

KINDERGARTEN MAKEOVER: ETFO EDITION

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FEATURING:

Dianne Riehl, District Wide Coordinator, Early Years. TDSB
Melanie Murphy, Teacher, Toronto DSB
Vanessa Grieve, Teacher, Toronto DSB

ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' FEDERATION OF ONTARIO STAFF:

Jane Bennett, Executive Assistant, Professional Services
Joan Littleford, Executive Assistant, Professional Services

Additional Resources

- *Viewing Guide*
- *Who Can Help Me With My Makeover*
- *How Can I access Material?*
- *Samples of Reflective Questions to Guide Your Makeover*

The learning environment plays a critical role in the way that the teacher guides young children's skill development. The choice of classroom materials should be well thought out and materials should be carefully organized. Children should have easy access to those materials and know the organizational structure and routines to be able to return them to the right place; they should be of sufficient quantity and quality to allow access by a range of children.

In this webcast you will follow the beginning of the journey of two Kindergarten teachers who sought assistance in making changes to the physical environment in their classrooms. They realized that their beliefs about how young children learn and the environment in which they were working did not match. They knew that a Kindergarten Makeover was just the intervention they needed and they sought guidance for their plan.

Melanie and Vanessa were very reflective as they tackled a remodeling of their learning centres. By listening to their thinking, viewers of this video will have an opportunity to consider aspects of their own classrooms and to reflect on their beliefs about young children and how they learn.

Everyone was excited to see the children's reactions to the changes that took place in their classroom. Some of Melanie and Vanessa's colleagues were surprised that their room did not appear to be that different after all of their hard work. The changes were not like those on the television shows – they were not really cosmetic. The furniture, the drapes, and much of the children's work on the walls remained the same. But the simple, though well thought out structural changes had significant effects on the learning of the children and were not as apparent as what we now think of as a makeover. Although the video concludes immediately after the big reveal to the children, Melanie and Vanessa's learning journey did not. They used

this opportunity as a spring board for their own reflection and have since made a number of other changes – particularly in the area of visual arts and mathematics.

VIEWING GUIDE

The purpose of this video is to engage teachers in a reflective process which will help to guide their thinking of their own classrooms. By discussing some of the ideas addressed in the video, teachers can engage in their own learning journey. The following questions can serve to guide teachers as they watch *Kindergarten Makeover: EFTO Edition*.

1. What are my beliefs about how young children learn?
2. How do my core beliefs influence my decisions about classroom setup and programming? How can I rethink the decisions I have made in my classroom to better reflect my beliefs?
3. Who could help me with my classroom makeover? Who could provide guidance or expertise? Who could actually help with the move?
4. How is my own classroom set up? Is it inviting to children? Do the materials spark inquiry and deeper thinking on the part of the children?
5. Do I have material that is not being used presently by the children that could be:
 - Used in a different way
 - Given to others for their classroom
 - Thrown out
6. What new material do I need to add to the centres in order to meet my learning goals and to enhance learning at the centres?
7. What is my role, as the teacher in an activity based classroom? How can I enhance and extend children's learning while they are engaged in activities at the centres?
8. Where do I stand on a continuum of learning? Is my classroom more teacher centered or more child centred? How can I move to a space on the continuum that more closely matches my understanding of how young children learn best?
9. How is my classroom organized for independence? Can the children access all material easily? Can they return material to the designated spot? What are the impediments to independence?
10. Do the routines established in my classroom match my beliefs about appropriate practice for young children? What changes would help align my understandings and the reality of my classroom?
11. Is my timetable reflective of my beliefs and my knowledge of how young children learn? What modifications are necessary? Has an appropriate time been blocked for children's authentic and independent application of their learning?

WHO CAN HELP ME WITH MY MAKEOVER?

Where Can I Access Expertise?

- A colleague whose plans and classroom I admire
- Staff at the district level – an early years consultant
- A reflective colleague who can help to guide me on the questions I need to ask of myself
- A professional resource document
- The internet
- Other videos
- By visiting classroom suggested by others

HOW CAN I ACCESS MATERIALS?

- Share material with other colleagues in the school
 - Working with the same grade level
 - Working with a different grade level (example science equipment)
- Borrow material from home and from friends
 - Specific material for the Home Centre
 - Colorful recipe books
 - Mixing bowls and beaters
 - Wok and cooking utensils
 - Empty baking ingredient containers
 - Specific material for the Block Centre
 - Simple tools
 - Paint brushes and rollers
- Families in the school neighbourhood
 - Empty food containers
 - Books for specific inquires
 - Multicultural materials/props
- Stores that specialize in inexpensive merchandise (Ask your administrator for a budget allotment specifically for this purpose. The budget will go a long way.)
 - Outdoor shovel and pails
 - Fly swatter for word framing on charts and posters
 - Craft material
 - White boards
- Props for the Block Centre
 - Paint brushes and rollers
 - Tools – hammers, screw drivers for the work bench
 - Plastic helmets

