

Essential Learning Experiences For Three-, Four- and Five-Year Olds

Intro Practice Booklet
Supplement to Play and Exploration:
Early Learning Program Guide

Play and Exploration



Early Learning Program Guide

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Essential Learning Experiences is a supporting document to *Play and Exploration: Early Learning Program Guide*. *Essential Learning Experiences* was created at the request of educators to provide further information regarding the domains of holistic learning for preschool aged children.

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Early Years Branch expresses sincere gratitude to the early learning programs in Saskatchewan that provided feedback and guidance during the development of *Essential Learning Experiences*.

Note: Throughout all aspects of early learning programs, it is the educator's responsibility to ensure the safety of the environment and the activity as well as to be aware of the individual needs of each child and provide appropriate supervision.

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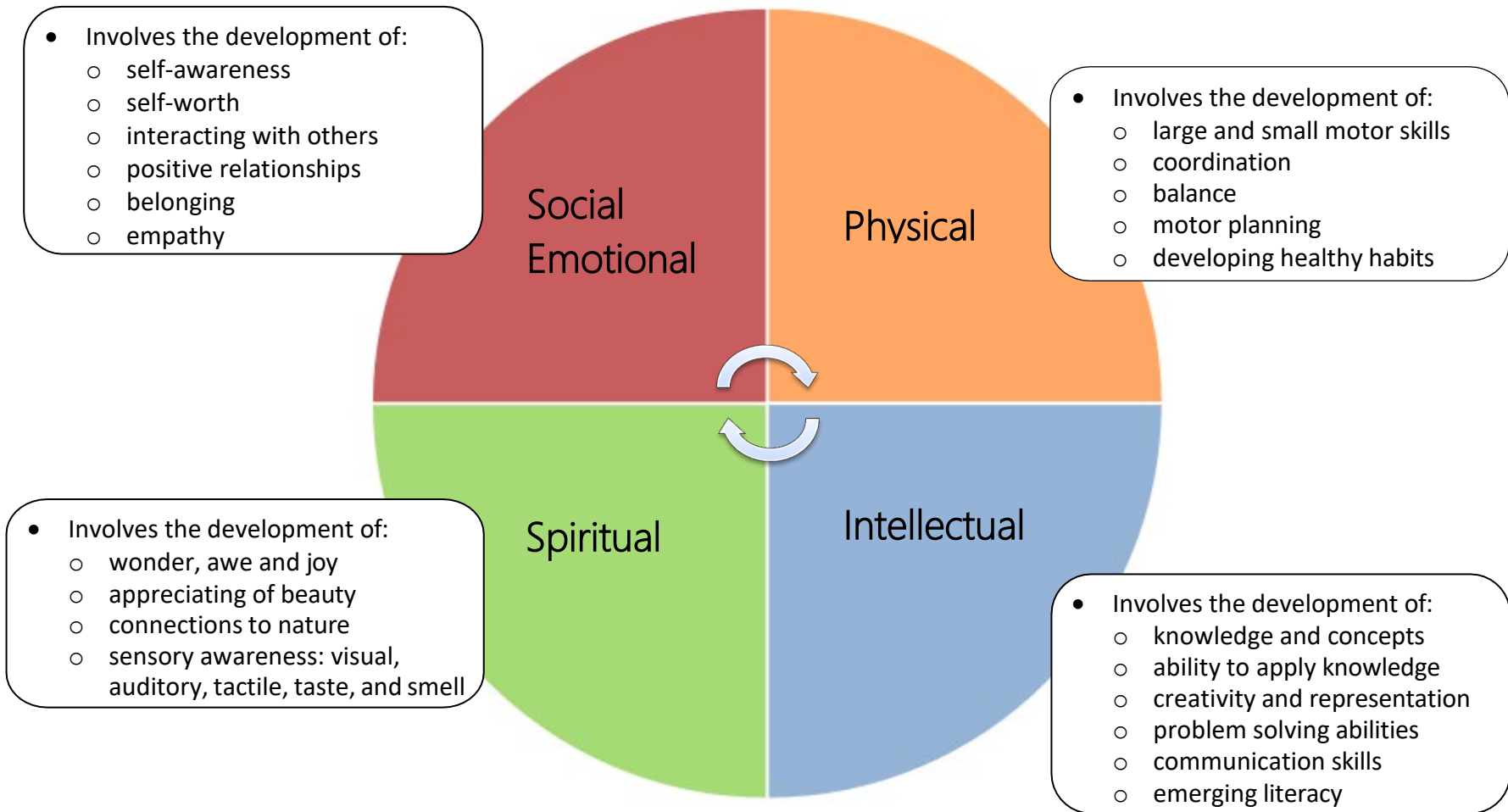
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Intellectual

Overview: Essential Learning Experiences for Three, Four, and Five Year-Olds

 Social Emotional	 Physical	 Spiritual	 Intellectual	
Developing Self-Awareness Developing Self-Worth Developing a Sense of Belonging Separating from Family Without Distress Identifying and Regulating Emotions Interacting with Others Perspective Taking and Empathy Resolving Conflicts	Developing Loco-Motor Skills Developing Fine Motor Skills Developing Stability/Balance Developing Manipulative Skills Developing Space and Body Awareness Developing Healthy Habits	Experiencing a Sense of Wonder, Awe, and Joy Experiencing Heightened sensory Awareness Developing an appreciation of Beauty and Connection to the Natural and Man-Made World	Solving Problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curiosity • Exploring • Observing • Cause/Effect • Predicting Creating and Imagining Recognizing Attributes and Characteristics Exploring Numeracy Exploring Time	Language and Emerging Literacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening with interest • Engaging in Conversation • Exploring Words • Gaining Meaning from Visual/Text Materials • Representing Ideas • Exploring How Print Works



This resource focuses on those learning experiences that are essential for young children’s learning and development in four domains. The developmental domains are: Social Emotional, Physical, Intellectual and Spiritual. Below is a brief summary of the main ideas for each domain of development. A more detailed explanation of each domain is provided in the appropriate section of this document.

Young children learn in holistic ways. They do not separate their learning into categories or subject areas. Everything they learn and experience builds on previous knowledge, learning and experience to influence them in multiple ways as they construct understandings of the world around them.

Children develop as whole people whose modes of learning are interrelated. Learning and development in one domain can influence learning and development in other domains. These multiple and interrelated modes of learning are widely referred to as the domains of holistic development.

For example, growth in a child’s social emotional development can influence his or her intellectual development. A child gaining awareness of his/her own needs and an increased ability to regulate his/her own emotions may experience a corresponding increase in ability to focus on more complex intellectual learning such as understanding cause and effect relationships. As the child becomes more calm, content and confident due to being emotionally regulated, he or she may experience more curiosity toward and appreciation of the beauty in their world (spiritual development). The child may also be able to better tolerate frustration while experimenting with and practicing a new skill such as throwing and catching a ball (physical development).

Throughout the “Essential Learning Experiences” document, young children’s learning is represented by the familiar circle of holistic development with the addition of four colours. This icon is a visual reminder of the importance of the concept of holistic learning and to identify and draw attention to a particular domain.

The icon further reflects and aligns with the perspective and principles of the ministry’s *Play and Exploration: Early Learning Program Guide* and *Better Beginnings, Better Futures: Effective Practices Policy Guidelines for Prekindergarten in Saskatchewan*.

All areas of each child’s development change or transform (Miller, 1988) in relation to their new learning, their relationships, and their activities . . . Children function as whole persons whose development is affected constantly by what happens to them, with them and around them.

(Play and Exploration: Early Learning Program Guide, 2008,) (p. 28)

Essential Learning Experiences for three-, four- and five-year-olds is designed to be used primarily by educators of preschool aged children in Saskatchewan’s early learning programs including Prekindergarten (PreK), child care and preschool programs. The information presented will also be of interest to school division personnel (PreK associates, principals, administrators, and consultants), child care personnel (directors, boards of directors and/or parent advisory committees) and families. In addition, professional support personnel who provide services to young children and their families, such as speech language pathologists, occupational therapists and psychologists may find this document useful in discussion with educators and for reference in team planning sessions to develop program modifications or individualized goals for children with intensive needs.

This resource is intended to support and guide program development in early learning programs and to assist educators to monitor and facilitate young children’s development. *Play and Exploration: Early Learning Program Guide* identifies the vision and principles that should be prevalent in the philosophy and all aspects of the early learning program. The *Essential Learning Experiences* (ELE) does not provide the specific content or skills to teach preschool children. Instead, it provides more detailed information regarding how to actualize the principles of early learning identified in *Play and Exploration* by including suggested activities and information regarding the educator’s role in observing children, reflecting on those observations and responding in a manner that promotes learning and development. These suggestions are not meant to be an exhaustive list. They are to be considered a starting point for educators who will have additional ideas to take the experiences further and meet the individual needs of the children in the program.

Specifically, the ELE is intended to:

- identify essential learning experiences that provide a focus for learning programs within each domain of learning: physical, social-emotional, spiritual, and intellectual;
- provide guidance to educators regarding their role in facilitating, supporting and scaffolding young children’s development and learning;
- assist educators with planning high quality programs;
- assist educators to engage in effective pedagogical practices to provide developmentally appropriate early learning environments; and
- provide a framework for monitoring children’s developmental growth in all four domains as well as sharing information regarding children’s developmental growth with their families.

Supporting Research

Research conducted by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2004) indicates that determining common learning goals or directions is a key aspect in the development of high-quality early childhood

“Creativity becomes more visible when adults try to be more attentive to the cognitive processes of children than to the results, they achieve in various fields of doing and understanding.”
(Malaguzzi, 1993)

education programs. Further, program directions must allow for flexibility at the program, teacher and child levels to accommodate children's interests and experiences. The National Association for Young Children (2002 cited in OECD 2004) supports these ideas concluding that clear, research-based guidelines for the content and goals of early learning experiences and pedagogical practices can both focus programming and contribute to later positive outcomes.

Create a Shared Framework

Clear early learning goals are also seen to contribute to a shared language and understanding for individuals with varied backgrounds and educational levels who work together in the education of young children such as: school division administrators, educators, PreK associates, child care directors, members of child care boards of directors/parent advisory committees, psychologists, social workers, speech and language pathologists and children's families (Riley, San Juan, Klinkner and Ramminger, 2008). These goals also create a "shared framework for understanding and communicating young children's development" (p. 131) among professionals and with children's families. The common goals can unite all partners around best practice to facilitate and scaffold children's learning. Educators can use the ELE when describing their programs to families in order to help explain why certain experiences have been planned, why various learning areas are included in the early learning environment, why educators interact with the children in various ways and how observations of the children have led to thoughtful and intentional responses to promote further learning and development.

Inform Assessment Processes

Program goals, along with developmental continua for learning domains also direct the design of assessment processes to determine whether learning objectives are being reached, whether children are engaged in meaningful learning activities and whether changes in learning and development are documented over time (NIEER, 2007). Appropriate evaluation and assessment procedures utilized in early childhood education will be necessarily different from those of traditional schooling. Learning goals and objectives that are designed to support and that are inclusive of best practice, will lead to an evaluation process that reflects the ways children learn during the early years.

In addition, appropriate and effective assessment procedures are considered critical to promote positive child outcomes. Higher quality programs result in better intellectual and social outcomes for children.

In order to achieve quality programming and enhanced learning outcomes for young children in Saskatchewan, it is critical to have a clear understanding of the necessary learning experiences for preschool aged children. As educators observe, listen, reflect, and respond to the play, interactions, interests, relationships, and experiences of young children in their programs, they need to be able to

consult a set of observables, developmentally significant behaviours that can be documented over time and referred to as milestones of growth and development.

Finally, these essential learning experiences and milestones of growth and development can support and guide educators to scaffold children's learning when they are linked with pedagogical practices and responses.

Guiding Principles and Related Pedagogical Considerations

This document has incorporated the following principles that are aligned with *Play and Exploration* as well as some related pedagogical considerations that are specific to the *Essential Learning Experiences*.

The Competent, Capable Child

- Children are viewed as capable learners and have numerous competencies and meaningful life experiences that enhance their learning and development.
- Children are powerful learners who show us what interests them, focus with intensity on ideas and activities that motivate them and make choices and participate in decision making in their learning environment.

