

Early Learning for Every Child Today

**A framework for Ontario
early childhood settings**



Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning



January 2007

Foreword

Early Learning for Every Child Today: A Framework for Ontario Early Childhood Settings describes how young children learn and develop, and provides a guide for curriculum in Ontario's early childhood settings, including child care centres, regulated home child care, nursery schools, kindergarten, Ontario Early Years Centres, family resource programs, parenting centres, readiness centres, family literacy, child development programs in Community Action Program for Children, Healthy Babies Healthy Children and early intervention services.

It is intended to complement, not replace, the *Ontario Day Nurseries Act*, Ontario Early Years Centre guidelines and the *Kindergarten Program*. *Early Learning for Every Child Today* is prepared for use by early childhood practitioners – early childhood educators, parenting workers, kindergarten teachers, family support staff, early interventionists, home care visitors – and other caregivers who are working in early childhood settings.

Early Learning for Every Child Today is a Best Start initiative that emerged from the work of the Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning – a panel of professionals from the early childhood education and the formal education sectors in Ontario.

Best Start is a long-term strategy to design a coherent system for young children. In 2005, the Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning was established to develop an early learning framework for formal preschool settings that would link with the Junior/Senior Kindergarten program and, ultimately, develop a single integrated early learning framework for children ages two-and-a-half- to six-years. The work of the Expert Panel on Early Learning supports the immediate and long-term goals of Best Start.

The individuals who were invited by the Minister of Children and Youth Services to participate on the panel appreciated the opportunity to share their expertise and support the Ontario government's Best Start vision. Dr. Pat Dickinson prepared the international curriculum framework review that guided the panel's work (see Appendix 1) and made significant contributions to the development of *Early Learning for Every Child Today*.

The panel received knowledgeable and responsive support from Karen Chandler, Lynne Livingstone and the rest of the Best Start team at the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. The collaborative relationship among Ministry staff and panel members was essential to the completion of this document.

The panel also benefitted from the participation of representatives from the Ministry of Education and the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat.

Early Learning for Every Child Today is based on an extensive review of early childhood curriculum and pedagogy in Canada and internationally, research findings and the collective professional expertise of the panel members.

Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning

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Introduction

Every child has the right to the best possible childhood. Ontario's vision is to make Ontario an international leader in achieving the social, intellectual, economic, physical and emotional potential of all its children.

To make this vision a reality, the Ontario government launched its *Best Start Plan* in November, 2004. Ontario's *Best Start Plan* puts the central recommendation of the *Early Years Study* (McCain & Mustard, 1999) into action to create a 'first tier' for children 0 to 6 years. *Early Learning for Every Child Today* is a Best Start resource developed for Ontario early childhood settings that are the building blocks of the Best Start system.

"What we envision will be a first 'tier' program for early child development, as important as the elementary and secondary school system and the post-secondary education system. The system should consist of community-based centres operating at the local level and linked to local schools within a provincial framework."

Early Years Study
(McCain & Mustard, 1999)

Purpose

Early Learning for Every Child Today is a guide to support curriculum and pedagogy in Ontario's early childhood settings, including child care centres, kindergarten classrooms, home child care, nursery schools, Ontario Early Years Centres and other family support programs and early intervention services. It is a living document that will continue to evolve as early childhood practitioners working in early childhood settings use it.

Early Learning for Every Child Today complements, rather than replaces, specific curricular and pedagogical approaches, early identification protocols and regulated requirements now in place in Ontario early childhood settings. It also provides direction for programs that do not have an explicit curriculum or consistent pedagogical approach. It features a continuum of developmental skills and a shared language that will support early childhood practitioners and caregivers as they work together across early childhood settings.

Context

The Best Start strategy intends to transform and consolidate programs and services for young children (from birth to entry into Grade 1) into a coherent, responsive system. One of the components of that system is a common framework that lays out – in a way that is relevant to all early childhood programs – what and how young children learn.

The Expert Panel members collaborated to create *Early Learning for Every Child Today*. At the beginning of its mandate, the panel members identified their shared beliefs about early learning that guided discussions and the development of *Early Learning for Every Child Today*.

A comprehensive international review of early childhood curricular approaches in fourteen jurisdictions drew attention to components that were particularly relevant to the Ontario context (see Appendix 1 – Dickinson, 2006).

The review considered approaches that espoused a developmental approach, were prepared within the last ten years and recognized specific needs of diverse groups, including newcomers, refugees, special needs, additional language and Indigenous populations.

Expert Panel Members' Shared Beliefs (Spring 2005)

Every experience in a child's early life has an impact on his/her development now and in the future. Parents and families are the first and most powerful influence on children's early learning and development. Young children and their families live in communities that shape early experiences. Early learning programs need reciprocal partnerships with parents, families and communities.

- Acknowledge children's individual and diverse development and natural disposition to learn;
- Be inclusive, supporting meaningful engagement and equitable outcomes for ALL children;
- Recognize that families, early childhood professionals and healthy communities are key to quality, effective early childhood programs;
- Use the evidence of research, knowledge of professionals, the wisdom of practice and the context of communities.

The findings of the review guided the panel to:

- Acknowledge that care and learning are inseparable concepts. Since all quality early childhood settings provide both care and education, a caring, nurturing environment that supports learning and early development is an essential component of a framework for early learning.
- Maintain a focus on a framework for curriculum and pedagogy rather than develop a specific curriculum.
- Focus on commonly used, broad categories of development: physical, social, emotional, communication/language and cognitive.
- Situate children within the context of a developmental continuum that extends from birth to age eight years rather than evaluate their performance against age-related expectations.
- Recognize multiple sources of evidence and points of view about children's growth and learning.

- Prepare a practical document for early childhood professionals working in all types of early childhood settings.
- Align the framework with the revised *Kindergarten Program*, Guidelines for Ontario Early Years Centres, Guidelines for Preschool Speech and Language Programs and the 18-Month Well Baby Visit.

Panel members contributed their professional expertise and research findings to the project. Additional working papers summarized research findings about early brain development, family involvement in early childhood programs and schools and issues related to diversity, inclusion and equity and early learning.

The development of *Early Learning for Every Child Today* coincided with the review of the Kindergarten Program by the Ministry of Education. The panel members had opportunities for input into that process and were able to align the framework with the revised *Kindergarten Program*.

Working groups with members of the Expert Panel on Quality and Human Resources and with the Chair of the Expert Panel on the 18-Month Well Baby Visit contributed to the knowledge base used to prepare *Early Learning for Every Child Today*. The Joint Working Group on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion prepared a report (Bernhard, Lero & Greenberg, 2006) that informed the development of this document.

Two other working papers provided additional background material: *Parent Involvement* (Pelletier, 2006) and *Experience-based Brain Development: A Summary* (Mustard, 2006a).

In fall 2006, the panel presented components of the framework to the three Ontario Best Start demonstration sites and to representatives of early childhood provincial institutions and professional organizations. Feedback from these sessions was incorporated into *Early Learning for Every Child Today*.

Form

Early Learning for Every Child Today is a practical document intended to guide practitioners in early childhood settings. It is organized into five sections.

Statement of Principles is based on beliefs, values, experience and current research findings. The deliberations of the panel converged on six overarching principles that orient *Early Learning for Every Child Today*:

1. Early child development sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health.
2. Partnerships with families and communities strengthen the ability of early childhood settings to meet the needs of young children.
3. Respect for diversity, equity and inclusion are prerequisites for honouring children's rights, optimal development and learning.
4. A planned curriculum supports early learning.
5. Play is a means to early learning that capitalizes on children's natural curiosity and exuberance.
6. Knowledgeable, responsive early childhood professionals are essential.

Understanding Children’s Development begins with an understanding of the sequence of how development proceeds. Human development is complex and varied but skills are likely to emerge in a predictable continuum.

Early childhood practitioners need to know what comes earlier and later, as well as understand that individual development proceeds at different rates within the contexts of family, community and culture.

The arc of possibilities for human development is wide but the progression of children’s development can be anticipated.

Early Learning for Every Child Today includes a tool to support practitioners’ understanding of child development. The *Continuum of Development*¹ is a central component of the framework.



It outlines the sequence of skills that children at different ages can be expected to acquire across broad developmental domains (physical, social, emotional, communication/language and cognitive). It also provides examples of interactions that support early learning and development.

The *Continuum of Development* supports the abilities of early childhood practitioners to observe and document children’s activities and interactions in order to plan the curriculum and talk with families and other caregivers.

Into Practice helps early childhood practitioners anchor what they do with respect to the six principles and an understanding of child development. Practice guidelines recognize that the framework is intended to complement and support curriculum and pedagogy in a variety of early childhood settings.

Assessment, Evaluation and Monitoring approaches outline possible strategies to support the use of *Early Learning for Every Child Today*. For this purpose, “assessment” is used to focus on individual children and their development. “Evaluation” refers to early childhood setting and the implementation of the framework. “Monitoring” is associated with identifying the impact of the *Early Learning for Every Child Today* at a community or provincial level.

The final section is a **Glossary** of terminology that brings forward a shared understanding of the terms and concepts used in *Early Learning for Every Child Today*. It is informed by academic, researched-based definitions as well as definitions from Best Start documents and other expert panels.

An international review of early childhood programs, a review of parent involvement and the Joint Working Group Report on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are in the **Appendices**.

¹ The Continuum of Development is adapted from Goulet, M. & Shroeder, B. (2004), *Early Learning and Development Resources: Infants Through School-Age*. Toronto: Centre of Early Childhood Development, George Brown College.

Statement of Principles

Early Learning for Every Child Today

A framework for Ontario early childhood settings



Statement of Principles

Early Learning for Every Child Today brings together established research findings and diverse perspectives, beliefs and recommended practices. It recognizes that families, communities and cultures hold distinct values about how young children should experience and interact with the world around them.

Values are complemented by detailed attention to the early child development research in the fields of early childhood education, family studies, developmental psychology, neurosciences, anthropology, sociology, pediatrics and epidemiology.

Early child development sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health.²

Early development takes place in the context of families and communities and is shaped by the day-to-day experiences and environments of early life. The steady drip of daily life (Barr, 2001) establishes pathways for lifelong learning, behaviour and health that are inextricably linked to the development of the whole child.

The brain orchestrates physical, social, emotional, linguistic and cognitive development. It governs capacities to learn, ways of behaving, and immune and hormone systems that influence physical and emotional health (Mustard, 2006).

Genes set the parameters for the basic structures of the developing brain, but it is a child's interactions and relationships with parents and significant others that establish neural circuits and shape the brain's architecture (Shonkoff, 2006).

The dynamic dance between genetic and environmental variability establishes neural pathways and the biological potential for learning from experience, including the capacity to perceive, organize and respond. The brain's capacity for higher-level human functions, such as the ability to attend, interact with others, signal emotions and use symbols to think, builds on this platform.

The brain's architecture and a child's skills are built from the bottom up. Neural circuits that process basic information are wired before those that process more complex information. The sequence is similar for all children but the rate of development and variety of pathways vary, illustrating the wide arc of human possibilities.

**"Early brain development sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health."
- (Mustard, 2006)**



² This section is based on Mustard, J.F. (2006) *Early Child Development and Experience-based Brain Development: The Scientific Underpinnings of the Importance of Early Child Development in a Globalized World* Brookings Institute.

Children begin life ready for relationships that drive early brain development (Greenspan & Shanker, 2004). The abilities of children to regulate their own emotions, behaviours and attention increase over time with maturation, experience and responsive relationships. Supporting self-regulation is a central focus of early development because self-regulation skills lead to physical, social, emotional, behavioural and cognitive competence.

Differing cultural and social contexts, including quality of stimulation, availability of resources and preferred patterns of interactions within communities, interact with each child's potential for development (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2005; Greenspan & Shanker, 2004).



Early brain development benefits from interactions with adults who are responsive and from activities that challenge young children. Access to shelter, clean water and food, and to developmental opportunities such as parks, high-quality early childhood programs and libraries increases families' abilities to be responsive and stimulating. Fewer resources make it more difficult to sustain optimal conditions for development.

Unfortunately, one quarter of children in Canada are vulnerable when they enter Grade 1 – they have learning, health and behaviour problems that are likely to interfere with their academic achievement and abilities to get along with others (Willms, 2002; Kershaw, 2006; Janus, 2006).

In some communities, the percentage of vulnerable children is much higher. Many families and communities face societal barriers (such as poverty, employment demands, transient living conditions, parental health problems, minority ethno-cultural, racial or linguistic status and limited time and/or resources) that make it difficult to support their children's optimal early development.

While children facing these barriers are more likely to have problems, vulnerable children are present across the socio-economic spectrum. Early identification of learning and other developmental difficulties combined with additional support to families can lead to interventions that reduce difficulties and set children on more optimal developmental pathways.

Recent attention to rising rates of childhood obesity and subsequent health problems highlights the importance of physical health and well-being in early life (Health Council, 2006). Nutritional diets, physical activity, ability to handle day-to-day challenges and awareness of healthy habits in the early years set a biological foundation and behaviours that promote well-being and healthy choices into adulthood (Mustard, 2006).

Partnerships with families and communities strengthen the ability of early childhood settings to meet the needs of young children.

The web of family and community is the child's anchor for early development. Families are the first and most powerful influence on children's early learning and development.

Families live in, and belong to, multiple communities that may support or thwart their ability to support young children's optimal development. Relationships between early childhood settings and families and their communities benefit children when those relationships are respectful of family structure, culture, values, language and knowledge (Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006).

Increasing families' participation in their children's early learning and development reaps powerful benefits (Mustard 2006, Greenspan & Shanker, 2004). Families provide both learning and care.

'Learning' begins as infants seek patterns and begin to recognize the familiar voices and faces of family members; in turn, responses to infant cues set in motion a dynamic learning system. Contingent and sensitive responsiveness to children's signals is a natural form of teaching and learning.

As children grow, families can offer learning opportunities that are based on the deep knowledge they have of their children. This can take the form of conversations in the home, shared reading, outings, recreational activities and other meaningful moment-by-moment experiences.

'Care' begins prior to birth and continues throughout life through feeding, sheltering, nurturing, stimulating and protecting. Care and learning cannot really be separated since high quality care includes learning and high quality learning is dependent on care.

Family involvement in early childhood settings benefits children (Weiss et al., 2006) and multiplies children's opportunities for learning. Parents and other caregivers who are involved in early childhood settings tend to be more supportive of children's learning and their children tend to have positive outcomes in primary grades (Cleveland et al., 2006; Sylva et al., 2004).

Early childhood settings can reinforce the interrelationship of care and learning and the benefits of direct family participation in children's early learning and development.

Family involvement practice in early childhood programs needs to go beyond *whether* parents are involved and focus on *how* they are involved and what happens as a result (Corter & Pelletier, 2004).

- Benefits are greatest when there is planned programming for children and their families and relationships with families are based on mutual trust and respect and are sensitive to family culture, values, language and composition (Bernhard, Freire, & Mulligan, 2004; Gonzalez-Mena, 2005). Guidelines for culturally responsive family involvement emphasize respectful dialogue and awareness of cross-cultural communication skills.

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- Parents want to understand how their children develop and learn. They benefit from observations and information about how to support learning and recognize how their children are doing. Parents also benefit from having a say in what is offered in the program and what goes into the curriculum.
 - Early childhood programs need family/community perspectives if they are going to serve young children in light of parent and community needs.
 - Learning about community life can be part of projects in early childhood settings that include community field visits, community experts and relevant artifacts from home and community to promote learning. Links within communities bring together families, schools and early childhood programs and bring the local environment into the daily activities of young children. Children benefit from respectful interactions with a variety of community members.
 - Early childhood settings have daily opportunities to connect families with each other. They have strengths, experiences and skills that they can share with one another (Gordon, 2005; Wilson, 2006). Families who are newcomers to Canada and far away from family and friends who share similar cultural traditions, or those who speak languages other than English or French, gain from meeting each other. Families also benefit when they learn about child rearing practices from families that have different backgrounds. Informal social networks among families with young children can become valuable resources that promote children's health and well-being (McCain & Mustard, 1999; Weiss et al., 2006).



Family and community involvement is a focus for educational improvement in Canada and internationally (Pelletier, 2006). Family involvement in schools is associated with academic success across all socio-economic groups.

Families who are involved are more likely to establish peer networks with other families and to have more information about their children's school. Family involvement in school settings includes parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community. These strategies can be useful to organizing family involvement in early childhood settings (Epstein & Sanders, 2002; Corter & Pelletier, 2005).

Family involvement studies in early childhood settings illustrate an array of different program types (see Cleveland et al., 2006). They include home- and centre-based programs and activities. They aim to support families and parents to improve children's early environments and outcomes.

