A Look at our 4-Year-Olds From Disadvantaged Backgrounds

Presentated at
Les journées nationales
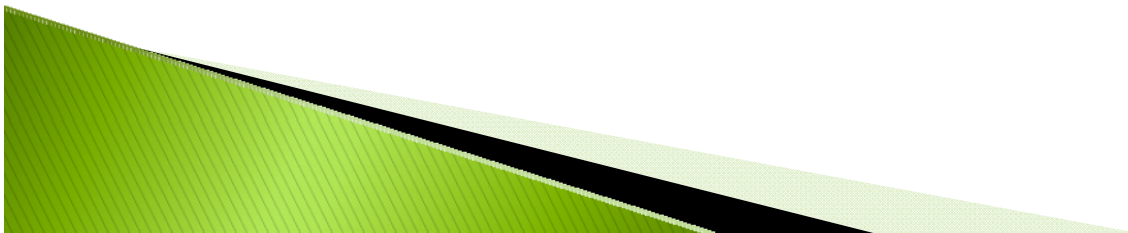
November 26, 2013, Montréal

December 3, 2013, Québec City

Overview

1. Socioeconomic status and student achievement

2. Range of experience

3. Intervention

1. Socioeconomic status and student achievement

Socioeconomic status and student achievement

The positive relationship between socioeconomic status and student achievement has been well documented. (Perry and McConney, 2010; Sirin, 2005)

•Effect on the probability of obtaining a Secondary School Diploma (SSD)

•Effect on the probability of going on to postsecondary studies
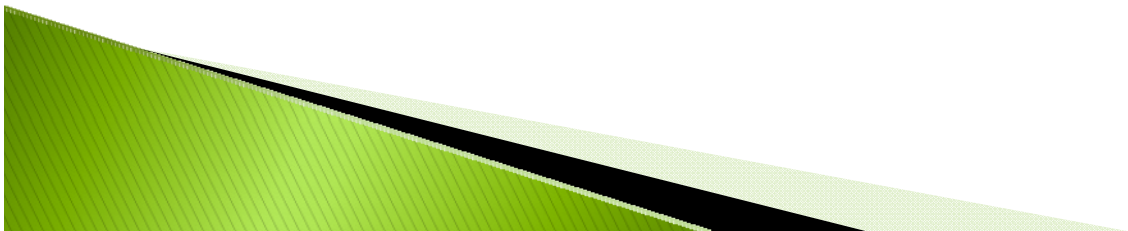
Proportion of students who obtain an SSD

- 35% of students from the most disadvantaged areas do not obtain a diploma or other qualifications compared with approximately 20% of students from the most affluent areas.

- The proportion rises to 42% for boys from disadvantaged areas.

(*Conjuguer équité et performance en éducation, un défi de société*, Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, 2010)
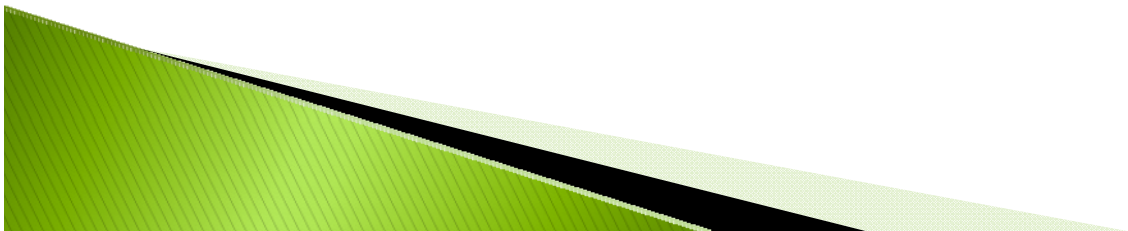
What accounts for this discrepancy?
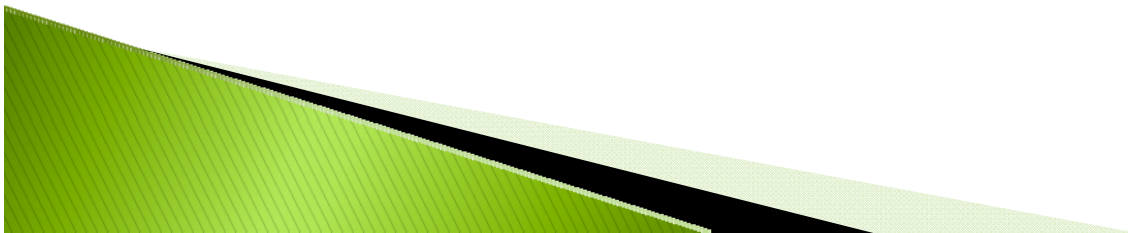
A variety of factors at play