Play and Exploration as the Best Mode for Learning

- Play and exploration is viewed as the way that young children learn and is central to their development. Further, children's interactions and strong positive relationships with others are seen to be integral with play, exploration and learning (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008; OECD, 2010; CMEC 2014).

Continua of Development: Both Typical and Unique

- Children’s competencies in all domains of learning are viewed as developing along a continuum marked by the milestones of a typical developmental sequence.
- The timeline along which milestones are reached is influenced by the unique skills and abilities of the child, supportive relationships in the child’s home and early learning setting, and the typical sequence for development.
- Each child’s learning and development unfolds according to his/her individual developmental processes and timeline. There will be variances in development from one child to another, both in the rate and processes of learning.



Development as Holistic in Nature

- The concept of holistic development embraces the domains of social emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual development and recognizes that all four domains of development are integrated within children’s learning experiences (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008).
- Although educators frequently separate learning into areas of development for ease of understanding, assessment and planning purposes, it is important to remember that progress in one area of the child’s development affects progress in others. A change in one area can significantly influence all other areas of development. Consequently, programs that address the whole child and attend to children’s overall development have the greatest possibility of being successful at improving any single aspect of learning (Diamond, 2010).

Responding to Children’s Interests

- Children learn more effectively when daily invitations and opportunities for learning respond to their interests and experiences (OECD, 2010). Therefore, the essential learning experiences presented in this resource are best observed and documented from within learning that is child-initiated and sustained. “It is within these sorts of activities that a child’s inclinations and attitudes [for learning] are richly exemplified” (Dowling, 2010, p. 112).

High Quality Programs and Best Practice as Keys to Supporting Learning

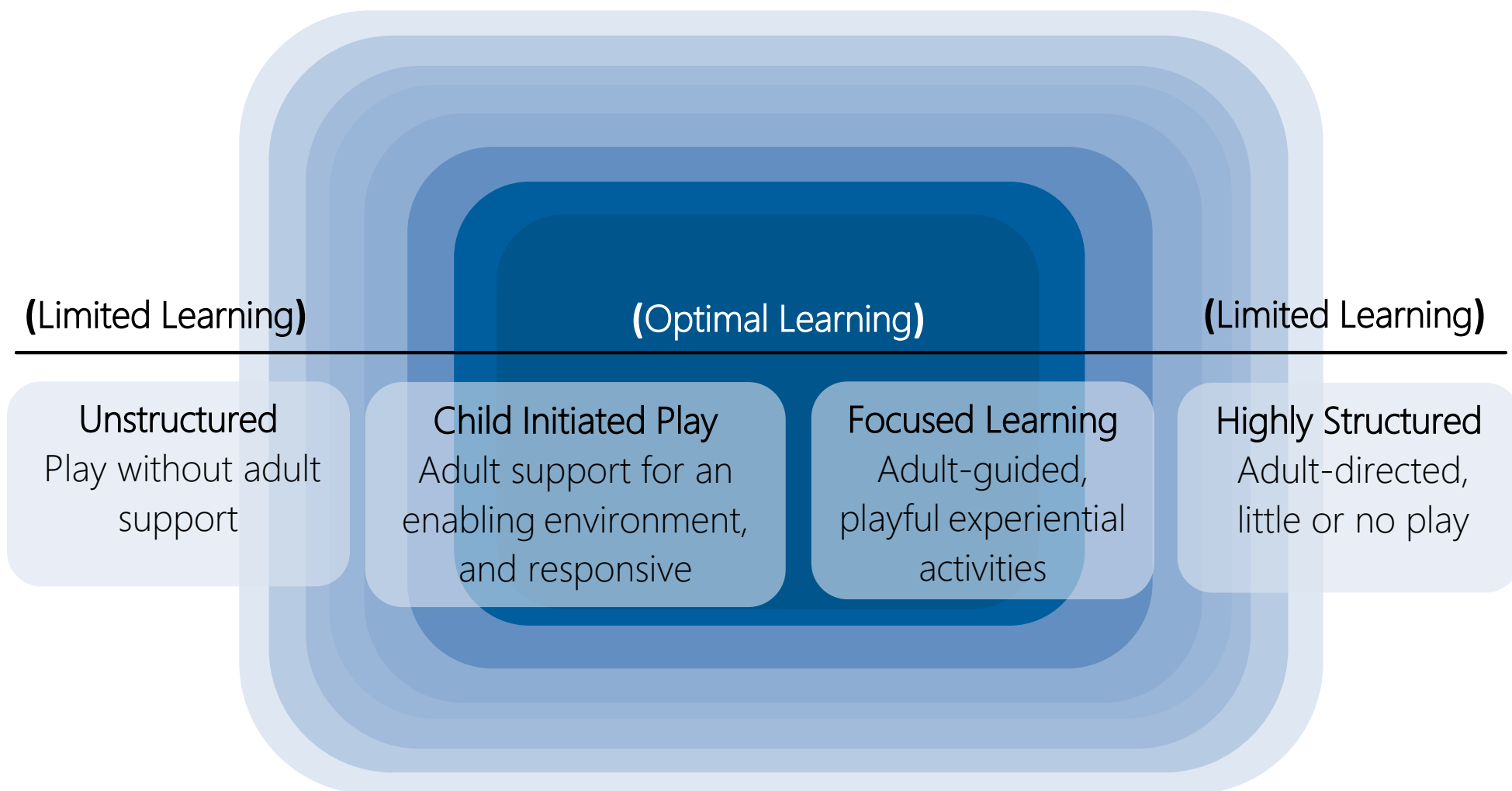
- Programs that adopt child-driven curricula and implement a holistic approach to child development are viewed by the OECD (2010) to better support young children’s learning.
- Challenging and stimulating children’s interests and understanding while, at the same time, achieving overall learning objectives are seen to be hallmarks of high-quality programs.

- Strong positive relationships and positive interactions between children and adults and between the children themselves, is correlated with high quality programs and positive child outcomes (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Early Years Branch, 2008; OECD, 2004, 2010).
- High quality early learning and child care programs balance adult-initiated learning with child-initiated play based activities. Programs with an appropriate balance between child directed free play and exploration and teacher planned and guided activities, provide young children with varied opportunities to best support development in all areas.

Please refer to the diagram on the next page. Note: Optimal learning occurs when there is a balance of activities and when educators are intentional and responsive to the children in the program.



Balanced Approach of Pedagogical Practice in Developmentally Appropriate Early Childhood Settings



Adapted from *Learning, Playing and Interacting* by DCSF, 2009

Leadership and the Essential Learning Experiences

Leaders of early learning programs play an important role. The educators look to their leaders for direction and accountability. To be an effective leader I need to ...

1. Be aware of what is happening in the early learning program. This means visiting and spending time in the space, viewing the documentation of the children's learning experiences as well as having conversations with, and listening closely to, the educator, children and families.
2. Encourage reflection. Ask 'why' questions to provoke educators to think more deeply, understand connections and articulate the reasoning behind their practices. This also allows leaders to learn more about the program and the educators.
3. Support the educator to participate in professional development opportunities for continued learning. After the experience, have the educator share what they have learned and how it will influence their practices in the early learning program.
4. Be open and allow the educator to try their ideas. View the educators as competent learners who can explore their ideas and learn from the experience.
5. Provide a budget or process for educators to obtain materials for the early learning program. Ask how materials will be used to support the children's learning and interactions with others.
6. Support the educators to partner, network and collaborate with other educators in the program, such as co-teachers or educational associates, and in the community such as with educators in child care, Prekindergarten, Kindergarten or preschool.
7. Be available to educators when they have questions. If time is not available immediately, set up a meeting to listen to their inquiries or suggestions and provide guidance in a way that supports best practice.
8. Model behaviours I want to see in the educators; such as respectful interactions, reflection, continued learning and actualizing other values that are part of the philosophy of our organization.
9. Hold myself and the educators in the organization accountable to providing a high-quality early learning program for the children and families in our community.
10. Find joy in the work that I do and support the educators to be passionate about their work.

Thank you to the participants of the Regional Child Care Directors meetings in the spring of 2014 who provided this information which is intended for all leaders in early learning programs.

Introduction – Social Emotional Development: Essential Learning Experiences

Social emotional competence has been shown to be one of the greatest determinants of future success both in school and life (Riley et al, 2008, CEECD, 2009, NIEER, 2007).



Friendship develops between children when they share enjoyable experiences.

Social emotional development of children is often referred to by educators and parents as the ability to interact well with other children. However, social emotional development is much more complex. There are many factors that contribute to the capability of having friends and interacting with others successfully. Some of these factors include how we perceive ourselves, regulate our emotions and behavior, understand the social rules and expectations of various locations or situations, form relationships with others (which provides a motivation as to why we would set aside our own desires and consider the needs of others), and the ability to understand that others perceive the world differently with different thoughts and emotions.

Social emotional development is not just about interacting with others because it is also important when a child is alone. Even when alone, the child needs to feel connected to others, that they belong, that others care about them and that they are a confident, competent and worthy person.

Early childhood educators intentionally design the environment and experiences to provide numerous opportunities for young children to practice and learn from their experiences in order for children to gain the knowledge and skills to be successful.

“The excellent teacher makes it a priority to develop a warm, positive relationship with each child. This relationship is vital to young children’s learning and development in all areas, and it makes effective, positive guidance possible.”

(Copple and Bredekamp, 2009, p. 35)

Connecting the Guiding Principles and Related Pedagogical Considerations to Social Emotional Development

A child's sense of worth is gained primarily through a reflection of how others see them.

- The educator designs the early learning environment to communicate that this is a space where children are valued and respected.
- Every interaction the educator has with the child and his/her family should convey that the child is respected as a competent learner and unique and worthy individual.
- Observation, reflection and documentation of children's learning occur daily and are discussed with the children so they can benefit from revisiting past experiences and develop an awareness of their own growth and development.

“The building of strong relationships in every aspect of an early childhood program is the key in providing quality care and education for young children.”
(Fraser, 2006, p. 97)



Provide opportunities and spaces for small groups of children to interact and play together.

The development of positive and supportive relationships is required for successful learning for young children.

- When children have a warm and secure relationship with their early childhood educator, they get along better with other children in the current year and for years to come (Riley et al., 2008, p.34).
- Strong positive relationships and positive interactions between children and adults and between the children themselves are correlated with high quality programs and positive child outcomes (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, Early Years Branch, 2008; OECD, 2004, 2010).
- The adult-child relationship is vital for the educator to understand the child's needs and interests, to be able to respond appropriately and to provide engaging learning experiences. For the child, this relationship provides a trusting bond that communicates that this adult cares about them and has their best interests in mind.
- Positive caring relationships support the building of resiliency which helps children to successfully deal with adversity.
- Positive peer relationships are built by sharing enjoyable experiences. These relationships are crucial for children to learn how to negotiate with others and to learn positive social skills and expectations.
- Connecting with the child's family provides an opportunity to learn about the child from those who know him/her best. Learning what is important to the family builds a meaningful and respectful relationship.

“In play, children are often able to stretch beyond their own needs and compromise with playmates because they are highly motivated to maintain the friendship”
(Riley et al., 2008, p. 47)

Children bring their own unique prior knowledge and life experiences to the learning program.

- These competencies should be respected and recognized as a beginning point from which additional skills are developed and opportunities provided to meet the new requirements of the early learning setting.
- One of the most fascinating topics for children to explore is themselves. For learning to be meaningful they need opportunities to connect knowledge to themselves, their prior knowledge and to their experiences.


Intentional design of the environment creates opportunities for positive social interactions among the children.


- Designing interesting areas for small groups and providing interesting materials for children to explore together can build bonds through shared interest and enjoyment.
- Small group interactions provide the best opportunity to learn to cooperate and interact with others (e.g., dramatic play, blocks, water table, light table, and invitations for learning).
- Educators provide a safe environment where children feel confident in the predictability of the physical space, basic routine and social interactions enabling them to take risks in exploring and learning.


Educators view themselves as co-learners. Educators discover new knowledge with the children as well as modelling, guiding and encouraging acceptance, dealing with transitions and change, controlling impulses and taking the perspective of others.





It is important to provide spaces in the environment where children can be alone, relax and take a break from the activity of the learning program.


