**STRATEGIC DIRECTION GOALS—Early Learning:**
Each student starts strong through early grades with a foundation in literacy and numeracy.

Utah State Board of Education

# Utah's Kindergarten Best Practices Guide

**Utah State Board of Education**
**250 East 500 South**
**P.O. Box 144200**
**Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200**

**Sydnee Dickson, Ed.D.**
**State Superintendent of Public Instruction**



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August 2020

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# Special Thanks

**UTAH'S KINDERGARTEN BEST PRACTICES GUIDE** was a collaborative effort between stakeholders, the Region 15 Comprehensive Center at WestEd, and Utah State Board of Education specialists.

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**Early educational experiences are critical** to establishing a solid foundation for success in later academic years. For many Utah students, the kindergarten year is their first experience in a formal school setting. Consequently, kindergarten teachers need to be well-equipped to help these children develop the skills necessary for success.

## Utah's Kindergarten Best Practices Guide

This guide is designed to be a brief, practical guide to help kindergarten teachers implement high leverage practices in their classrooms. Intended readers of this guide include both new and experienced kindergarten teachers as well as those supporting them. The document is framed around Utah's five high leverage practices (HLP). An HLP is a frequently occurring educational practice that all educators should know how to do. These practices are evidence-based, meaning that they reflect effective methods that when successfully implemented can improve results for each learner.

Research shows that teachers who learn and master these HLPs are better prepared to engage in the types of instructional practices and professional collaborations that are necessary for effectively educating students. Teachers who implement HLPs design and deliver instruction that results in better learning outcomes for all students. Included in the guide are real-world definitions and specific classroom examples of each HLP rooted in the context of kindergarten. It is important to note that there are overlapping themes and extensive connections amongst the HLPs discussed in this guide and none are designed to stand in isolation. Users of this guide may find it helpful to start with the HLP that is most in line with the area where they are seeking information. For example, HLP #5 is establishing a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment. Starting with this HLP will allow teachers to build the foundational knowledge necessary to effectively implement the remaining HLPs.

This document was a collaborative effort between stakeholders, Region 15 Comprehensive Center at WestEd, and USBE specialists, and it incorporates many evidence-based research practices and existing USBE resources.

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## High-Leverage Practice #1:

# USE STUDENT ASSESSMENT DATA

**DEFINITION:** Use student assessment data, analyze instructional practices, and make necessary adjustments in collaboration with professionals to improve student outcomes.

**EXPLANATION**

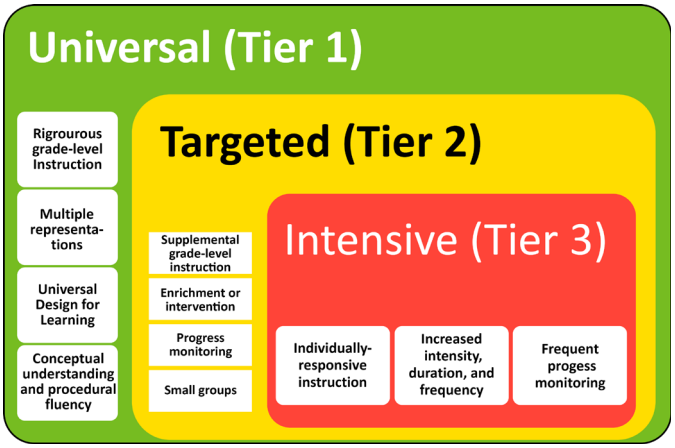
Teachers consistently collect and interpret data from multiple sources (e.g., informal and formal observations, student work samples, curriculum-based measures, information from families, progress towards English language proficiency for English learners, progress towards IEP goals for students with IEPs, and other data sources) to inform instructional decisions and change instructional practice to meet student needs. Teachers regularly collaborate with other general education and special education teachers, support staff, and families to support student learning.

**TOPICS**

1. High Quality Instruction
2. Data-Based Decision Making
3. Collaboration
4. Progress Monitoring
5. Remote Learning
6. Research, Supporting Documents, & Additional Resources

**PRACTICAL HOW-TO—WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN THE CLASSROOM:**

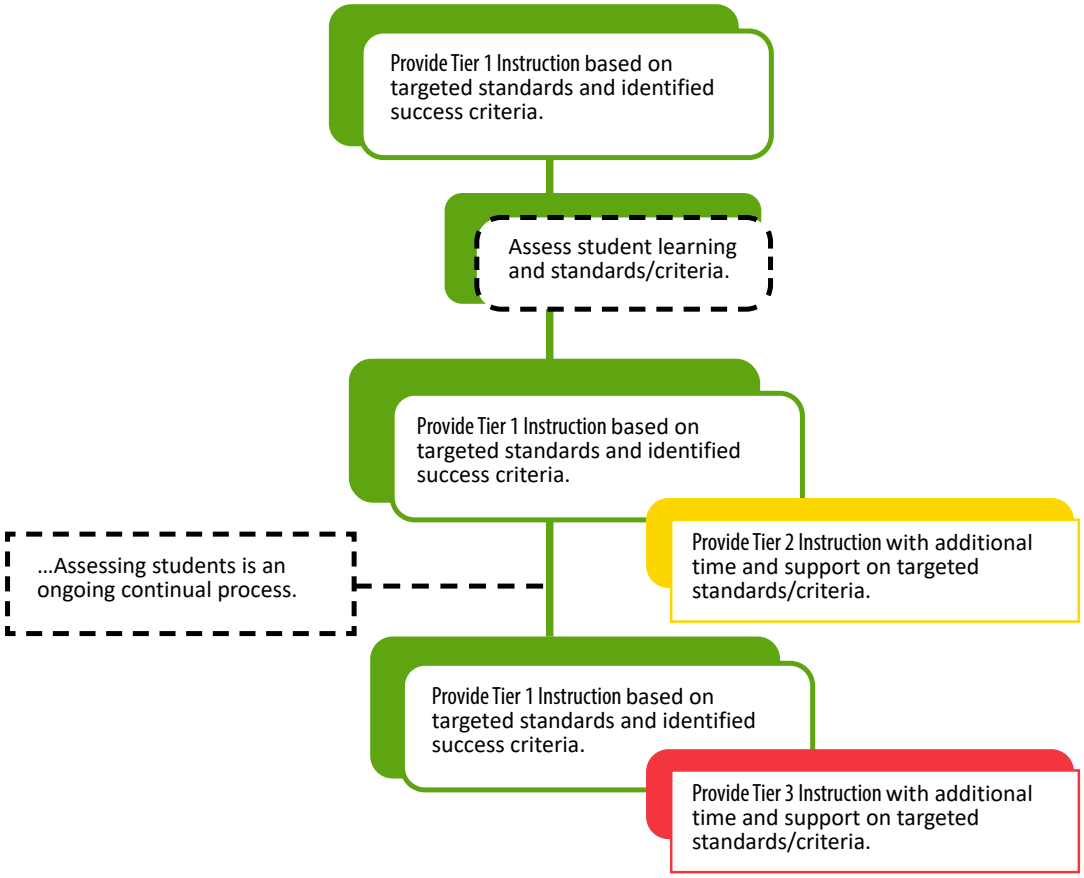
**1. HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION:** Research suggests that, among school-related factors, teachers matter more to student achievement than any other aspect of schooling. For all students to be successful with grade level core standards, high quality universally designed instruction should be evident in all kindergarten classrooms. High quality instruction is occurring in a classroom when all students demonstrate outcomes on grade level core standards. Teachers should utilize evidence-based curriculum and instructional practices daily in the classroom, as well as provide appropriate scaffolding, materials, methods, and assessments for diverse learners. Before any decisions for placement in targeted or intensive instructional groups are made, teachers must ensure that a lack of student outcomes is not related to ineffective universal instruction.




More information about high quality systematic instruction is provided in HLP #3.

**2. DATA-BASED DECISION MAKING:** Once it is evident that equitable, high quality universal instruction has been consistently provided, teachers can begin to analyze assessment data to inform instructional decision making. Data sources primarily include formal and informal assessments (informal and formal observations, student work samples, curriculum-based measures, information from families, progress towards English language proficiency for English learners, progress towards IEP goals for students with IEPs, etc.) of student thinking and understanding. These assessments determine entry into and exit from targeted and intensive interventions and enrichments. Throughout this process, decisions are made based on the learning goals and needs of the whole class, groups of students, and individual students.

## Data-based Decision Making




UNIVERSAL INSTRUCTION: In kindergarten classrooms, teachers should be collecting student data and conducting analysis continuously and over time to ensure student outcomes continue to be met. Data analysis should influence changes to the delivery model of instruction in core content areas.

TARGETED INSTRUCTION: When data show that students need supplemental instruction in core standards, students should receive targeted intervention in addition to the instruction they receive in universal instruction. Progress monitoring of targeted instruction should occur every 2 to 4 weeks, as it provides ongoing feedback about the effectiveness of targeted instruction. If a student is not making progress, adjustments to instruction need to occur immediately. Adjustments may need to be made to the duration, frequency, and/or intensity of the intervention instruction being provided.