Because they are so varied, finding out what really works is difficult. The clearest effects seem to be when programming for parents and other caregivers is combined with programming for their young children. Engaging parents and other family members in children's activities connects them to their children's early development and ignites the child's learning (Gordon, 2005).

Early childhood settings provide information and resources that families can use to enhance development, as well as early interventions that can help children experiencing developmental difficulties and delays.

The challenge is often linking families to needed resources. Early childhood settings can communicate with, and connect families to, other community resources, including public health, primary health care, housing and specialized services.

The recommendations of the Report of the Expert Panel on the 18-Month Well Baby Visit (Ontario Children's Health Network & Ontario College of Family Physicians, 2005) identify the role of the primary health care system as pivotal in reaching all young children and their families. The 18-Month Expert Panel recommended an enhanced 18-Month Well Baby Visit with a primary care practitioner (family physician, primary care paediatrician, nurse practitioner).

The 18-Month Well Baby Visit is coupled to the last of the immunization visits for several years and includes a developmental review, discussion about healthy child development, information about parenting and community early childhood settings and referrals to early childhood settings and other specialized services as needed (Williams, Biscaro, Van Lankveld, 2006).

Demonstration of respect for diversity, equity and inclusion are prerequisites for optimal development and learning.

All children have a right to live and learn in an equitable society. Early childhood settings can plan for meaningful engagement and equitable outcomes for all children.

They can take into account the differences each child and family brings to an early childhood setting including appearance, age, culture, ethnicity, race, language, gender, sexual orientation, religion, family environment and developmental abilities.

Young children with different abilities, challenges, resources and cultural backgrounds, and their families, come together in early childhood settings. They bring unique life experiences and orientations.

They and their families benefit most when they are fully included and when they feel that they belong. Children grow up with a strong sense of self in environments that promote attitudes, beliefs and values of equity and democracy and support their full participation (Bennett, 2004).

To include everyone, early childhood settings must encourage healthy dialogue about the principles and shared beliefs that relate to inclusion, diversity and equity. They must recognize every child as a citizen with equal rights and unique views about how to participate in the world.

To turn belief statements and principles into practice at the community level requires an infrastructure that actively promotes engagement of all children and their families (Bernhard, Lero & Greenberg, 2006).

Ontario is a province of many cultures, religions and languages, particularly in its urban centres. English or French language may be unfamiliar to many children and they need support to maintain and expand their home language as well as learn a new one.

For many children, mainstream Canadian culture is different from their home environments. All children gain when they learn early to live together comfortably with others who look and talk differently than themselves (McCain & Mustard, 1999; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

Early childhood settings can be pro-active in identifying strategies that will respect families' diverse linguistic, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds and value this diversity as an asset that enriches the environment for everyone.

- Effective strategies begin by identifying the early learning and child care needs of families in their communities, and taking this information into account when planning the curriculum and pedagogy of the program (Ali, 2005; Bernhard, 2003). Because many children live in newcomer, immigrant and refugee families, information that is collected should include migration history.
- Meaningful participation for all requires strategies for second language acquisition (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2004; Tabors & Snow, 2001). Children who are learning English or French as an additional language benefit when their first language is valued. It is a challenge to know what children are capable of learning when early childhood practitioners and children and their families do not share the same language. In order to be able to determine a child's capacity to learn, the child needs adequate opportunities to learn in a language that she or he can understand. Interpreters can increase the level of effective communication with parents.
- Preconceived notions about children's ethno-cultural backgrounds, gender, abilities or socio-economic circumstances create barriers that reduce engagement and equitable outcomes (Bernhard, Freire & Mulligan, 2004). Addressing prejudices increases the involvement of all children. Early childhood practitioners can take actions to avoid prejudice and to counteract bias when it occurs in early childhood settings.

"A language thrives when people use it in daily communication and when it permeates the space in which they live and build their communities."

**Aménagement Linguistique
Ontario Ministry of Education**

- Early childhood settings in Francophone communities can contribute to the protection, enhancement and transmission of the French language and culture in Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006). *Aménagement Linguistique* refers to language planning and is a policy for Ontario's French language schools and Francophone community. Early childhood settings should adopt the same guidelines and ensure that young Francophone children and their families are exposed to as much French as possible before entry to Grade 1.

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- Aboriginal early childhood settings require programming that values Aboriginal languages and culture and is generated from the community rather than imposed on the community (Ball, 2005).
 - Rural and remote communities require flexible early childhood settings that can adapt to the challenges of geographic distances and isolation (Gott & Wilson, 2004). *Early Learning for Every Child Today* can be used as a structure to programming so that children and families in rural and remote areas have the same opportunities as those living in more urban regions.
 - Early childhood settings can organize programming to use the diversity of the participants as an asset that enriches the environment for everyone.

Children with developmental difficulties, particularly those who have special needs, can benefit from participation in quality early childhood settings with other children. But despite the good intentions of inclusion, mere exposure to age-appropriate activities and peers is no guarantee that children with special needs will experience positive interactions with their peers or acquire new skills (Frankel, 2004; Irwin, Lero & Brophy, 2004).

Some children need different balances of child- and adult-directed activity. For some children, special programming strategies are necessary to support more positive interactions with peers, greater involvement in play opportunities and social skill development.

Children who are vulnerable (that is, are experiencing developmental difficulties) may have more difficulties with the social and emotional demands of early childhood settings (Lero, Irwin & Darisi, 2006). They may need additional attention in supporting their abilities to build relationships, use language and develop trust.

Early childhood settings should check their curriculum and pedagogy against program standards that reflect inclusion (for example, see Irwin, 2005). Additional early childhood practitioners with specific expertise who can build and support capacity may be needed to support inclusion.

Programs may require technical support and special consultancy or special equipment and materials.



A planned curriculum supports early learning.

Curriculum is often described as the content of early childhood settings (National Research Council, 2001). It includes the organization of the physical space, materials and activities that are designed to encourage learning processes, skills and the acquisition of specific information.

A planned curriculum with goals for children’s learning and development impacts on the quality of early childhood settings (Cleveland et al., 2006; Sylva et al., 2004; National Research Council, 2001; Bennett, 2004; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2006).

- It begins with an informed understanding of what children are capable of learning and how they learn effectively.
- It has specific goals for children that support self-regulation (behaviour, emotion and attention), identity, social inclusion, health and well-being, language and thinking skills, and physical skills, as well as the foundation knowledge and concepts needed for literacy and numeracy.
- It provides structure and direction for early childhood practitioners who support the development of capacities and skills while respecting a child’s interests and choices (Bennett, 2004).



Many factors contribute to children’s early learning and development so it is difficult for researchers to isolate the impact of any one curriculum (e.g., Reggio Emilia, High Scope, Montessori). The effect of an individual teacher, early childhood educator or family worker can outweigh the effect of a particular curricular approach.

Curriculum should be applied in context of how well it enables children’s full participation (Bernhard et al., 2006; Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud & Lange, 1997). What is clear is that having a planned curriculum with specific goals for children’s holistic development and families’ participation benefits children’s enjoyment, development and learning.

A broad research base on early learning and development informs the development and selection of curriculum approaches (National Research Council, 2001; Galinsky, 2006; Bennett, 2004; Sirgi-Blatchfield et al. 2003; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2006).

- Learning is fundamentally social and takes place within children’s cultural contexts. During the early years, children learn through active engagement, activity, observations, experimentation and social interactions with others. As they develop an understanding about themselves and others, they learn to regulate their emotions, attend to what is important, and to make plans – all based on the cultural values and practices embedded in their social and physical environments. A planned curriculum can support children’s interactions with other children and adults and respect those values and practices.

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- During early childhood, children learn how to learn. Children construct knowledge through physical activity, social interactions with others and their own active thinking. Children practise the tools of learning: how to plan, monitor, revise, reflect, investigate and solve problems; and to see and exchange points of view with others. Through observation and action, children form their own hypotheses, try them out, find out what happens and formulate their own answers. Children develop learning strategies from first-hand actions with objects in their world and from exchanging points of view with peers and adults.
 - Children build new understandings from existing ideas and concepts. Starting from what children know and want to know motivates engagement and excitement about overcoming challenges and solving problems. First hand, concrete experiences shape ideas that can be expressed symbolically in drawings, paintings, dramatic play, and in verbal and written forms (Greenspan & Shanker, 2004). Learning proceeds from the concrete to the abstract.
 - Basic skills and facts are meaningless if they are not part of a larger context (Wein, 2005). Information and skills become knowledge when facts are combined with concepts (Keating, 1998; National Research Council, 2001). For example, literacy emerges when children mimic the reading and writing process. Children derive meaning from text by combining a growing sense of story and the structure of language with the idea that print represents spoken language and thoughts. Children’s ability to derive meaning from text is further enhanced with greater understanding of letter-sound relationships and word recognition (Neuman & Dickinson, 2001; Bennett, 2004).

Play is a means to early learning that capitalizes on children’s natural curiosity and exuberance.

Pedagogy is about how learning takes place. Play is child-centred activity that engages a young child and promotes learning (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Kagan & Britto, 2005; Kagan & Lowenstein, 2004; Greenspan & Shanker, 2004).

Play is how children make sense of the world and is an effective method of learning for young children. Ideas and skills become meaningful; tools for learning are practised; and concepts are understood.

Play engages children’s attention when it offers a challenge that is within the child’s capacity to master. Early childhood settings that value children’s play create a “climate of delight” that honours childhood (ETFO, 1999). Effective settings take advantage of play and embed opportunities for learning in the physical environment and play activities.

Children who thrive in primary school and whose pathways are set for later academic success are those who enter Grade 1 with strong oral communication skills are confident, able to make friends, are persistent and creative in completing tasks and solving problems and excited to learn (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Bennett, 2004; National Research Council, 2001; Sylva et al., 2004; Maggi et al., 2005). These are the same qualities that children strengthen through high quality play during their early years.

The imitating and exploring play of infants and toddlers (and the underlying development and organization of the brain) evolve into symbolic thinking and the capacity for pretend or imaginative play. As children engage in pretend play with each other, they are learning to get along with each other, make compromises, resolve conflicts, regulate emotions and behaviour and initiate friendships.

Pretend play is a form of communication that requires the pretenders to communicate with each other using language gestures and symbolic objects to tell and retell stories (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Social competence, emotional and attention self-regulation and the ability to communicate with others are foundational to all types of learning and are best developed in play-based environments (Barnett et al., 2006; Ziegler, Singer & Bishop-Josef, 2005; Kagan & Lowenstein, 2004).

Pretend play is the primary mode of learning during the preschool years and continues to be important into the primary grades. Pretend play means practice in choosing, generating possibilities and taking risks.

Children use language and thinking skills to compare and plan, problem-solve, negotiate and evaluate in pretend play. Language shapes and extends their play as they express ideas and tell and retell stories. High quality pretend play means the child is deeply involved and is acquiring and practising emerging skills.

In pretend play, children try on a variety of roles and scenarios which facilitate perspective-taking and, later, abstract thought. The relationships between pretending and the development of mental representation have been studied extensively (for example, see Astington, 2004; Bergen 2002; Schwebel, Rosen & Singer, 1999).

Pretending involves mental representation. A child's ability for joint planning and assigning roles during pretend play with other children is related to the child's level of theory of mind or ability to understand that others have beliefs, desires and intentions that are different from one's own.

The understanding that what one believes and what others believe may not be the same is a critical element in the development of theory of mind that is acquired around four years of age (Astington, 1993). Children's abilities for joint planning and role assignments during pretend play expand (Moses & Carlson, 2004).

“The developmental literature is clear: play stimulates physical, social, emotional and cognitive development in the early years. Children need time, space, materials and the support of informed parents and thoughtful, skilled early childhood educators in order to become master players. They need time to play for the sake of playing.”

Hewes (2006), *Let The Children Play*

Although play is a well-established feature of early childhood education, there is often a lack of general understanding of the important contribution that high-quality play – especially pretend play – can make to children’s literacy, numeracy and inquiry skills in the early years.

If the focus shifts from play during preschool years to a strong emphasis on the formal instruction of isolated skills like learning symbols (letters, sounds, numbers), children’s literacy skills – as well as their numeracy and inquiry skills – may actually be reduced (Bennett, 2004; Nabuco & Sylva, 1996).

In fact, high-quality play that is mediated by adults who are play partners and able to inject small amounts of focused direct instruction based on the needs of the child into the daily play, is an effective pedagogy for emergent literacy, numeracy and inquiry skills (Clarke-Stewart & Allhusen, 2005; Kagan & Kauerz, 2006; Schweinhart, 2006; Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002).

Cognitive research points to the role of pretend play in literacy acquisition (National Research Council, 2001; Neuman & Dickinson, 2001; Zigler, Singer & Bishop-Josef, 2004). Symbolic play requires children to determine tasks and goals, to carry them out, and provides opportunities for narrative recall and use of complex language.

Children in complex pretend play situations use more advanced language and have higher levels of narrative structure than they do in other situations. Children become storytellers, creating new versions of familiar stories and composing new stories.

The ability to use narrative and more advanced oral language is linked to later reading comprehension and fluency (Roskos & Christie, 2004; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2005). When literacy materials are embedded within play settings in preschool, kindergarten and multi-age programs, studies find increases in children’s use of literacy materials and engagement in literacy acts (Zigler, Singer & Bishop-Josef, 2004).

By using and creating environmental print in their pretend play, children begin to understand what reading is and how print works. Pretend play helps children develop schemas and scripts as organized mental structures that are applied to understanding print.

Numerical thinking begins early in life. Young children’s informal mathematical knowledge is broad and complex. They begin to understand the language of numbers when they recognize quantity differences, the role of special numbers like five and ten and the relationships between big and little, large and small, more and less, tall and short.



The social environment in general, and rich pretend play opportunities with adult coaching in particular, provide counting words and mathematical relationships, including one-to-one correspondence and the various contexts in which numbers are used: to put things in order (ordinality) and to count “how many” (cardinality).

Play can consolidate understanding about numbers, and children can then begin to use a number line that is a prerequisite for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division (Case, Griffin & Kelly, 1999; National Research Council, 2001). Play that involves games that use a number line, one-one correspondence and counting (for example, simplified variations of Snakes and Ladders) helps children master and integrate understanding about numbers (National Research Council, 2001).

Scientific reasoning begins in infancy (Gopnik, Meltzoff & Kuhl, 1999). Babies see how objects move and behave, gather information, build patterns of expectations about the world around them and form general categories.

Toddlers experiment with tools and learn to manipulate objects. They learn to solve simple problems they encounter in their environment (e.g., how to get an object out of reach or how to make their desires understood).

Preschool children use methods of inquiry including data collection, predicting, recording and talking about findings. Problems to be solved emerge in preschool pretend play.

Also, early childhood practitioners may introduce problems into the environment that engage children’s curiosity and provide opportunities for them to apply and reinforce their problem-solving skills.

In summary, children learn best when they can play, explore the world and interact with adults and peers. Their explorations require flexibility and inventiveness.

Children react to the outcomes of their investigations and create strategies for discovery. Play is the platform for inquiry and exploration.

Early childhood practitioners balance opportunities for the child to figure out how the world works and how to overcome challenges, with the practice necessary to perform skills effortlessly.

“Stacking blocks, and mixing sand and water, encourages logical-mathematical thinking, scientific reasoning and cognitive problem-solving... the learning that occurs is a by-product of play.”

– Cappon (2006), Canadian Council on Learning

Knowledgeable and responsive early childhood practitioners are essential to early childhood settings.

Knowledge about and responsiveness to the developmental level and characteristics of the child, his or her family and communities are central to supporting learning and development in early childhood settings.

Early childhood practitioners who are responsive to children, their families and their communities, establish social and physical environments where children thrive.

Knowledgeable and responsive practitioners are **reflective practitioners**.

- **Reflective practitioners** use an emotionally warm and positive approach which leads to constructive behaviour in children (The Canadian Child Care Federation/Augmentative and Alternative Communication, 2003). Reflective thinking and empathy are required as children grow and meet the challenges of an increasingly complex world and diverse social environments. Reflective thinking and empathy have their roots in early relationships, where emotions are shared, communicated and expressed. Empathy is broadened when children share experiences, relate and respect each other in the context of caring, secure relationships with adults. When children share emotions and ideas with others, they come to feel that they are a part of another's feelings and ideas. Sharing emotions and ideas enables children to begin to see the world from another's perspective, to identify with others and to put themselves in someone else's shoes. Opportunities to connect ideas logically to pretend play are promoted by adults who value, respect and have concern for others while establishing responsible limits.
- **Reflective practitioners** integrate theoretical frameworks, research findings and their own daily experiences to guide their interactions with young children and their families. Reflective practitioners figure out how the children in their program think, learn and make sense of the world. They know what the children are currently capable of doing and what next steps are possible. Responsive adults help to focus children's observations, use language that describes events and ask questions that provoke children's thinking. Thus curriculum is meaningful when there are clear matches between a child's current knowledge and interests and the opportunities provided.
- **Reflective practitioners** communicate to family members and other caregivers about what they are doing and why they are doing it. They understand and seek out opportunities to support interactions between young children and their parents and other caregivers that build on the child's interests and skills. They are able to articulate how play experiences promote learning and optimal development. They coach family members and other caregivers on how to participate in play activities in ways that encourage exploration, expand use of language and introduce literacy and numeracy concepts. They also know and respect that parents and families remain the experts on their own children.