 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Developing Self-Awareness	<p>From ... Recognizing representations of self in mirrors or photos.</p> <p>To ... Communicating who they are – name, identifying physical characteristics, likes, dislikes, interests, and cultural connections.</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the child describe his/her self? • Does the child use phrases such as “I am ...”, “I like ...” or “I have ...?” Or the words “me” or “mine?” <p>Observe and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the child able to pick his/her self out in a group photo? • Does the child make choices based on their interests? • Are they aware of what they can do independently and when they require assistance? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure children are able to see themselves, their family and culture in the early learning environment e.g., mirrors, photos, family photos, first language in print, cultural artifacts. • Provide activities which examine and explore self-awareness such as self portraits, including children’s names in the environment, creating charts for traits or preferences such as eye colour, favourite fruit or activity, creating displays or books which include children’s favorite attributes or a special area of interest such as teeth, hands or hair. • Invite families to participate in creating a poster with their child. Include information that is important to their child such as birthday, pets, family members, and favourites. • Provide numerous opportunities for children to make choices throughout the day. • Help children recognize their strengths and reactions to various situations, activities and materials. This includes changes that occur as children grow and develop and gain experience with materials. • Share observations with the children that will allow them to learn something about themselves or become more aware of their skills or preferences such as “When you pump your legs on the swing, you were able to make it go very high” or “You don’t seem to like the feel of that pumpkin” or “Playing at the water table really calms you down”. • Share positive observations and information about the child’s new learning and preferences with other educators and family members when the child is listening and can hear and benefit from this experience.


 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Developing Self-Worth	<p>From ... Reluctant to try new experiences due to lack of confidence and/or experience or identifying self by using negative descriptors such as 'bad'.</p> <p>To ... Self-confidence is evident through identification of self by using positive descriptors and willingness to try new experiences and explore new materials.</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What adjectives does the child use to describe him/herself? • How do others (e.g., family, care givers, peers, or anyone they spend time with) refer to him/her? • Reflect on the impact of these remarks and what influence you may have. <p>Observe and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the child let peers make all decisions or insist on making all decisions his/her self? If so, why? • Does the child require adult support to try new experiences, access materials or complete tasks? • Does the child have the confidence to take a risk and explore new situations and learning opportunities independently? • Does everyone who spends time in the program feel important and valued? - How is this communicated and how can this be enhanced? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greet each child warmly so he/she understands he/she is important, and the adults are genuinely happy that he/she arrived at the early learning program. • Learn a greeting or a few phrases in the first language of children who speak another language at home so you can communicate with them. This shows these children that you appreciate their culture and care about them as individuals. • Listen intently to the child's ideas and ask for more information to confirm you are interested. • Comment on children's efforts, not just the products or results. • Display children's creations and representations in prominent and respectful ways such as in frames, in the entrance way to the building or other important places. • Display children's creations in places where they can reflect on past learning experiences and successes e.g., at child's eye level, in photo books or digital photo frames. • View each child as unique and able to articulate their positive aspects and interests. • Design the environment to promote independence; allowing children to access materials e.g., art materials, scale, camera etc. and complete tasks such as wash hands or take photos of a block creation without having to ask permission. This confirms that they are competent and capable learners. • Incorporate the children's ideas into the planning, activities and documentation of the program to reinforce that the ideas are worthwhile and valued. • Use documentation as a tool to review learning that has occurred over time. e.g., "Remember when you were scared to hold the bunny? Now you enjoy feeding and looking after him."


 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Developing a Sense of Belonging (Both physically and socially)	<p>From ... Being hesitant to enter the environment, playing in isolation from others or damaging materials.</p> <p>To ... Being comfortable in the environment (physical and social) and demonstrating care with materials because a sense of connection exists.</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the children describe the materials and space of the learning program? As “mine” and “ours” or as the “teacher’s” space and materials? <p>Observe and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the child feel secure and comfortable being in the space and accessing materials? What do you observe to confirm this? • Does the child care for and value the materials in the space? Do the children remind each other of where materials go, to be careful with certain materials or to clean up areas when activities are complete? • Does the child feel connected to others in the program? What do you observe to confirm this? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include materials in the environment that make the children feel welcome and that they belong (e.g., cultural items, children’s artwork, photos of the children and their families). • Consult the children when making decisions about the placement and type of materials in the environment. Use language such as “we” and “our” when discussing the space and program. • Consider projects that all students can contribute to such as an art mural, collection of fall leaves, numbers in the environment etc. • Provide individual space, such as a locker, for each child to store personal items.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Separating from Family Without Distress	<p>From ... Crying and showing distress when being dropped off at the early learning program.</p> <p>To ... Saying goodbye to family members and willingly transitioning to activities in the early learning environment.</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What vocabulary and tone of voice does the child use when saying goodbye to family? <p>Observe and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What behaviours does the child display during drop off? Are family members anxious? • What do the child and family need to feel good about this separation? • Is there a routine that they follow such as reading a book together, sharing a hug and then waving at the window? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage families not to sneak out but to instead say good bye and create a 'good bye routine'. • Reassure children that family members care for them and will return. • Ensure interesting activities are available for children (and family members) to engage in upon arrival. • Consider ways to allow children to feel connected to family when apart. • Provide support to children who are having difficulty separating. This may include having children carry a family photo with them, writing a letter or creating art to share with family when they return. • Ensure children are familiar with the program schedule and time when their family will return.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Identifying and Regulating Emotions	<p>From ... Requiring adult assistance and intervention to regulate behavior when highly emotional (external regulation).</p> <p>To ... Identifying and communicating feelings and emotional needs to others and being able to regulate their own behaviour (internal regulation).</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the child use ‘feelings words’? E.g., happy, sad, angry, frustrated, excited. • Can the child identify how he/she is feeling when asked? • Is the child able to identify what helps he/she to feel better when he/she is upset? e.g., “When I am sad, I need a hug”. <p>Observe and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the child react in moments of intense emotion such as happiness, sadness, anger etc.? • Are there factors that increase or decrease the intensity of the reaction? • How does the response of the educator or others impact the reaction? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about emotions in everyday situations so children are exposed to the vocabulary of emotions. • Provide children’s books that highlight emotions in the learning environment. • Read and explore ‘feelings’ books with the children. • Model the identification of emotions and appropriate communication strategies such as “Sometimes I feel angry but I feel better if I relax and read a book or go for a walk.” • Have children speculate about how they think the characters feel in stories based on the images and events. • Model delayed gratification e.g., “I really want to ... right now but I can wait until...” • Provide a quiet space in the environment for children to go to when they are upset or overwhelmed. Incorporate elements of comfort and softness into this space. • Discuss with children what makes them feel happy and document this in a way that can be revisited with a child when he/she is upset. • Use pictures of real people as a reference for labelling emotions. • Highlight positive emotions using photos of the children in the program. E.g., happy, surprised, excited, calm, peaceful.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Interacting with Others (Relationships with peers and adults)	<p>From ... Preferring to spend time alone, choosing to interact only with adults or limited peer interaction such as dominating or watching interactions.</p> <p>To ... Developing close bonds with others, cooperating with peers by taking turns, sharing materials and working together to achieve a common goal.</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who does the child interact with? Consider both peers and/or adults. • What is the tone of interactions with others? • Does the child share ideas with peers and listen to ideas from peers? • Does the child negotiate during play in an attempt to make all players content? <p>Observe and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the child interact with peers? • What types of play does the child engage in - solitary, parallel, associative, cooperative? • Does the child repeatedly choose the same play partners or type of play? • Does the child choose to be close to others and does this occur more often during certain activities or with certain people? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for small groups of children to play and explore shared interests together e.g., experiential centres, invitations, and areas such as a small table with two or three chairs. • Provide opportunities for children to interact with a wide variety of people in a wide variety of social situations e.g., visit a senior care home, invite administrators to the program so children can share their learning projects, arrange for multi-age book sharing and explorations which could include infants, elders or older students. • Encourage peers to support each other e.g., “I see you are having trouble getting that to work. I saw Kayden do that yesterday. Maybe you could ask him to help you.” • Encourage positive peer interactions by commenting on your observations and highlighting them in documentation of the play experience. • Consider whether your intrusion into the children’s play experience will enhance or hinder the play. Consider how you can enhance the play.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Taking the Perspective of Others and Showing Empathy	<p>From ... Believing everyone sees the world as he/she does.</p> <p>To ... Being able to consider the perspective of others and how his/her actions may influence others.</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the child use the pronoun ‘we’ (considering more than himself/herself)? • Does the child talk about or acknowledge the feelings of others? E.g., “Josh doesn’t like it when you break his tower” or “She sad mom gone.” <p>Observe and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the child attempt to calm others who are upset or hurt? E.g., Bringing a favourite toy, getting an adult, or giving the child a hug? • Does the child ask others about how they feel, what they think or what they would like to do? • How does the child exhibit their sense of compassion and responsibility when they observe and interact with animals or small creatures? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whenever possible, model and discuss how to consider the perspective of others with the children, such as “The boy in this book has tears on his face. How do you think he is feeling?” or “I wonder if Will’s little sister can see what is in the water table or if she needs someone to help her?” • Provide a dramatic play area with a diverse array of dress up clothes and props so children can experiment with various roles. • Provide opportunities to care for other living things including plants or pets in the learning environment. • Visit and/or connect with others in the community such as an infant care program or senior care home where the children can build relationships with others who may be from other generations or require assistance which the children can provide. • Open, honest, simple, and factual communication about the challenges and limitations that some children in the program may experience. E.g., Joe can’t walk because his muscles don’t work the way yours do. That’s why we need to take the sidewalk to the library instead of the trail across the field.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Resolving Conflicts	<p>From ... Requiring adults to resolve conflicts for them, using physical methods to resolve conflict or always conceding to others to avoid conflict.</p> <p>To ... Requesting assistance when needed either from adults or peers. Compromising and problem solving with peers to find a mutually acceptable solution.</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What words and tone does the child use in conflict situations? • Is the child able to articulate why they are upset? • Does the child attempt to negotiate to resolve the conflict? <p>Observe and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the child react in conflict situations? • Is the child calm, aggressive or avoidant when conflict arises? • Does the child listen to and try to understand the ideas of the other person? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help articulate and clarify the reason for the conflict so the children can see beyond their own motivation – “You both want to use the camera but we only have one.” • Guide children through conflict by staying calm and assisting the child to see the perspective of others such as “See Brooklyn’s tears. She feels sad when you take the blocks away.” • Provide and model words and actions for children to use to resolve conflicts. • Invite the children to articulate their feelings and ideas to others in resolving conflict. • Model and insist on respect for others during conflict resolution. • Design the environment to avoid unnecessary conflict and promote positive interaction by having multiples of materials and setting up areas for small group interactions. • Assist children to understand that conflict is natural, and we need to work hard to find respectful solutions. • Encourage problem solving and being open to new ideas, “What do you think would happen if we used River’s idea? Can we try it and see?”



Quality in Action – Social Emotional Development

Using the children’s photos throughout the environment and within the learning activities is one way to build self-awareness and a sense of belonging for children within the early learning program.

Other simple ideas can be to use children’s photos as game pieces, create memory or bingo games, create photo puzzles, and illustrate concepts using children’s photos instead of commercially produced materials. These ideas make learning more meaningful and connected to the children and their lives.

Photos that come with the games such as *Guess Who* can be replaced with photos of the children in the program. This helps children develop a sense of others by paying attention to attributes and becoming more familiar with others in the program. Educators can also add photos of themselves, educational assistants, principals, directors, cooks, and anyone else who is important to the program!

For example, in the bottom photo, the educator provided a dramatic play opportunity by attaching the children’s photos to blocks so they, and their friends, can be characters in the play.

<p>1</p>  <p>One</p>	<p>2</p>  <p>Two</p>	<p>3</p>  <p>Three</p>	<p>4</p>  <p>Four</p>
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In this activity, numerical concepts are illustrated using photos of the children. You could also have children draw the numbers and letters then glue on items to match the quantity. This supports children’s development of self-worth.



Introduction – Physical Development: Essential Learning Experiences

Physical development is vital to the growth, health and well-being of young children. Early childhood educators have an important role in planning for and promoting children's movement competency and in establishing healthy physical activities through exploring the physical environment.