Janosz et al. (1997) argue that the risk factors do not seem to affect everyone the same way. Thus, not only does the nature of the factors influence young people differently, but the length of time that these factors are present in their lives must also be considered, along with their combined effect and how they influence one another.
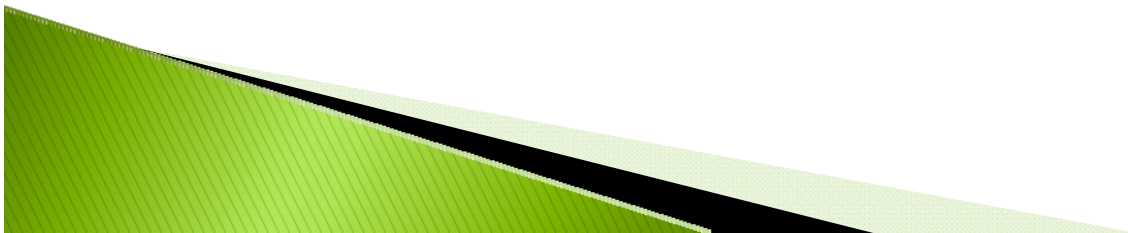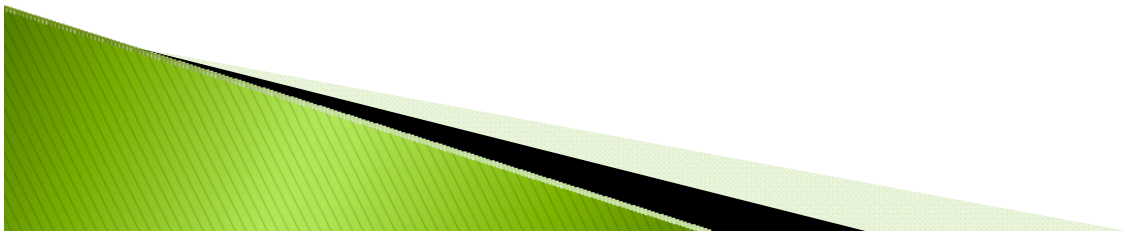
2. Range of experience

Range of experience

With respect to literacy, some students from disadvantaged areas start school with a **different range of experience** from that of students from more affluent areas; this has a major impact on their introduction to written language and continues to affect their schooling. (Murray et al., 1996)
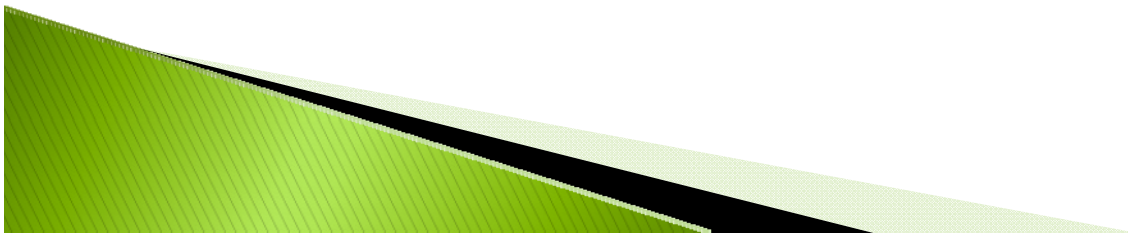
How is their range of experience different?
How does it influence their start in school?

# Edward's range of experience

Focus:

Identify the impact of early experiences with the realms of writing and mathematics on different areas of global development.