INTENSIVE INSTRUCTION: In this level of support students are receiving individually responsive instruction. Classroom teachers are responsible for delivering intensive instruction to any student who needs intensive support, which may include foundational skills and knowledge required to access grade level standards and content. Intensive intervention time is in addition to time spent in universal and targeted instruction. Progress monitoring on the skills taught in intensive instruction should occur weekly. Multiple data points should be analyzed so that teachers are able to make timely decisions about how to change instruction to meet student needs and improve outcomes.

Guiding questions for analyzing data—While looking at data individually or as a team, teachers ask the following questions:

- What areas of students' performance are at or above expectations?
- What areas of students' performance are below expectations?
- How did various groups (e.g., by gender, race, socioeconomic status, disability, English Learners) of students perform?
- What patterns or trends appear?
- What do we observe at the school level? The grade level? The class level? The student level?
- What other data do we want to examine?

3. **COLLABORATION:** In order to maintain a focus on student outcomes, teachers need to work together. In order for collaboration to be successful, there must be a common understanding amongst all participants, and working norms that are established through a collaborative process. Some of these norms may include: be present, contribute your expertise, presume positive intention, seek clarification, put ideas on the table. The graphic below outlines 6 essential characteristics of collaborative teams.

4. **PROGRESS MONITORING:** Progress monitoring is the practice of testing students briefly, but frequently, on the skills (across all content areas) in which they are receiving instruction to ensure that they are making adequate progress. Any student receiving targeted instruction should be monitored for progress once every two to four weeks. The progress monitoring should be in the area of instruction that the student is receiving. Students who are receiving intensive instruction receive weekly progress monitoring. The expectation for progress monitoring is the same for both half- and full-day kindergarten students. Progress monitoring data is used to determine if a student is mastering specific Utah Core Standards, and the data should be discussed during collaboration time. The basic steps of progress monitoring include:

- determine current level of performance
- identify what level of performance the student should achieve by a certain time
- establish the rate of progress necessary to achieve the appropriate performance level

- collect assessment evidence
- determine when and what kind of instructional adjustments to make
- determine if adjustments need to be made to the accommodations being provided for students with IEPs

When progress monitoring is utilized effectively, teacher decision making improves and student outcomes increase. The process also allows students to be more aware of the progress they are making. Teachers should frequently communicate student progress with parents/families, as well as provide at-home learning activities to support continued progress towards mastery of the standards.

- *EXAMPLE*: One assessment kindergarten teachers may use (but is not required in kindergarten) is Acadience Reading. Acadience Reading Progress Monitoring can be used to guide instructional decisions to improve student outcomes. When reviewing the data it is important to ask, "Is what I am doing working?," and "Is the student making progress?" This tool is sensitive to incremental change and is effective when paired with evidenced-based activities and strategies to achieve progress goals.
- *EXAMPLE*: A student has been receiving instruction on identifying the beginning sound of words. The teacher asks the student to identify words that start with /b/. The student is able to identify 3 out of 5 words in a quick check. The teacher then knows that additional instruction is needed, and can adjust as necessary (e.g., frequency, duration, intensity).

**5. REMOTE LEARNING:** It is important to establish data decision making norms and protocols for online meetings with collaborative teams. Even during remote learning, collaborative discussions and analysis of student data contributes greatly to improving teacher instruction and student learning outcomes.

During remote instruction teachers should progress monitor student learning and make instructional decisions just as they would during face to face instruction. Adjustments to informal assessments will need to be made based on online capabilities and availability of students. Teachers should become familiar with available online tools and their capabilities for student interaction and gathering of data. It is important to communicate outcomes regularly with families. Consideration should be given to:

- Discerning if the education technology is impacting student progress (is the student not making expected progress due to learning challenges, or due to not being able to understand or use the ed technology correctly).
- Using education technology tools that students are familiar with prior to using it for assessment purposes.
- Imagine Learning, iReady, Lexia, and Waterford are software programs provided through the Early Intervention Software Program (EISP) that students may be familiar with. These resources can also be accessed by students in a remote learning setting.
- Taking advantage of education technology programs and applications that allow for multiple ways for students to demonstrate their progress.

Research, Supporting Documents, & Additional Resources for HLP #1:

Topic 1: **High Quality Instruction**

- MTSS
- Provide High Quality Instruction
- Utah Core Standards

Topic 2: **Data-Based Decision Making**

- 3 Ways Student Data Can Inform Your Teaching
- Coaches Help Mine the Data
- Guiding Questions for Data Analysis

Topic 3: **Collaboration**

- 6 Essential Characteristics of a PLC

Topic 4: **Progress Monitoring**

- How Student Progress Monitoring Improves Instruction
- Immediate Instructional Adjustments Based on Assessed Performance

Topic 5: **Remote Learning**

- 14 Simple Tips for Better Online Teaching
- Adapting to Teaching Online Kindergarten
- Collecting Progress Monitoring Data Virtually
- Virtual IEP Meeting Tip Sheets

## High-Leverage Practice #2:

# STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

**DEFINITION:** Use strategies to promote active student engagement.

**EXPLANATION**

When students are actively engaged, teachers can see their attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and positive feelings when they are learning or being taught. Teachers may use a variety of instructional strategies that result in active student responses. Active student engagement is critical to academic success. Positive student-teacher relationships, connecting learning to students' lives, and using a variety of teacher-led, peer-assisted, and technology- supported strategies have been shown to increase student engagement. Teachers also monitor student engagement and provide positive and constructive feedback to sustain performance.

**TOPICS**

1. Student Engagement
2. Observing Student Engagement
3. Engagement Strategies
4. Check for Understanding
5. Reluctant Learners
6. Remote Learning
7. Research, Supporting Documents, & Additional Resources

**PRACTICAL HOW-TO—WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN THE CLASSROOM:**

1. **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT:** In general, student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and excel in their education. Student engagement occurs when students:

   - have invested themselves, their energy, and their commitment to the learning environment, both within and outside the classroom.
   - willingly exert the required effort to find personal success academically, socially, and emotionally.
   - care about the success of themselves, their peers, and the adults around them. They contribute meaningfully to the school and classroom climate.

   Teachers use a variety of instructional strategies that result in active student responding. Active student engagement is critical to academic success and requires that all students have equitable access to the content (including instructional delivery, materials, and assessment). Teachers must initially build positive student–teacher relationships to foster engagement and motivate reluctant learners. They promote engagement by connecting learning to students' lives (e. g., knowing students' academic and cultural backgrounds) and using a variety of teacher-led

(e.g., choral responding and response cards), peer-assisted (e. g., cooperative learning and peer tutoring), student-regulated (e.g., self-management), and technology-supported strategies shown empirically to increase student engagement. They monitor student engagement and provide positive and constructive feedback to sustain performance.

**2. OBSERVING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT:** What Does Student Engagement Look Like? When observing a student, there are specific, observable behaviors that demonstrate evidence that the student is engaged in the learning. Some of these observable behaviors include:

- Paying attention (alert, tracking with their eyes, nodding)
- Listening (as opposed to chatting)
- Asking content related questions
- Responding to questions (whole group, small group, cooperative learning strategies)
- Showing attention by following requests
- Reacting (laughing, crying, shouting, etc.)
- Writing to learn
- Contributing to class discussions or debates (sharing their perspective, asking questions)
- Interacting with other students
- Persisting when a task is difficult or challenging, even when they make mistakes

Building relationships with students allows teachers to know what active student engagement looks like for specific students. It is important that teachers can recognize that students who learn differently may express their engagement differently. For example, a student who visually looks like she is not paying attention may be able to answer the teacher's question or a student who is learning English may not seem to be listening but is translating in her head.

**3. ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES:** Increased student engagement correlates with increased student achievement. Teachers need to incorporate strategies to ensure that students are active participants in the learning process. Strategies need to be thoughtfully planned, as well as explicitly modeled and practiced using non-academic content. This allows students to grasp the engagement strategy in order to utilize it without hesitation when engaging with academic content. Some engagement strategies to consider are:

### COOPERATIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

- *EXAMPLE*: When introducing cooperative learning strategies in the classroom teachers must first explicitly model the strategy and expectations. Students must first understand how the process works before they use the strategy in an activity or lesson. One strategy teachers can use is think-pair-share. Students first think individually about an assigned task. Then they pair with their partner to share their ideas. This strategy helps to ensure that all students are engaged and keeps student focus on the lesson.

### INTEGRATION OF STUDENT INTERESTS

- *EXAMPLE*: At the beginning of the year teachers should spend time with individual students to find out more about them. Utilizing simple interest surveys is one way to collect data. This information can then be used by the teacher when planning lessons to ensure they are engaging and relatable for all students.

USE OF WAIT TIME

- *EXAMPLE*: When asking questions that require more than a yes or no response, it is important to provide students with adequate time to think. Research suggests that 5-7 seconds of "wait time" is sufficient for most questions, though students with comprehension difficulties or IEPs may need additional wait time. By affording these precious seconds, not only will students have higher quality responses, but more students will likely engage and be ready to respond.