Physical activity has been shown to help with concentration and enhance learning as physical movements stimulate connections in the brain, producing a strong positive effect on children's ability to learn (Pool, Miller & Church, 2003; CCCF & CICH, 2004).

Physical development includes physical movements that demonstrate what the body can do. These are presented in the skill categories of loco-motor skills, stability/balance skills and manipulative skills (Epstein, 2007). Some of these skills depend on maturation to develop; however, educators must plan a broad range of movement options and provide time, space and equipment for children to continue to develop and refine movement. Through intentional planning, educators can build on the children's earlier experiences. Invite children to participate in physical movements that expand their physical growth and development by providing a range of movement options, large open areas, enticing equipment and materials, and appealing activities.

Physically active children are more likely to:

- Develop and maintain strength, flexibility, and endurance
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Increase bone density through weight bearing activities
- Enhance attention and focus on academic learning (NASPE, 2009)
- Create links between the brain and the neuromuscular system
- Lower stress and anxiety
- Improve self-esteem



“Many people believe that young children automatically acquire and perfect motor skill, such as running, jumping, and throwing, as their bodies develop, that it is a natural process that occurs with physical maturation.... But maturation takes care of only part of the process - the part that allows a child to execute most of the movement skills at an immature or beginning level.... When children don't get the help, they need to learn physical skills, many never fully master gross (large muscle) motor skills.”
(Pica, 2008, p. 48) (p. 113)

Connecting the Guiding Principles and Related Pedagogical Considerations to Physical Development

Young children are active learners and need to be able to move in and around their environments.

- Play and exploration offers a multitude of opportunities for children to share their ideas through their physical movement, active participation, and interaction with others both indoors and outdoors.
- Children learn about and make sense of their world through active play.
- Educators consider active options for all learning activities. For example, the retelling of favourite stories can include the creation of materials or props as well as dramatic story telling by acting it out.
- Offering children a choice of opportunities and materials for physical play such as items to roll, kick, throw, strike or catch engages children in refining fundamental motor skills.


Children's physical development follows a typical progression.


- The rate at which each child grows and develops physically varies; and control over their motor skills increases with maturity and experience.
- All children benefit from being as active and involved as possible, including children with limited mobility or range of movement.
- Introducing new equipment that reflects current interests such as jumping from a safe height, balanced walking along a length of rope or maneuvering through an obstacle course constructed by a group of children, all contribute to physical skill development.





“Preschoolers are extremely physical creatures—constantly moving, running, and jumping. They react joyfully to opportunities for dancing, creative movement, physical dramatic play, and being outdoors where they can move without constraint.”


(Cople & Bredekamp, 2009,) (p. 113)


 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Developing Fine Motor Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grasping, squeezing, painting, drawing, printing, cutting, pouring, beading etc. 	<p><i>From ...</i> Using an awkward grip to manipulate tools such as markers, crayons, scissors, or paint brushes.</p> <p><i>To ...</i> Using a skilled grip and manipulation of markers, crayons, scissors, paintbrushes or other small tools and materials to play or represent ideas.</p>	<p><i>Listen and Reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the child talk about his/her ability to use his/her hands and fingers and/or small tools and materials? Do they express frustration, ask for assistance, or express pride in abilities? <p><i>Observe and Reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do children use fingers and thumbs for precise movements such as snapping toys together or zipping up a jacket? Do they grasp tools such as pencils, crayons, scissors, and/or paint brushes correctly? Are they able to pick up and manipulate small materials such as beads, buttons, small blocks, or the pieces of a puzzle? Can they pour a liquid from one container to the other without spilling? What makes some of these tasks easier or more difficult? <p><i>Respond ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities to strengthen hand muscles by providing materials to squeeze and manipulate such as clay, play dough, bread dough, sponges and eye droppers in the water table or spray bottles, paintbrushes, and water for outside play. • Provide opportunities for children to manipulate small items with their fingers such as beads, stones, Tinker toys, Lego, etc. and with tools such as tongs or scoops. • Encourage children to represent their learning and observations through drawing and building by using tools such as a paintbrushes, pencils, blocks, clay, sand, hammers, screwdrivers, etc.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Developing Locomotor Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking, marching, running, crawling, jumping, hopping, leaping, skipping, galloping, rolling, moving to music etc. 	<p><i>From ...</i> Walking and/or running in play. Moving forward and being able to change directions, although may be awkward.</p> <p><i>To ...</i> Skipping and/or galloping Moving sideways and/or backwards and able to change speed, direction and levels smoothly.</p>	<p><i>Listen and Reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the child talk about his/her movement? • Does he/she name the movement, the speed of running or the height or distance jumped? <p><i>Observe and Reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does he/she run, march, crawl, or jump easily or with much effort? • How fluid is the movement? Is the child able to change speed, direction, level, pathway, or type of movement smoothly and easily or with effort? How does the surface type impact ability? <p><i>Respond ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that children have space to move and regular opportunities to do so, such as playing in the gym or outdoors, climbing on the playground, rolling down a hill, walking along a trail, skating, pulling, and sliding on a sled, swimming, riding tricycles in the hallway, or crawling through a tunnel to enter the early learning program. • Provide opportunities to gallop, march, hop, leap, skip, slither, etc. through obstacle courses, games, acting out stories or moving according to suggestions from books or music.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Developing Stability/Balance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn, twist, bend, stretch, push, pull, rise, fall, balance, jump and land 	<p><i>From ...</i> Swaying to music with both feet on floor, bending to pick up an item from the floor or stretching to reach something from a shelf.</p> <p><i>To ...</i> Remaining upright and maintaining balance while moving on various surfaces, slopes, and heights. Maintaining balance to jump and land on his/her feet, stepping from one stump to another, sitting on a ball, standing on one foot, or sitting on a swing.</p>	<p><i>Listen and Reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As children sway to music that moves from a slow to a faster rhythm, what do the children say/do when the rhythm changes? What words do they use to describe the movement? <p><i>Observe and Reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can children change their movements when the rhythm changes when responding to music? • Do children hold their arms out to the side to assist with balance during activities? • Do they appear stable? Do they fall frequently? • Are children able to maintain their balance when carrying items such as a box or bag or pulling a sled? Is there a change in stability based on footwear? <p><i>Respond ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for children to move about, play and develop skills on various surfaces and slopes, both indoors and outdoors. • Provide a variety of equipment that encourages balancing such as benches, small stilts (walking blocks), scooters and/or balance balls. • Build on children’s imaginations and interests to develop stability skills. With the children, design a ‘balance trail’ with low objects and gradually add higher objects or place objects slightly farther apart to challenge their ability to jump and land on their feet. • Provide opportunities for children to dance and move to culturally diverse music.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Developing Manipulative Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throw, Toss, Kick, Catch, and Strike 	<p><i>From ...</i> Throwing a bean bag up in the air but being unable to catch it on the way down. Kicking a large sized ball. Throwing balls of various sizes.</p> <p><i>To ...</i> Catching a large ball with both hands. Tapping a balloon into the air multiple times without letting it touch the ground. Striking a balloon with a racket.</p>	<p><i>Listen and Reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the child’s response when he/she does not catch the ball? Does the child tell him/herself to try again? <p><i>Observe and Reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the child keep his/her eyes open when attempting to catch? • Does the child make alterations to attempts to catch the item with the next throw? • How does the child use the rest of his/her body when catching/throwing etc.? • Does the child demonstrate a preference of hand when throwing, foot when kicking, etc.? <p><i>Respond ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer encouragement, modeling, and cues to children so they can move from catching large soft items to catching a harder, smaller balls, or striking a ball on a batting tee, shooting a puck with a hockey stick, or hitting a balloon with a racket; cues might include, “watch the ball” or “hug the ball to your body” (Epstein, 2007). • Provide targets such as a hoop hanging from a rope or baskets and bins at which children can throw balls or beanbags. • Incorporate these activities into fun games that encourage children to try out and practice new skills.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
<p>Developing Space and Body Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With self and others and varied environments 	<p>From ... Using their body to demonstrate shapes such as a stick or a circle or ball and sizes such as big and small.</p> <p>Having difficulty avoiding others and/or obstacles in the environment.</p> <p>To ... Using their body to demonstrate more complex shapes such as round, flat, wide, narrow.</p> <p>Adjusting movement and speed based on environmental obstacles such as tables, objects on the floor or other hazards.</p> <p>Avoiding colliding with friends while moving in a common space.</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the child speak to others when moving or request that children move out of the way? Do the children name the shapes or sizes that they are making with their bodies? Do they voice expressions such as “Get out of the way, move over or don’t bump me?” <p>Observe and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the child travel around others when moving in a common space or does he/she frequently bump into furnishings or knock over items in the classroom? Does the child use inappropriate effort in his/her movements such as pulling too hard on a chair and knocking it over or being unable to gently hold a chick or hamster? Can the child vary the speeds of his/her body movements? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide photos of the children engaging in various movements. Invite the children to copy the movements displayed in the image. Talk about how their bodies look during various movements. Provide opportunities for children to crawl under, over, beside and behind objects. Invite children to imitate the speed of familiar items such as toy cars, rolling balls, or animals such as cats, bears, moose, alligators, geese, horses, or deer; model language such as “slow as a turtle” or “fast as a deer”. Invite children to think of ways to move at different levels; slither on floor, walk on tip toes etc. Encourage children to suggest more difficult movements as they explore the space. Read poems/stories or listen to music with strong rhythms and have the children clap their hands, tap their toes, jump, walk, or gallop to the rhythms. Talk with children about how their bodies feel when they are pulling a sled, hammering nails, or carrying a box. Model language to contribute to body awareness such as “I saw how you were leaning forward when you pulled your buddy on the sled,” or “I noticed how you were pushing down with your feet when you were peddling on the tricycle.” Suggest that two children share a hula hoop to perform movements together to build awareness of sharing a defined space. Offer objects of varying weights for children to pick up. Have them describe how heavy or light the object is and how they need to adjust their body to lift and/or carry it.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Developing Healthy Habits	<p>From ... Completing healthy routines because instructed to and possibly with adult guidance. e.g., washing hands before eating when instructed, wanting to leave the table and move around while eating or requesting screen time</p> <p>To ... Completing healthy routines independently and/or understanding why the routines are important. e.g., independently washing hands before a cooking activity to remove germs, sitting with peers and educator while eating and having meaningful interactions</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the child talk about his/her health and the healthy routines that are part of the program? • Does the child participate in conversation with the educator and/or peers during snack time? <p>Observe and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the child only follow through with healthy routines when there is an adult supervising? • Is the child hesitant to try new foods? Does the child eat very quickly or very slowly? If so, why? • Does the child appear healthy? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expose children to new and healthy foods. Model tasting new foods with the children. • Ensure water is always available to drink. • Share nutritional information with children such as milk has calcium which makes your bones and teeth strong, or beef has protein which is important for building muscles. • Provide props to encourage dramatic play that include health professionals such as eye charts, eye glass frames and nutrition guides. • Arrange a class trip to health professionals in the community or invite them to the early learning program to discuss healthy habits and allow children to become comfortable with the environment and tools. E.g., dentist, doctor, health nurse, optometrist etc. • Provide modelling of a healthy lifestyle to the children. Share aspects and information such as “I took my dog for a walk to the park last night”. • Provide a pleasant environment and routine for snacks and/or meal times focused on interactions and conversations. Allow children to serve themselves snacks. • Model and provide opportunities for children to practice proper hand washing techniques.



Quality in Action – Physical Development

Allowing children to make art and experience new sensorial experiences with different parts of their bodies provokes in children a sense of wonder and excitement. It also help kids to become aware of their own bodies' abilities.



Introduction – Spiritual Development: Essential Learning Experiences

This section of the resource outlines the essential learning experiences that enrich children’s spiritual development to assist early childhood educators to recognize, plan appropriate strategies, and support the growth of young children’s spiritual capabilities and understandings. Spiritual development is perhaps the least understood and most thought-provoking developmental area that educators integrate into children’s daily learning experiences (Dowling, 2010; Hay & Nye, 1996).

Spiritual Development is “the process of connecting with and living in the natural world while becoming aware of personal values and beliefs, gaining self-knowledge and reflecting on life’s fundamental questions”, page 69 *Play and Exploration*.