- Drafting tools
- Clip boards
- Props for the Home Centre
 - Utensils
 - Aprons, oven mitts, towels
 - Writing pads, writing utensils

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. What do I want the children to learn? What materials, therefore, should I put out for use by the children at this time?
2. Does my classroom respect the diversity of our community and our province?
3. Am I making most of the decisions or are the children given opportunities to make their own decisions? Have I empowered children to be active decision makers?
4. Do children have many different opportunities to pursue their own interests and share their knowledge with others?
5. Do children have authentic opportunities to problem solve? How are their decisions honoured?
6. Do the children know the routines of the classroom and follow them independently?
7. Have large blocks of time been built into the timetable to allow for independent work at learning centres?

IDEAS FOR VIEWING

Consider ways to view the Makeover Webcast:

- Alone at home
- During prep time at school
 - Alone
 - With a Kindergarten colleague
- Within a professional learning community
 - Pizza party after school
 - Lunch and learn (with time to talk)
 - Kindergarten network group
 - With Kindergarten colleagues from neighbouring schools

CLASSROOM SET UP

This series of photos and reflective questions have been chosen to demonstrate some of the significant centres in a Kindergarten classroom and some of the decisions a teacher makes when considering the set up. It is hoped that the accompanying questions will help you to reflect on your own centres and to consider any alterations you can make to your classroom.

Paint Centre



Decisions to consider include:

1. Where is this centre to be situated in the classroom?
 - Is there carpet underneath? If so, with what will the carpet be covered?
 - Is it in proximity of a storage area for the paints and brushes?
 - Is it close to a water source for easier clean up?
 - Is it adjacent other visual arts material?
2. What is available currently in the classroom for this centre? If there are 2 separate easels how will they be arranged?
3. How can I arrange the material so that children experience painting on a vertical surface as well as a horizontal surface?
4. How can oral language be encouraged at the centre? How can the arrangement of the materials be altered for this purpose?
5. Where will the wet paintings be stored? Is there access to a specific drying rack? Is there a counter area for immediate storage until the paintings are dry?
6. How will the painter be identified? Should someone other than the painter be making marks on the painting?

7. How will I converse with the child about the painting? What open ended questions would allow the child to tell about their thinking? How best is this recorded? Where can this be recorded?

Dramatic Centre

1. Are the materials in the centre stimulating or interesting to children?
2. How can the theme of the centre enhance learning?
3. What theme would be of interest to students but would also enhance learning?
4. Are the materials encouraging exploration of different roles?
5. How is a literacy focus built into the play materials available?
6. How is a mathematics focus built into the play materials available?
7. Is the organization of the centre obvious to students for easy and independent clean up?



Blocks and Construction Material

1. Are there a sufficient number of blocks for substantial constructions to develop?
2. Is there a sufficient block of time devoted to free play at the block centre so that both construction and related dramatic play can develop?
3. What props are available to enhance the play?
4. How do the students at the centre use literacy props and tools?

5. What routines are established or need to be established to encourage routines for courtesy, safety, and clean up?



Mathematics Centre

1. How are a range of mathematics manipulatives for counting, sorting, patterning, measurement, etc. arranged or stored?
2. Are these materials available for use at other learning centers when students wish to incorporate them into the play?
3. What materials are available for the recording of data?
4. What routines are in place that allows students to explore materials independently? How are they challenged to extend their thinking and to think divergently?
5. How are children able to demonstrate their understanding of a mathematical concept in more than one way and at a variety of independent learning centres?



Sand/Water Centres

1. How do the materials at the centre encourage independent exploration?
2. What other materials could be added to enhance exploration?
3. What materials could be added that allow independent practice or exploration of a specific learning expectation? Of a specific focus of instruction?
4. Is the set up of the centre geared for personal interactions amongst students?
5. What materials would attract a different group of students?



Reading Centre

1. Is the centre set up to be attractive to young readers?
 - Are the covers of some books visible?
 - Are the books in good condition?
2. Do students have familiarity with the books? Have many of them been read to them previously?
3. Is there a range of reading material?
 - Fiction/non-fiction
 - Easy/hard
 - Multicultural
 - Commercial/class made
 - Picture books/ simple text
 - Previously enjoyed charts and poems
4. Is the material changed regularly to attract all readers on an ongoing basis?
5. Is the Reading Centre a comfortable place to sit and read?
6. Are there cushions and/or chairs to sit on?
7. Are there stuffies to curl up with and to read to?
8. Are there a variety of reading props available for the children to use?

- Reading wands for pointing to the words
- A prop such as a fly swatter with a large hole cut from the middle for framing high frequency words found around the classroom