SELF-MONITORING SKILLS

- *EXAMPLE*: Self-monitoring skills are used by students to keep track of their own actions and performance. Teachers can use picture examples of the steps for a task to help students pace themselves through the activity once it has been explicitly modeled by the teacher.

When engagement strategies are used consistently, they become part of the classroom routines and procedures. Students are then able to then utilize the strategies to dive deeper into their learning collaboratively with minimal support from the teacher.

4. **CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING:** When teaching in whole groups, checking for understanding must occur regularly. Teachers must consistently monitor students to ensure that the concepts and skills that are being taught are understood before progressing with lessons. There are many various methods that can be utilized. Some examples include:

CALLING ON STUDENTS: When calling on students it is important to ask the question first, give students time to think, share with a partner, and then call on a student to respond. This allows all students to be engaged in their learning. Teachers should vary how students are called to ensure all students remain engaged. Calling students randomly, utilizing student names on markers/sticks/counters, etc., and utilizing groups (i.e. "Yellow Table") are a few ways to vary engagement.

DEMONSTRATING UNDERSTANDING: Students should be able to show their understanding in many ways. Kindergarten is a fast-paced environment, and teachers should vary how they check for understanding to ensure students remain engaged in learning. Before using strategies in the classroom, they need to be explicitly taught to students. Some strategies include:

- exit tickets
- white boards for responses
- finger-rating (1, 2, 3)
- color-cards (Green=Good, Yellow=More Time/Information, Red=Didn't Get it!)
- technology response systems ("clicker" systems)
- body/sign language signs for immediate response(s)

These are just a few ways for students to demonstrate their understanding. Teachers will find additional strategies that work better for their teaching style. All teachers should ensure that they have various ways to check for understanding, and that students are able to independently engage in the process.

5. **RELUCTANT LEARNERS:** At the beginning of kindergarten many students may seem like they are reluctant to learn. School may be a new experience for many children, and teachers need to be aware that students might not understand how to engage in learning. Kindergarten teachers should take advantage of this unique opportunity and help students to establish a love of learning.

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT #2

Teachers need to explicitly model and explain how to be an active learner. This allows students to develop an understanding of learning expectations in the classroom. Teachers may also find whole group lessons to be challenging. While many students will maintain focus, others may struggle or be reluctant to learn in this setting. Even in small group settings, teachers may sometimes find reluctant learners. Here are some ways to help engage reluctant students in learning:

- Discover what is interesting or motivating to the students.
- Consider students' placement within the room (proximity to teacher or other students).
- Assign the student a classroom role to bolster confidence and trust.
- Provide one-on-one coaching with the student.
- Reach out to the families to share positive communications.

6. **REMOTE LEARNING:** Keeping students engaged and excited about learning online can be challenging. It requires focusing on engaging students, communicating with families, and making the most of new situations. Here are a few things to consider:

- Embrace technology. Explore what the school or district already has available for teacher use. Becoming more familiar with the technology will help teachers increase student engagement.
- Explore the accessibility features and tools to ensure all students have access.
- Set up a space for students to socialize with classmates. This could be a specific class meeting or time set aside for students to interact with each other.
- Get students off their screens. While this may seem counterintuitive, this allows students to be more actively engaged by creating tasks and choices that are offline.
  - *EXAMPLE*: Have students count while doing jumping jacks, count objects around them, identify shapes and letters in their environment, or identify objects in their environment that start with a specific letter.
- Include families. Communicating with families is crucial to successful online learning. Establish with each family the best way to communicate with them. If families are not proficient in English, consider using apps that provide instant translations. Taking time to build relationships will help each student be successful.

Research, Supporting Documents, Additional Resources for HLP #2:

Topic 1: **Types of Engagement (Emotional, Behavioral & Cognitive)**

- Methods of Engaging Students During a Lesson in Kindergarten
- Social-Emotional Learning in Kindergarten

Topic 2: **Engagement Strategies**

- 7 Effective Teaching Strategies for the Classroom
- Evidence of Student Engagement

Topic 3: **Check For Understanding**

- The Importance of Checking for Understanding
- Ways to Check for Understanding
- Why Check for Understanding?

Topic 4: **Reluctant Learners**

- 5 Ways to Engage Reluctant Students

Topic 5: **Remote Learning**

- Activities for Learning at Home

## High-Leverage Practice #3:

# SYSTEMATICALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION

**DEFINITION:** Systematically design instruction toward a specific learning goal including the use of explicit instruction and scaffolded supports.

**EXPLANATION**

Teachers help students to develop important concepts and skills that provide the foundation for more complex learning. Teachers sequence lessons that build on each other and make connections explicit, in both planning and delivery. They activate students' prior knowledge and show how each lesson "fits" with previous ones. Planning involves careful consideration of learning intentions, what success looks like, and allocating time accordingly. Scaffolded supports (e.g., visual, verbal and written supports) are provided as temporary assistance to students so they can successfully complete tasks that they cannot yet do independently and with a high rate of success. Teachers model and scaffold steps or processes needed to understand content and concepts, apply skills, and complete tasks successfully and independently. Ongoing changes (e.g., pacing, examples) occur throughout the sequence based on student performance.

**TOPICS**

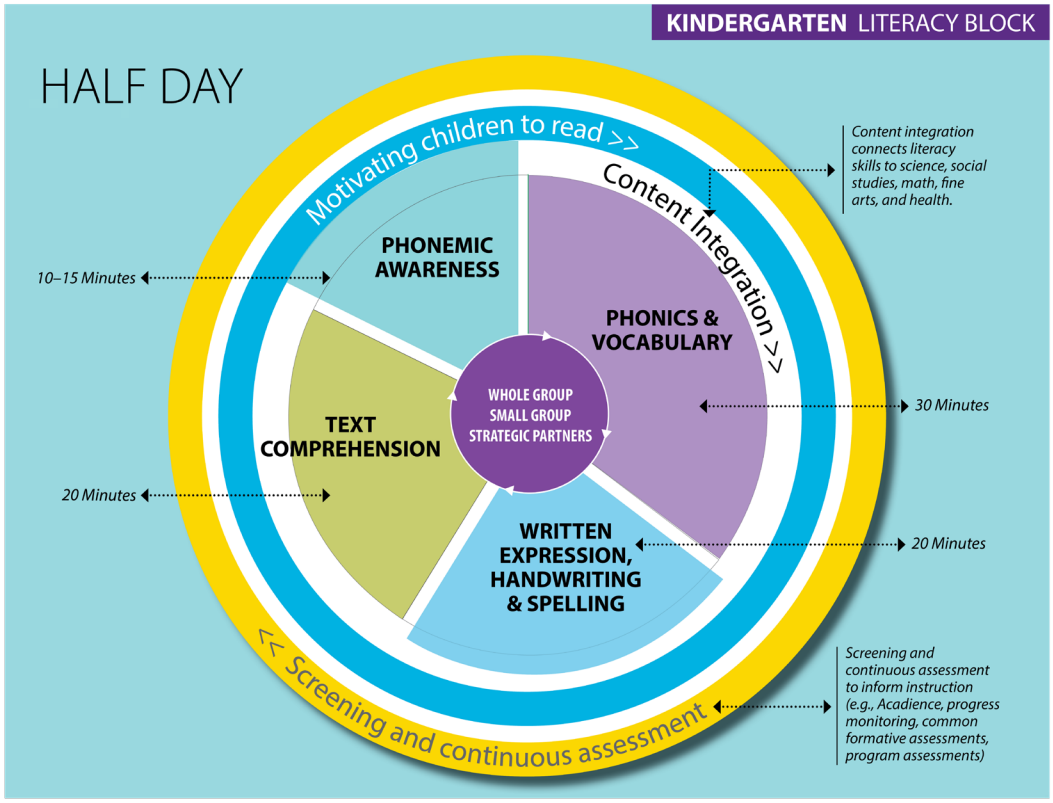
1. Instructional Block
2. Lesson Design
3. Explicit Instruction
4. Inquiry Instruction
5. Scaffolding
6. Student Performance
7. Remote Learning