Appreciate beauty in nature.

“Experiences during the early childhood years give form to the values, attitudes, and basic orientation toward the world that individuals carry with them throughout their life.”
(Wilson, 1997)

How educators interpret the term “spiritual development” is influenced by their personal values, culture and experiences. For some, spirituality is a worldview that stands in direct contrast to a materialistic view of the world. For others it is a deeply felt connection to a greater being.

Spirituality is an important aspect of life and a distinguishing feature of First Nations’ culture. It is related to a holistic perspective on life and is associated with the land, healing, culture and education. First Nations children are taught to be aware of and thankful for their natural environment (Ottmann, 2002). Although expressed differently, spirituality is a component of every culture.

“The purpose of aesthetic experience is to develop a full and rich life for the child. It does not matter whether an activity is useful for anything else. There does not have to be a product. Doing just for the sake of doing is enough.”
(Mayesky, 2003, (p. 23)

Another example of experience within the spiritual domain is the aesthetic experience – an experience in which our human sensibilities are open to the beauty and wonder of aspects of our world. To better understand this aspect of spirituality, educators might recall their own absorbing experiences of hearing the rhythm of the rain or seeing the hoar frost on a row of trees, the expansive hue of a sunset, or the joyful expression on a child’s face. Along with being intrigued by nature and fascinated by beauty, young children engage in personal expression through artistic modes such as song, dance, and visual creative expressions with an openness, focus, and absence of conformity that marks the artistic aesthetic experience. There is no purpose or motivation required for experiencing the aesthetic. It is engagement for pure joy.

Early contributors to a child-centered approach in early childhood education include Froebel, Pestalozzi, Montessori and Steiner. They pioneered holistic education with the belief that education should also contribute to the spiritual development of children. In the context of education, spiritual development is often described as the non-material aspect of who we are, in contrast to the body which represents the material aspect of who we are. For purposes of this document, the term “spiritual development” in young children is expressed as “other ways of knowing” (Wilson, 1997). With preschool children, these ways of knowing and being in the world may be described as aesthetic experiences, wonder, insight, compassion, and curiosity.

Connecting the Guiding Principles and Related Pedagogical Considerations to Spiritual Development

“Spiritual development can seem remote from the tenets of early education, which stress the importance of activity and ‘being’...yet during the early years of life children are not naturally weighed down with materialism...and are very receptive to thoughts and ideas. Clearly this is a good basis to recognize the things of quality and significance in life.”
(Dowling, 2010, (p. 140)

Children expand their self-understanding in their social and natural environments by participating in a lifelong journey of discovery about themselves, other children and adults in their lives, the natural world, and the connections between each.

- Children are seekers of knowledge through their curiosity, play, creative activities, and aesthetic experiences. They use their entire bodies and all of their senses to examine, explore and appreciate their surroundings.
- Through their play and exploration, children encounter moments of wonderment, leading to questions about events and their surroundings.

- Children express their ideas and insights when they produce original works of art or create stories in dramatic play, interpreting what they view as beautiful in their surroundings.
- Experiences, unique talents, and specific developmental processes will influence how each child matures along his/her personal spiritual path.
- Spiritual development involves a distinctly non-material aspect.
- A learning environment that reflects or ignites children`s interests in the natural world provides opportunities to connect with wonder and beauty through sensory involvement, intellectual engagement, curiosity, and imagination.



Educators intentionally offer a wide range of choices and opportunities to use natural materials to promote sensory awareness and boost children`s recognition of the capacities and possibilities of the materials they explore.

“... if the focus of education is on the development of the whole child (rather than just the intellect), the spiritual dimension of our humanness must be addressed. It is a serious fallacy to think that young children are not ready for spiritual growth or that they do not have spiritual experiences The opposite is likely true - childhood is the spiritual period par excellence.”
(Wilson, n.d.)


- Educators provide for multiple opportunities to explore the texture, properties, and transformative possibilities of materials in order to know and understand the potential and limitations of materials including clay, paint, glue, sand, light, snow, water, seeds, etc.
- Educators take time to observe, be curious and be amazed by their natural surroundings. They share this wonder with the children to foster an appreciation for the beauty that exists in the natural and manmade environment.
- Repeated visits to physical spaces in the natural environment throughout the various seasons allow children to become aware of and recognize the changes that occur through the annual cycle. The educator assists children to carefully observe and reflect on these changes.
- Experiences in nature build a connection, a relationship and sense of belonging within a place.
- Guided experiences in natural spaces evoke children`s sense of responsibility to care for the spaces where they explore, learn, and grow.
- Adults in the learning environment set the tone and provide a positive example through which children learn to respect, care, and show compassion for other people.


- Children sense and are deeply validated when their natural abilities and interests are recognized and nurtured. This contributes to the child's sense of personal uniqueness and value, and the understanding of who they are as a person and how they see and know the world.


Are rituals part of your day with the children?

“Ritual lifts us out of the mundane and habitual and calls our attention to what matters to us. It reminds us of what we hope for and who we hope to be. It binds us to each other and honors the bonds between us.”

(Pelo, 2013,) (p. 171)

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Experiencing a Sense of Wonder, Awe, and Joy	<p>From ... Being unaware of aspects of the environment that are beyond their immediate consciousness.</p> <p>To ... Beginning to express wonder such as: being on an outing in a field or park and noticing the expansiveness of the sky and sharing that awareness by saying with a sense of awe, "The sky is big ..."</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the child express surprise, excitement, and joy? E.g., facial expressions, verbalizations, and body language • Does the child spontaneously share observations and experiences that evoke the feelings of wonder, awe and joy? <p>Observe and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of times when children are noticing and focusing - fleetingly or with attention - on an element of wonder in the environment or taking pleasure from a sensory experience. • Reflect on your observations regarding what you believe may have been a child's aesthetic experience. What characteristic made this experience a spiritual one for this child? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To better respond to children's spiritual experiences, recall your own childhood memories of wonder and consider how to provide similar experiences for children. Consider the involvement of sensory perception within that memory. Consider the role of culture in the experience. • Share your own experiences with children; describe what you have noticed that captured your attention, engaged your senses and how it made you feel. • Draw children's attention to aspects of wonder and beauty in the environment such as dew sparkling on a spider web or the swelling bud of a plant. • Encourage children to express their excitement and describe what intrigued them in a variety of ways: telling a story, painting a picture, acting out an event, creating a song, dancing, or simply closing their eyes and thinking about the experience. • Use documentation of the child's experiences, including photographs and video, to share with him/her and his/her family. Discuss what the children recall and how they felt.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Experiencing Heightened Sensory Awareness	<p>From ... Enjoying the fleeting sensory experience of running fingers over materials, textures of items in an invitation area or attending to sounds in the environment such as the whistling of wind or the sound of a flute.</p> <p>To ... Engaging deeply with materials or experiences that awaken sensory exploration such as sitting quietly in the music area listening to a favourite selection or mixing paint and watching the colours swirl and change.</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the children describe their sensory experiences to adults or their friends? • Do the children quietly and intently focus on their observation or experience? <p>Observe and reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the child notice and focus, even fleetingly, on experiences such as light flowing through a window, the smell of rain or flowers blooming in the air, water flowing from a container into the water table, the rhythm of the beating of a drum, or squishing, pinching, smoothing, or adding marks to clay or play dough? • Which materials entice the child to become more observant and engaged? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of times when children are noticing and focusing - fleetingly or with attention - on a sensory exploration in the environment. • Provide a variety of materials that invite deeper exploration and encourage multi-sensory awareness such as beads, feathers, cones, pebbles, mirrors to capture light or plants with different scents. • Discuss how sensory items smell/feel/look/taste/sound. • Extend sensory experiences to the outdoors. • Model and encourage the use of powerful and evocative language during sensory play to expand children’s vocabulary and understanding of their experiences; tactile sense words such as “slimy, cold, warm, hot, prickly, smooth, bumpy, corrugated, frigid, frosty ...” can be introduced and/or modelled for children.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Developing an Appreciation of Beauty and Connection to the Natural and Man-Made World	<p>From ... Beginning to notice and observe pleasing aspects of the environment. (child sees a plane in the sky and likes this)</p> <p>To ... Being able to identify which aspects of the environment are intriguing or pleasing, show appreciation of those elements and begin to seek them out. (child looks for planes or other objects in the sky knowing he/she likes this experience)</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen for exclamations of delight or quiet attention as children observe their surroundings. • What does the child describe as beautiful? • How does the child express his/her connections to the natural world and his/her understanding of the world? <p>Observe and reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the child find intriguing in the natural world? In their classroom? • How does the child demonstrate his/her appreciation of beauty? • How does the child interact with living creatures, growing plants, or other items in his/her learning environment? Does the child observe or collect beautiful things in the environment such as small colourful stones, shells, or leaves of various colours and shapes? • How do the experiences of the child contribute to a sense of connection to the world? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on what you consider beautiful – both natural and man-made. Share with the children why you believe this and how this may have changed as you matured. • Draw children’s attention to aspects of wonder and beauty in the environment such as dew sparkling on a spider web or the swelling bud of a plant on the window sill or outdoors. • To enhance aesthetic sensitivity, talk with children about their artistic creations in terms of the elements of art. You might comment on their use of colours, shapes, lines, space, or the design of the art work: “I noticed that you used long black lines to make the trees.” • Explore man-made elements such as 3-D structures or architecture to appreciate the beauty and uniqueness. Reflect on the effort required to create and what the creator was thinking or feeling. • Provide opportunities for children to represent natural objects (flowers etc.) – paint or other mediums. • Take photographs of aspects of nature, including living creatures, and various sized items that capture children’s interest. Provide invitations and collections that encourage closer examination. • Enhance children’s relationships with natural objects and animals by providing materials for drawing, painting, constructing, or sculpting representations of their experiences. • Invite a First Nations elder to visit the classroom to share stories about the natural world and the role humans play in it. If other cultures are present in the class, ask families to share their stories and beliefs regarding the natural world. Incorporate these into the learning environment/activities. • Create a class book about children’s experiences throughout the year that highlights their relationships with each other, the school, the wider community, and the natural world. Revisit the books regularly with the children and their families.



Quality in Action – Spiritual Development



This young girl is meeting her cousin for the first time. As adults we may recognize the significance of this new relationship, but we often underestimate the spiritual aspect that may accompany such a moment.

At first the child looks closely at the new baby. Her curiosity is aroused as she examines the newborn. She uses all her senses as she observes: sights, smells, touch and even sounds.

She listens carefully to hear the breathing of the baby. Notice how her head is turned slightly to allow her ear to pick up the whispery breaths more effectively.

Although she may not be able to articulate it to others, the child recognizes that this moment is special, significant in her life and the lives of those she cares about. She is able to perceive the reverence felt by the adults and the care that is given in the touches and conversation surrounding the baby and she perpetuates this reverence in her own actions.



This recognition of the significance of new life is instrumental in building empathy and respect for others. This also illustrates the importance of the attitudes and dispositions of the adults and educators.

Whether openly discussed or not, the arrival of a new person into the environment can also lead to an exploration of connections. How this new person is connected to me and how are we both part of something bigger (family, class, or group of children etc.)?



Introduction – Intellectual Development Essential Learning Experiences



When considering the intellectual development of preschool children, we must look deeper than the memorization skills of letter recognition and counting. The simple repetition of lists does not provide a meaningful context to the knowledge. During this important period of development, the foundations for how, what, and why children learn are being formed. Therefore, educators must nurture children’s dispositions for learning, investigate those concepts which have meaning to the children and encourage children to explore, problem solve, reflect, and create through their interactions and play.

“... we must empower children to learn how to learn and enjoy the process. Children will also need many chances to construct their own knowledge. Knowing how to investigate and think is a powerful tool that will stay with them forever.”

(Stacey, 2011,) (p. 18)

High quality early learning programs provide children with opportunities to acquire knowledge that they will build on throughout their lives. When children are engrossed in investigations, their attention is focused on using their senses to explore what is happening, asking questions about what they find and wondering what will happen. Children will benefit from supportive adult participation in the form of well- placed questions and discussion or the addition of simple tools and materials that help to expand and extend children’s prior knowledge.