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- **Reflective practitioners** participate in play, guiding children’s planning, decision-making and communication, and extending children’s explorations with narrative, novelty and challenges. When adults become involved in children’s play, they help with the difficult spots: they may sequence activities in a way that is clearer and reinforces learning or use language that helps to clarify challenges and solutions. Play creates important learning moments that build children’s competencies. Practitioners can set up and participate in play opportunities that relate to the children’s experiences and help them to move beyond their current levels of understanding and abilities. Responsive adults know when and how to enter the child’s play in order to stimulate children’s thinking but not take command over the play.

“On-going support to build and sustain capacity with respect to diversity, equity and inclusion is essential.”

Bernhard et al., (2006)

The work environment of early childhood settings influences adults’ responsiveness to children, families and communities (for example, see Doherty et al., 2000; Beach et al., 2004; Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000).

Early childhood settings that are offered within an infrastructure of support, with working conditions that facilitate an early learning environment and reasonable levels of compensation are judged to be of better quality and are associated with better outcomes for children (Beach et al., 2004; Goelman et al., 2000; Lero & Irwin, 2005).

Early childhood practitioners require a working environment that provides time for program planning, observation and documentation, opportunities for professional development and regular conversations with families.

Pedagogical leadership contributes to a working environment that encourages responsiveness (Jorde-Bloom, 1997; Sylva et al., 2004; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2001; Bennett, 2004).

Program supervisors/directors and school administrators in all early childhood settings can support and value the development, implementation and evaluation of a coherent curriculum.

They can set the stage with program practices that respect all families; provide leadership in developing a vision and philosophy to guide the setting’s curriculum and pedagogy; and create a workplace that values the practice of early childhood practitioners.

The Child Care Human Resource Sector Council has prepared an occupational standard (2006) for early childhood program managers that articulates the roles and responsibilities of pedagogical leaders.

The report of the Quality and Human Resources Expert Panel outlines the requirements for quality work environments in early childhood settings.



Understanding Children's Development

Early Learning for Every Child Today

A framework for Ontario early childhood settings



Understanding Children’s Development

The metamorphosis of childhood can be understood as a dynamic dance between children and their environments.

Understanding the patterns of development (as well as the underlying processes outlined earlier) helps early childhood practitioners plan optimal environments and interact positively with young children and their families.

Domains of Development

All aspects of human development are interconnected. Separating out the development of emotional maturity from social competence or language abilities or cognition is an artificial categorization of what is an integrated process.

However, categories allow us to think and share ideas about specific aspects of development.

In doing so, it is essential to keep in mind the interconnectedness of early child development. Learning to talk is social, emotional, cognitive and physical.

Sequence of Development

Children usually learn to sit before walking and running, babble before talking, and scribble

before drawing faces and printing letters. New learning and skills build on earlier changes. Each skill is necessary for the next emerging skills.

Knowing what comes before and what comes next helps early child-

hood practitioners determine where to enter and what experiences to provide.

Understanding children and their development is central in the attitudes, skills and knowledge possessed by practitioners. Observing children’s behaviour; knowing individual children, their

families and their community; and using relevant theory to interpret the behaviour one has observed provide the foundation for curriculum development.

In early childhood settings, practitioners continually observe children for the purpose of improving teaching and learning.

The rate of development is shaped by each child’s family, culture and daily experiences. To say that a child’s development is typical implies that development is following a predictable broad pattern that is filled in with considerable cultural and individual variation.

Development and Values, Beliefs and the Context of Children’s Lives

Values and beliefs about childhood influence ideas about child development (Friendly, Doherty & Beach, 2006). Children’s development happens within the context of children’s daily lives in families and communities.

Early development and learning patterns are shaped by a complex array of environmental and biological factors. Genetic make-up, the quality of interpersonal relationships within and outside the family, the quality of environment and experiences, and range of programs and supports available to enable optimal development and learning, impact on the pattern and timing of development.

“The appropriate sequence in each area of development is an important indication that the child is moving steadily along a sound developmental continuum.”

- Allen & Marotz (2006)

Children’s development happens within families who can be supported by informal networks, programs and services, which in turn can be supported by community and government infrastructures.

“...[the] child is growing, changing, and acquiring a broad range of skills characteristic of the majority of children of similar age within the same culture.”

- Allen & Marotz (2006)

The idea of including broad developmental domains and pathways to organize a curriculum framework has been questioned by some recent initiatives (for example, New Zealand’s innovative Te Whariki approach, Carr, 2001; Dickinson, 2006; Moss, 2004). The idea of culturally

agreed upon values is promoted as the organizing framework in New Zealand and elsewhere.

In *Early Learning for Every Child Today*, the six principles are shaped by values about childhood, early development and the role of families and communities.

Understandings about human development are incorporated with the principles to create and apply *The Continuum of Development*.

The Continuum of Development³

The *Continuum of Development* describes predictable sequences of development within broad domains of development. It helps early childhood practitioners observe and document children’s emerging skills, based on an understanding of children’s development.

The primary purpose is to use that information to plan curriculum that is meaningful for individual children and groups of children because it is grounded in an understanding of child development.

The *Continuum of Development* is not a tool to assess children’s progress against a set of benchmarks or child outcomes. Nor is it a screening tool to identify developmental difficulties.

The *Continuum of Development* outlines the sequence of steps along developmental trajectories that are typical for the majority of children. The *Continuum of Development* is not a locked step, universal pattern of skills that should be achieved according to a specific timetable.

Rather, it is a guide that identifies sequences of development as a foundation to implementing early childhood curriculum and pedagogy in a variety of settings. It is a base for observation and discussion of children’s growth and learning.

It helps adults see individual growth, strengths and challenges and supports planning for individual children as well as the group. Each age and domain of development is equally valued.

Children’s abilities, experiences, rights and needs are respected. It describes the predictable progression of social, emotional, language, cognitive and physical skills in young children

The *Continuum of Development* is a tool that can help early childhood practitioners and families exchange information about children’s growing skills. Families have knowledge of how and what their child has learned at home and in the community, The early childhood practitioner has knowledge and observations of that child in an early childhood program. The continuum provides a reference point for discussions about the child’s development.

When particular communities have important values and needs, they may emphasize them by adding items to *The Continuum of Development*.

³ The references used to develop *The Continuum of Development* are listed in a subsection of the reference section.

For instance, Aboriginal communities may emphasize their connection to nature. Rural and urban values may be recognized in the continuum.

Early childhood settings in Francophone communities may wish to put more emphasis on language learning. When a community includes immigrant and refugee families, early childhood settings may add more items on culture, language, security and transition.

In high-density communities where families live in high-rise buildings, early childhood programs may add more items to the physical development section to ensure children have the opportunity to practise important motor skills that are not fully supported in the community. School-age settings may want their programs to include peace and global issues. These individualised items would reflect the circumstances of particular families and communities and be grounded in evidence from professional expertise and current research.

The *Continuum of Development* describes the progression of development for infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school-age children. There is overlap in the age ranges, reflecting that the sequence of developmental skills will be achieved within a broad range of time. The continuum is made up of *root skills* and their *indicators* organized into developmental *domains*. Interactions describe experiences that support children's development.

Domain

A domain is a broad area or dimension of development. There are many ways to organize development into domains. The social, emotional, language, cognitive and physical domains were chosen for the continuum because they reflect areas of significance in the early years and are the most commonly used

domains in early childhood education curricula in Canada and internationally. Though presented separately, the five domains of children's development are interrelated and no one domain is more important than another.

Root Skills

Root skills that emerge and are practised in the early years are important both in their own right and as foundations of later development. Pathways for learning, behaviour and health are constructed in the early years. The continuum identifies the root skills that predict later learning, behaviour and health.

Root skills are specific capacities, processes, abilities and competencies that exist within a domain. When adults understand and observe emerging skills, they can create individual strategies to support the practice and extension of the skill. A skill may appear in all four age groups, indicating pathways that emerge early and are elaborated over time. Attention to root skills supports children's learning in early childhood settings using different curricula.

Indicators

Indicators are markers of what a child knows or does which show that the skill is emerging, being practised or being elaborated. Indicators are given in progression within each root skill. Early childhood practitioners observe children's behaviour and can use the indicators to identify the related skill, set goals and plan appropriate curriculum.

Interactions

Interactions are examples of adult-child communications, contacts and joint activity that support the child's accomplishment of the indicators and related skill development. The examples also describe why the example interactions are effective.

Infants (birth to 24 months)



1. Social

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
1.1 Social Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preferring human faces to inanimate objects or animals • smiling at an adult • returning the gaze of an adult • seeking adults for play, stretching arms to be picked up • examining objects with others as a means of forming relationships • observing peers 	<p>Play with the infant on her physical level.</p> <p>This tells her that you are available as a respectful partner in play.</p>
1.2 Imitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • imitating adult behaviour • take part in pretend play with simple scenarios like caring for dolls 	<p>Opening your arms wide, say, “Big!” Pause and look directly at the infant. Repeat. When he imitates this action, say, “You did it!”</p> <p>Playing “copy me” games supports observation and imitation as a way of learning.</p>
1.3 Simple Turn Taking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • playing simple one-to-one games such as peekaboo 	<p>Cover your face with a transparent scarf. Pull it off and say, “Peekaboo!” Pause and repeat. Soon the infant will pull off the scarf when you pause. When he does, say, “Peekaboo!” Repeat so the infant takes turns.</p> <p>This simple game provides practice in the give and take of simple turn taking.</p>
1.4 Maintaining Connection across Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses gestures, vocalizations and her emerging expressive language to keep connected to an adult across space 	<p>Make eye contact when you are across the room.</p> <p>Mobile, older infants are now able to communicate across space (distal communication).</p> <p>Making eye contact from across the room can help to maintain your connection to an infant who is exploring.</p>

Infants (birth to 24 months)



2. Emotional

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
2.1 Expression of Emotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> expressing comfort and discomfort expressing pleasure and displeasure expressing anger, anxiety, fear, sadness, joy, excitement showing affection with hugs showing anxiety at separation from parents showing clear attachment to parents 	<p>Observe infants to determine what senses and motor skills they enjoy and use for exploring.</p> <p>Sensory and motor skills form the basis of individual differences in how infants calm themselves (self-regulation).</p> <p>If an infant uses his visual sense to calm himself or pay attention, provide interesting visual stimulation (your face or the infant's favourite toy) to support self-regulation.</p>
2.2 Self-Regulation <i>Emotion Regulation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> becoming calm when comforted by familiar adults comforting self with thumb recovering from distress and over-stimulation in a secure relationship 	<p>Respond to infant's distress by supporting his self-soothing behaviours.</p> <p>When recovery from distress is supported by an adult, the infant's attachment to the adult is reinforced. The infant learns that strong emotions can be tolerated and recovery is hastened.</p>
2.3 Sense of Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sucking fingers, observing own hands showing preference for being held by familiar people beginning to distinguish known people from strangers showing pleasure in mastery playing confidently in the presence of caregiver and frequently checking in with her (social referencing) increasing awareness of opportunities to make things happen yet limited understanding of consequences of own actions 	<p>Hold the infant securely when she is meeting a new person. Look at the person and reach out to them.</p> <p>This helps the infant remain secure with new people and build confidence as she expresses her preference for certain people.</p>
2.4 Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> noticing and responding to distress of others offering comfort by touching 	<p>Respond to infant's distress and provide comfort.</p> <p>Responsive care-giving establishes the foundation of empathy.</p>
2.5 Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> beginning to sense that her behaviour can have an effect on others 	<p>When an infant smiles at you, smile back. When she raises open arms, pick her up.</p> <p>Adult responses to an infant's attempts to communicate, support her sense that her behaviour can have an effect on others.</p>



3. Communication, language and literacy

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
3.1 Non-verbal Communication Skills <i>Referencing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> checking in with caregiver using eye contact 	<p>When the infant checks in with you and stops playing to look up at you, comment on his play. This reinforces his sense of security and also encourages continued exploration.</p>
<i>Joint Attention</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> looking at what an adult is looking at pointing to direct the adult's attention sharing attention with an adult, looking at the same thing as the adult looking at photos and books with adults 	<p>Share the infant's gaze by looking at the same thing that the infant looks at. This reinforces his shared communication with an adult and provides a shared reference point for language.</p>
<i>Gestures</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shaking head to mean "no" using gestures in the presence of objects that show the purpose or function of an object showing intentional communication, e.g., waving using gestures when objects are not present that show purpose or function of the object 	<p>Interact with gestures used in the infant's home. This is a particularly positive approach when supporting emotions. Using home gestures provides security and establishes the shared meaning of the gesture.</p>
<i>Intentional Communication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using gestures with the intention of meeting goals 	<p>Observe infant to determine his intentions. Interpret his gestures with clear and simple language. This provides a rich context for language and exploration.</p>
<i>Simple turn taking</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> taking turns in simple games like peekaboo taking pleasure in back-and-forth vocal play 	<p>Use simple sentence structure – for example, "Where is the ball?" Pause and look at the infant. This conforms to the infant's ability to attend and provides the social cues necessary to take turns in communication.</p>
3.2 Receptive Language Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> responding to human voices and distinguishing familiar voices from other sounds by six months, distinguishing sounds of home language responding to a verbal request recognizing named objects and body parts pointing to objects named 	<p>Use the child's name when playing with her. This helps to focus her attention while she is listening.</p>

Infants (birth to 24 months)



3. Communication, language and literacy (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
3.3 Expressive Language Skills <i>Signaling</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • crying to signal distress • looking at others and opening body (i.e., arms and chest lifted) to others • raising arms to invite interaction 	<p>Interpret the infant's signals: “You’re ready to play. Let’s go.”</p> <p>Interpreting and responding to an infant’s signals promotes language and communication by pairing actions with words and responsiveness.</p>
<i>Vocalizing and Babbling</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vocalizing to initiate social contact • babbling using a wide variety of sounds 	<p>Imitate the infant’s vocalizations. Infant: “Ba, ba!” Adult: “Ba, ba!”</p> <p>Imitation encourages the infant to repeat or expand the vocalizations and thereby practise pre-verbal skills.</p>
<i>One Word</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using one word to communicate 	<p>Respond to the infant’s expressive language. Child: “Ball.” Adult: “Where’s your ball?”</p> <p>This encourages the infant to continue to talk and thereby practise expressive language.</p>
<i>Words with Gestures</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speaking with words and gestures • beginning to speak with more words than gestures 	<p>When an infant points to a toy he wants, respond by offering the toy and naming it: “You want the ball. Here’s your ball.”</p> <p>Responding to infant’s gestures with language and actions reinforces communication (the gesture) and language by providing the vocabulary in a meaningful context.</p>
<i>Vocabulary</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beginning to repeat overheard words • beginning to use “me,” “you” and “I” 	<p>Expand the infant’s one-word communications. Infant: “Ball.” Adult: “You’ve got the blue ball?”</p> <p>This helps to add new words to the infant’s vocabulary.</p>



4. Cognitive

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
4.1 Attention Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shifting attention with increasing ability • attending, disengaging and returning attention 	<p>Observe an infant who is focused on her play. When she disengages and looks up, comment on her play.</p> <p>When infants play, they focus their attention, disengage and then return their attention to their play.</p> <p>When adults comment as infants disengage, they reinforce infants' exploration and support the return of their attention back to their play.</p>
4.2 Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setting goals and acting to achieve them • solving problems with actions by trial and error • engaging others as agents in solving problems • beginning to use objects as tools for solving problems; e.g., pulling a string to retrieve a toy 	<p>Admire the infant with words and tone of voice, e.g., "Wow! Mary, You pulled the string! You've got it!" Pause. "Hurrah!"</p> <p>Admiration for the infant's achievement of her goals reinforces and promotes continued exploration and problem solving.</p> <p>Using an enthusiastic voice tone ensures that your positive message is understood because infants understand non-verbal forms of communication before they understand the spoken language of others.</p>
4.3 Cause-and-Effect Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • repeating actions that produce outcomes • distinguishing actions from outcomes • using actions that show the properties and functions of things 	<p>When an infant is exploring actions and their outcomes, offer him materials with immediate, striking, observable responses.</p> <p>This ensures he can construct the relationship between his actions and the reaction of the material.</p>
4.4 Spatial Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tracking moving objects with eyes • looking for dropped toys • elaborating search with watching and seeking after a number of changes • identifying objects from different points of view (perspective) • using body to explore space by crawling in, by and through various objects • exploring objects in space by dropping toys into containers and dumping them out 	<p>Say, "Where's the ball?" while shrugging your shoulders, arms out, palms up.</p> <p>The simple question (coupled with the action) invites spatial exploration.</p>