Emotional Development
Builds and strengthens self-esteem

- **Expresses and regulates his emotions and feelings:**
    - Expresses joy
    - Accepts losing
    - Shows confidence
    - Feels secure

- **Engages in positive experiences:**
    - Demonstrates pride
    - Perseveres in his activities

- **Explores autonomy**
    - Chooses and leads a game
    - Asks questions
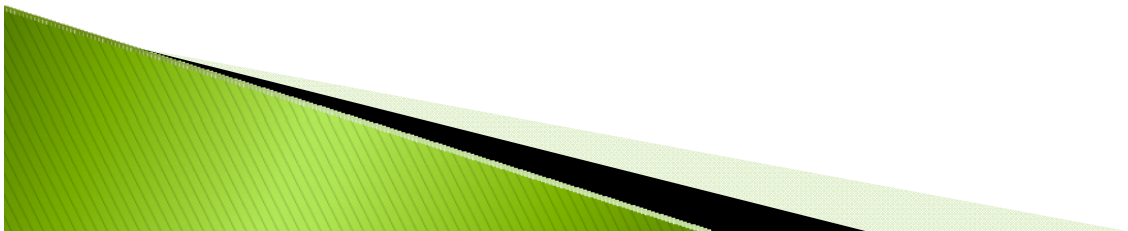
Social Development
Establishes and maintains
harmonious relationships with others

- **Integrates the rules of conduct:**
  - Follows the rules of the game
  - Takes responsibility for leading a game
  - Takes care of his books and games

  - **Participates in group activities:**
  - Suggests a game or book
  - Waits his turn
  - Participates actively in the activity

Oral Language and Literacy Development
Understands and expresses himself/herself
by exploring spoken and written language

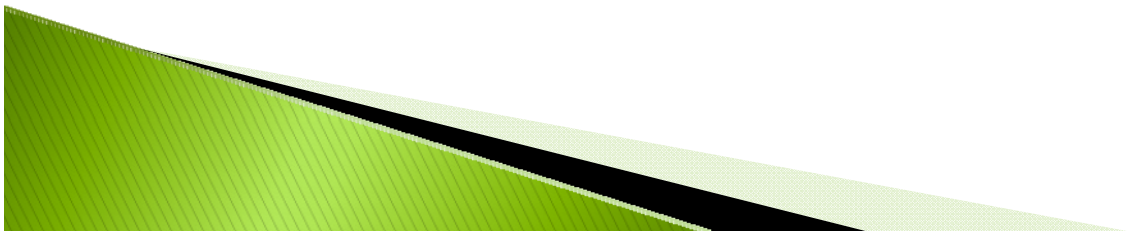- **Interacts verbally:**
    - Listens and converses using complete sentences
    - Asks questions
    - Demonstrates his interest or lack of understanding

    - **Expands his vocabulary:**
    - Understands complex words
    - Uses new words

   - **Uses different words to express himself:**
    - Understands and uses complex sentences
    - Remembers a story that has been read aloud
    - Memorizes part of a text

Oral Language and Literacy Development
Understands and expresses himself
by exploring spoken and written language

- **Imitates the behaviours of readers and writers:**
    - Selects a book for someone to read to him
    - Shows interest in new books
    - Tells the story related in a book that has been read to him
    - Makes up a story based on a familiar pattern

    - **Interacts with print:**
    - Reacts to the reading of a story (non-verbally and verbally)
    - Makes connections between events and between the text and illustrations

    - **Recognizes reading and writing conventions and letters of the alphabet**
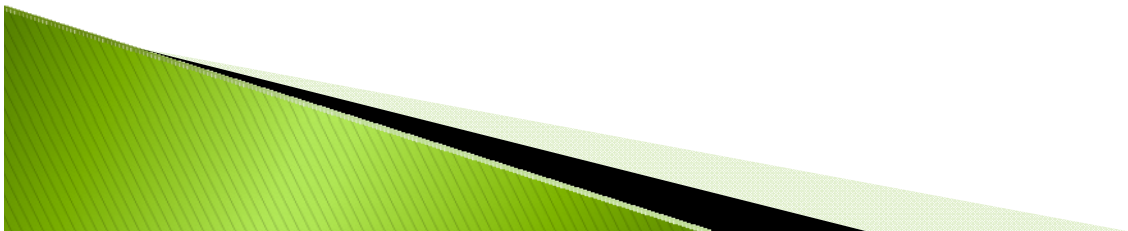
Cognitive Development and Numeracy
Explores and discovers the world around him/her