A well-equipped environment that appeals to children’s inclination to figure out how something works, where it can be used and what can be uncovered in the investigation will include a variety of interesting materials, natural items, and tools for examining objects and living creatures. With educator intentionality, careful planning and ongoing adult support in the context, children enthusiastically engage in learning processes as they discover new concepts and develop deeper understandings.

By observing to determine what children already understand, educators can scaffold their learning with new vocabulary and conceptual frameworks that are meaningful to the child. Through ongoing practice and repeated experiences, children gradually acquire valuable content knowledge.

Current brain research informs us that when children are happy and excited about a concept or area of learning, they learn more easily and better retain what they have learned.

Connecting the Guiding Principles and Related Pedagogical Considerations to Intellectual Development

Children's natural urge is to explore their surroundings, equipment, and materials, using all of their senses and imagination to help them understand and talk about their experiences and observations.

- Curiosity and exploration are processes that young children use constantly to 'find out' about the world. They ask questions about how items work, how sounds are made, where creatures live, where oranges come from, why wasps sting, or why is the moon in my backyard? Each query invites exploration and investigation as children add to their cache of experience by expanding knowledge about their world and how it works.
- Preschool children raise questions about what they see and how things work as they carefully observe objects, living creatures or events occurring around them and engage in investigations and interactions that help solve their problems.
- Exploration of various tools and devices such as ramps, levers, pulleys, measuring tapes, timers, simple scales and graduated measuring cups and spoons lead children to ask questions and/or use the resources to solve their own problems. These early explorations provide the foundation for more formal mathematical and scientific understanding.

Play is considered to be an important pathway for inquiry and learning.

- During play, children engage in exploring ideas which are important to them such as the properties of water, testing and predicting which toys roll farthest and why, or in constructing a hideaway that can safely accommodate two children.
- Educators who see themselves as co-learners with the children inspire children to explore more possibilities and become more creative problem solvers.
- Educators encourage intellectual development by connecting children's new experiences to previous ones as well as assisting children to recognize such connections in their ongoing play and explorations.
- Ample time for play and exploration is provided to ensure that children have time to try things out, take risks, think about, analyze, and reflect on their work. Materials are available over days and weeks so that children can return to explore them on multiple occasions. Children are supported to use materials in ways that adults may not have originally envisioned.

"Children who are better at drawing also tend to have larger vocabularies and better pre-literacy skills. Art is a way to communicate (visually) and is linked to these other ways to communicate (through the spoken and written word). Having fun with art experiences can build the foundation for increased competence in many parts of [a] child's life".
(Riley et al., 2009,) (p. 148)

Intellectual exploration is deeply imbedded in classroom activities, projects, and conversations. The environment invites children to share their interests and theories by representing and documenting what they discover.

- Materials, equipment, books, and other resources are carefully selected to appeal to children’s interests and respond to their questions. Children are encouraged to explore questions such as, “Why can’t we see the sun at night?” or “What would happen if we loaded the wagon with these rocks?”
- Children will use materials such as collections of similar objects and other equipment to incorporate their emerging mathematic and scientific ideas and vocabulary into their dramatic play. Through this playing out of processes and conceptualizations, children expand and deepen their understandings. (Spencer & Hall, 2010; Tomlinson & Hyson, 2012)





Instead of purchasing commercially made posters, create displays with the children to reinforce the concepts they are learning.





The children used blocks and tubes to explore concepts such as size, height, gravity, angles, and structural stability.





 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
<p>Solving Problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrating Curiosity • Exploring • Observing • Understanding Cause and Effect • Anticipating and Predicting 	<p><i>From ...</i> Demonstrating curiosity by exploring materials, making observations, and engaging with interest in new experiences with varying levels of frustration or excitement.</p> <p>Understanding simple cause and effect connections when there is an immediate and evident response. e.g., “when I slam the door, it makes a loud noise” or “when I step in the puddle my foot gets wet”.</p> <p><i>To ...</i> Anticipating, predicting, and evaluating possible solutions to problems which are meaningful to the child. Exploring additional solutions or modifying attempts based on observations and experiences if initial attempt(s) are unsuccessful.</p> <p>Understanding more complex cause and effect relationships, such as, when there is a delayed response or additional influencing factors.</p>	<p><i>Listen and Reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of questions does the child ask? E.g., during discussions, interactions, explorations, field trips • What connections does the child make between stories, books, conversations, and life experiences? • Does the child talk aloud while problem solving? • Does the child anticipate or predict that a certain action or material will/will not suit a particular situation? Can the child explain why a solution is not appropriate? • How does the child express frustration? • How does the child communicate his/her discoveries with others? <p><i>Observe and reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the child respond to new materials in the environment? E.g., examine, sort, move or select materials to transfer to another location/project/creative representation? • How long does the child remain engaged with a task when problems arise? Does the child make multiple attempts to solve the problem? Does the child persist in using one strategy or does he/she try new strategies after failed attempts? • Does the child observe others to identify alternative strategies or use a strategy that has been used previously in a different situation? • How can you encourage the child to consider alternative solutions to problems? • Does the child accept input from others to assist in problem solving? • Does the child’s body language or emotional state indicate frustration? <p><i>Respond ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the dialogue between children as an opportunity to prompt problem solving. • Encourage children to reflect on cause/effect/possible solutions to meaningful events in their lives. “Why are there earthworms on the sidewalk after it rains? Why are they on the sidewalk instead of under the ground? I wonder if it is because ...” • Model “if ... then ...” language and activities for the children to hear and experience. • Use questions beginning with “why”, “what”, “when”, “where” or “how” that prompts children to begin to understand cause and effect as well as to consider other options/ways to view a situation or encourage curiosity in exploring ideas further. • Engage with children who are reserved and quiet; observe their actions and invite them to show their problem-solving strategies. • Provide opportunities for children to make choices and mistakes in the learning activities as these are valuable learning experiences. Ask “what if” or “what will you do next” questions to prompt children to predict and analyze. • Encourage children to consider how they would feel or what they would do or say in various situations e.g., character in a book, at a community event, or an event experienced by a peer • such as falling off a bike and breaking an arm or welcoming a new baby in the family, etc.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Creating and Imagining	<p>From ... Using materials in simple ways and needing prompting. e.g., dramatic play, visual art, sensory exploration</p> <p>To ... Using materials in multiple ways to represent ideas and share thoughts or feelings. e.g., dramatic play, visual art, music, and/or movement, building materials etc.</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the child explain why he/she is selecting a particular material or prop? • Does the child communicate how a material/prop could represent something else? e.g., blocks or boxes could be used as a stove. • Does the child assign roles such as “I’ll be _____ and you can be _____?” • Does the child ask/suggest, “Look at this!” “Let’s pretend.” “Let’s try _____.” <p>Observe and reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the child pretend to be someone or something on his/her own or when inspired by class activities, prompts or props? e.g., an animal, car, doctor, clouds, etc. • Does the child re-enact stories, either familiar or novel, and add his/her own creative aspects or episodes? • What aspect of creative expression is the child most often drawn to? e.g., construction, picture making, collage, role play, creating or moving to music, etc. • How often does the child engage in representing ideas using visual art/construction materials, role play, moving to music, etc.? • Does the child use a material to represent something else or use a material for another purpose? What is the purpose/motivation behind this representation or substitution? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a range of materials that can be used to represent ideas in all areas of the learning environment; change or add materials to prompt expression in a new way based on your observations. • Invite children to share their thinking with you by saying, “Tell me about how/what you are building/making/painting etc.” • Invite the children to suggest materials they might like to use in a specific situation/project. Provide these materials if possible. • Invite children to share with their peers how they have used specific materials to create an outcome/creative representation/construction/prop/dramatic play, etc. • Use open-ended questions in conversation with children prompting them to think in ways that are divergent and/or convergent. • Ask “what if” or “what will you do next” questions to prompt children to predict and analyze. • Encourage children to consider how they would feel or what they would do or say in various situations e.g., character in a book, at a community event, or an event experienced by a peer such as falling off a bike and breaking an arm or welcoming a new baby in the family, etc.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Recognizing Attributes and Characteristics	<p>From ... Sorting items by obvious characteristics, possibly with prompting. E.g., cars, crayons, animals, blocks by colour etc.</p> <p>To ... Classifying and comparing materials by recognizing more detailed differences in attributes. (texture, temperature, size, shapes, living/nonliving, animals that walk/fly/swim etc.)</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the child describe attributes related to observable characteristics? E.g., obvious, such as, same/different, size, shape, texture, colour, weight, living/non-living etc.; more detailed attributes: such as, animals – walking, flying, swimming; vehicles – combine, seeder, sprayer; colours – blue, turquoise, lime green • How can you encourage recognition of attributes and use of the related vocabulary? <p>Observe and reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the child select materials with specific likenesses such as when using cubes, attribute blocks/tiles, paper, manipulatives or dress up costumes and props in creating representations and/or engaging in construction, and/or dramatic play? • Does the child identify/sort/classify characteristics of play materials such as red/yellow/blue buttons (obvious) or buttons with two/four holes (detailed)? • Can the child express the differences or why certain materials were selected? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide multiple opportunities for children to engage with open-ended invitations with materials that involve differences and similarities. • Consider a variety of collection types including both natural and man-made materials. Use real materials whenever possible e.g., actual apples and oranges rather than pictures or photos • Set up invitations that invite sorting and categorizing or that highlight specific attributes of the materials (simple or more complex). • Talk about attributes, sorting and categorizing in everyday situations and planned activities, such as: “This tree is tall, and the bark is bumpy, but that tree is short and has smooth bark.” • Incorporate attribute words into your vocabulary when conversing with children; add more specific words as appropriate e.g., block/cube/soup can/cylinder; tempera/finger paint, tall/short; big/large/humongous; mad/angry/furious; happy/excited; sad /unhappy; scared/afraid/terrified • Organize class materials in different ways. Occasionally, instead of storing markers and crayons in separate containers put all the blue markers and blue crayons in one container; organize paper according to size at one time and later according to colour; organize books in groupings of small/medium/large instead of by topic. • Invite children to determine how materials are to be organized according to attributes.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Exploring Numeracy	<p><i>From ...</i> Reciting simple rote counting (1,2,3) or recognizing general quantity such as lots/more; little/many.</p> <p>Inconsistent identification of number quantities.</p> <p><i>To ...</i> Using numbers and numeracy concepts to count, measure, and compare materials to add meaning to projects or discover answers to questions identified by the children.</p>	<p><i>Listen and Reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When/how does the child talk about numbers in play or during daily routines? • Does the child use number names arbitrarily or does s/he understand and appropriately name the quantity of small groups of objects/children? E.g., one, two ... three, four • Does the child recognize that one group of objects is larger than another (cookies on snack plates etc.) and say, “He has more!” etc. • In what contexts does the child talk about numbers? Do the child’s words indicate that s/he understands the value/meaning of the number(s)? • When and how do you talk about numbers with the children? What about other adults? <p><i>Observe and reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When/how does the child use numbers or quantity in his/her play and explorations? • In what contexts does the child utilize his/her number knowledge? Does the child apply number knowledge to real life situations? Does s/he notice numbers in the environment? • Has the child moved from exploring numbers to intentional use of numbers? • Is the child beginning to use number-like symbols/numbers? E.g., when making a price tag for the store; identifying numbers on the phone/calculator • Does the child demonstrate an understanding of more/less/equal (or “the same”)? <p><i>Respond ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model the use of numeracy in everyday life in the learning environment. • Provide props and materials that give purpose to numbers such as phone books, real life calendars, watches and clocks, calculators, phones, flyers, charts, graphs, money etc. • Provide tools children can use for measurement in the early learning environment e.g., tape measure, rulers, meter stick, scale, pedometer, etc. • Use numeracy vocabulary (numbers, more, less, equal, bigger, smaller) when engaging in discussion with children and provide counting and number books in the program. • Prompt the use of counting and one to one correspondence. E.g., “Three children want to play with the tractors. How many are on the shelf? Are there enough tractors?” • Invite children to explain their use of numbers to others. • Make graphs with children to express preferences, differences, or changes. (Use set of class photos to enable children to indicate a choice on a bar graph.) • Provide opportunities for children to estimate how many, how big, how heavy etc. • Compare the size and weight e.g., bigger/smaller, taller/shorter, heavier/lighter etc. of items.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Exploring Time	<p>From ... Identifying difference of night and day.</p> <p>To ... Understanding basic time concepts that relate to the child's experiences in meaningful ways. (today, tomorrow, and yesterday and seasons of the year)</p> <p>Understanding and using sequencing concepts including before, after, first, then, now, and later</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are children using vocabulary such as day/night/morning/afternoon, bedtime, lunchtime, today/tomorrow/yesterday, dark/light, winter/spring/summer/fall, first/next/last, or before/after? Are they using the term "o'clock" although not necessarily with the correct time/number? • Are children making up or singing seasonal songs/retelling seasonal stories? • Are children able to identify time of day by identifying signals from their own body? (lunch time because hungry, nap time because tired) <p>Observe and reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are the children using time concepts in their dramatic play? E.g., getting the dolls ready for bed, dressing up to catch the bus to school, doing the dishes <i>after</i> eating dinner) • Are children observing/enacting/representing seasonal occurrences in their drawings/conversations? E.g., migrating/hatching birds, caterpillars and butterflies, changes in animal coloration, hunting, trapping, planting/harvesting crops, camping, preparing foods for special holidays • Are children using time-related materials from experience centres in their play? E.g., clocks, watches, stop watches, timers, calendars, appointment books • Do the children understand the sequence and follow the schedule of the program? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document with children the changes that occur with the seasonal change such as the changing colours of the leaves and grass. Take a photo of a particular tree in each season of the year and discuss how the tree has changed through the year. • Post a visual schedule and engage the children in talking about first/then/after/next. • Be intentional in modeling 'time vocabulary' when it is meaningful to the children. e.g., you might say, "Good- bye. I'll see you tomorrow! Tomorrow we are going to____/ Remember after snack we will_____. • Have a real calendar in the room and mark important events such as an upcoming field trip, library visits, Elder storytelling, Eid, Christmas, Chanukah, or celebrations that are important to the students in the class. • Read children's literature which includes time concepts e.g., seasonal change, night, and day. • View and discuss the children's observations regarding paintings and/or photos that highlight day/night and/or seasonal change. Provide opportunities for the children to use various media to create their own original artistic creations highlighting seasons or time concepts. • Provide activities that include several steps e.g., long term art projects, following a recipe, or creating a volcanic eruption with children interested in learning about dinosaurs. • Document long term or multi-step projects. Review and discuss the documentation to revisit the progression of the project over time. E.g., Do you remember yesterday when we _____?

