

Discoveries

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Supporting Kindergarten

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Visitors to the Classroom

As children are interested in the work, hobbies, and experiences of their parents/caregivers, Elders, grandparents, older brothers and sisters, and other members of the community, it is a good idea to invite guests to visit the class to talk, show things, give a demonstration, or to answer questions. These people can introduce a topic, or they can be the expert who assists in an outcome-based inquiry. The information gathered from guests assist children in achieving the outcomes. In addition to being part of an inquiry, bringing people to the classroom is an excellent way to increase children's awareness of the variety of lifestyles and cultures in the community while offering them opportunities to achieve the outcomes. (When inviting Elders into the classroom, teachers should become familiar with and adhere to local protocol.)

Making Discoveries Within the School

School is part of the whole environment of the child, a living thing drawing vitality from its contribution to, and its reflection of, the community it serves. A sense of belonging grows from firsthand knowledge, so small conducted tours should be arranged to accustom children to the layout of the school building and yard, and to introduce them to the work of various members of the school community.

There are many places and people within the school that young children are curious about: the furnace room, the staff room, the offices, the gym, the yard, the library, the principal, the teachers, the nurse, the teacher-librarian, the administrative assistant, the caretaker, etc. Children in Kindergarten are often curious to discover where the classrooms of older siblings are located. Knowing the layout of the school and where people can be located offers many children a sense of security.

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Making Discoveries About the World That Lies Outside the School

Sometimes children need opportunities to go beyond the school in order to be able to achieve the outcomes. Any street in a city or town is full of possibilities for inquiry and exploration as there are so many things there of immediate interest to young children: the houses, apartments and shops; the materials used in their construction; the colour and texture of the bricks and wood; the shape, size and arrangement of the doors and windows; the layout of the streets; where the children live; the reflections seen on a wet day; the texture of the snow; the shape of lamp posts and their methods of lighting; shadows on the ground. Children can look at the trees, plants, birds and animals, identify them, find out where they grow or live, and try to describe them. All young children enjoy watching the traffic—they can note the cars, trucks, and buses that pass the school and observe the traffic signals. Teachers can encourage the use of senses other than vision. Children can shut their eyes and listen, trying to identify the sounds around them. They can feel the vibrations made by traffic, people and animals passing along roadways and over bridges. They can feel the difference when walking on various surfaces. All these visits can be made near the school but some outcomes, invitations, and inquiries may require further excursions, which can be made to many places including:

- an art gallery—to respond to arts expression (Arts Ed, Visual Art, CRK.1)
- a building site—to watch construction or deconstruction (Science, MOK.1)
- a farm—to inquire about the animals, implements, and machinery (Science, LTK.1)
- a feed lot—to discover what it is and how it is managed (Science, LTK.1)
- a fire station—to see the firetrucks and equipment and learn about fire safety (Health, USCK.2 and DMK.1)
- a grain elevator—for an inquiry about what happens to the grain once it leaves a farm (Language Arts, CRK.1, CCK.1)
- a hospital—to talk to the staff, see the equipment, and learn about healthy behaviours and practices (Health, USCK.2 and DMK.1)
- a local park—to develop fitness and manipulative skills (Physical Education, PEK.1 and PEK.4)
- a walk through the local community to look for natural and constructed patterns (Mathematics, PK.1)
- a post office—to mail invitations or inquiries to an expert in the field

- a powwow—to experience the dancers, hear the music, and participate in a cultural event that may reflect the cultural diversity in the classroom (Social Studies INK.2).

Suggestions for Preparing for Excursions

- The site should be visited by the teacher prior to the excursion.
- The purpose of the visit should be defined; the direct result of either an invitation or an inquiry.
- Local regulations and required permission should be checked.
- Safety precautions should be in place.
- Parents'/caregivers' permission and support should be requested.
- The most suitable time for a visit should be considered.
- Transportation should be arranged (i.e., walking or taking the bus).
- Appropriate clothing for the visit should be considered.
- The length of the trip should provide children with enough time to achieve the purpose of the trip.
- Behaviour standards should be communicated to both children and adults.
- A follow-up time in school and a variety of materials should be provided so children can represent their impressions and ideas stimulated by the excursion. Children will need time for their knowledge to be expanded, questions to be clarified, and the outcomes to be achieved.