Infants (birth to 24 months)



4. Cognitive (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
4.5 Spatial Problem-solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> persisting in search for hidden toy searching for toy that rolled under furniture by crawling around to the other side solving spatial problems involving barriers by moving over, around or through barriers stacking blocks 	<p>Use a cushion to create a new barrier on the floor. This creates a new spatial problem for the crawling infant to master.</p>
4.6 Object Permanence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> searching for playthings that move out of sight finding hidden objects 	<p>Demonstrate an infant game at the beginning of play. Hide his favourite toy under a small blanket while he watches. Pause. Lift the blanket and look surprised. Say, "There it is! There's the doll!" This action-oriented strategy is how infants learn the rules of the game.</p>
4.7 Symbolic Thought, Representation and Root Skills of Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> creating internal image of an absent object or past event using gestures and materials to stand for ideas pointing to photos, pictures in books 	<p>When looking at pictures with an infant, name the object in the picture and use simple words to describe it. When possible, match the picture to real objects. Pointing to the picture say, "It's a ball, a big, red ball." Pause. Pointing to a nearby ball, say, "Look, there's your ball!" Naming pictures shows infants that pictures represent real things and that things and pictures have names.</p>
<i>Imitation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> imitating adult actions 	<p>Imitate an infant's block play and invite the infant to watch. When you are finished, invite the infant to imitate your building. When an infant has the opportunity to be a leader and a follower, she is learning through imitation and is beginning to learn about working together.</p>
4.8 Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognizing previously seen faces and objects increasing capacity of recognition memory 	<p>Attention is essential to memory. Point to play materials and touch them. This focuses the infant's attention on the materials.</p>
4.9 Sorting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> grouping like objects together 	<p>When an infant is picking up objects that are similar to each other, move a variety of objects close so that they may be included in her selection. Ensure that some objects match each other and some are clearly different. This provides the opportunity for the infant to sort by discriminating same from different.</p>

Infants (birth to 24 months)



5. Physical

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
5.1 Gross Motor <i>Reaching and Holding</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reaching towards objects reaching and holding with palmar grasp 	<p>Hold an object the infant wants so that she must extend her arm to reach it and then take hold of it. This provides practice in the coordination of reaching and holding.</p>
<i>Releasing Objects</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dropping and throwing objects 	<p>Offer objects to infants who are holding something. This will cause them to drop or throw away what they are holding.</p>
<i>Holding Head Up</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lifting head while held on a shoulder 	<p>Hold the infant on your shoulder with someone or something interesting behind you so that she will lift her head to look. Providing interesting situations that engage the infant's natural interest in the world allows her to use her own body to explore.</p>
<i>Lifting Upper Body</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lifting upper body while lying on the floor 	<p>While the infant lies on his stomach, place interesting objects close, point to them, touch them and move them to invite him to respond with interest and to lift his upper body. When these actions are paired with verbal encouragement, the infant's interest in the world expands and his body strength increases.</p>
<i>Rolling</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> rolling from side to back rolling from back to side 	<p>While the infant is lying on his back, hold his favourite toy within his line of vision. Move the toy so he tracks it and reaches for it, rolling onto his stomach. Bringing together vision and motor skills provides practice that promotes the strength and coordination required to roll over.</p>
<i>Sitting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sitting without support 	<p>While the infant is straddling your extended leg, hold her arms and bounce her gently. This rhythmic movement strengthens the muscles and balance involved in sitting.</p>
<i>Crawling</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> crawling on hands and knees 	<p>Sit at the opposite end of a short tunnel from an infant. Call to her to crawl through the tunnel to you. This provides practice in moving and fitting her body into the space provided.</p>



5. Physical (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
5.1 Gross Motor <i>Pulling Self to Stand Up</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using furniture to pull self to standing position 	<p>While sitting on the floor with an infant, extend your arm as support. When he has a firm hold, gently raise your arm so that he stands up.</p> <p>Using your arm to help him practise standing makes it possible to repeat the action and to easily adapt this interaction to the infant's individual needs.</p>
<i>Cruising</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> walking while holding on to furniture 	<p>Sing and clap while the infant cruises.</p> <p>This brings shared joy when the infant is exercising an emerging skill.</p>
<i>Walking</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> walking unassisted with wide gait 	<p>Provide push toys that motivate walking.</p> <p>Push toys provide purpose and support for infant's walking.</p>
<i>Strength</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increasing strength in gross motor skills 	<p>Play with the pre-mobile infant on your lap because you can use your body to provide responsive physical support when needed.</p>
<i>Coordination</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> transferring object from hand to hand with increasing coordination putting objects inside other objects 	<p>Create a small collection of objects and containers that can hold them. Offer the infant two toys. Wait, then offer a third toy.</p> <p>This provides an opportunity for the infant to coordinate which hand she will use, which toy she will hold and which toy she will drop.</p> <p>When you offer a small container, she may try to fit a toy into it. This game encourages the coordination of motor skills and the exploration of objects in space.</p>



5. Physical (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
5.2 Fine Motor <i>Palmar Grasp</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> holding objects with whole palm 	<p>Offer toys that the infant can hold of safe and assorted sizes.</p> <p>Different-sized toys provide variation when he is practising the palmar grasp.</p>
<i>Coordination</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> holding and transferring object from hand to hand manipulating small objects with improved coordination 	<p>Create a rhythm of give and take by passing toys with different weights back and forth.</p> <p>As the infant transfers toys from hand to hand, her coordination improves and she learns about the weight, size and shape of things.</p>
<i>Pincer Grasp</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using forefinger and thumb to lift and hold small objects 	<p>Place finger foods on a clean table.</p> <p>The infant will use his forefinger and thumb to pick up these small items from a flat surface.</p>
<i>Holding and Using Tools</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> making marks with first crayon scribbling 	<p>Secure a large piece of paper to the table and provide bright-coloured crayons. As the infant makes his own scribbles, comment on the marks that are left on the paper: “Your line is long and blue.”</p> <p>This reinforces his scribbles and encourages more scribbling. Repetition establishes control of hands and tools.</p>
5.3 The Senses Visual <i>Face Perception</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> showing a preference for simple face-like patterns by looking longer responding to emotional expressions with facial expressions and gestures turning and looking at familiar faces 	<p>Play face-to-face games with infants. Use animated facial expressions and gestures.</p> <p>The simple turn-taking of face-to-face games focuses the infant’s attention on facial expressions and gestures that are a large part of communication.</p>
<i>Pattern Perception</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> showing a preference for patterns with large elements showing a preference for increasingly complex patterns visually exploring borders visually exploring entire object 	<p>Observe the infant to determine his visual preferences for various objects. Place the items he prefers on a kitchen turntable. Point to each object and touch it. Name it. Rotate the lazy turntable slowly and invite the infant to watch.</p> <p>The movement of favourite objects engages the infant in sustained visual exploration.</p>



5. Physical (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
5.3 The Senses Visual <i>Visual Exploration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tracking moving objects with eyes looking and searching visually 	<p>Create a collection of plumber's pipes with joints and multiple openings and balls that will roll through the pipes. Roll a ball through a pipe. Say, "Look!" Pause. "Where's the ball?"</p> <p>This game invites a visual search. The infant must persist in searching when the ball disappears into the pipe then reappears.*</p>
<i>Visual Discrimination</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> scanning objects and identifying them by sight 	<p>Invite the infant to pick up a specific toy from a group of toys with different attributes.</p> <p>As the infant scans the toys to identify the specific one, she will discriminate between the visual attributes of the different items in the group.*</p>
Auditory <i>Auditory Exploration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> making sounds by shaking and banging objects 	<p>Create a collection of bottles with objects sealed inside. Ensure the objects inside provide auditory contrast, some soft sounds and some loud. When the infant makes a sound with a bottle, react in a way that is responsive to the sound.</p> <p>For example, when the sound is loud, look surprised and say, "Wow, you made a big noise!"*</p>
<i>Auditory Discrimination</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> turning to source of a sound responding to familiar sounds with gestures and actions responding by turning towards a sound when more than one sound is present 	<p>Hide a music box behind a shelf. Turn the key, look at the infant and say, "Where's the music?"</p> <p>The infant will use his auditory and motor skills to find the source of the music.*</p>
Touch <i>Tactile Exploration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> touching, rubbing, squeezing materials 	<p>Ensure the environment is rich with opportunities for exploration. When the infant repeatedly squeezes a soft toy, imitate her actions and admire her explorations: "You've found a soft teddy. You're hugging it. Me too!"</p> <p>These interactions support the infant's tactile learning while pairing language with actions. Imitation strengthens the infant's confidence in her explorations.</p>
<i>Tactile Discrimination</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> showing preferences for some tactile properties 	<p>Observe the infant for his tactile preferences. Pair the materials he prefers with new materials.</p> <p>The preferred tactile experience will encourage the exploration of the new material.*</p>

Infants (birth to 24 months)



5. Physical (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
5.3 The Senses Olfactory (smell) <i>Olfactory Exploration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> calming by familiar scents associated with security 	<p>In the infant's pocket place a soft material from home, for example, a handkerchief that Dad has carried. The scent from the handkerchief will be accessible to the infant for comfort or to re-establish security.*</p>
<i>Olfactory Discrimination</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> turning away from unpleasant smells and reacting with facial expressions 	<p>Put cotton balls with familiar scents inside empty, clean detergent bottles. Place a different scent in each bottle. Pop the top and squeeze the bottle. Model inhaling the air that escapes the bottle. Squeeze the bottle under the infant's nose. Observe his response, which will indicate his preferences. The infant strengthens his ability to discriminate scents and to communicate his responses.*</p>
Taste <i>Taste Exploration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> trying new foods 	<p>Ensure snacks and meals are healthy and varied and that they include both new foods and foods from home. Eat a bit of each food with infants. This supports the acquisition of a broad palate that promotes healthy nutrition.</p>
<i>Taste Discrimination</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> showing preferences for certain foods by sucking longer, eating more or turning head away 	<p>Observe and respect an infant's food preferences. When he turns away from a food and does not return his attention to it, this means he is no longer interested in eating that food. Respecting the child's choice builds his control.</p>
5.4 Sensory Motor Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> coordinating senses with motor skills in exploration and problem solving, e.g., looking at a bubble, reaching for it, then crawling after it 	<p>*The items identified above with an asterisk are examples of the coordination of senses with motor skills in exploration and problem solving.</p>

Toddlers (14 months to 3 years)



1. Social

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
1.1 Social Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> observing and imitating peers beginning to play “follow the peer” games observing and playing briefly with peers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – may turn into struggle for possession offering toys engaging in short group activities 	<p>Incorporate singing games into play and routines. Engage one child at a time where other toddlers can observe.</p> <p>Toddlers’ natural social interest in adults and children helps to focus their attention.</p> <p>Observing the shared joy of the singing game will motivate involvement when a new game is being introduced.</p>
1.2 Perspective Taking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in simple situations beginning to take the point of view of others 	<p>During snack routines, keep waiting to a minimum but use the brief periods of waiting to pair one toddler’s waiting with another toddler’s turn: “Prya, you’re waiting while Josh picks his fruit. It’s your turn next!”</p> <p>Engaging the waiting toddler supports her behaviour regulation while she waits.</p> <p>She also hears information that helps her understand the point of view of others balanced with her own viewpoint.</p>
1.3 Parallel Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> playing in proximity of peers with similar playthings without an exchange of ideas or things 	<p>Set out duplicate materials in a play space large enough for two toddlers to play side by side – i.e., parallel play. When toddlers engage in parallel play, join them in play with your own materials.</p> <p>This provides context for toddlers’ social play where interest in others is expressed by being close and playing with similar materials.</p>

Toddlers (14 months to 3 years)



2. Emotional

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
2.1 Expression of Feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> expressing aggressive feelings and behaviour beginning to show self-conscious emotions (shame, embarrassment, guilt, pride) expressing feelings in language and pretend play 	<p>Respond to toddlers' emotional experience with comments that affirm their emotional experience, for example, "Wow! You worked hard on your tower!"</p> <p>Toddlers need adults who are emotionally available and who maintain their connection with them.</p> <p>Sharing in the toddler's emotional experience reinforces and elaborates the child's emotions and motivation.</p>
2.2 Self-regulation <i>Emotion Regulation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> beginning to use language to assist in emotion regulation beginning to recover from emotion in the presence of familiar adults being overwhelmed and recovering elevating positive emotions seeking out adults as secure base 	<p>Acknowledge the child's feelings.</p> <p>Adult: "I see you are sad. It's hard when Mom goes to work." <i>Pause, look at the child.</i></p> <p>"Mom always picks you up after snack in the afternoon." <i>Pause and look at the child.</i> "I can play with you."</p> <p>The empathy of acknowledging feelings can create a connection between the toddler and the adult and it also can absorb some of the toddler's emotional energy.</p>
<i>Behaviour Regulation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> responding to cues to stop actions showing emerging impulse control with peers waiting for peers' increases 	<p>Move close to toddlers whose activity level is rising.</p> <p>Being close to toddlers may provide toddlers with the secure base that assists them in regulating their behaviour.</p>
<i>Attention Regulation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attending may be interrupted by actions of others attending distracted by several objects to focus on focusing attention, making choices and avoiding distractions 	<p>Participate in play and move your materials slowly into the toddler's visual frame when she is distracted.</p> <p>This can slow the action down, enabling her to solve a problem or avoid distraction.</p>
2.3 Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> showing awareness of own feelings and the feelings of others showing concern for others demonstrated with caring behaviour beginning to recognize the rights of others 	<p>Describe the facial expressions of toddlers as they happen. Match the facial expression with the associated feeling: "Look at Jessie's big eyes and his wide-open mouth. He's surprised to see the puppy."</p> <p>As the toddler's awareness of his feelings is emerging, this draws his attention to important non-verbal information and the feelings that accompany them.</p>

Toddlers (14 months to 3 years)



2. Emotional (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
2.4 Sense of Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • saying “no” in response to adult requests • seeing self as “doer” who is powerful • saying “good” and “bad” (shows emerging self-evaluation) • using name of self and others • recognizing self in mirror • pointing to parts of own body and the corresponding parts of others 	<p>Place a box of self-help items in front of a wall-mounted Plexiglass mirror. When a toddler pretends with a facecloth say, “You’re washing your ears.”</p> <p>Playing in front of a mirror allows the toddler to see what her body is doing.</p> <p>When the adult “broadcasts” her actions (describes them aloud while they are happening), the language and actions reinforce the toddler’s understanding of herself and her body.</p>
2.5 Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • initiating activities • setting own goals and persisting in achieving them • rejecting the intrusion of redirection, saying “no” and “I do” • seeking to control others, saying “mine” • making choices and avoiding distractions increases • distinguishing own intended actions from unintended ones 	<p>Provide a building area with blocks and a collection of cans and boxes of different sizes and shapes. As a toddler builds, pay attention to his actions. When appropriate, describe his building.</p> <p>This provides an opportunity for the child to direct his own play, have choices and make decisions. The collection of cans and boxes requires more decisions to create a stable building.</p> <p>Adult attention and comments help the child feel good about his achievements.</p>
2.6 Identity Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying self and in relation to others 	<p>Use family photos to encourage story telling. Point to the toddler and then to others in the photo. Ask open-ended questions. “What did you do at the park?” “What did you do with your dad?”</p> <p>Telling stories about his family helps the toddler see his place in relation to others and to feel that he is an important member of his family.</p>

Toddlers (14 months to 3 years)