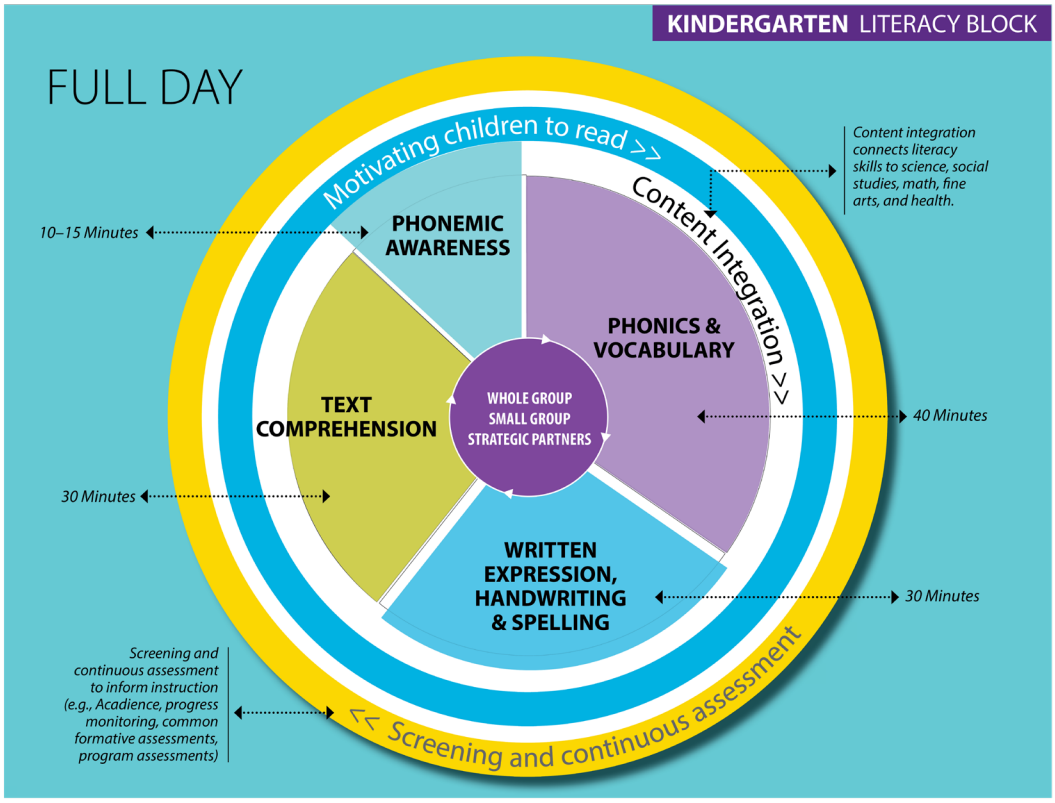
Research, Supporting Documents, & Additional Resources

**PRACTICAL HOW-TO—WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN THE CLASSROOM:**

1. **INSTRUCTIONAL BLOCK:** Instructional blocks are dedicated times set aside each day for specific content areas. During these times teachers model explicit skills and provide scaffolded access to grade level knowledge. Students then practice these skills in a variety of ways. Each classroom should have a dedicated, uninterrupted literacy and math universal instruction block. USBE recommends 60 minutes for the math block for both half- and full- day kindergarten sessions. USBE recommends 85 minutes for the half-day literacy block and 115 minutes for the full-day literacy block, broken down into the following essential components:

## SYSTEMATICALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION #3



In literacy, students need a specific amount of time devoted to each literacy component, including phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, oral language and writing. In mathematics, instruction should focus on mathematical practices, counting and cardinality, operations and algebraic thinking, number and operations in base ten, measurement, and geometry. Social emotional skills and other content areas (science and social studies) should be integrated thoughtfully and purposefully throughout the day. By purposefully integrating content areas, kindergarten teachers can ensure lessons are well planned and that students engage in learning that will improve outcomes.

Pacing is a critical component of effectively moving students through the necessary skills throughout the day, as well the year. Teachers must ensure that the pacing of instruction is appropriate for students of all abilities. The learning goals should be clear for students. Smooth transitions help to move the lesson from one activity to the next quickly and maximizes the use of instructional time. Utilizing various methods of delivery is important to keeping pacing on track.

- *EXAMPLE*: In teaching an AM and PM class, the AM class has not mastered all letter names and sounds, so the teacher would spend more time explicitly teaching letter names and sounds with these students. The PM class has mastered letter names and sounds, so the teacher would adjust the pacing of the lessons to move these students on to more appropriate skills.

**2. LESSON DESIGN:** In kindergarten, every student receives explicit and systematic universal grade-level instruction that is focused on Utah Core Standards. Teachers should utilize a variety of grouping strategies (whole group, small group, individual) to engage all students. Through thoughtful planning, preparation, observation, and analysis of student assessment data, teachers plan and deliver lessons. Lessons should incorporate evidence-based instructional strategies and curriculum, be properly paced, and provide adequate scaffolding to meet individual student needs. Students should be given multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery of learning in a variety of ways. Designing lessons to meet all students' needs is a critical element to effective teaching. Teachers working with special education students will reference Individual Education Plans (IEPs) frequently to ensure modifications and compliance with Special Education requirements. Lessons should be developed based on the Utah Core Standards using the curriculum approved by the district/school. Once lessons are developed, teachers will then know what mastery of skills should look like, how they want to engage students, what the pacing within lessons should be, and how data analysis informs decision making. Incorporating individual student's interests will increase engagement in learning. Teachers should communicate with parents and families the expected outcomes for kindergarten, including sharing grade level core standards in parent-friendly language.

- *EXAMPLE*: Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an instructional framework designed to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all learners based on scientific insights into how humans learn. UDL offers flexibility in the ways students access material, engage with it, and show what they know. Developing lesson plans this way helps all learners and may be especially helpful for students who think and learn differently. A core tenant of UDL is the concept that what is essential for some students is beneficial for all. More information can be found at http://udlguidelines.cast.org.
- *EXAMPLE*: A teacher has a student who knows three letters and sounds, and one who knows all letters and sounds. Thoughtful planning on the part of the teacher allows each student to actively engage in the learning process. The teacher optimizes learning for each student by incorporating individual interests and varying instructional demands in order to actively engage all learners.

Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher have created a *Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework*. Teachers will find this model helpful when designing lessons and considering how learning will occur in the classroom, as it suggests a sequence for delivering instruction that builds towards student independence and mastery of new learning. Equal time does not have to be spent in each area, it is dependent on where students are in their learning and the type of lesson that is being delivered.

- *EXAMPLE*: A teacher may choose to teach a lesson on the formation of letters. After using a whiteboard to write a specific letter, modeling "I Do," the teacher may then ask the students to take out their whiteboards and also write the letter with them, modeling "We Do." While modeling how to write the letter, the teacher monitors the students as they practice writing the letter at the same time and provide feedback as necessary. Students then move to "You Do" and practice writing the letter as the teacher monitors and walks around the room, informally observing and providing feedback.

**3. EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION:** Explicit instruction provides a series of engaging instructional supports or scaffolds - first through the logical selection and sequencing of content, and then by breaking down that content into manageable instructional units based on students' cognitive capabilities. (Archer & Hughes, 2011). Well-organized and connected information makes it easier for students to retrieve information and facilitates the integration of new material. Furthermore, some students may have difficulty seeing how some skills and concepts fit together. Therefore, it is important to use teaching techniques that make these connections more apparent.

The teacher may use explicit instruction when students are learning discrete skills, strategies, concepts, and rules that will allow students to practice and apply their newly acquired knowledge in the future. The teacher determines the logical selection and sequencing of the content, and then breaks down the content into manageable instructional units based on students' instructional needs.

Delivery of explicit instruction is characterized by clear descriptions and demonstrations of a skill, followed by supported practice and timely feedback. Initial practice is carried out with high levels of teacher involvement. However, once student success is evidenced, the teacher's support is systematically withdrawn, and the students move toward independent performance. The average learner requires 4 to 14 quality learning opportunities to learn a new skill or concept, whereas a struggling learner may need 14 to 200 experiences to learn the same concept.

**SIX KEY FUNCTIONS:**

1. Reviews relevant previous learning and/or prerequisite skills and knowledge.
2. Presents instruction by stating the learning intentions and success criteria, presenting new material in small steps, modeling, providing examples and non-examples, using clear language, and avoiding digressions.
3. Provides guided practice that requires a high frequency of responses, ensures high rates of success, provides timely feedback, and prompts while students continue to practice until they are accurate.
4. Provides positive and corrective feedback.
5. Provides independent practice that is monitored during initial practice attempts and continuous practice as students build automaticity and fluency.
6. Provides spiral reviews of previously learned concepts over time.

- *EXAMPLE*: A kindergarten teacher demonstrates how to use a dry-erase marker and white board to write the upper- and lower-case letter "Qq," using the instructional strategy "I Do." After students have had the opportunity to observe the teacher modeling how to write the letters more than once, the teacher shifts to "We Do." As the teacher models, students simultaneously use their own markers and white boards to write the letters "Qq." This activity is performed repeatedly with both teacher and students writing the letters, while the teacher provides timely feedback. In the final component of the instructional strategy, "You Do," the teacher no longer models and instead provides positive and corrective feedback directly to individual students. Through informal observation the teacher is able to determine which students may need brief practice and which students may need additional modeling and instructional support to learn the concept.

**4. INQUIRY INSTRUCTION:** Inquiry-based instruction is characterized by students engaging in student-centered investigation to gain knowledge and skills that support personal sense-making. This process includes students identifying and evaluating evidence, formulating explanations from evidence, connecting explanations to prior knowledge, and communicating and justifying explanations while the teacher carefully scaffolds students in the new learning experience. This process deepens student learning and facilitates the transfer of previously learned concepts in new or novel situations. Inquiry-based instruction should not be used when students are learning discrete skills, strategies or concepts (i.e. phonemic awareness, phonics, emergent reading, etc.).