- **Acquires reasoning skills:**
  - Uses a variety of high-level cognitive skills (anticipating, understanding, interpreting, recounting, comparing, discriminating, justifying)
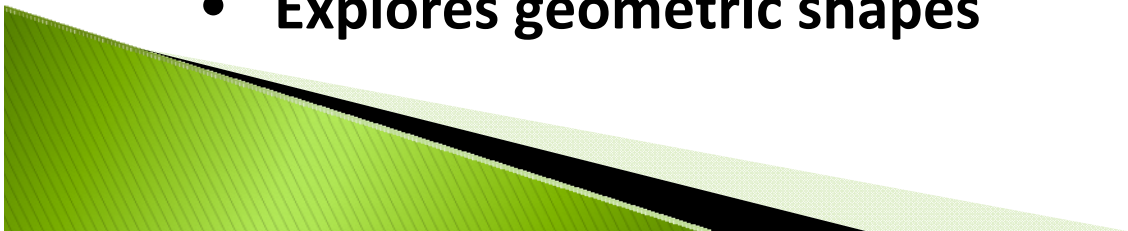
  - **Uses his attention skills and memory:**
  - Remembers the rules of a game
  - Explains how to play to his father
  - Memorizes facts, events

  - **Establishes certain relationships between numbers:**
  - Knows a counting rhyme
  - Counts cards
  - Compares two numbers to determine the winner of a game

  - **Explores geometric shapes**

Physical and Motor Development
## Increases and strengthens sensorimotor abilities

Range of experience

What is the impact of this range of experience on Edward as he starts school?

- He has developed **knowledge** connected with writing and mathematics.
- He has grasped the **meaning and usefulness** of reading, writing and numbers.
- He has developed a **desire to learn** (to read, write, count, understand, etc.).

He has developed **a positive relationship with writing and mathematics.**
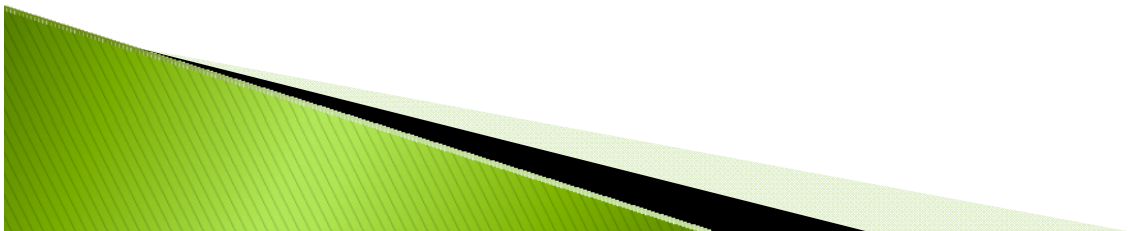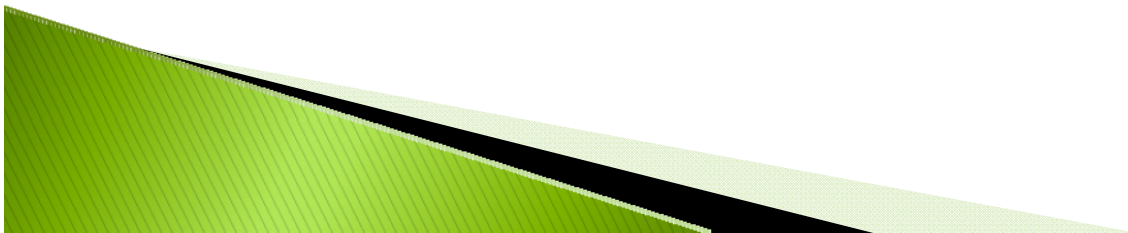
A different range of experience

In what ways might the range of experience of students who are not immersed in a culture of writing and mathematics differ?

