

# Development at Nursery school

The Nursery school is a place where children develop physically, socially, emotionally, cognitive, morally and spiritually.

Children learn and develop by doing and playing. Hence, rote learning does not help them. Activity is the most important aspect of the process of learning in young children. The more children interact with their environment through activity-based learning, the greater will be the clarity of the concepts they develop.

The children develop a lot of important skills they need, to continue the learning process in the Primary school:

- Respecting and taking care for themselves.
- Social development: working together and next to others; interacting with others. Learning to have an opinion and express it. Confidence and self esteem.
- Emotional development: feeling good with others and yourself. Expressing your feelings in an acceptable way.
- Exploring and discovering the world around them. Solving problems. Learning by trial and error. Learning of mistakes.
- Language: learning new words; interacting; talking together; telling news and stories; talking about actions and feelings.
- Action and reaction.
- Responsibility: for your work, others and the environment
- Independency: learn to do the work, as far as possible without help. Knowing how to get help when needed.
- Concentration
- (Self) Motivation
- Listening to and understanding tasks
- Development of the small and big muscles
- Cognitive skills: colors; shapes; counting and numbers; sizes; seeing and hearing differences and similarities

Also see: Early Childhood Development in the Learning Framework

Offer the children plenty of opportunities to play, explore, and experiment. The children will be taught alternately in the whole group, small groups, pairs or individual.

To play can be involved in all in- and outside activities. A variety of materials can help them to develop their skills: Role play, toys (dolls, cars, kitchen materials), building, puzzles, games like memory and domino, board games, games with numbers or letters, etc.

Many schools in Uganda have less or no materials and cannot afford to buy them. So the teacher has to be creative to offer the children what they need. A lot of things are easy to make by yourself using the materials find in the environment.

For example:

- Playing with a ball made of banana fiber:  
children develop skills like: social (playing together); concentration; developing the muscles; action – reaction; trial and error; they can count how many times they catch or bounce the ball; language: learning words like high, low, many, far, nearby; emotional: feeling good they

can play the ball, deal with losing a game; responsibility: caring for things around them, for themselves and other children while they play and care for the ball.

- Sorting / matching things found in the environment (leaves, stones, etc): children learn to see similarities and differences; working together; language: naming, big, small, more, less, etc.; listening and understanding tasks; cognitive: colours, number of object; sizes; etc.  
Free play: Children develop social skills; they use language; they learn several things by trial and error and experience cause and effect; they learn to be responsible; etc.

In this book you find ideas how to make and play with different games and some examples of games.

There are also a lot of games you can play with the whole class, in small groups or in pairs. For these games you need no or few materials. You find several ideas in the section 'Learning with fun at the Nursery School'. They are divided in different chapters. Some of the games cover more than only that part of development.

You can play the games with the whole group, in small groups or in pairs.

Make sure that all children can see what's happening. When you sit in circle everybody can see everybody and you can put the materials in the middle of the circle.

Make rules, e.g. about raising hands and giving turns.

Your role as a Teacher:

- Teachers prepare lessons and a challenging learning environment with a variety of materials. They prepare when the children are not there!
- Teachers interact with the children. They move around and talk, ask and play with them.
- Teachers motivate children.
- Teachers help to solve problems and handle conflicts, as far as possible together with the children.
- Teachers help children with special needs.
- Teachers observe and evaluate the children's performance, behavior, social development and physical health.
- Teachers make a report at the end of each term.

## Pre reading.

Before children start with the process of reading, writing, spelling and mathematics they have to develop some more specific skills.

- The children have to know the language. They need words to work with.  
They have to learn the difference between a letter, a word and a sentence.  
They have to know words like: right, left, up, down, first, last.  
They must be able to understand what the teacher asks.
- They must be trained in listening. They need to hear similarities and differences between sounds and words.
- They must be able to see differences and similarities, because each sound is written in a different way. Sometimes the differences are small. It starts with big differences (like different color or shape) and then they will see the small differences and similarities between letters and words.

- A very important skill is blending. Reading is putting sounds together so it becomes a word. E.g. c a t = cat; m a n = man. Use always the letter sounds. Blending is not possible when they use the letter names. E.g. em ai en, doesn't sound as man. When children know how to blend they can crack the code of learning to read. Reading is not the same as recognizing words!
- Children must understand the meaning of written text, that you can decode it and read. And that what you hear, can be written! You can write about what you see. This can be stimulated by showing written text, like in books, label words by objects, writing notes and telling the children that you write down what you don't want to forget.

## Pre mathematics

Specific skills children need for mathematics:

- The children learn to count. They should say the number at the same time that they point to the object.
- They learn the words like: more, less, a lot, a few, add, subtract
- They learn that the number of an object is not changing when it is smaller or bigger. E.g., 5 ants and 5 elephants is still the same number, even while the elephants are big and the ants are small.
- They learn the numbers and learn to match them with the same number of objects.
- They have to see the differences and similarities between the numbers.