Instructional delivery is characterized by clear expectations, activation of prior knowledge, and providing context while providing relevance and eliciting curiosity. A teacher introduces the initial investigation, explains the intent of the lesson, and describes needed student behaviors before student discourse begins. Students first work independently, then collaborate in groups while the teacher monitors, uses questions to probe student thinking and understanding, and promotes student-to-student discourse. Students increase their understanding and develop meaning through explaining and justifying their thinking. By the end of the lesson, the learning community of students demonstrate increased knowledge and skill toward the learning intention(s) in their mastery of the learning.

**FIVE KEY FEATURES:**

1. Learner engages actively in the learning experience provided by teacher, materials, and/or other sources.
2. Learner identifies (is directed to) and collects evidence as the teacher facilitates meaningful student to student discourse and experiences while activating prior knowledge.
3. Learner formulates (is guided in the process to formulating) explanation after summarizing the evidence, while the teacher elicits and uses evidence of student thinking to help build a shared understanding.
4. Learner evaluates (is directed towards) resources to link explanation as the teacher poses purposeful questions to assess and advance student reasoning and sense making.
5. Learner forms (is coached in the development of) a reasonable and logical argument to communicate explanations in a variety of forms as the teacher informally assesses student learning and determines the next steps for instruction.

*Note: Details in parentheses represent the scaffolding that may be necessary given the diversity of learners in each classroom.

- *EXAMPLE*: When teaching a lesson on forces, motion, and interactions the students are presented with problems requiring solutions (i.e. having a marble or other object move a certain distance, follow a particular path, or knock down other objects). Students must use inquiry learning to define the problem by asking questions and gathering information, conveying designs through sketches, drawings, or physical models, and comparing and testing designs. Students must analyze data to determine how their design solution causes a change in the speed or direction of an object with a push or pull. They should discuss how different objects react on different surfaces and why this is important to know.

**5. SCAFFOLDING:** Scaffolding is a key concept in education. It is a framework to describe an adult's supportive role in children's learning. Scaffolding enables a child to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal which is just beyond his or her own independent abilities. Scaffolding is a bridge to new skill levels using modeling, asking questions, and prompting students to try out the new skill. Scaffolding is meant to bring the child up to the new skill, not bring the skill down to an independent level.

- *EXAMPLE*: If a child knows how to draw a straight vertical line, they can then be shown how to draw a straight horizontal line. Once those two skills are mastered, they can put it together to draw a square.
- *EXAMPLE*: Teachers can use questions to scaffold content for students. Some questions include:
  - What are you thinking?
  - What else is possible here?
  - What do you need in order to learn more about ___?
  - What does this remind you of?
  - When you do ___, what are you noticing? This means you are learning __.
  - What is different in your thinking now? What do you now know about __?

**6. STUDENT PERFORMANCE:** When planning instruction teachers must intentionally set high expectations for all students. Careful consideration should also be given to the types of questions and tasks that are utilized during lessons. Throughout a lesson the activities and questions should increase in complexity and depth of knowledge and should be tied to the learning goals. Depth of knowledge is not about difficulty level or taking away scaffolds. It is essential for teachers to recognize that all students, even students who are advanced, still need scaffolding and support from teachers to reach higher levels of depth and complexity. Karin Hess has created a cognitive rigor matrix that applies depth of knowledge and cognitive processes to various content areas. Teachers may find this useful in increasing student performance.

- *EXAMPLE*: When teaching a lesson on collecting data the teacher begins the lesson by asking students to recall information previously learned. After this review, the teacher provides the students with a sentence frame that says, "My favorite animal is _____." Students then color in one bar on a bar graph to show their favorite animal. When the graph is completed, the teacher can then ask open ended questions that vary in complex thinking and allow sufficient wait time. This allows students to apply critical thinking skills and engages all students in the lesson.

7. **REMOTE LEARNING:** Remember that remote learning is a huge undertaking for parents/guardians as well as teachers, so the more predictable the online instruction is, the more successful students and families will be. Creating a tutorial of how to navigate the systems used online will support parents in being able to better help their children. It is important to build relationships with students and parents even from a distance. Teachers may host a conference time when everyone can check in via video chat occasionally.
    - *EXAMPLE*: Teachers can create their own videos and share them with the class if they can't quite find the right content online. Consider having a resource library for students to reference. Some video ideas recorded for students engage with online may include:
        - read alouds
        - word work lessons
        - class alphabet or sight word chart
        - daily calendar time (modified)
        - guided drawing
        - writing mini lesson
        - writing prompt question + hook
        - move and sing along with an educational video
        - count, read or show their work to someone in their household
        - create a collection of objects
        - I-spy or scavenger hunt

Research, Supporting Documents, Additional Resources for HLP #3:

Topic 1: **Instructional Block**

- Improving Pacing: The Rhythm of the Classroom
- Instructional Pacing: How Do Your Lessons Flow?
- Pacing Guides—Educational Leadership

Topic 2: **Lesson Design**

- Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework
- 3 ACT Math Tasks
- Kindergarten Math: Teach Addition With 3 ACT Tasks

Topic 3: **Explicit Instruction**

- Explicit Instruction: A Teacher's Guide
- Instructional Strategies for Kindergarten and the Primary Grades

Topic 4: **Inquiry Instruction**

- What is Inquiry-Based Learning and How Does it Help Prepare Children for the Real World
- Why Inquiry-Based Learning in Kindergarten Makes Sense

Topic 5: **Scaffolding**

- 6 Scaffolding Strategies to Use with Your Students
- Three Types of Scaffolding
- What Is Scaffolding in Early Child Development

Topic 6: **Student Performance**

- Cognitive Rigor and Depth of Knowledge

Topic 7: **Remote Learning**

- 19 Things Kindergartners Can Do for Distance Learning

## High-Leverage Practice #4:

# FEEDBACK

**DEFINITION:** Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning and behavior.

**EXPLANATION**

Effective feedback must be strategically delivered, actionable, and goal directed; feedback is most effective when the student has a goal and the feedback informs the learner regarding areas of strength and areas needing improvement along with clear ways to improve performance. Teachers should provide ongoing, age-appropriate feedback, that includes verbal, visual and written forms, until learners reach their established learning goals.

**TOPICS**

1. Feedback vs. Advice
2. Academic vs. Behavioral
3. Teacher to Student Feedback
4. Student to Student Feedback
5. Student to Teacher Feedback
6. Remote Learning

Research, Supporting Documents, & Additional Resources

**PRACTICAL HOW-TO—WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN THE CLASSROOM:**

1. **FEEDBACK VERSUS ADVICE:** Feedback is information about how individual students are doing in an effort to reach a goal. It is objective and allows the person receiving feedback the opportunity to act in a timely manner. It is important to consciously give feedback. While feedback can recognize positive behavior, it is not simply praise, but calls out the specific act that is done well. Teachers should explicitly model giving and receiving effective feedback to ensure kindergarteners understand what feedback looks like. It is important to remember feedback can happen in a conversational way, as opposed to a teacher providing a report with the student as simply the receiver of information. With a transition from half-day to full-day, teachers should be checking in with students to discuss performance and behavioral goals more frequently and in a conversational, two-way method.

   - *EXAMPLE*: Early learning includes feedback for all areas of a child's growth, including social-emotional learning (e.g. feelings) and academics. A teacher may check-in with a student and use language such as "How are…,""Tell me more about…," or "The expression on your face leads me to believe you may be feeling ___" to solicit feedback from the student. Feedback from the teacher is also based on data and may include things such as "In learning letters, you are…" or "I am happy to report…" Being objective in feedback allows students to learn about where they are currently, and where they need to go next both socially and academically.

2. **ACADEMIC FEEDBACK VERSUS BEHAVIORAL FEEDBACK:** In the kindergarten classroom teachers should utilize feedback to support academic growth as well as to maintain a productive and safe classroom environment for all students. Academic feedback should be provided to individual students which allows them to improve in areas of need so that outcomes continue to improve. Feedback on behavior should be specific and focused on the behavior and not the student.

   - *EXAMPLE:* Teachers should provide feedback specifically tied to academics. These feedback starters focus on learning and do not include feedback regarding behavior.

     Some examples of academic feedback include: "I notice you have successfully…," "It seems that you are struggling with…," "During your reading I noticed…," "You are doing well in learning…," and "I like how you have learned and shared about…"

   - *EXAMPLE*: Teachers in early childhood classrooms should reinforce behavior by focusing on the specific behavior and not the student. By saying "I like the sharing I see around the classroom" instead of "Student B, you are not sharing well," the feedback reinforces positive behaviors to all learners in the room, and does not single out one individual child.

3. **TEACHER-TO-STUDENT FEEDBACK:** Giving students feedback in the classroom during the learning process has been proven to increase learning and improve student outcomes. When given correctly, feedback guides the student in their learning process and gives them the direction they need to reach the target or goal of the lesson. Students must be receptive to receiving feedback. Ensuring that feedback is tied directly to individual student performance helps students to feel safe when engaging in learning. Teachers need to provide immediate feedback that is constructive in nature and allows the student to improve in specific areas. Consider the following questions when providing feedback to students:

   - What can the student do?
   - What can't the student do?
   - How does the student's work compare to mastery of the standard?
   - How can the student do better?