1. The **frequency** of activities
2. The **types** of activities
3. The **discussions** during activities
4. The **models**
5. The **diversity** of the activities
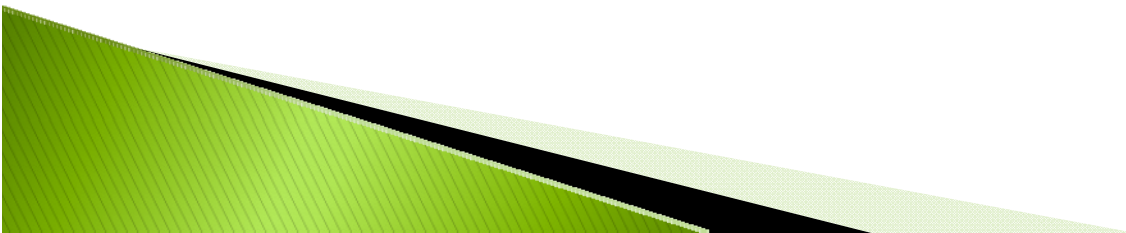6. The family **environment**
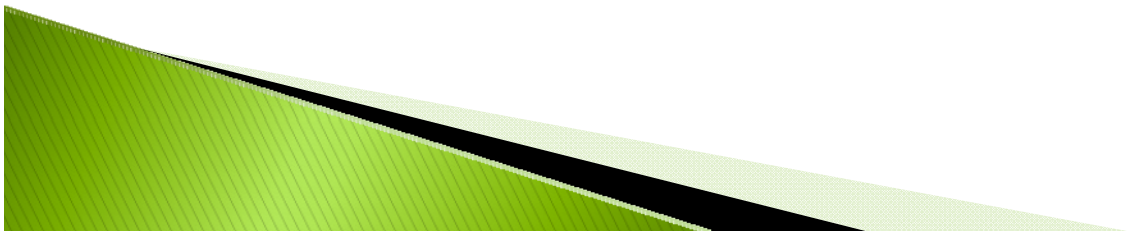
What about their relationship with school and the different experiences they have there?

Some students from disadvantaged backgrounds start school with a range of experience that often differs from what is expected and valued by the school.

(Duncan and Seymour, 2000; Raz and Bryant, 1990)

Capacity/Opportunity

What are the risks in confusing *capacity* with *opportunity* ?

•Prematurely labelling a child as being "at risk"

•Lowering expectations:
  - offering learning content that is less complex and less varied
  - offering fewer opportunities to answer questions and to practise
  - giving **less** feedback at the **cognitive level** and **more** at the **behvioural level**
  - providing an environment that is less conducive to learning (lacking in warmth, less attention)
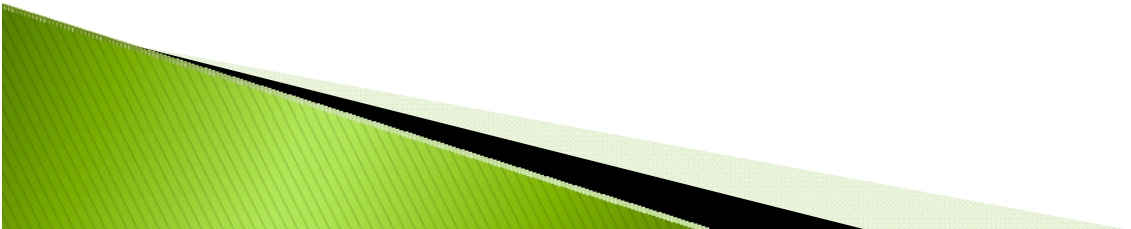
(Trouilloud and Sarrazin, 2003)

Starting school without knowing what is expected or without having learned certain things does not mean a child has a learning disability. (Archambault, 2010)
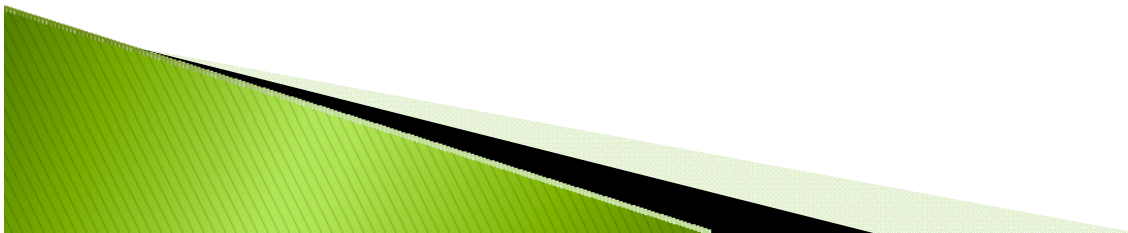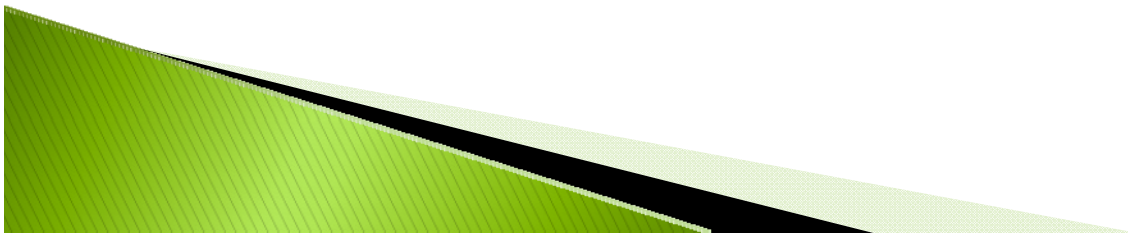
3. Intervention

Working document

In this context, how can school be fair to all students whose range of experience does not correspond to the school's expectations?