3. Communication, language and literacy

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
3.1 Receptive Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> listening to stories responding to names of body parts, commands and personal pronouns responding to longer sentences and commands 	<p>Broadcast the child's actions while they are happening. Adult: "Bobby, you're building so high!"</p> <p>Pairing language with the child's actions provides a rich context for a toddler's understanding of the spoken language.</p>
3.2 Expressive Language <i>Words</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> combining words using common verbs and adjectives 	<p>Invite a toddler to add to your description of a photo. "Look at Ned's big hat." Pause. "What else is he wearing?"</p> <p>This invites the toddler to notice photo details and respond in expressive language.</p>
<i>Sentences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using simple sentences using compound sentences engaging in pretend play that includes language 	<p>Reflect back language and expand when a child misspeaks. For example: "Daddy wented away." Adult response: "Your daddy went away." (Reflecting back.) "Where did he go?" (Invitation to expand.)</p> <p>This provides a correct language model and encourages the toddler to continue to talk.</p>
<i>Vocabulary</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increasing vocabulary identifying functions of household items 	<p>Pair functions with nouns when describing play: "You're talking to Mommy on the phone."</p> <p>This increases understanding in a rich context of meaning and action.</p>
<i>Questions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> asking simple "what" and "where" questions 	<p>During dressing routines take turns with the toddler in finding items of clothing.</p> <p>This give-and-take game gives him an opportunity to ask and answer questions.</p>
<i>Conversation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> observing and attempting to join conversations 	<p>"Here's Nelofer. She knows about birthday cakes."</p> <p>This acknowledges a toddler's interest in interaction and creates an opportunity for her to join in conversation.</p>

Toddlers (14 months to 3 years)



4. Cognition

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
4.1 Self-regulation <i>Attention Regulation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintaining attention for increasing periods of time ignoring distracting variables 	<p>Offer toddlers materials with contrasting properties; e.g., add solid shapes to stacking rings.</p> <p>This will provide the challenge of ignoring forms with no holes when stacking rings.</p>
4.2 Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> setting goals and acting to achieve them solving problems in actions by trial and error seeking out adults to help meet goals using objects as tools to solve problems figuring out who is missing from a group by looking at those in attendance 	<p>Use cognitive dissonance (violating expectation). For example, during play, place people figures in the garage and cars in the house.</p> <p>Ask: “What’s wrong? How can you fix it?”</p> <p>Dissonance promotes thought and problem solving and can be humorous to toddlers.</p>
4.3 Cause-and-Effect Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> responding with joy to the predictable outcomes of exploration exploring the functions of objects; opening and shutting doors 	<p>Invite exploratory actions with predictive questions. e.g., “What will happen when you drop the ball?” or “What would happen if you pushed the car?”</p> <p>Be prepared for toddlers to answer with actions. Predictive questions promote the cause-and-effect explorations of toddlers.</p>
4.4 Spatial Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exploring containment by putting objects in containers and by dumping them putting things together and taking them apart 	<p>When a toddler is scooping and dumping, you can scoop and dump objects of different sizes using identical containers. Ask him, “Will that toy fit into that cup?”</p> <p>Toddlers are parallel players and when you play alongside them at their level, you can reinforce and extend their explorations in an unobtrusive manner.</p>
4.5 Spatial Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pushing obstacles out of the way using tools to overcome barriers 	<p>Move relevant materials, such as tools, close to where the toddler is playing.</p> <p>Movement attracts attention, and toddlers may not see some materials when they are busy at play. Moving tools that can expand play when a toddler is stuck, can encourage him to include those materials in his play, thereby expanding his exploration or problem solving.</p>

Toddlers (14 months to 3 years)



4. Cognition (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
4.6 Temporal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using terms related to time: “tomorrow” and “yesterday” understanding of “now” versus “later” emerges 	<p>Match temporal terms with blocks of time that are part of the toddler’s daily life.</p> <p>“Later we will go outside, after snack.”</p> <p>This allows the child to connect temporal terms such as “later” with a sequence of time that he knows.</p>
4.7 Symbolic Thought, Representation and Root Skills of Literacy <i>Pretend Play</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using objects to stand for other things acting out simple themes in pretend play: cooking, caring for babies 	<p>Be a partner in pretend play by taking on a role.</p> <p>When the toddler is cooking and serving food, eat the food and say, “Such good food. Thank you for taking care of me.”</p> <p>When adults are partners in play, toddlers elaborate their pretend play themes and representation.</p>
<i>Representation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying objects in photos pointing to objects in books on request identifying objects in books 	<p>After looking at and pointing to pictures in books, invite the toddler to search back through the book: “Find the bear with his socks on his ears.”</p> <p>This encourages her to identify and recall representations in books.</p>
4.8 Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increasing memory capacity following routines establishing rituals 	<p>Establish routines. When routines are well established, ask the toddler while you are dressing him, “What comes next?”</p> <p>This requires his recall of repeated events in the context of the routine.</p>
4.9 Sorting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sorting and labeling objects by characteristics, such as hard and soft or big and small matching items by function (e.g., spoon with bowl) 	<p>Use simple open-ended questions that invite responses that can be actions, e.g., “What else can you add to the basket of flowers?”</p> <p>Open-ended questions allow the toddler to give a personally meaningful response, and when he can respond with actions, it allows him to communicate his thinking even when he may not use his expressive language.</p>

Toddlers (14 months to 3 years)



5. Physical

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
5.1 Gross Motor <i>Balance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> standing on one foot taking a few steps on raised surface 	<p>Take advantage of toddlers' enjoyment of carrying objects, marching and following others. Sing a parade song and make up lyrics that invite toddlers to march on different surfaces.</p> <p>As toddlers move from one surface to another, they must adjust their balance.</p>
<i>Jumping</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> jumping up and down on the spot jumping down from short heights 	<p>Include toddler-safe risers in outdoor and indoor environments. Support toddler's emerging skills by standing as close as required and admiring her stepping up, jumping and confidence.</p>
<i>Walking and Running</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> balancing and coordination increase stopping while running improves 	<p>Play stop-and-start games in environments with enough space.</p> <p>Playful practice of running and then stopping improves the toddler's increasing control of these skills.</p>
<i>Climbing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> climbing stairs one foot at a time climbing on climbing equipment and furniture 	<p>Admire toddler's emerging skills, e.g., "Mark, you climbed up to the top!"</p> <p>This reinforces his accomplishments and encourages him to continue.</p>
<i>Riding Toys</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> moving riding toys forward by pushing with feet 	<p>Give toddlers a reason to ride tricycles forward by setting up play stations on the riding path. Then engage the toddler in riding.</p> <p>"Marcus, drive to the store and buy some milk."</p> <p>This motivates the continued practice of riding skills.</p>
5.2 Fine Motor <i>Dressing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> doing up buttons pulling up zippers 	<p>During dressing, break down the job of doing up a zipper by attaching the sides of the zipper. Invite the toddler to pull up the zipper while you hold the bottom.</p> <p>This reduces frustration and supports the toddler's active involvement in dressing.</p>
<i>Eating</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using utensils and cup independently 	<p>Make suitable utensils available as the toddler's skills emerge. Present them along with opportunities to eat finger foods.</p> <p>This provides choices for independence and promotes success.</p>

Toddlers (14 months to 3 years)



5. Physical (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
5.2 Fine Motor <i>Tool Use</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using toddler-safe scissors 	<p>Introduce safe scissors for use with play dough. Sit with toddlers, roll a piece of play dough into a long cord and offer it to a toddler to cut.</p> <p>The soft texture of the dough and your involvement support the practice of tool use and independent cutting.</p>
<i>Making a Mark</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using palmar grasp to hold crayons and brushes and make scribbles scribbling expands to include lines and shapes 	<p>Sit beside toddler with a piece of paper and a crayon of your own. Describe his scribbles: “Your line is long and straight. I am going to make a line like yours.”</p> <p>This reinforces the toddler’s actions and shows him that marks can be repeated.</p>
<i>Pincer Grasp</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> turning pages of book adapting holding from palmar or pincer grasp 	<p>Drop a toy into a container while a toddler watches. Invite her to take the object out. Use a variety of objects in containers with different-sized tops.</p> <p>The difference in objects and containers presents the possibility that the toddler will use different motor strategies to retrieve the objects.</p>
5.3 Senses <i>Sensory Exploration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using all senses in the exploration of properties and functions of objects and materials 	<p>Add a small amount of food colouring to water when toddlers are pouring water from one container to another.</p> <p>This will make the movement of water more visible and the toddlers’ observations of water easier.</p>
<i>Sensory Discrimination</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using all senses to identify and differentiate properties and materials 	<p>When toddlers are familiar with materials, make requests by using textures to identify the objects. “Can you find the bumpy one?”</p> <p>While the toddler feels objects, he learns the words for what he is touching. Language and touch together expand tactile learning.</p>
<i>Sensory Motor Integration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> coordinating senses with motor skills in increasingly complex ways using eye-hand coordination to string large beads on a pipe cleaner, do simple puzzles, pour, dump and fill 	<p>Take advantage of toddlers’ natural enjoyment of carrying objects, dumping and filling by placing buckets near toy shelves.</p> <p>This invites the coordination of sensory and motor skills.</p> <p>The integration of sensory and motor skills is essential to learning.</p>

Preschool Kindergarten (2.5 to 6 years)



1. Social

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
1.1 Making Friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seeking out others to play with • offering play materials and roles to others • playing with others co-operatively • inviting others to play • exchanging ideas, materials and points of view with others • sustaining play with others 	<p>Engage in play with children. Offer toys. Take turns and exchange ideas in play. Modelling how to make friends and sustain play provides a positive example of social skills.</p>
1.2 Conflict Resolution and Social Problem-Solving Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beginning to express what they want and are thinking and feeling • regulating emotions in order to solve conflicts • beginning to attend and listen to peers • beginning to identify solutions to conflict • beginning to identify consequences • making decisions and choices and accepting the consequences 	<p>Consult children who are involved in resolving a conflict. Begin by supporting emotion regulation. Then to support their thinking, ask: “What happened?” (Pause.) Child: “He took my truck.” Adult: “How do you feel?” (Pause.) Child: “I’m mad!” Adult: “What can you do to solve the problem?” (Pause.) Child: “He could find another truck.” Adult: “What else can you do? Which solution do you choose?”</p> <p>When adults support children to think instead of solving the problem for them, children learn how to solve problems.</p>
1.3 Peer Group Entry Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observing before entering play • offering objects or ideas that are relevant to play • entering play by assuming available roles 	<p>Create a clearly defined entrance to learning centres. Stand at the entrance by the child who wants to enter play. With the child, observe the children who are at play. Comment on what you observe.</p> <p>Children who are successful entering play observe before they enter. If you slow the child down and model observation, the child may try this entry strategy.</p>
1.4 Helping Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offering assistance • identifying the emotions of others • regulating their own behaviour in the face of the needs of others • offering comfort • being generous 	<p>Interpret the non-verbal behaviour of others to children. “Look at Josie. She is eager for a turn.”</p> <p>This will provide practice in reading facial expressions that give social emotional information.</p>

Preschool Kindergarten (2.5 to 6 years)



1. Social (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
1.5 Interacting Positively and Respectfully	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> beginning to show respect for other children's belongings and work playing with others who have differing abilities and characteristics beginning to become aware of stereotypes found in books, etc. beginning to develop ideas of, and to practise, co-operation, fairness and justice learning music and art forms from a variety of cultures, racial and ethnic groups using artifacts from a variety of cultures, racial and ethnic groups in socio-dramatic play 	<p>Notice the role of different children in a group activity. "Roy is tall and he can reach the pieces on the top. Meika's hands fit in the small holes where the marbles rolled."</p> <p>When adults admire how individuals make different contributions to a group effort, children learn how different strengths work together and are respected.</p>
1.6 Co-operating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exchanging ideas and materials during play taking part in setting and following rules and inviting others to join them in play listening, thinking and responding appropriately as others speak during group time engaging in group decision making with voting and accepting that the majority vote will be followed by the entire group 	<p>Set the environment so children can play face-to-face or choose to watch others from nearby. Exchange ideas with children during play. "You finished the puzzle. Great. I was thinking about matching all the blue pieces at the start. What you do think?"</p> <p>Environments with options for social play where adults think with children and exchange ideas promote co-operation.</p>
1.7 Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sharing emotions, communicating and expressing feelings with adults and peers sharing experiences, relating and respecting each other beginning to see the world from another's perspective beginning to identify with others putting themselves in the other person's shoes seeing an injustice and taking action to change it 	<p>When a child is the aggressor, adults must act to stop the behaviour and help that child to see the other's perspective. When the same child is hurt by others, adults must intervene with empathy and support.</p> <p>It is by being treated with fairness and empathy that children develop empathy.</p>

Preschool Kindergarten (2.5 to 6 years)



1. Social (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
1.8 Taking Another Person's Point of View	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> describing their ideas and emotions recognizing that other people have ideas and emotions understanding the ideas and emotions of others beginning to accept that the ideas and emotions of others may be different from their own adapting behaviour to take other people's points of view into consideration beginning to respond appropriately to the feelings of others beginning to take another's point of view engaging in the exchange of ideas and points of view with others 	<p>Create discussion of an experience that was shared by all. "When we were at the fire hall yesterday, I took these photographs? Look at this one, Jed. What do you remember? Becky, Jed remembers.... Do you remember that? What do you think?"</p> <p>This gives practice in describing ideas and hearing the ideas of others who had the same experience.</p> <p>In this way, children can recognize the ideas of others and see that they may be different from their own, e.g., theory of mind.</p>
1.9 Interacting with Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> approaching adults as sources of security and support engaging adults in activities in positive ways seeing adults as resources in exploration and problem solving 	<p>Respond positively when a child asks you to join in their play. "Thanks for offering me some play dough. I would like to sit with you."</p> <p>Positive responses to children's approaches strengthen your relationships with them and reinforce their positive social skills.</p>

Preschool Kindergarten (2.5 to 6 years)



2. Emotional

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
2.1 Self-concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talking about their personal characteristics • identifying what they can do and what they have yet to learn • developing responsibility for themselves during dressing and eating routines and in daily living • seeing self as competent and capable of self-direction 	<p>See children as competent. “You finished the whole game yesterday, Sophie.” Reminding children of past successes helps them see themselves as competent.</p>
2.2 Identity Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing identity formation • noticing their own abilities • recognizing shared abilities • expressing joy in their characteristics and identity • expressing curiosity and sensitivity to physical characteristics • understanding culture in concrete daily living within own family through language, family stories, values, and celebrations • beginning to make connections between family and larger cultural group • asserting own choices in the face of stereotype 	<p>Ensure children have opportunities to retell family stories. “Cecil, your mother said that you had a lot of people at your house this weekend. What happened?” Regular opportunities for all children to tell and hear family stories can help them understand how they and their families are both alike and different. Freely talking about one’s own family reinforces the child’s sense of self-respect and pride in who he is.</p>
2.3 Self-esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • judging themselves as worthy individuals • seeing themselves as a valued member of the group • setting goals for themselves and working towards them • acting responsibly towards others 	<p>Admire the child’s strengths and achievements. Adult: “Ola, you are a good problem solver. You figured out how all four of you could play together.” Admiring the child’s achievements reinforces her strengths.</p>
2.4 Recognizing and Expressing Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying their emotions • increasing or decreasing emotional energy in keeping with the situation • expressing negative emotions in ways that do not harm others 	<p>Every time group begins, say, “Let’s come together. Let’s all join in.” Using consistent phrases to signal the start of group helps focus attention and prompts children to redirect energy to the new demands of group. When responding to negative emotions, address self-regulation first. Help children to bring down their emotional energy. To address the expression of negative emotions the adult may say, “When I’m frustrated, I go for a walk and talk to myself about my problem. I come back to my work later.” Walk with the child while he expresses his feelings.</p>



2. Emotional (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
<p>2.5 Regulating Attention, Emotions and Behaviour</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasingly expressing emotions appropriately • focusing attention • avoiding distracting stimulation • returning attention after checking in or after a distraction • stopping and starting their own actions • delaying gratification • persisting when frustrated • using language to communicate needs and regulate emotions • gaining control of their behaviour • increasingly coping with challenges and disappointments • using effective strategies for self-calming 	<p>Offer the option of extending an activity. <i>“May, if you leave your sculpture to dry overnight, we could look for more boxes for you to use tomorrow.”</i> Projects that are extended over more than one day involve waiting for the satisfaction of completion. When children decide what they will do, they are motivated to follow through.</p>
<p>2.6 Positive Attitudes towards Learning <i>(e.g., persistence, engagement, curiosity and a sense of mastery)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • persevering when faced with challenging or new tasks • coping with defeats and errors • asking for and accepting help when needed • accepting challenges and taking risks when learning • expressing satisfaction and joy when accomplishing tasks 	<p>Model curiosity, creative thinking and problem solving. <i>“I wonder what would hold these large boxes together.” Be a partner to a child when persistence is required. Be excited about learning and share children’s joy in their discoveries.</i> This provides the social support for taking on challenges and risks and staying with a task required for mastering a new skill.</p>

Preschool Kindergarten (2.5 to 6 years)