   - *EXAMPLE*: While teaching a math lesson on counting the teacher is looking for mastery of counting and one-to-one correspondence. When observing students, the teacher will need to use a variety of feedback methods. While observing one student, the teacher may simply ask the student to check their work by recounting. While observing another student who is grouping instead of counting the feedback will change, and the teacher would encourage the student to concentrate on one-to-one correspondence. Utilizing positive reinforcement to encourage perseverance, a teacher may verbally say to the class "I noticed the team at the yellow table doing a terrific job of counting each cube one by one." Feedback can vary, should be linked to the activity and given in a way that the student responds positively. If the teacher knows a student is unusually shy, then asking the student to count during the activity for the whole class may not be as effective as asking the student privately to count. This would give the student the opportunity to demonstrate understanding of the learning and activity.

4. **STUDENT-TO-STUDENT FEEDBACK:** Student interaction in kindergarten is essential to creating a community of learners. Students must be given the opportunity to engage in thoughtful discussions and provide feedback to their peers in a way that is relevant and meaningful to learning. Visual representations help students to see the process as it is happening and adjust along the

way to improve outcomes. By teaching students how to provide feedback to peers, teachers are building independence and allowing students to actively participate in their learning and begin to see themselves as learners. "Cultivating an atmosphere that encourages 'failing forward'—that is, one that sees mistakes as opportunities for growth rather than as closed-ended failures—increases students' engagement and awareness of their strengths and challenges and opens up endless opportunities for students and teachers alike to grow." (Stackstein & Berkowicz, 2017, p. 12).

- *EXAMPLE*: Use sentence frames to teach students how to provide feedback to peers. This is a skill that teachers must explicitly teach students to do and provide students with scaffolding until they are able to independently provide feedback. Suggested sentence frames include:
  - The ___ worked well
  - The ___ was a good example of ...
  - I don't yet understand...
  - Can you break down the...?
  - Can you give me an example of...?
  - Can you tell me the next step…?
  - I need some more details on the …

**5. STUDENT-TO-TEACHER FEEDBACK:** Just as students benefit from receiving comments on their work and learning, teachers may find it beneficial in improving their teaching to receive feedback from students. The more information gathered about their teaching, the more informed changes a teacher can make that will be beneficial to the students' and the teacher's development. Timely feedback gathered and reviewed during a learning experience helps inform the teacher of what adjustments need to be made to ensure all students' needs are being met.

- *EXAMPLE*: A teacher can receive feedback regarding instructional practice from students by asking specific questions. These questions help to improve the learning process and environment for each student and allow them to take ownership of their learning. Some questions may include: Did you find it helpful to count using the blocks? Was anything confusing that you still need help with? What other ways could we count if we did not use the blocks? Is there anything you wish you would have had more time to do?
- *EXAMPLE*: At the conclusion of a lesson teachers can ask individual students to repeat back key aspects of the lesson or recount the directions for the next task. This informal student to teacher feedback allows for immediate corrections to be made if necessary and ensures student understanding is occurring.

**6. REMOTE LEARNING:** Feedback is critical not only in the classroom setting but during remote learning as well. Effective feedback should be frequent, specific, balanced and timely, even in a distance learning setting. It is important that there is a protocol established for how feedback is shared with students. Some examples of how to give feedback online include:

ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING MODULES: These are self-paced lessons that include content offered in a variety of formats (PPT slides, videos, reading, etc.)

LIVE WORKSHOPS: These are very similar to whole group or small group instruction in the classroom, only they are in front of the computer screen. These workshops can be recorded in case students need to reference them again later, or in the event they can't attend at the time it is offered.

## FEEDBACK #4

OFFICE HOURS: These are simply blocks of time that the teacher is available to support students and families who need extra help. Although these are optional, teachers may strongly encourage specific students to attend them.

GROUP BREAK OUTS: These smaller, shorter (15 to 20 minutes) sessions can be provided for specific students to engage in specific tasks. The teacher is present to facilitate discussion and allows students to provide feedback to peers.

STUDENT CHECK IN: Establish a dedicated check in time with each student and family to provide descriptive feedback on their work and learning.

Research, Supporting Documents, & Additional Resources for HLP #4:

Topic 1: **Feedback vs. Advice**

- Feedback in schools by John Hattie
- Feedback Tips
- Getting Feedback Right: A Q&A With John Hattie
- Seven Keys to Effective Feedback

Topic 2: **Academic vs. Behavior**

- Assessment and Feedback: Giving Feedback
- Best Teaching Methods
- The Power of Positive and Meaningful Feedback on Student Success

Topic 3: **Teacher to Student Feedback**

- 5 Research-Based Tips for Providing Students with Meaningful Feedback
- 20 Ways to Provide Effective Feedback for Learning
- Giving Student Feedback: 20 Tips to Do It Right
- How to Give Effective Feedback to Preschoolers

Topic 4: **Student to Student Feedback**

- Student to Student Feedback Strategies
- Seven Strategies for Improving Student Feedback

Topic 5: **Student to Teacher Feedback**

- Improving Your Teaching: Obtaining Feedback

Topic 6: **Remote Learning**

- How to do the Feedback Loop in Distance Learning
- How to Succeed in Distance Learning: 5 Tips for Families
- How to Succeed in Distance Learning: 5 Tips for Teachers

## High-Leverage Practice #5:

# LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

**DEFINITION:** Establish a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment.

**EXPLANATION**

Teachers explicitly teach and practice expectations, procedures, and routines that value ethnic, cultural, contextual, and linguistic diversity to foster student engagement across learning environments. By establishing, following, and reinforcing expectations of all students within the classroom, teachers will reduce the potential for challenging behavior and increase student engagement.

**TOPICS**

1. Establishing Routines and Procedures
2. Building a Safe and Supportive Classroom Culture
3. Valuing Student Diversity
4. Social and Emotional Learning
5. Trauma Informed Practices
6. Remote Learning

Research, Supporting Documents, & Additional Resources

**PRACTICAL HOW-TO—WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN THE CLASSROOM:**

1. **ESTABLISHING ROUTINES AND PROCEDURES:** All students greatly benefit from clear and consistent routines and procedures in the classroom. Teachers must explicitly teach routines and procedures for all aspects of kindergarten. Direct instruction and modeling are helpful when teaching expectations and processes. Don't assume that the students understand verbal explanations, it is a good idea to reinforce through modeling. Spending time at the beginning of the year to establish a solid foundation helps students to be more successful as the school year progresses, and teachers can spend more time in meaningful instruction. Routines and procedures should be taught during naturally occurring instances (i.e., if a student breaks a pencil, use the opportunity to teach students the procedure for replacing it). Some students may benefit from having visual reminders posted in the classroom or on individual cards as needed. If at any time throughout the year there is an area where students are having exceptional difficulty, teachers should immediately address the area of concern. This may involve a complete restart, with thorough reteaching and modeling of expectations to ensure students have a clearer understanding and are able to be successful with minimal support. All students will greatly benefit from clear and consistent routines and procedures. When in doubt, reteach and model where necessary at any time!

## LEARNING ENVIRONMENT #5

CLASSROOM LAYOUT: During the beginning of school it is important for teachers to consider and plan classroom logistical design prior to students entering the classroom. While there may be features of the classroom that are unchangeable, teachers should think about the flow of the classroom for quick transitions and optimal learning. This may include where student desks are located, small group and independent workstations, whole group rug area, and space for personal belongings.

ENTERING THE CLASSROOM: Teachers should think through how they would like a typical day to start. Careful consideration should be given to creating an inviting and safe classroom environment for all students. This allows students to be in a space where they are ready to learn. Teachers should carefully plan how the following will look in the classroom:

- entering the classroom
- unpacking
- organization of student belongings
- what students do when waiting for others

Teachers should also explicitly teach students how to reenter the classroom throughout the day. Careful consideration should be given to how students return to class from other locations (special services, using the restroom, etc.).

TRANSITIONS: Smooth transitions are purposeful, and include modeling expected outcomes for students, and recognizing positive behaviors. Teachers should consider how transitions affect students and make connections to classroom management structures, like classroom jobs, to ensure that all transitions are as smooth and successful as possible. In kindergarten the type of instruction should change frequently. Teachers need to ensure that students know how to move from one activity or place to another efficiently, with as little disruption as possible. Spending time to explicitly teach and model expectations during transitions is necessary to ensure students fully understand how to quickly and efficiently transition to maximize instructional time. Incorporating the use of cueing systems helps teachers to maintain control and allows students to remain focused. Providing students with time limits gives them a way to focus on specific tasks and ensures that instructional time is maximized. Integrating academic learning or review while students are transitioning from one area to another also maximizes instructional time. Teachers should consider how to handle:

- collection/dispersal of materials
- moving from one area to another
- walking in the classroom
- walking in the halls
- using the restroom

Teachers should model and review expectations consistently every time a transition occurs until students are able to transition independently.

