?
- What do pupils think about writers using different tools and resources to help them write?

#### Comprehension:

- Asking the pupils questions that elicit descriptions or explanations of their thinking processes (e.g., "Why do you think that ...?"; "What should we do next ...?")
- Encouraging the pupils to talk about what they notice or give reasons for what they prefer
- Asking questions that encourage discussion and/or negotiation between the pupils (e.g., discussion of reasons why a block tower fell, negotiation about taking turns reading a picture book, offering a different point of view, giving evidence for their point of view, finding the main idea)

Inviting pupils to pose their own questions and/or to investigate the ideas that they are proposing

#### Inquiry:

 Showing the connection between talking and writing in practical examples that arise from inquiries that the pupils are pursuing (e.g., turning social justice issue they are discussing into a persuasive text, discussing which is the best text form for the writing purpose and audience)

**Assessment Strategies:** As we observe and document, then review and analyse our documentation to determine next steps for a particular pupil or group of pupils' learning, we ask ourselves questions such as the following:

- How can we find out what this pupil might be thinking?
- Why have we chosen this learning for this pupil at this time in this context?
- How is this pupil constructing knowledge with other pupils? In what way does the pupil participate and contribute?
- How is this pupil's approach to a problem different now from what it was earlier?
- How does the evidence we've gathered help us determine the next steps in learning for the pupil?

#### Using Inquiry Mindset to Plan for Digital World and for the "Knowledge Economy"

Within today's multimodal, digitally rich contexts, literacy learning and teaching is evolving with innovations that engage and respond to learners who "live in a world of 'anytime, anywhere' access to information" and who, through social media and online networks, belong not to just one but a range of global communities (Ontario Ministry of Education, p.2):

"Today's technological environment allows [pupils] to draw on sources around the globe and integrate what they discover into their learning using a range of media . . . world wide access to information enables teachers to **design with pupils**, learning opportunities that stimulate them to be independent, reflective, and collaborative learners, challenge their thinking and assumptions and engage them on many levels."

Ontario Public School Boards' Association. (2013). A vision for learning and teaching in a digital age. Toronto: OPSBA.

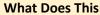
Navigation is a key component of digital reading, as readers "construct" their text through navigation. Thus, navigational choices directly influence what kind of text is eventually processed. Stronger readers tend to choose strategies that are suited to the demands of the individual tasks. Better readers tend to minimize their visits to irrelevant pages and locate necessary pages efficiently. (OECD, 2011, pp. 9, 20)

**Teachers Plan For:** Discussion and investigations with pupils using concrete examples of how to be critical consumers of on-line sources, apps, web designs, video games and social media. The following questions are examples that can be used with pupils. It is important in the discussions to include pupils' questions and document pupil thinking. The documentation can be revisited over time to add to, change revise, synthesize pupil thinking (assessment for as and of learning) When thinking about digital world and accessing information:

- Whose voice is present?
- Whose voice is missing and why?
- Where did the source come from?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What do you notice about the graphics?
- What do you notice about the features?
- Why do you think the developers added...?
- What would be the best source of information and why?

Pupils need many experiences while developing the ability to use reading, writing and communication to gain access to the world of knowledge, to synthesize information from different sources, to evaluate arguments, and to learn totally new subjects (Adapted from Future of Children, p.3).

Computers, mobile devices, artificial intelligence and technologies not yet known will require literacy skills and human capacity to design, think critically, monitor and question. Therefore, thinking as broadly and critically about the role of technology in our lives will be necessary for pupils to learn and contribute over the course of their lifetime.



The following are

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#### **Differentiating Learning**

An evolution of what it means to read, write and communicate coupled with multilingual diverse classrooms and groups of children necessitates learning that is differentiated. The following is an example of how learning can be differentiated.

**Teachers plan:** Using the same complex concepts such as the higher order thinking skills of analyzing, synthesizing, integrating and interpreting

#### Differentiated Learning can look like and sound like:

- 1) Using a text that is concrete or relevant to pupil's community
- 2) The text can be read or viewed in a shared reading or read aloud context and pupils can respond to text in multiple ways their home dialect, with gestures, drawings, with concrete materials
- 3) Using familiar texts such as the pupil's name to analyze and synthesize what they notice
- 4) Use environmental print, signs to interpret, analyse and synthesize what they see, think, compare revisit this process and document what is the same thinking, new thinking (synthesis)
- 5) List what pupils notice about how language looks and sounds different in various texts and various subjects e.g., the way we talk about something sounds different than the way we read about it in books ("it is so rainy and cold today" vs. In a book "I looked up in the sky and as usual mother nature was in a bad mood today")
- 6) Make lists and observations about how we use language differently in contexts

Innately curious, pupils explore, manipulate, build, create, wonder, and ask questions naturally, moving through the world in what might be called an "inquiry stance". Educators observe and document the pupil's thinking, ideas, and learning; interpret and analyze what they have noticed; and express their own thinking and wondering as they interact with the pupils. In Kindergarten, the educators adopt an inquiry stance along with the pupils, and a culture of inquiry characterizes the learning environment. (The Kindergarten Program, 2016, p. 18)



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Trygghet, mestring og læring for alle

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