3. Communication, language and literacy

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
3.1 Using Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using gestures and signs to communicate • expressing their ideas and describing their experiences with increasingly complex sentences • using facial expression and tone matched to the content of their communication • attending to and responding appropriately to the non-verbal communications of others • increasingly engaging in more complex interactions • sharing songs and stories in home language 	<p>When Chaviva's communication is not understood by Martin, interpret what she said. In your conversation, include Martin's gestures and language that is used in Martin's home and suggest that Martin speak directly to Chaviva.</p> <p>This approach will promote the child's inclusion in play and the expansion of conversation.</p>
3.2 Using English and the Child's Home Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • entering into play using both their home language and French or English • greeting others in their home language and French or English • teaching each other names of objects, actions and events in their home language • talking about important people in their lives 	<p>Learn a few words of the home language (for example, simple greetings, names of common objects and family members) of the children in your program. Use these words in conversation.</p> <p>A child's engagement increases in inclusive environments where her native language and culture are valued and she is encouraged to retain her home language.</p>
3.3 Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using new words in play • asking questions to extend their understanding of words • linking new experiences with words they know • defining words by function (i.e., a ball is something you bounce) 	<p>Link new words to vocabulary the child already knows and uses. Use actions to illustrate the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary. Use new words in daily conversation so that the children can hear and use them in context.</p> <p>Words are more likely to become part of the child's vocabulary when they are used in play.</p>
3.4 Conversing with Peers and Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using increasingly more complex sentences • engaging in increasingly longer interactions • speaking in front of groups • understanding many culturally accepted ways of adjusting language to fit the age, sex and social status of speakers and listeners 	<p>Invite children to introduce their family members that are attending the program. Encourage children to bring in items from home. Ask questions that encourage more complex sentences. For example, "How do you cook food in the wok?" or "The red sari is beautiful. Can you tell me how you put it on?" Continue to ask questions that encourage children to give more detail and information.</p> <p>Asking children to introduce a family member in a group setting or introduce a household item requires them to adjust their conversation to a group of peers and to family members.</p>



3. Communication, language and literacy (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
<p>3.5 Using Descriptive Language to Explain, Explore and Extend</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using sentences to describe objects and events • expanding descriptive language to sentences of five to seven words • using new vocabulary and grammatical constructions in their descriptive language • spontaneously using the language of mathematics, inquiry and reasoning as they play 	<p>Take advantage of children's natural curiosity and make a list of children's questions about things that interest them and that they want to know.</p> <p>Explorations in play, interviewing family and community members, and field trips and research resources provide rich sources of information and answers to their questions.</p> <p>Refer to the children's question list.</p> <p>Comment on a child's exploration and invite the child to add what he has learned to answer a question.</p> <p>Adult: "How does knowing how many children came in today help us figure out how many children are away?"</p> <p>Provoked by their own curiosity and supported with rich opportunities for exploration, children are motivated to describe and explain what they have learned. Expand on what the children say and ask stimulating questions to extend the topic.</p>
<p>3.6 Listening to Others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listening to each other with attention without distraction or interruption • engaging in give and take when interacting with others (communicative turn-taking) • understanding and following oral directions 	<p>Wait for children to respond, sit at the children's level and pay attention to them as they talk.</p> <p>When children watch significant others modeling communication skills and respect for others, it supports the acquisition of those behaviours and attitudes.</p>
<p>3.7 Enjoying Literacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • choosing to spend time with books • discussing and making connections between books and stories in their play • requesting specific stories, poems, songs • showing pleasure and enjoyment during activities with language, music and print materials 	<p>Read and re-read interesting stories that are rich in ideas and meaning and that engage the children.</p> <p>Show your enjoyment in reading books.</p> <p>When reading is experienced with enjoyment, learning is reinforced and children are motivated to continue to expand their involvement in literacy.</p>
<p>3.8 Using and Understanding the Power of Literacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beginning to express self in print • connecting information and events in text to life and life to text • dictating stories • creating stories orally and using a variety of media • referring to print in the physical environment for meaning, rules and directions • understanding the functions of literature 	<p>Take dictation during play. Act as a scribe and record children's ideas and stories during play.</p> <p>This practice makes connections between experiences and the written word.</p> <p>It also creates a lasting record in print of children's stories.</p>



3. Communication, language and literacy (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
3.9 Retelling Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retelling stories in pretend play and art activities • making connections from stories in their daily living • dictating ideas and stories 	<p>Ask a child to retell a story after having read or listened to one.</p> <p>This invites the child to reconstruct the basic story elements.</p> <p>When adults listen to a child retelling a story, they learn what the child understands and what is important to her.</p>
3.10 Phonological Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying sounds in their environment, such as animal sounds, traffic noises, music and human speech • creating sounds by singing and making music • taking part in sound games • filling in rhyming words in familiar poems, songs and books • identifying specific letter sounds and syllables • isolating sound combinations • reciting nursery rhymes, poems or sing-songs • making up chants and rhymes 	<p>Use rhyme rituals in daily routines such as, “Willoughby, Wallabee, Woo, the Elephant Sat on You.”</p> <p>The repetition in routines and rituals provides many opportunities to hear and match sounds in real-life situations.</p> <p>Also, rhymes in routines add pleasure and a positive tone to daily routines.</p>
3.11 Letter Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying the letter that begins their names and its sound • picking out other words that begin with the same letter or sound as their names • beginning to identify a few consonant letter-sound correspondences in words in familiar rhymes 	<p>Play letter and sound games where the adult and child take turns leading. This game invites children to listen to and then to create alliteration.</p> <p>Adult: “Pat plays with purple paint. Pat, how many p’s did I use? Pat, your turn to use Hina’s name. What is the first letter in Hina’s name? Make a sentence with Hina’s name and words that start with h.”</p> <p>This kind of game gives children an opportunity to identify initial consonants in context.</p>



3. Communication, language and literacy (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
<p>3.12 Understanding of Orientation and Familiar Conventions of Print</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pretending to read • using paper and pencil to scribble • pretending to write and writing letters and words • holding books the right way up • turning pages from the front to the back • using left to right directionality • gradually moving from scribbling to drawing to writing • writing their own books 	<p>In dramatic play, include literacy-related props that let children write and read or pretend to write and read.</p> <p>Take on a role that promotes children's use of these props. For example, provide menus and order book, then be a guest in the restaurant and state your order to the child server, who can write your order in her order book.</p> <p>This embeds the practising of print concepts in play.</p>
<p>3.13 Matching Spoken Words with Written Ones</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • associating the spoken word with the written word by pointing or talking about connections • recognizing familiar signs (i.e., stop signs, logos etc.) 	<p>Put labels and signs in important places in the room and then make reference to them when appropriate.</p> <p>“Look, Josh made a sign, ‘Do not touch my Lego building.’”</p> <p>Signs like these capture attention and serve a purpose. Meaningful print in the environment invites children to match spoken words with written words.</p>
<p>3.14 Beginning to Write Letters of the Alphabet and Some High-Frequency Words</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognizing and writing their own name • writing most letters and some words when dictated • independently writing many uppercase and lowercase letters • using invented spelling • writing high-frequency words 	<p>Transfer the role of writer-recorder in daily duties from adults to children as their skills permit.</p> <p>Children may write their names on their artwork, add names to attendance lists or make signs.</p> <p>Everyday writing with a purpose embeds beginning writing in meaningful contexts with print-rich examples.</p>

Preschool Kindergarten (2.5 to 6 years)



4. Cognition

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
4.1 Self-regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using language to regulate own behaviour and attention • using emerging ability to take another's point of view to regulate own behaviour and attention • monitoring own behaviour 	<p>Use language to describe feelings. "Mariam is frustrated. She's been working a long time and the puzzle still doesn't fit."</p> <p>Preschoolers are beginning to use language to regulate emotions. When children hear and use a vocabulary of emotional terms, they can express and regulate emotions with language.</p>
4.2 Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying problems • beginning to plan ahead • collecting and organize information • brainstorming solutions and outcomes • connecting consequences to actions • taking action to solve problems • evaluating the outcomes of their problem solving • creating rules based on similarities of two situations, for transferring knowledge • generalizing solutions of problems from one situation to another 	<p>Pose problems. For example, "How can you make your building bigger?" "How can you make something sink that floats?" "How can you move the blocks across the room without using your hands?"</p> <p>This causes the child to solve problems, think logically and use language to represent thinking.</p>
4.3 Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pretending to be someone else • dramatic playing with a plot and imaginative features • drawing and constructing 2D and 3D models • beginning to use art media and tools to express their ideas, feelings and experiences • using a variety of materials to build with and express their ideas • generating alternative ideas • recognizing their own work and the work of others • beginning to use art media and tools to express ideas, feelings and experiences • talking about the story or meaning of artwork • connecting artwork to their past experiences or to emotions, feelings and thoughts • taking a role in socio-dramatic play; co-operating and negotiating roles with others • sustaining and extending their socio-dramatic play with language, additional ideas and props 	<p>When children's drawings represent a recent event in the program or a field trip, engage in discussion about the artwork and what it represents. "You've drawn a fire truck. It has large wheels like the one we saw at the fire hall last week."</p> <p>Pause to transfers the conversational lead to the child.</p> <p>This engages the child in thinking about his art and remembering what he knows from a field trip.</p> <p>The child uses representations to go beyond the present and to use ideas, language and drawing to explore people, places and events.</p>

Preschool Kindergarten (2.5 to 6 years)



4. Cognition (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
4.4 Questioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> telling others of problems asking “why” to determine causes asking questions that can be answered through observation asking questions to solve problems asking questions to clarify their understanding 	<p>Listen to children’s questions with respect and answer them seriously.</p> <p>This creates an environment where children feel free to express their ideas. Children learn to ask questions when adults model curiosity and pose questions.</p> <p>If you don’t know the answer to a question, say, “I don’t know, but we can find out together.” Show your willingness to learn along with the children.</p>
4.5 Observing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> visually attending to things in their environment using all senses to gather information while observing focusing their observation on details increasing the time they spend observing naming and describing the things that they have observed using specialized sources and books as a means of extending their observations 	<p>Ask a child: “How does it look when you use a magnifying glass? What else do you see?”</p> <p>This invites children to observe more closely and to generate more than one observation.</p>
4.6 Collecting and Organizing Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using objects to construct graphs creating pictorial graphs posing questions about graphs placing marks on graphs indicating their choice describing and comparing data on graphs and in surveys using graphs to reach conclusions 	<p>When planning a field trip, brainstorm destinations with children. Create a graph with pictures of the destinations that have been identified. Invite the children to put a mark on the graph indicating the children’s choice.</p> <p>This provides a record of information that can be examined and discussed. The information can be analyzed and compared.</p>
4.7 Reflecting and Reaching Conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> describing similarities and cause and effect in recurring events identifying patterns of events describing connections between different objects, events and experiences making generalizations about different objects, events and experiences 	<p>Ask a child: “How do you know what comes next?” Or: “How did you figure that out?”</p> <p>This will invite the child to reveal his thinking and tell how he came to his conclusion.</p>

Preschool Kindergarten (2.5 to 6 years)



4. Cognition (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
4.8 Communicating Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> presenting their ideas to others through drawings, telling, music and movement using mathematical processing and language to communicate findings 	<p>At the end of the day, ask the child to tell and show his mother how he built a tower as tall as himself.</p> <p>Retelling ideas and explaining discoveries to others integrates learning.</p>
4.9 Reasoning Logically <i>Causality</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying actions and outcomes identifying evidence for point of view exploring causes transferring rules from one situation to another generalizing knowledge across situations 	<p>Include the language of logic in daily interactions. “You may choose <i>Caps for Sale</i> or <i>Something from Nothing</i> for group today.”</p> <p>Words and phrases such as <i>or, not, if...then, because, some, all, never</i> and <i>probably</i> reflect thinking and logical connections.</p>
<i>Sequential Change</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> making logical connections identifying what precedes change 	<p>Avoid non-verbal and verbal responses to children’s thinking that imply “right” or “wrong.” Instead, communicate the message: “That’s an interesting idea.”</p> <p>As children explore, they may try out one idea. If it fails, they may move quickly to another idea. Learning to consider why the first idea did not work makes children better problem solvers. Children also monitor adult’s reactions to their actions.</p> <p>When adults communicate “right” or “wrong,” they can cut off children’s thinking.</p>
<i>Exploring Transformations and Hypothesizing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mixing and transforming materials predicting the outcomes of transformations 	<p>Ask predictive questions. For example: “What will happen if we add more water to the play dough?”</p> <p>Predictive questions invite the child to construct a hypothesis about the outcome of a transformation.</p>
4.10 Classifying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sorting objects, pictures and things into groups comparing, matching and sorting according to common properties comparing objects moving from random classification to classifying by one and then two or more properties 	<p>Provide multiple copies of paper money of many denominations. Also provide play coins of many values. Have a cash drawer with many compartments. Be a customer who makes a purchase paying with many bills.</p> <p>Materials with contrasting properties, together with equipment to organize the materials into groups, support the skill of classification.</p>



4. Cognition (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
4.11 Seriating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> describing relationships such as smaller than, bigger than, different than placing objects, pictures and things in order along a continuum 	<p>Provide a set of measuring cups in the sand box.</p> <p>When children use the cups, ask relationship questions. “Which cup is the biggest? Which cup did you use to make the small castle?”</p> <p>The materials and questions encourage the children to put objects into relationships, such as bigger than and smaller than.</p>
4.12 Counting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> counting in meaningful ways in play and daily living 	<p>Invite thinking about numbers when it is meaningful. In dramatic play, ask: “Are there enough plates for Tamika and me to eat with you?” Children may count the number of plates, the number of diners and the number of new guests.</p> <p>Using everyday situations motivates children to use the number concepts that they know, such as counting and comparing amounts.</p>
4.13 Determining Quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> counting to determine quantity matching numbers to sets of objects 	<p>At snack time, say: “Joan, bring just enough cups for everyone to have one.”</p> <p>During daily living there are many opportunities to think about numbers.</p> <p>This interaction asks the child to determine the number of cups required. It encourages the child to figure out the number of children in order to determine the number of cups. Children may respond by picking up one cup at a time and delivering it to a child or by counting the number of children.</p>
4.14 Comparing Quantities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> making more-or-less comparisons when using materials moving objects to align them when comparing quantities counting to compare quantities counting using one-to-one correspondence using a graph to compare numbers 	<p>Invite children to move objects they are counting. “Kathy, while you are counting the cars, drive them into a parking spot.”</p> <p>Arranging and moving objects is a strategy children use to make sense of number relationships.</p> <p>When you provide movable objects and other materials, you help children keep track of the objects they have counted, so that they do not count any object twice as they construct one-to-one correspondence.</p>



4. Cognition (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
<p>4.15 Representing Numbers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> representing numbers in different ways (tallies, numbers, graphs) recognizing numbers in print, children write numbers reading numbers written in words 	<p>Refer back to children's number representations. "Let's look at your chart and count the tallies to see how many bowling pins Avi knocked down."</p> <p>When adults introduce and use a wide range of number representations, such as tallies, drawings, maps, graphs made from stacked objects, pictographs, bar graphs, tables and narratives, they promote number thinking and help children remember and explain their reasoning.</p>
<p>4.16 Describing and Determining Ordinal Number and Position</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pointing to and describing relative position: before, after, between, front, back, next, last, first to sixth identifying position of events in a sequence 	<p>Make a numbered "elevator" available as a prop for addition to children's vertical buildings.</p> <p>When children build up and then use the elevator, they can see that three is more than two and less than four.</p> <p>Number lines allow children to see and compare numbers.</p> <p>Before or after positions of a number in relation to another number can be used to determine which number is larger or smaller.</p>
<p>4.17 Understanding Two-Dimensional and Three-Dimensional Shapes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognizing and naming shapes counting sides and corners identifying common attributes of shapes matching shapes and names recognizing and naming cubes, rectangular prisms, cylinders, spheres 	<p>When children are building with blocks, look at their constructions from different points of view. Describe what you see: "You have used a lot of rectangle blocks. Come over here and look at them." Pause. "Are the small rectangles on the top the same shape as the blocks on the bottom?"</p> <p>This gives children the opportunity to identify shapes from different points of view.</p>
<p>4.18 Identifying Patterns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognizing patterns in their environment creating patterns with blocks and art materials describing patterns such as plaid, checked, striped representing patterns with movements and with symbols identifying, creating, copying and extending a variety of patterns (e.g., sound, colour, shape, number, etc.) identifying, creating, copying and extending patterns 	<p>Talk about patterns that are part of daily life. "Every day we start by playing inside, we go outside and play on the playground, we come back inside for group and circle. What comes next?"</p> <p>Recognizing patterns gives practice in predicting what will happen, talking about relationships and seeing connections.</p>