- *EXAMPLE:* A teacher converting their room from half- to full-day Kindergarten will incorporate more transitions into the instructional day, including moving students from the classroom to other places, and transitions within the room for various content and agenda activities.
- *EXAMPLE:* When returning from recess and waiting in line for a drink, the teacher can ask students to identify the beginning sound in words (or another skill that is applicable). The

students are then engaged in a process while waiting and this helps to eliminate undesirable behaviors.

WHOLE GROUP INSTRUCTION: Thoughtful planning for each lesson, including where students will be located, is crucial to effective delivery and instruction and maximizes instructional time. By planning for and thinking through where students will be in the room, teachers are better able to plan instruction that actively engages all students. In the classroom, whole group instruction can occur while students are sitting at their seats or on a rug. Ensure that all students can see the teacher and content being delivered, as well as actively participate in the lesson.

- *EXAMPLE:* A teacher is teaching a lesson about seasons and time of year. Students may be sitting at the rug and are holding various tools such as color signs or weather symbols. Instructional videos, songs, and movement can be integrated into lessons to reinforce what students are learning.

SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION: Small group instruction is teacher-led, synchronous learning that is predetermined and standard(s)-specific. Instructional delivery needs to be engaging for students and provide multiple opportunities to respond. Teachers need to thoughtfully plan to maximize the use of instructional time. Small groups should be flexible, and students should be moved in or out of specific groups based on specific needs. For small group instruction to be highly effective it is critical that the teacher has established routines and has procedures in place, and that student behavior is effectively managed. When these things are lacking, the focus of the teacher cannot be on effective small group delivery. Spending time at the beginning of the year focused on embedding routines and procedures will allow small group instruction to begin sooner and ensure that time spent in small groups is effective in improving student outcomes.

- *EXAMPLE:* Teachers analyze data that has been regularly collected through progress monitoring on a specific standard(s). The data helps the teacher to determine individual student needs and how to place students into small groups. The teacher then plans lessons specific to the needs of each group. As instruction is taking place, the teacher remains flexible for necessary adjustments to be made based on student performance.

## LEARNING ENVIRONMENT #5

CENTERS: Centers allow teachers to meet with students in small groups while the rest of the class works on reinforcing standards and skills. Teachers should be thoughtful when planning expectations for center work, and these should be carefully modeled and explicitly taught to students. As a class, students should have the opportunity to practice how to move from center to center until they are able to independently participate successfully. When thinking about the type of activities to use, teachers should thoughtfully plan centers that are educational- and standards-based. Center activities should be work that is a review of skills previously learned and needs to be engaging. Students must be able to independently complete all center work without the need for support. Some classrooms may have the advantage of additional adults during center time. If a center is led by another adult, there should be explicit instructions for what the adult needs to do to guide the activity. Center activities should be taught in the whole group setting before moving students to a center for individual student work. As students become more familiar with expectations, child-led centers and spontaneous groupings can be introduced.

- *EXAMPLE:* Ensure that the activities students are engaged in are appropriate for student skills levels. Differentiation is necessary to ensure all students are actively engaged. Florida Center for Reading Research has numerous examples: https://www.fcrr.org/student-center-activities/kindergarten-and-first-grade

RECESS: Recess is an important aspect of kindergarten. Students need free time to play with their peers, and this free time also helps with cognitive, social, and emotional development. Students must understand the behavior expectations of recess time, and these should be explicitly taught and modeled until students are able to independently follow the agreed upon rules and procedures. Careful consideration should be given to the following:

- equipment usage rules
- lining up (inside and outside)
- behavior expectations (i.e. walking on the pavement, how to use slides, etc.)
- playground equipment rules

- *EXAMPLE*: Before students are turned loose to play, the teacher spends time focused on modeling and explicitly teaching the procedures for lining up in the classroom, how to move on the playground (i.e. walking on the blacktop, running on the grass/wood chips), what to do with equipment, and lining up outside. Students also take turns modeling for their peers.
- *EXAMPLE*: Teachers incorporate recess jobs into the classroom roles/responsibilities for students. A recess manager could be responsible for equipment, which would help to minimize time lost during transitions. Classroom manager roles and clearly defined responsibilities and protocols will support this endeavor.

DISMISSAL: Teachers should think through how they would like their typical day to end. Closing the classroom may include specific placement of chairs, desks, learning materials, and other resources. This is also a time when the teacher can thoughtfully close the learning day and have students reflect on their learning. Time should be planned so that students can successfully help themselves, their peers, and the teacher prepare the room for a safe exit. Consideration should be given to how students will move in the hallways in appropriate lines for students who walk, ride a bus, wait for car pick-ups, attend after school programs, etc. Careful planning on the teacher's part will ensure success for dismissal procedures. Teachers should carefully plan what each of these will look like in the classroom:

- cleaning up (materials, personal space, desks, floor)

- packing up (collecting materials that need to go home)
- Rug/Circle/Class Meeting to reflect on the day's learning
- lining up
- getting home (bus, car rider, walker, after school, etc.)

2. **BUILDING A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOM CULTURE:** Teachers should allot considerable time to establishing a classroom management plan that incorporates the school/district approved system. Consideration should be given to the classroom environment, daily schedule, and transitions. Teachers should also think through what makes their classroom a safe and supportive learning environment for all students. A classroom culture should be established that is inclusive of all aspects of the learning process. When children know that their teacher cares about them and makes a conscious effort to relate to them as an individual, they are more likely to trust and become actively engaged in learning.

TYPE OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT PLAN: Classroom management plans should include strategies for creating a supportive classroom climate. The plan should be fluid, as adjustments will need to be made as the year progresses. It is important for teachers to be able to identify when certain aspects aren't working and when to adjust. The plan should also include strategies to actively build positive relationships, and how to handle undesirable student behavior.

FEATURES OF A SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOM CLIMATE:

- ENGAGEMENT: Strong relationships are built among students, teachers, families, and schools. This provides a sense of belonging at school and gives students a connectedness to learning. Teachers need to be a role model for their students.
- SAFETY: All students are protected emotionally and physically. This allows the establishment of a secure learning environment. Students feel comfortable and are willing to take risks that may result in mistakes from which they are able to learn and grow.
- ENVIRONMENT: Teachers need to set a positive tone for the classroom environment. Students should be treated fairly and a culture of respect for others needs to be evident.

POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS (PBIS): PBIS aims to promote a positive school climate and prevent disruptive behaviors. The strategies involved should be implemented consistently by all staff and emphasizes working together to change the school climate. Bullying is a relationship problem that requires a relationship solution, and the multifaceted approach of PBIS can help to enhance bullying prevention efforts.

- *EXAMPLE*: Teachers should consider how to address behavior within the school/district approved system. Co-planning with peers (such as first and second grade teachers) may offer kindergarten teachers the opportunity to reflect on best-practices for classroom management solutions.
- *EXAMPLE*: Teachers show that they truly believe in all students and celebrate learning. When these high expectations are set, students rise to meet the expectations and are deeply invested in their learning.