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Exploring Position and Direction	<p>From ... Demonstrating an understanding of basic position and direction concepts. E.g., up/down, on/off, over/under, forward/backward</p> <p>To ... Demonstrating an understanding and use of complex position/direction words. E.g., beside, behind, in front, on top, near, far away</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What vocabulary is the child using to describe positions and concepts of direction in play? Is the child using the correct term for the situation? • How does the child explain direction and position to peers? • How and when do adults in the environment use position and direction vocabulary? Can this be increased and/or made more meaningful to the child? <p>Observe and reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are children demonstrating the correct position/direction for the language being used by self or peers? E.g., moving ‘closer’ when asked, putting a toy ‘under’ the blanket, turning right etc. • Can the child demonstrate understanding of position/directions using his/her body? Using materials/objects? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce position and direction words through children’s literature (<i>Rosie’s Walk</i>), songs (<i>Hokie Pokie</i>), finger plays, games (<i>Simon Says</i>), movement activities. • Set up environment/experiences to facilitate understanding of position/direction e.g., obstacle courses, exploring hills outdoors and inside the learning environment using materials such as the overhead projector, light table, blocks, cars, and tubes. • Be intentional in using position/direction language in meaningful ways throughout the day. • Take photos of children and/or classroom pets demonstrating various position words e.g., rabbit under a chair, Emma behind the tree. Display the photos in the environment and/or make class books that children can access freely. • Ensure a sufficient quantity and variety of building materials are available for the children to create large and small structures in order to develop visual spatial competencies. e.g., position of a block in relation to another such as on top/under/beside/behind; how many blocks are needed to make a structure big enough for _____; recognizing that a particular structure might/might not fit in a particular space) • Provide gears, ramps, pulleys etc. for children to explore and manipulate in order to build their experience and knowledge.

Quality in Action – Intellectual Development



Bannock making is part of the traditional way of life for many children, including this group in Northern Saskatchewan.

The children used all of their senses as they explored the properties of the bannock ingredients and were able to actively transform the dry ingredients into a nourishing food that connected with previous cultural experiences.

The children witnessed cause and effect in action by creating and cooking the dough, participating in this activity from start to finish.



Filling measuring cups and spoons and counting are integral components in cooking that provide an authentic and meaningful context to numeracy concepts.

The children were able to anticipate and predict through each stage of the creation.

They gained confidence in their individual and collective knowledge and skill through sharing the result of their experiences with their families.



Introduction – Language and Emerging Literacy

Language development and emerging literacy are a cornerstone of intellectual development. Language enables individuals to understand and communicate ideas and literacy supports our ability to comprehend and express them within and to a wider community.

Children’s language development and emerging literacy is supported through rich language experiences embedded within children’s daily experiences. These experiences include opportunities for watching, listening, responding to, and representing understandings in many different forms including asking, explaining, engaging in authentic conversation with adults and peers and using language in play and exploration. Being able to share thoughts and ideas with an interested and responsive adult is crucial in building a child’s language skills which are a precursor to literacy development.

Opportunities for individual and small groups of children to listen to stories read by adults as well as time and space to view books and engage in role play reading activities individually and with their friends are also essential. These positive experiences with books and storytelling lay a positive foundation for future experiences and attitudes toward reading and a positive disposition to learning.

Opportunities that support language development and emerging literacy skills also include those occasions when children can construct literacy understandings through play and exploration with real life literacy materials such as cookbooks, magazines, advertising flyers, blueprints, and maps.

Further, intentional educators provide a language and literacy rich environment which enable occasions when children engage in role play writing to experience print in personal and purposeful ways.



In alignment with *Play and Exploration*, for young children, the tools of language and literacy involve communication in the broadest sense. Consequently, when considering the language development and emerging literacy of three- and four-year-olds, it is important to recognize that the essential learning experiences include listening and speaking, viewing, and representing, and emerging reading and writing within the framework of developmentally appropriate practice. (Loris Malaguzzi (1997) described these expansive expressive and receptive abilities as “the hundred languages of children”.)

Connecting the Guiding Principles and Related Pedagogical Considerations to Language and Emerging Literacy Development

All children are viewed as capable learners having numerous competencies that specifically support communications with their peers and with the adults in their lives.

- Long before they are able to speak, children communicate with others. From birth they are able to connect and communicate in simple but effective ways. A child recognizes his/her mother's voice and focuses his/her vision on her face. An infant is able to use changes in tone, volume, and urgency to result in a variety of cries that indicate different needs – hunger, discomfort, or a call for attention. Gradually they add facial expressions, gestures, and a larger variety of sounds to communicate needs and feelings. Young children learning to speak use inflection and tone of voice along with gestures to communicate needs and thoughts with limited spoken vocabulary.
- In addition to spoken language, modes of communication may include the use of augmentative/alternative communication systems such as Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), sign language or assistive technology devices.
- Children show us what they know and understand through authentic conversations with adults and peers, and through the languages of singing, storytelling, creating visual representations with varied materials, gestures, and dramatic play.
- Children's skills and abilities with language strongly influence their sense of others and their social relationships.
- Play and exploration offer many opportunities to engage in dialogue and conversation with adults and peers. Language becomes a tool for problem solving when children play together. Play and exploration provoke the child's use of language to direct, explain, suggest, ask, and respond.

“Genuine conversations aim to involve all participants in an exchange of information and ideas that engage both children and adults.

Conversations with children change the educator's role from a “telling role” to that of “exchanger of knowledge and ideas” with the children.”

(Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2008,) (p. 58)



Provide opportunities for children to play with and explore words, letters and ways to make meaning through written symbols.

Children's language development follows a typical progression.

The child's unique skills and abilities, prior experiences, supportive relationships in the child's home and early learning setting will influence his/her expressive and receptive language and literacy competencies.

Children's prior experiences, in addition to their unique abilities and developmental processes, influence the growth of communication skills and abilities.

Learning projects and activities that emerge from children's curiosity and interests, nurture authentic and meaningful conversation. They provide the opportunity for children to learn new, relevant vocabulary and provoke children to ask questions and to share knowledge and experiences, both prior and new.

Language development, both expressive and receptive, is dependent on and supported by relationships. If the educator interacts with the child in ways that signal respect, interest, support, encouragement and acceptance, the child will feel comfortable in communicating with the educator and with others.

- Friendships and peer relationships nurture language development through interactions in play. Children rely on language to plan and negotiate their play with peers.
- Play is highly motivating and can facilitate the acquisition of more complex language structures, varied vocabulary, and social emotional expression.
- Interactions with responsive social partners is critical to language development but is also "one of the most developmentally provocative experiences" (Thompson, 2008, p. 6) for brain development in general and thus for all areas of learning.

When children are learning English as an Additional Language (EAL), factors of both culture and language development influence English language acquisition.

- The child's natural aptitude for language, the age of acquisition, socio-economic status and the quality of English exposure are all factors that influence how quickly he or she will learn and develop communication competencies in English.

- Learning an additional language is considered a positive factor in the development of communication competencies. Children are preprogrammed to learn language and can easily learn more than one language if exposed regularly. Research shows that when young children are learning two languages simultaneously, the two developing languages build on one another rather than detract from development of one or the other. In fact, the stronger the home language is, the stronger the child's ability with the additional language will become (Alberta Education, 2009).
- Educators can support development and learning of English with intentional communication strategies such as creating meaningful opportunities to communicate that are linked to the child's interests. Educators can also provide words for objects the child needs, is interacting with or has an interest in, and also by using visual supports to ensure comprehension.
- As educators monitor communication competencies and language learning of a child learning English as an additional language, it is with an understanding that the child needs an extended time period to absorb the language and build confidence and competence through play, exploration and interactions with peers and adults before speaking.





Singing familiar and repetitive songs and chants are great for children's language development. 'Wheels on the Bus' is one example. The educator then supported these children to make their own bus out of cardboard!





Language and Emerging Literacy


Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
<p>Listening with Interest and Engagement During Brief Experiences with Spoken Language</p>	<p>From ... Indicating interest during short but authentic conversations such as facial expressions and body language at snack time.</p> <p>To ... Showing interest by coming closer to the speaker, watching intently and/or making comments while an elder or storyteller shares an oral story with the large group.</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the child quietly listening to the speaker? Is the child engaged? • Are the child’s comments relevant to the material? Do adults listen to the child? <p>Observe and reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the child look like when they are listening? • Is the child choosing to participate in oral language experiences? • Is the child looking at/towards others in the learning environment when they speak or showing other behaviours that indicate interest? • Are there situations when the child does not appear to hear what is being said to him/her? If so, has the child’s hearing been tested? • How does the child respond to familiar one step directions? E.g., sweep up spilled sand or put on a coat? • How does the child respond to multistep directions? E.g., put your inside shoes in your locker and put on your coat? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for children to experience musical performances, puppet shows and stories. • Provide opportunities for the child to participate in active storytelling experiences. • Invite parents to record themselves reading books, reciting chants, rhymes, or songs that children can listen to in small groups. Who else from the community might volunteer to create a recording for the children? E.g., principal, local police officer, mayor, athlete, etc. • Include opportunities for children to participate in active listening with each other in small groups and be prepared to provide guidance to ensure success. E.g., Asking a question about a project that someone has been working on lets them know that you are interested. • If the child’s first language does not match the language of the early learning program, provide opportunities for children to listen in their first language as well as in the language of the program through inviting guests, having recordings of music and storytelling available and learning a few words or phrases yourself. • Introduce and model new words that are meaningful and connected to the child’s learning such as ‘chrysalis’, ‘pupa’ and larva if you are hatching.