Preschool Kindergarten (2.5 to 6 years)



4. Cognition (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
4.19 Measuring Length, Weight and Capacity, Temperature, Time and Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> measuring to determine relationships such as comparisons of length, weight and capacity using vocabulary of measurement such as heavier or lighter and taller or shorter using non-standard measuring tools, such as their feet, hands, a piece of string when they play, build or create beginning to use the vocabulary of standard units of measure recognizing relationships between attributes (i.e., weight and size; size and capacity) 	<p>When children are lining up materials ask, “How long is your train? It has so many cars.”</p> <p>This helps children recognize that objects have measurable properties.</p> <p>Have a variety of measuring tools available for children’s use so they can explore which tools are useful for measuring which attributes. For example, a balance scale is good for measuring weight.</p>
4.20 Completing Simple Number Operations <i>(comparing sets; simple addition and subtraction)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishing one-to-one correspondence identifying more than, less than, or same as, when working with concrete objects or events adding and subtracting one from a set performing simple operations of adding to and taking away when working with concrete objects or events using bar graphs to compare amounts separating a set into two equal groups sharing objects equally among more than two groups 	<p>Many opportunities to think about numbers occur naturally in play. Describe them.</p> <p>“Bernie, you’ve used four Popsicle sticks for each window. Are there enough sticks to finish your house?”</p> <p>Describing number operations as they occur draws children’s attention to number concepts and can invite them to extend their number thinking.</p>
4.21 Using Number Symbols and Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using counters to represent objects identifying and using the + and – symbols 	<p>When children are bowling, offer them one counter for each pin that they knock over. The counters represent the pins and will be collected in small sets for each turn. These sets can be counted or added to determine the total number of pins a child knocked over.</p>
4.22 Using Spatial Relations, Directions, Maps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using spatial terms in context (i.e., forward, backward, inside, next, behind, in front, etc.) following and identifying directions using simple maps to find a location making a map 	<p>When children’s firefighter play includes moving to various places in the playroom to put out fires, suggest that they make a map of the playroom to guide the firefighters to a fire.</p> <p>Making and using their own simple maps in play gives many opportunities to use spatial terms and find well-known rooms on the map.</p>

Preschool Kindergarten (2.5 to 6 years)



5. Physical

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
5.1 Increasing Levels of Activity, Endurance, and Variation in Types of Activity and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> freely exploring large outdoor equipment running, climbing, jumping, hopping, balancing, etc. using open-ended materials to move about, build and construct practising bouncing, catching, kicking balls gaining the ability to control their movements increasing the distance they are able to walk increasing skill in group games 	<p>Engage children in setting up the environment. “Let’s set up the playground together. Look in the storage shed. What equipment should we set up?” Involving children in planning and decision-making increases their active involvement in play.</p>
5.2 Gross Motor Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increasing in coordination, speed, and endurance 	<p>“Joe, there is enough room for you and Hildy to run and run!” Indoor and outdoor programs that offer choice and enough time and space for exploration provide the circumstances for gross motor skill practice.</p>
<i>Walking</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> beginning to walk with opposite leg-arm swing walking up stairs alternating feet walking down stairs alternating feet 	<p>Plan walks for small groups of children that involve walking up and down stairs. Walking can be practised in daily living, and when adults participate, children are motivated to continue to practise their emerging skills.</p>
<i>Jumping</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> jumping increases in co-ordination 	<p>Play follow-the-leader on an obstacle course that requires children to climb up and jump down. Children’s co-ordination and jumping are practised and supported in games when adults participate.</p>
<i>Hopping</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hopping on one foot increases 	<p>Invite partners to take turns in hopscotch. “Lee, you and Sunny can play hopscotch together. Roll the marker to see who goes first.” Games like hopscotch motivate active and repeated practice in hopping.</p>
<i>Galloping</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> galloping and one-foot skipping emerge 	<p>Play music with simple rhythms when children are engaged in gross motor activities. Join in and clap out the rhythm. Musical patterns and adults who participate with children motivate continued practice of emerging galloping and skipping skills.</p>



5. Physical (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
<p>5.2 Gross Motor Skills <i>Throwing</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • throwing with rigid movements • throwing with increased co-ordination 	<p>Play throwing-at-a-target games with children. Target games encourage children to throw and increase their co-ordination.</p> <p>When adults participate, children are motivated to continue to practise throwing and increasing their co-ordination.</p>
<p><i>Riding</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pedaling and steering riding toys • riding a tricycle smoothly 	<p>Create a tricycle-riding path that invites riding. Take a role that is compatible with children's riding (traffic officer, parking attendant, delivery person). For example, as a traffic officer, hold up a stop sign. This causes children riding tricycles to stop. Stopping and starting again increases children's motor control.</p>
<p><i>Movement and Expression</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing control over own movements skills • becoming expressive using movement • expressing moods in movement • moving to music • matching movements to the rhyme and mood of the music • making patterns while moving to music • working together in shared dance and movement activities 	<p>Provide expressive music and props in a space large enough for creative movement. Imitate children's actions and introduce new patterns of movements. This provides practice in becoming expressive with movement and when adults participate, children are motivated to continue to practise movement skills.</p>



5. Physical (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
5.3 Fine Motor Skills <i>Dressing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mastering simple items of clothing • dressing without assistance 	<p>During daily dressing, encourage children who have completed their dressing to work with their peers to finish dressing.</p> <p>This increases co-operation within the group while mastering the skills involved in dressing.</p>
<i>Eating</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eating using forks and knives 	<p>Observe children's use of utensils during lunch and snacks. As their skill and co-ordination increase, add the appropriate utensils.</p> <p>Adding utensils as children are ready increases the chances that utensils are coordinated.</p>
<i>Tool Use</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stringing large beads • cutting paper with scissors • cutting a straight line 	<p>Ensure that a variety of tools are provided with clay and modeling materials. Discuss children's actions.</p> <p>Clay is soft enough to mould yet dense enough to provide resistance when cut. It is a suitable medium for fine motor practice with tools.</p>
<i>Drawing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • copying straight lines • copying triangles and crosses 	<p>Make paper, markers, crayons and pencils part of pretend play and constructive play. Model their use in play.</p> <p>Accessible paper and markers provide the opportunity for their meaningful use. Children may draw the shapes they encounter in their play.</p>
5.4 Auditory Skills and Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying the sources of musical sounds • showing enjoyment when listening to music • making choices and demonstrating preferences in music • using musical instruments to move from exploration to producing patterns to reproducing patterns 	<p>Provide a variety of recorded music for children to choose from. Talk about their musical choices with them. Identify instruments. Match rhythms by clapping and with sticks.</p> <p>Playfully joining children in their self-initiated music activity supports their auditory explorations and the development of their emerging musical skills.</p>

School-age Children (5 to 8 years)



1. Social

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
1.1 Friendship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participating in peer groups • having a best friend • basing friendships on mutual trust • participating in complex socio-dramatic play • often playing with children of the same sex with gender-specific toys • playing group games • interacting with more pro-social skills • declining aggression • emerging social hierarchies • interest in pleasing adults 	<p>As social hierarchies emerge, offer children who are leaders the opportunity to serve their peers. For example, during snack they could set out food, dishes and utensils.</p> <p>This provides the emerging leaders with an opportunity to take the initiative and care for others.</p> <p>Opportunities to balance initiative with caring promote the development of positive leadership skills.</p>
1.2 Conflict Resolution and Social Problem-Solving Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying solutions to conflict • making logical connections between actions and consequences • constructing a sense of right and wrong • problem solving in the face of difficulty • following rules 	<p>Consult with children so that they can solve social problems. “How did you feel when Chuck took your turn? What did you do? What else could you have done?”</p> <p>Consultation enables the child to review and clarify feelings and think through the problem for himself.</p>
1.3 Co-operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-operating and sharing frequently 	<p>Invite children to share their ideas with their peers. “Jake, tell Sasha what your solution was.”</p> <p>Co-operation involves sharing ideas and materials. As children’s co-operation develops, increasing the exchange of ideas promotes thought before action.</p>
1.4 Helping Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing helping behaviours 	<p>Assign a task to a child who is interested but has not volunteered. “Jesse, would you take attendance today?”</p> <p>Some children may not volunteer but may want to participate. This duty would promote helping as well as leadership.</p>
1.5 Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrating empathy for the rights of others • showing concern for the future welfare of others 	<p>Use empathy: “I get sad when I lose my things, too.”</p> <p>Empathy can increase the connection between the adult and the child through shared emotional experiences. It can also draw off emotional energy and thus free the child to solve problems.</p>
1.6 Taking Another’s Point of View	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding the point of view of others and using this to regulate their own behaviour • understanding that others think, believe or feel differently from self • viewing self from another person’s point of view • viewing a relationship from the perspective of a third party 	<p>Redirect questions to peers. Adult: “Shanti wants to know how to make her pink darker.”</p> <p>This engages peers in an exchange of points of view which promotes thought.</p>

School-age Children (5 to 8 years)



2. Emotional

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
2.1 Self-Concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talking about personal characteristics • taking responsibility for dressing, eating and hygiene routines • using personality traits and social comparison to define oneself • being increasingly responsible and independent 	<p>Describe children in psychological terms. Adult: “Thank you for being honest, Mary.” This encourages children to see themselves and others in psychological terms and as worthy of respect and dignity.</p>
2.2 Identity Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • becoming aware of stereotypes • increasing flexible expectations of the behaviour of others 	<p>Create a collection of favourite books from children’s homes. Discuss and compare the books’ characters and their actions. Through the exploration of roles in literature, children can increase their awareness of the many ways that people live their lives and make comparisons to their own lives.</p>
2.3 Self-Esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • showing pride in work and achievements 	<p>Affirm the child’s strengths. Adult: “That is an amazing building. You really figured out how to fit all those rooms in that space!” Admiring the child’s achievements promotes the child’s sense of self and self-esteem.</p>
2.4 Recognizing and Expressing Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing understanding of sources of pride and gratitude; jealousy and anxiety • beginning to integrate mixed emotions 	<p>Promote reflection on the circumstances that lead up to mixed emotions. “What happened when you were playing ball?” “How did you feel?” Identify the emotions experienced. “It sounds as if you were excited and anxious.” Remembering the circumstances of emotionally charged experiences may provide the information necessary to make sense of mixed emotions.</p>
2.5 Regulating Emotions and Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using private speech (self-talk) to regulate emotions • using empathy and perspective taking to regulate emotions and behaviour • using a variety of strategies to regulate emotions such as anxiety 	<p>Model private speech. “This puzzle is hard for me. I need to slow down and find a matching piece.” Private speech is an important tool in self-regulation. Thinking out loud helps regulate emotions and recover from increasing emotional energy while giving time for other responses.</p>
2.6 Positive Attitudes towards Learning, such as Persistence, Engagement, Curiosity and a Sense of Mastery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing pride in work and interest in learning new things • solving problems in the face of difficulty • expanding curiosity and interest in learning about the world 	<p>Model how to lead a group discussion: questioning, summarizing, clarifying and predicting. When children have had sufficient group experience, rotate the role of leader to a child and participate by listening, observing and recording. This promotes the child’s engagement and sense of mastery.</p>

School-age Children (5 to 8 years)



3. Communication, language and literacy

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
3.1 Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using fluent, grammatically correct speech • telling jokes • memorizing songs • using correct verb tense, word order and sentence structure 	<p>Write a “joke of the day” leaving out the punch line for children to complete. Read the joke aloud and invite children to read out their punch lines to the joke.</p> <p>Ritualizing jokes is a playful way to expand children’s use of language and communication skills.</p>
3.2 Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning more words daily • using synonyms • using local slang 	<p>Continue to read to children daily. Transcribe their stories and communications and include them in daily reading.</p> <p>Hearing, using and recording language expands the vocabulary.</p>
3.3 Conversing with Peers and Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adapting messages to the needs of the listeners • increasing the length of recalled stories 	<p>Provide time for conversations and prompt children to extend their communications: “Tell us what else you saw.”</p> <p>Conversations require time. Prompting children to add more detail increases the length of conversations, the extent of recall and the amount of language used.</p>
3.4 Phonological Awareness and Phonics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying initial, middle and final sounds in words • recognizing common patterns and words 	<p>Model sound-letter associations when reading: “The Dra – A...Dragons of Blueland.” This focuses attention and identifies a middle sound.</p> <p>Model looking for familiar parts or “chunks” in words, for example, “jump... ing.”</p>
3.5 Knowledge of Print	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decoding and word identification to make meaning • beginning to understand punctuation 	<p>Use flip charts to write outcomes of group meeting. This provides a permanent record for further review and discussion.</p>



3. Communication, language and literacy (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
<p>3.6 Reading</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enjoying being read to • making letter-sound correspondences • sounding out multi-syllable words • reading simple stories • retelling stories that have been read • using a variety of strategies to read • recognizing global words that are understood by most readers (e.g., the, home, pizza) • reading for pleasure • reading for different purposes • reading to find information • reading with fluency and meaning • thinking critically about the content of reading 	<p>Connect stories that have been read to current circumstances. Invite a child to retell the story, “This reminds me of the time Elmer, the dragon, outsmarted the hunters who were after his family. Ben, tell us Elmer’s plan.”</p> <p>Connecting what you have read to what children are experiencing brings literature into children’s daily lives. Retelling what has been read reinforces comprehension.</p>
<p>3.7 Writing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writing with increasing complexity • writing about a personally meaningful topic • writing messages to others • taking dictation • using spelling that grows from invented to conventional • writing in various forms (stories, poems) • writing narratives • writing adapted to suit audience or purpose 	<p>Create a message centre with individual mailboxes where children can exchange written messages and drawings. Participate by writing messages and leaving them in the mailboxes.</p> <p>This provides a meaningful context for children to write and read in.</p>

School-age Children (5 to 8 years)



4. Cognition

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
4.1 Self-regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> regulating attention becomes more selective, planned and adaptable 	<p>“Midori, tell yourself, ‘Five more pumps and the ball will be ready for the game.’”</p> <p>This supports self-coaching, the child’s ability to guide her actions and attention with language and thinking.</p>
4.2 Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> planning to achieve goals developing strategies internally solving problems of more complexity 	<p>Repeat a child’s ideas for emphasis.</p> <p>Child: “You need a heavy ball to make the basket go down.” Adult: “It works with the heavy ball. That’s an interesting idea.”</p> <p>This reinforces thinking and brings salience to an idea so that it may be reviewed and reworked.</p> <p>Engage children in problem solving that is relevant and doable through hands-on investigations and through their own research.</p>
4.3 Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> engaging in complex socio-dramatic play drawings are figurative (i.e., realistic representations) creating complex 2D and 3D drawings and constructions drawing becomes more detailed and organized writing 	<p>Imitate the child’s novel methods of constructing 3D models.</p> <p>This promotes what the child has done with her peers. It also focuses attention on the child’s form of representation.</p>
4.4 Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using memory strategies of rehearsal and organization using several memory strategies in one situation 	<p>Rehearse field trip procedures with children before leaving. First you say a rule and then a child tells a rule.</p> <p>Preparing for an event by running through known rules provides rehearsal of field trip procedures.</p>
4.5 Inquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> observing and forming a question collecting information interpreting information discovering relationships comparing results with peers and in books writing reports, discussing results evaluating and re-adjusting 	<p>Create a garden where children decide what they want to plant and do the research to determine where to plant the seeds.</p> <p>Provide a garden chart where children can record when they water the plants and when the plants may bloom.</p> <p>Engage children in discussion about their plants and recordings.</p> <p>When children gather information, make predictions, record observations, discuss procedures they are engaging in elements of the inquiry process.</p>



4. Cognition (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
4.6 Classifying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating hierarchies • creating sub-categories and -classes • understanding relationships between categories in the hierarchy 	<p>Play team sports. Children will create categories of players and team positions, offensive or defensive. When the game is being played, children will expect team members to play according to their category or positions.</p> <p>These expectations will guide behaviour: If I am offensive I do... . If she is defensive she will do... .</p> <p>In this way, team sports engage children in the logic of classification and creating sub-categories.</p>
4.7 Measuring Length, Weight, Capacity, Temperature, Time and Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using conventional units of measurement (metres, litres, hours, etc.) 	<p>Provide a tape and other measuring tools to children who are making a fabric craft or sewing. Encourage them to design their own patterns using the measuring tools.</p> <p>This integrates use of conventional units of measurement into activities chosen by the children.</p>
4.8 Completing Number Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adding and subtracting double-digit numbers • starting to multiply and divide 	<p>Use voting to decide on an activity.</p> <p>“When we go outside, we can take the field hockey equipment or the soccer equipment. Let’s vote to see which game to play. Eighteen votes for soccer and there are 29 children here today. How many children want to play hockey?”</p> <p>Voting supports both democratic (social) and number skills (comparing yea and nay votes).</p>
<i>Patterning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extending patterns • representing and describing patterns • growing and shrinking patterns 	<p>Paraphrase children’s pattern construction.</p> <p>Adult: “Jose said that if the CN Tower is taller than the SkyDome, and the SkyDome is taller than our building, then the CN Tower is taller than our building, too. How does Jose know that?”</p> <p>The question invites the child to describe the pattern.</p>