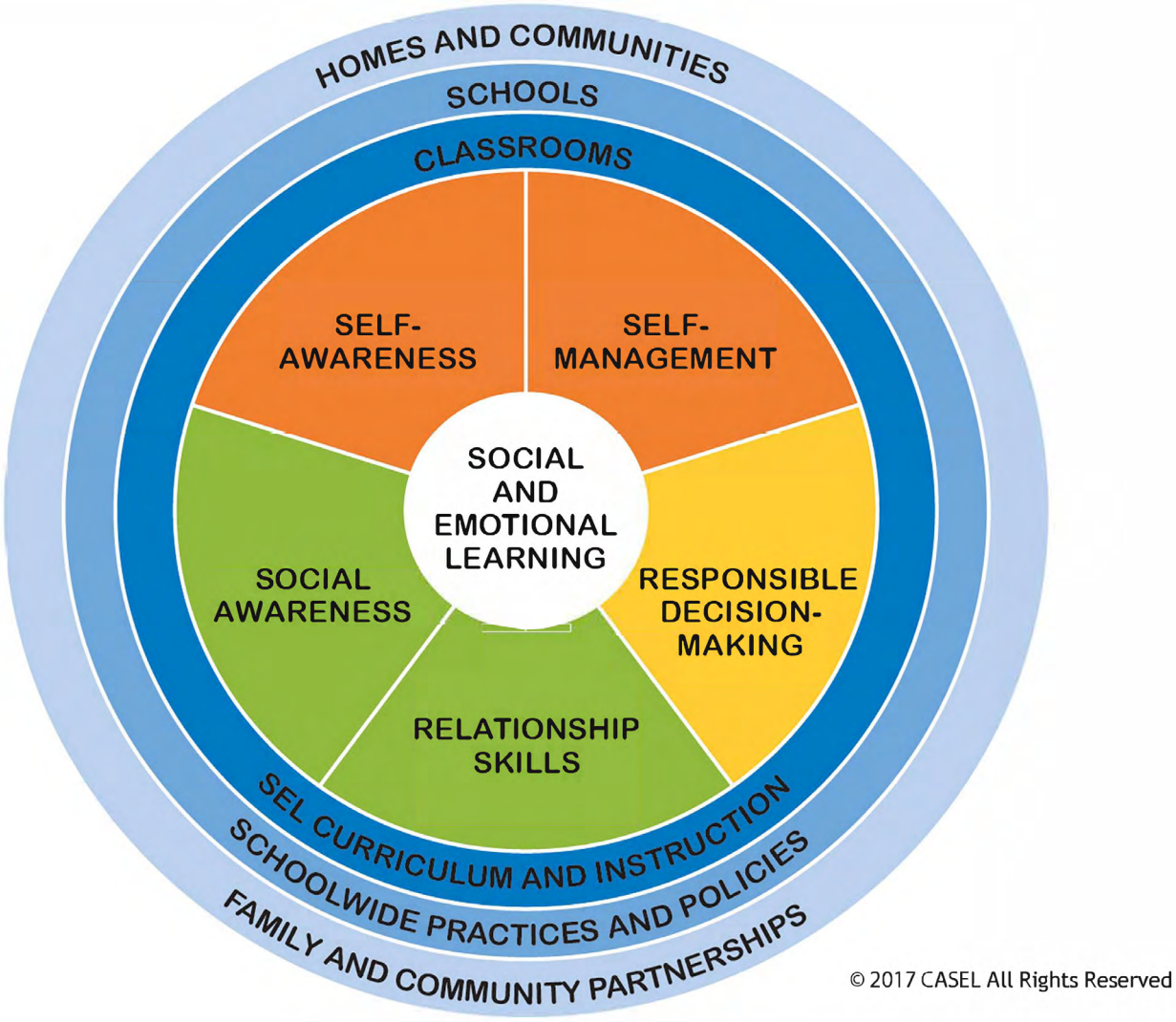
3. **VALUING STUDENT DIVERSITY:** Teachers have multiple ways available to them to value diversity and model acceptance. It is necessary to take time to learn about the personal strengths of students (e.g. a child likes to make art, in addition to interests in math) so meaningful relationships can

be developed. This all allows for the teacher to better incorporate diversity into daily instruction in a meaningful way. During instruction teachers should model how to provide feedback and allow students to provide feedback for peers. This builds the norm in the classroom and allows students see the value of response and participation, even if students disagree on a topic. It is important to note that recognizing differences, discussing different viewpoints, and valuing students' input is a conscious decision on the part of the teacher that takes place daily in the classroom and is reinforced throughout the instructional year. To incorporate valuing student diversity in the classroom teachers should ensure that they:

- Model acceptance for all students. Teachers can, by modeling expected behaviors, integrate valuing diversity in the classroom. Teachers should also explicitly teach student diversity through integrated lessons.
- Invest in learning about individual student's backgrounds, interests, and learning styles.
- Provide opportunities for students to learn about each other.
- Teach more inclusively. When teachers integrate examples from various backgrounds and cultures, they strengthen the sense of belonging for all students. Take care to use inclusive language and avoid stereotyping.
- Remain aware of implicit bias. Reflecting on classroom instruction and utilizing instructional coaches, where available, allows teachers to address areas of implicit bias to ensure the classroom functions at the highest level of inclusivity for all students. Students need to recognize that their culture and background are respected and included in everyday learning.

- *EXAMPLE*: During "meet-the-teacher" times, strategic opportunities can be incorporated that allow teachers to begin to learn and appreciate the ways that families are unique and how learning is supported at home.
- *EXAMPLE*: A teacher can create a class puzzle and give each student a piece of a puzzle to color and draw pictures of what goals they have for the year. Have each student explain what they drew on their piece. Then the pieces are put back together and displayed. The teacher can use this to explain we will all have to work together to meet our goals and facilitate discussion on how individual strengths come together to help everyone succeed.

4. **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING:** Social and emotional learning (SEL) is defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as "the process through which children acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (https://casel.org/what-is-sel/). It includes the following five core competencies:




When SEL is integrated into classroom lessons teachers are able to work with students to develop desirable behavior skills. This provides students with a welcoming and supportive environment for learning. Teachers must also actively work hard to build trusting relationships with families. Teachers should ensure that families understand they believe families are the most important people in their child's life. To partner with families, teachers should:

- Listen to families' goals and concerns.
- Encourage families to participate in different ways in their children's education.
- Respect each family's language and culture and try to communicate in their home language.
- Regularly share information about what their child is learning.

*EXAMPLE*: Students are provided with consistent opportunities to build and practice social and emotional competencies in the classroom and at home. Teachers provide students with integrated exposure to the core competencies throughout the school day, and support families by providing activities that can be completed with relative ease at home.

- *EXAMPLE*: During social studies lessons on culture, a teacher may have classroom visitors bring music, food, and language to the students. Teachers can model how to appreciate those cultural elements that are different from their own.
- *EXAMPLE*: Teachers may use part of their planning time to make positive phone calls home. Calling home with a positive attribute, rather than a negative experience, helps to build positive relationships between teachers and families.
- *EXAMPLE*: A teacher may utilize a classroom communication service (through the computer, or the teacher's personal cell phone) to share positive information about activities students are completing.

5. **TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICES:** It is risky to assume that our students haven't experienced trauma—according to a seminal study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, childhood trauma is far more pervasive than previously believed and is often invisible. Educators should be mindful that traumatic life experiences can sometimes emerge as behaviors that we might otherwise label as challenging. Teachers can, in partnership with counselors and other professionals, recognize trauma in its varying forms. Recognition of trauma is a beginning step and planning for the student's success is purposeful. Considerations might include how to modify a student's workspace, the classroom management system (a specialized/customized response plan for the individual student), and the feedback system to better support students. Ensure that any adults that interact with students on a regular basis are included in decisions about modifications. Teachers also need to ensure that they work to build relationships with the families of their students. These relationships will help to create a deeper understanding of the trauma that children may be experiencing and allow teachers to have a better understanding of the additional support students may need to be successful and feel safe at school.

   - *EXAMPLE*: Hypervigilance can masquerade as hyperactivity, recasting a child's nervous disposition as a possible response to a difficult home environment. Fear can look like aggression: flight, freeze, or fight.

6. **REMOTE LEARNING:** Building a classroom culture and management routine while engaged in online learning can be challenging. It is important to have rules and procedures that apply to online learning, just as in a regular classroom setting. This helps eliminate some anxiety around teaching and learning from a distance. Building a routine will also make lesson planning easier. It also ensures students understand what is expected during online learning, and what their next steps should be to continue learning in between sessions.

   - *EXAMPLE*: Teachers can establish specific times in the online environment that are used to develop the culture of the online classroom. These times should be used for classroom meetings where students can develop relationships and learn about their peers. It is also an opportunity for the teacher to model expected behaviors. One example may include what it looks like when you are present online and ready to learn.

Research, Supporting Documents, Additional Resources for HLP #5:

Topic 1: **Establishing Routines and Procedures**

- Fun Ways to Teach Kindergarten Classroom Routines
- Kindergarten Routines and Schedules...And Why They Matter

Topic 2: **Building a Safe and Supportive Classroom Environment**

- 20 Tips for Creating a Safe Learning Environment
- Creating a Supportive Classroom Climate
- Fostering a Healthy, Safe, and Supportive Learning Environment
- School Climate Improvement
- The Truth About Kindergarten Classroom Management

Topic 3: **Value Student Diversity**

- Teaching Diversity: A Place to Begin
- The Importance of Promoting Diversity in Early Childhood Programs
- Valuing Diversity: Developing a Deeper Understanding of All Young Children's Behavior

Topic 4: **Social and Emotional Learning**

- Activities for Learning at Home—USBE Website
- Kindergarten, Here We Come—USBE resource for parents
- What is SEL?
- Why Social and Emotional Learning is Essential for Students

Topic 5: **Trauma Informed Practice**

- Better Together: A Trauma Informed Approach to Social and Emotional Learning
- Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators
- Creating Trauma-Sensitive Classrooms
- Putting the Pieces Together
- Resources Specific to Early Childhood Programs
- The How and Why of Trauma-Informed Teaching
- Trauma-Informed Teaching Strategies

Topic 6: **Remote Learning Resources**

- EL support during COVID
- Learn at Home
- USBE Coronavirus Resources

## REFERENCES


- Sackstein, S., & Berkowicz, J. (2017). Peer feedback in the classroom: Empowering students to be the experts (p. 12). Alexandria, VA: ASCD. Retrieved 2020, from http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/publications/books/PeerFeedbackInTheClassroom_Sackstein.pdf


## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- High-Leverage Practices: An Introduction
- Multi-Tiered System of Supports
- Edutopia
- The International Educator (TIE, Education Forum)
- The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- National Education Agency (NEA)
- Utah State Board of Education (USBE)
- We Are Teachers Foundation (WAT)
- What Does a High-Quality Kindergarten Look Like?

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