Intervention with 4-year-olds from disadvantaged areas

Objective:

To enrich the experience, in terms of quantity and quality, of children from disadvantaged areas so as to reduce the discrepancy with the range of experience of children from more affluent areas
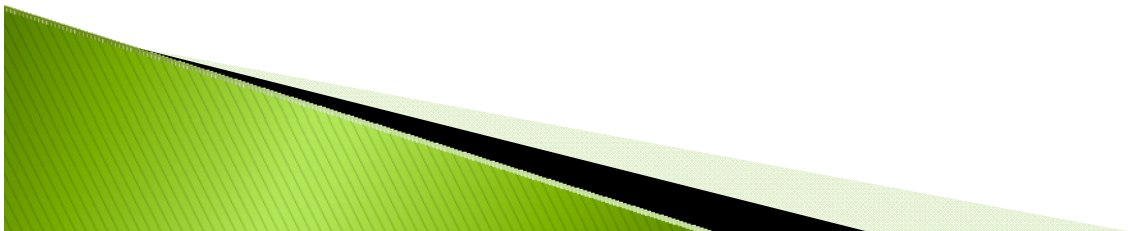
1. **Offer an enriching environment**

- Provide printed matter and games, using a variety of media
- Provide enrichment materials in play areas
- Organize visits to cultural venues

2. **Offer a variety of authentic activities that are also meaningful and useful**

- Take advantage of all learning opportunities

3. **Foster discussion as a tool for constructing thought and developing language**

- Give explanations and ask questions in all learning contexts
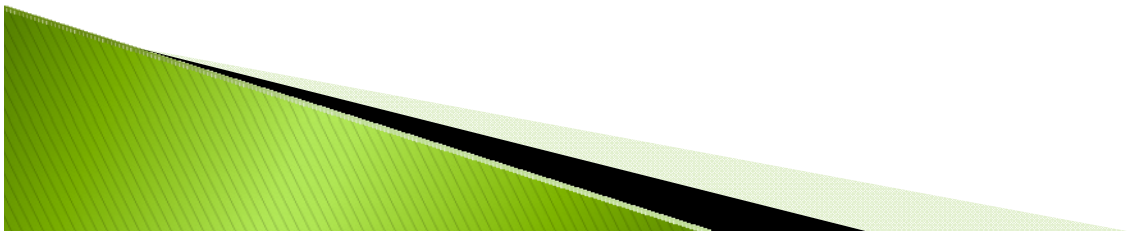
4. Enable students to mobilize their resources

- Recognize and acknowledge the children's linguistic, cultural and social origins

- Make explicit connections between the knowledge they have, their world and knowledge of a more academic nature

5. Vary forms of support during the learning process

- Strong support and high expectations
- Support and learning process
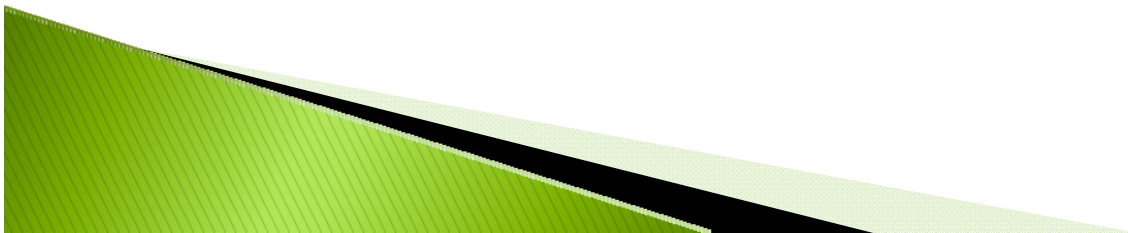
6. **Offer a variety of models that allow the children to interact with:**

- the teacher
- one another
- other school staff members
- other students in the school
- parents and siblings
- significant adults in their lives

7. **Support parents in their role by taking family realities into account**

- Encourage family participation in school life
- Promote and organize activities that encourage discussion between parents and children at home

Review of our practices

Thank you!