 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
<p>Engaging in Conversation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding to Others and Expressing Ideas 	<p>From ... Conversing with others in very short exchanges and/or conveying ideas/concepts with abbreviated speech concepts such as “Car go fast.”</p> <p>To ... Conveying ideas in lengthy and descriptive language such as, “The red car goes faster up the hill than the green one.” And Engaging in sustained conversation with an adult or peer about a topic of interest.</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the child respond when a conversation is initiated? E.g., verbally, through gestures, or other methods • Does the child stay on topic during the conversation and/or does the child’s response connect to the information provided by the communication partner? • Are there multiple back and forth turns between the child and the communication partner in the conversations? (recommended at least five). • Does the child initiate conversation with others? • How many words is the child putting together to express an idea? How can this be expanded or extended? • What kinds of words is the child using? Nouns, verbs, adjectives/adverbs, and/or pronouns? • Does the child rely on or omit certain kinds of words? <p>Observe and reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the child’s body language and behavioural response indicate an understanding of the message? • Does the child use language differently in certain situations? (Language that is more descriptive and expressive when playing in the block area or when a family member is present.) • Are the child’s verbal expressions more complete or descriptive when talking about certain topics? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment on the child’s responses to communication from others e.g., “I like how you stopped pouring sand on Joey’s hand when he asked you to stop”. • Consider enlisting the support of an adult who may be able to interact with the child, even for short periods of time, in the early learning environment. Share the importance of conversation in children’s language development with the adult, encourage him/her to listen to what the child has to share and to engage in friendly conversation. • Comment and/or ask questions about topics that are of interest to the child to invite conversation. • Use clear speech sounds when you communicate with the child and emphasize the sounds that the child is distorting or omitting, by repeating, exaggerating and/or elongating target sounds or words. • Consult with the speech and language pathologist for ideas to encourage language development in the early learning program. • Reinforce and extend the child’s vocabulary and word combinations by adding new words as you converse with them about an experience of special interest to him/her.


 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Engaging in Conversation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inquiring 	<p><i>From ...</i> Asking simple questions such as “What’s that?” or “Where we going?”</p> <p><i>To ...</i> Asking more complex questions such as “How does that work?” or “Why do leaves change colour?”</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What sort of questions is the child using? E.g., who, what, when, where, why, how <p>Observe and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the child seek assistance? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for learning that stimulates curiosity and provokes questions. Science experiments often work well. Model Reflection and questioning strategies e.g. “I wonder what would happen if ...” or “What just happened? Let’s try it again and see. Be approachable and responsive to children looking for assistance. Give the child your full attention when he/she is inquiring. Model appropriate methods to gain assistance for various situations.
Exploring Words <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporating Vocabulary in Play 	<p><i>From ...</i> Limited use of vocabulary to express needs or ideas</p> <p><i>To ...</i> Using vocabulary and concepts from prior language experiences to enhance play.</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the child using new vocabulary in play activities? Are the adults in the environment stressing and repeating new words to draw attention to them? <p>Observe and reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What descriptive and concept words is the child using while exploring materials? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record children’s conversations and review them to listen for vocabulary use. Provide props, costumes, construction materials and art supplies to provide opportunities to retell/re-enact familiar stories. Model New Vocabulary in context and repeat it through the day to reinforce it. Provide visuals in the experiential centres e.g., drawings or photographs with text to reinforce and stimulate use of new vocabulary in the play. E.g., ‘arch’, ‘column’, ‘gazebo’, or ‘skyscraper’.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Exploring Words <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging in Sound and Word Play 	<p><i>From ...</i> Repeating parts of familiar songs, chants, and finger plays.</p> <p>Engaging in silly Language play (Itty bitty kitty!) or giggling at silly sounding words</p> <p><i>To ...</i> Responding with a rhyming word to complete a phrase/sentence from a book</p> <p>Creating new chants songs or rhymes on their own or with others.</p>	<p><i>Listen and Reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the Child repeating new sounds, creating new sound combinations, or rhyming? • During story time, does the child join in with repeated phrases/predictable text/sound effects? • Does the child seem aware of and able to control the volume of his/her voice? <p><i>Observe and reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DO you see the child exploring sounds/rhymes when playing independently/with a peer? • What clues do you hear/see that indicate development of the child’s phonological awareness of word parts? • Are there rhyming combinations that the child has more difficulty responding to? <p><i>Respond ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead movement activities connected to sound and invite children to create and make the sounds. E.g., Move like a snake – ssss; a horse – clop; kangaroo – boing; car – vroom). • Sing favourite songs and chant favourite rhymes and finger plays frequently in addition to introducing new ones. • Read aloud books with text that rhymes, uses alliteration, includes silly words, or words that mimic sounds e.g., meow, roar, or murmur. • Encourage children to chime in or ‘try out’ the words/sounds and/or clap out syllables of favourite words or their names. • Notice and comment if a child is making up a rhyme or singing a song during play. E.g., “I can hear you using rhymes in your song. I hear that you are singing about boats and goats. Boats – goats. That rhymes!” • Join in with the child when he/she is exploring sounds during role play reading. • Introduce the children to stories with sound effects; help the children make sounds with their voices and encourage them to be louder in some parts of the story and quieter in others.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Gaining Meaning From a Variety of Visual Formats and Text Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring meaningful images and symbols 	<p><i>From ...</i> Recognizing a sign or logo in their environment</p> <p><i>To ...</i> Using text materials in purposeful ways during play (looking at a cook book and while 'making a cake' in the dramatic play area and role play reading the ingredients and method).</p>	<p><i>Listen and Reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When browsing through text materials, does the child point at images or print and ask questions such as, "What is that for?" or "What does that say?" <p><i>Observe and reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the child use literacy artifacts in a meaningful way? e.g., dramatic play cook books or grocery store flyers and in the block centre; blueprints or photos of buildings • Which symbols have meaning for the children and their families? How can this be implemented in to the learning environment? <p><i>Respond ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take children for walks in the neighbourhood and draw attention to street signs, store signs etc. Have children take photos of the signs and add the signs to the vehicle/block materials. • Include literacy materials that are culturally relevant to the children and families. • Include literacy props e.g., books, poster, photos with captions, magazines, phones, maps, newspapers, grocery lists, envelopes, menus in learning centres and invitations for learning.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Gaining Meaning From a Variety of Visual Formats and Text Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging With Stories and Books 	<p><i>From ...</i> Occasionally exploring books or real-life literacy materials.</p> <p><i>To ...</i> Spending self-selected time browsing through books, cultural images, or artifacts alone, with peers, or with an adult.</p> <p>Role play 'reading' a book alone or with a peer</p>	<p><i>Listen and Reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What questions/comments/predications/personal experiences does the child express during story reading? Do adults invite and encourage children to make comments? <p><i>Observe and reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What clues do you hear or see that indicate the child is engaging with a book? When is this sort of engagement likely to occur? Does the child use books as a source of information? • Does the child show emotional response to stories through appropriate facial expressions, laughter or verbal expressions of surprise or concern such as "uh-oh"? • Are favourite books and/or books on topics of particular interest to one or more children available and accessible to the children throughout the day? The environment? • Is the child able to tell a story from the picture clues in a book or a personal memory? <p><i>Respond ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share a child's pleasure/interest in particular books, join individual or small groups in the story area, re-read favourites/books and select books that entice children to engage in deeper explorations with topics of interest. • Ensure that the classroom literature includes a range of genres, fiction, and non-fiction. • Include books as part of learning invitations and centres throughout the environment. • Support children in gaining meaning by reading interactively with individuals and/or in small groups: invite their comments, predictions, and sharing of feelings and experiences.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Representing Ideas Using Expressive Forms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drawing, painting, collage, construction, singing, and dancing, dramatic play puppetry etc. 	<p><i>From ...</i> Beginning to represent ideas using an expressive form with which he/she is most comfortable. E.g., drawing, construction with blocks, dramatic play.</p> <p><i>To ...</i> Expanding his/her range of creative expression to engage in multiple forms of representation.</p>	<p><i>Listen and Reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the child tell a peer what he/she is creating? E.g., building a road with blocks or what he/she is painting at the paint easel. <p><i>Observe and reflect ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What materials or forms of self-expression is the child exploring? Note whether the child is expanding his/her repertoire of personally selected modes of expression. E.g., Is the child beginning to use drawing as a way of representing ideas when previously construction was the only method of representation used? <p><i>Respond ...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer opportunities for children to use new materials/modes to express ideas. Provide materials for the child to explore drawing, painting, collage, and construction to express ideas that others can view and understand. Provide a method to capture/record fleeting representations a child creates. E.g., iPad used to record a child explaining an idea or a dance he/she created to represent how they are feeling When introducing new materials in the art centre, demonstrate how various tools can be used but do not provide a model/end product for children to emulate or copy. Provide props that will stimulate dramatic play about a story recently read. Offer group opportunities to sing and move to music. Engage in dramatic play and children. Stimulate new ideas and vocabulary but be careful to let the children lead the play.

 Essential Learning Experience	Continuum of Development What does it look like?	Educator Role to Support Learning and Development
Exploring How Print Works	<p>From ... Becoming aware that print carries a message. Experimenting with writing tools and making marks.</p> <p>To ... Becoming aware that speech can be written down and beginning to use marks with the intention of communicating a message.</p> <p>Engaging in role play writing during various play scenarios using calendars, note pads, lists, letters, envelopes, cards, etc.</p>	<p>Listen and Reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the child say while experimenting with marks that informs you about his/her intent in writing? • Listen carefully to verbal interactions between children engaged in role play writing. What do they say that provides clues regarding their understandings about writing? <p>Observe and reflect ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the child make scribble-like forms of writing, letter-like forms, or letter strings in various places on drawings? Are the symbols scattered around the page or are they in rows? • Does the child point to the scribble marks, letter-like forms or letter strings when telling you about a drawing? • Does The child make marks/letters for specific purposes such as making a birthday card for a family member, writing a grocery list in the housekeeping area, drawing a map to find hidden treasure? <p>Respond ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite the child to tell you what his/her 'writing' says. • Take the time to talk with the child about what he/she has expressed. • Engage in brief, meaningful experiences to model the writing process; 'think out loud' to make visible the process of how you match letter sounds with letter forms to write words. E.G., invite children to create a list of items needed on a field trip. • Act as scribe to write down the child's words as he/she describes their artwork or creates or recounts a story. Say each word as you write it, stretching sounds to draw attention to them. Read each sentence back to the child, pointing to each word as you read and ask for them. Read each sentence back to the child, pointing to each word as you read and ask for the child's confirmation. "Is that what you wanted to say?" "What should I write next?" • Consider ways to include writing and reading materials in all dramatic play areas, learning centres and invitations. • Ensure that there are purposeful writing materials available. E.g., an appointment book and patient file folders for a doctor's office to encourage experimenting with writing. • Provide opportunities for children to use a variety of writing tools and surfaces. E.g., paint brushes and water on cement, chalk, crayons, markers, pens or pencils on paper or cardboard, white board and markers, fingers in sand etc.

Stages of Literacy Development					
All children go through stages of literacy development at their own pace, and in a variety of ways					
Playing Supports Literacy Development	Literacy Skills	Infant	Toddler	Preschool/PreK/K	Grades 1, 2 and 3
	Speaking Talking Singing	Coos, babbles, cries	First words, 2-word phrases	Phrases/sentences, takes turns, questions	Story tells, inquires, predicts, infers, retells, reflects
	Listening	Rhymes, songs, music	Words, phrases, conversations	Various texts, rhymes, poems, songs, stories, digital media, conversations	Listens to variety of texts varied in length and purposes
	Viewing Looking	Board books, environment	Objects in texts & environment	Names, letters, common environmental print	Views books as sources of information & pleasure
	Reading	Observes illustrations	Requests re-reading stories	Makes up stories, explores books on own	Independently reads (home & school), understands different text types
	Representing Showing Ideas	Imitates; signs; gestures	Scribbles, copies	Draws, creates, builds, paints, sculpts, dramatizes	Re-enacts, displays and creates stories both orally and written
	Writing	Explores writing mediums and tools		Role-play writing, creates lists & cards, copies letters or writing	Attaches meaning to text; interested in story structure

Literacy development is more than the ABC's

- Educators use play to support children's oral language skills and desire for acquiring literacy skills or being read to.
- Once children have strong oral language skills, their literacy skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking, representing, and viewing) develop quickly.

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