School-age Children (5 to 8 years)



4. Cognition (cont'd)

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
4.9 Spatial Relations, Directions, Map	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding left and right • giving clear, well-organized directions • representing depth in drawing • using maps • creating maps 	<p>Make a map of the room with children. Cut out shapes to stand for furniture and equipment. Use the map and shapes to plan room changes with children.</p> <p>These activities engage children in practising spatial skills.</p>
4.10 Temporal Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding of continuum of time • using conventional units of time (hours, minutes) 	<p>When children are doing long-term projects, invite them to record their activities on a calendar.</p> <p>Engage them in discussions that compare the time spent on each element of the project.</p> <p>Invite them to use the calendar to determine the amount of time and make comparisons. This can be a part of project review and decision-making.</p> <p>Recording and discussing the time lines of the project encourages children to think about time in activity units and in conventional units of time. They may create temporal order by describing the beginning, middle and end of the project (a continuum of time).</p>
4.11 Games with Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conforming to the rules of the game • using strategies to improve performance during the game 	<p>Play cards with children as an equal.</p> <p>Reducing adult power encourages children to think for themselves and not depend on adults for answers.</p>

School-age Children (5 to 8 years)



5. Physical

Domain and Skills	Indicators of the Skill	Interactions
5.1 Gross Motor Skills <i>Running</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increasing control, speed and coordination 	<p>Play dodge ball with children. Dodge ball engages children in running and changing speed and direction.</p>
<i>Jumping</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> jumping vertically increases in height standing broad jump increases in length 	<p>Play skipping games with children. Turn the rope and recite jumping rhymes while children combine jump rope tricks. Children in this activity increase agility and strengthen jumping skills.</p>
<i>Throwing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> throwing speed, distance and accuracy improve 	<p>Play 4-square with children. It requires throwing co-ordination and accuracy as children throw balls into designated squares.</p>
<i>Catching</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> catching small balls over greater distances 	<p>Play softball with children. It requires that children catch and throw over differing distances.</p>
<i>Kicking</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> kicking speed and accuracy improve 	<p>Play target games like soccer where children kick a ball at a target. This will support children's increasing ability to run and kick with increasing co-ordination and accuracy.</p>

Into Practice

Early Learning for Every Child Today

A framework for Ontario early childhood settings



Into Practice

Day-to-day experiences and interactions among early childhood practitioners, children and their families should reflect the principles and an understanding of children’s development.

The following examples illustrate how early childhood settings and practitioners can put the principles and understanding of child development into action.

In home child care

Elmira cares for five kindergarten-age children in the afternoons. Every day she walks to the neighbourhood school at 11:30 am to pick up the children.

Lately, the children have been spending time playing with marbles in the afternoon.

Today they have set up a spontaneous game, using small blocks to make pathways for their marbles.

Recognizing this as an opportunity to build on children’s interests and abilities, Elmira has collected several empty shoe boxes and brings them out for the children.

Nearby are markers, tape, scissors, string, small slips of paper.

She asks the children, “How do you think these boxes could be part of the game?”

In an Ontario Early Years Centre

At 8:30 am every Friday morning Petra, an early childhood educator employed in an Ontario Early Years Centre based in a small town, drives to a nearby village and sets up toys, equipment and some refreshments in a church meeting room.

She is soon joined by parents, other caregivers and their young infants who range in age from two to six months. Most of the group participated in a public health prenatal group and have continued to meet each week.

Petra begins the morning by greeting each new arrival and listening to accounts of first smiles, sleepless nights and introducing solid foods. She often joins into the conversation and answers questions. She also points out the emerging skills.

Petra turns to Dorothy, mother of four-month-old Carmen, and says, “Look at how Carmen is reaching out to grab the cup you are holding – she is really determined to get hold of that handle.”

By admiring Carmen's determination to achieve her goal, Petra draws attention to how early learning is promoted in Dorothy and Carmen's everyday interactions.

In a preschool community child care centre

Carla works in a preschool community-based child care centre located in a downtown school in a large city. The children are following the construction of a high-rise building next door with great interest.

During outdoor times, the tricycles and wagons have been unused for several days while the children line up at the fence and watch the comings and goings of diggers, front-end loaders and cranes.

One day, Carla moved the tricycles, wagons and some large empty boxes down by the fence. She notices that Pedro has sat down on one of the tricycles and is moving it back and forth making a vrrrrrr sound.

Before long, Pedro is joined by three other children and they are orchestrating tricycles and wagons around an area they name “the building site.”

Carla takes an active role in the children’s play. She joins the children and asks if they would like to put a large fence up around the building site.

Pedro says, “Yes, and we will need to make big signs that say *Danger* and *Keep Out*.” Carla decides to extend the time outside today and joins in the new developments.

A week later the building site is still a popular area of the playground and now includes a digging area in the sand box; structures made out of blocks, tubes and boxes; and numerous picture and word signs giving directions for construction vehicles and warning of dangers.

The children are asking more and more questions about how the construction vehicles work and debating about what are the proper names for each of them. Carla does not know the answers to many of their questions. Today she has brought in several picture books about construction vehicles from the nearby library.

Excitement in community events and the children's keen interest are the starting points from which Carla creates a platform in pretend play to elaborate the children's learning, literacy and development.

In a nursery school program

Jonathon is an early childhood educator working in a nursery school program that is part of a large multi-service agency. Four-year-old Carlos started the program a month ago. Carlos speaks Portuguese at home and his mother wants him to know English before he starts junior kindergarten in six months.

Carlos spends time watching other children play. He follows the daily routines and seems to understand what is being said at snack time and group time but he speaks very little.

Carlos's mother asks Jonathon to do more to help Carlos acquire English.

She wants to take home some picture books with simple text that she can read at home in English. Her own English is limited but she thinks that she should start only speaking English at home.

Jonathon says, "It is a very good idea to read books with Carlos. What kinds of books do you think would interest him most? If I give you some storybooks without text—you and Carlos could tell the story together in Portuguese. We use the same books here and tell the story in English. Carlos's ability to understand and speak Portuguese will help him as he learns English. And he is learning – he already understands a lot of English. We usually learn to speak a language by understanding before we speak. Would you come early one day next week when you are picking up Carlos? I would like to have you join our group time and introduce all the children and me to a few Portuguese words."

Jonathon demonstrated respect for Carlos and his mother. His knowledge of how language emerges from understanding produced many points from which Carlos and his peers could continue their language learning.

In a workplace child care centre

Elisa works in a workplace child care centre with toddlers. Families using the program include professional, two-income earning parents who are working in offices nearby and parents who are employed in the nearby garment industry.

Most of the families are newcomers to Canada and living on low incomes.

Elisa wants to create a learning environment that respects diversity and identity while creating clear access to personal items during busy drop off and pick up routines.

She uses a digital camera to take pictures of all the children and their families to paste in their cubbies and on their diaper boxes.

In coordinated Kindergarten and child care programs

Anna is a teacher in two Junior-Senior Kindergarten classes in which children attend on alternate days. Many of the children attend an on-site child care centre on alternative days and before and after the Kindergarten program.

Anna and Mercedes, the child care program supervisor, have organized a common place for coats and cubbies in the hallway between the kindergarten class and child care room. The children attending both Kindergarten and child care are able to keep their personal belongings and messages and art to take home in one place.

Mercedes and the school principal are meeting to prepare a joint professional development session on play and early literacy for the child care staff and Kindergarten teachers.

The principal invited the child care staff to participate in the teachers' orientation session on the new Kindergarten program.

Coordinating space, routines and staff learning and development helps reduce stress and remove barriers to learning and communication.

In Francophone Junior Kindergartens

Marie is a Junior Kindergarten teacher in a Francophone school in an urban setting. Four-year-old Pauline is dropped off at Kindergarten in the morning by her father, Jonathon.

Marie greets both Pauline and her father in French. Jonathon replies in English, mentioning that he really does not understand much French.

His wife, Josephine, is from a Francophone family and she wants Pauline to learn French.

Marie asks Jonathon if he would like to join a parents' meeting next week that is going to discuss ways that families who do not regularly speak French at home can support their children to acquire a strong foundation in French before they enter Grade 1.

Connecting families with other families who have the same goals for their children's acquisition of French and English ensures the exchange of meaningful ideas and a rich resource for dual language learning.

In parenting centres

Saima is a parenting worker who works in a parenting centre located in a public school where families can connect with each other, can find out about resources and engage in their children's play and learning.

Zhing has just turned 3 years old and he and his family have recently arrived from China. His mother Ying Hi has been attending the parenting centre where she has made friends, is learning English and has recently been offered employment in a downtown business.

Saima supported Ying Hi in getting a diagnosis of her child's speech and language delay and a space in the child care centre also located in the school.

The parenting centre has an early identification program using the medical backgrounds of participants and a partnership with Preschool Speech and Language to identify speech and language delays for non-English speaking children.

The Kindergarten teacher and early childhood educator from the child care centre have come to meet with Ying Hi in the parenting centre to explain that when Zhing starts child care and later, Junior Kindergarten, they will be aware and supportive of his language delay and that they will collaborate with the parenting worker as a team to encourage Zhing's continued acquisition of language through playful learning in the classroom.

Ying Hi is relieved to know that she and her son can continue to be a part of the parenting centre for the next couple of years.

The supportive network established through the parenting centre and school community has helped Ying Hi to feel that she belongs and her homesickness is disappearing.

In Aboriginal Head Start

Jonas is an elder who strengthens his community's culture by participating in the Aboriginal Head Start Program in his community. He retells stories of the four seasons and of how ancestors lived and honoured Mother Earth.

Some days Jonas tells stories of when he was a small boy and how he loved to live on the land and hunt with his family.

After Jonas's visits, the children reenact the hunt in pretend play.

They tell their own stories of first snowfalls, family life and community feasts. Denise, an Aboriginal early childhood educator who works in the program and other staff members, record Jonas's stories, the children's tales and pretend play.

With support from a culture and language initiative, the Centre publishes the stories with Cree and English text and art and pictures created by children and their families.

Jonas, the children, the Aboriginal early childhood educator and community members have created a unique and valuable tool for promoting their culture and language.

The books are available for children in the reading centre and in the family resource room to be taken home.

Practice guidelines describe how early childhood practitioners can organize the environment and interact with children.

The specific items in the **practice guidelines** anchor professional practice within all early childhood settings, ensuring that practice is consistent with the six principles and an understanding of child development.

The **practice guidelines** are a tool to appraise how *Early Learning for Every Child Today* is used in different settings using different curriculum approaches.



Principles and Understanding of Development

Practice

Early child development sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health.

The Continuum of Development identifies root skills that emerge and are practised in the early years and are important both in their own right and as foundations of later development.

A skill may appear in infant, toddler, preschool and school-age groups, indicating pathways that emerge early and are elaborated over time.

- Support learning within the context of families and communities.
- Work with families in their communities to surmount barriers to optimal early development.
- Support learning with experiences that extend children's competence but do not overwhelm their abilities.
- Support self-regulation because these skills lead to physical, social, emotional, behavioural and cognitive competence.
- Promote children's growing autonomy and cooperation. Balance responsive relationships with setting and reinforcing limits that enable children to participate successfully in the group.
- Encourage behaviours that promote healthy choices and well-being.

Partnerships with families and communities strengthen the ability of early childhood settings to meet the needs of young children.

Using *The Continuum of Development*, families and early childhood professionals can exchange information about children's early development.

- Engage in meaningful communication, establishing and building respectful relationships with families that enable children to enjoy and benefit from early learning opportunities.
- Amplify families' involvement in their children's early learning and development.
- Connect families to other community resources and work together with families and other professionals to support all children's learning and development needs.
- Engage in ongoing exchange of information with families.
- Review children's developmental progress with parents.
- Link with communities to expand opportunities for children and their families; connect families to community resources and services as needed; and support dual language and mixed culture families by inviting them to take part.
- Make extra efforts to ensure families who are newcomers to Canada can find information and services that they need.
- Follow-up on referrals.
- Share research with families.
- Connect families with each other, particularly those that share the same language.



Principles and Understanding of Development

Practice

Demonstrating respect for diversity, equity and inclusion is a prerequisite for optimal development and learning.

At the core of respecting diversity is the flexible creation of curriculum that is responsive to individuals.

The Continuum of Development makes it possible for practitioners to observe a child's development and then create curriculum to extend and expand learning.

- Recognize the rights of children.
- Create a sense of belonging and acceptance where every child experiences a feeling of being valued by others. Then model acceptance, respect and flexibility in interactions with all learners.
- Create learning environments for the full participation of all children that include adaptations for children with special needs.
- Set up a learning environment with books, print materials and other artifacts in French, English, Aboriginal and other home languages that respect and promote language and literacy learning and that reflect diversity in unbiased ways.
- Accommodate the needs of children who are learning French or English in addition to their home language.

A planned curriculum supports early learning.

Understanding development supports the ongoing observation and documentation of children's learning for the purpose of planning curriculum.

Planning involves the planning of strategies or ways to support skills.

The Continuum of Development includes interactions with examples of strategies that support the practice and extension of the skill.

- Plan curriculum that promotes continuous learning and development.
- Base curriculum planning and implementation on:
 - knowledge of children and their development
 - specific knowledge of children in the program including children's prior knowledge, individual children's needs and approaches to learning and children's interests
 - skills and individual ways of exploring and experimenting.
- Take into account children's knowledge, abilities and point of view.
- Plan and implement curriculum in social, emotional, cognitive, language and physical domains.
- Plan curriculum using a variety of strategies that include hands-on, concrete experiences.
- Engage in ongoing observation of play, exchange of information with parents.
- Use of a variety of methods to document learning to determine how to plan and adapt curriculum and create learning goals for individuals and the group.
- Plan indoor and outdoor environments that include equipment and materials that facilitate learning and development.
- Plan the use of time schedules and routines that are organized to facilitate development.



Principles and Understanding of Development

Practice

Play is a means to early learning that capitalizes on children's natural curiosity and exuberance.

Understanding child development leads to an appreciation of the role of play.

The Continuum of Development identifies skills that are learned and practised in play and gives examples of adult interactions that support early learning in the context of play.

- Create learning environments and caring communities where children play collaboratively and participate together in the daily routines.
- Create learning indoor and outdoor environments in distinctive areas for different types of play and participation.
- Observe children's play to inform planning, including changes to the environment.
- Engage in continuous supervision supporting exploration, well-being and safety.
- Take an active role in play with the children.
- Promote play that offers challenge and that is within the child's capacity to master by creating opportunities for play where children can learn, practise and extend their skills.
- Use a range of strategies in play to help children extend thinking and learning.
- Provide for play with opportunities for children to plan and select many of their own activities and provide choice so that children can select among types of social play, activities, projects and play areas.
- Promote play that is the platform for literacy, numeracy and inquiry.
- Promote children's pretend play as a primary mode of learning.
- Use play as an opportunity to model acceptance, respect, empathy and co-operative problem solving strategies: create situations that encourage children to co-operate; balance individual with group needs; provide experiences that expand children's capacity to verbally exchange ideas and feelings with others where children learn from each other as well as adults.
- Explain the role of play in early learning and development.

Knowledgeable, responsive early childhood professionals are essential.

The Continuum of Development builds on early childhood professionals' existing knowledge of children in their programs and the pedagogy of play.

Through ongoing observation and use of *The Continuum of Development*, early childhood professionals extend their knowledge of development and learning.

- Base curriculum on the evidence of research, their knowledge, the wisdom of practice in the context of their communities.
- Integrate theoretical frameworks, scientific findings and their own daily experiences to guide their interactions with young children and their families.
- Create supportive, trustworthy and pleasurable relationships that enable children to enjoy and benefit from early learning opportunities.
- Figure out how the children in their program think, learn and make sense of the world so that they can create the starting point for continued learning.
- Engage in ongoing interactions with parents in which they share their observations and communicate the basis of their curriculum planning and implementation.

Assessment, Evaluation and Monitoring

Early Learning for Every Child Today

A framework for Ontario early childhood settings



Assessment, Evaluation and Monitoring

Quality early childhood settings use ongoing assessments and systematic evaluations to gather information on children's learning and development and the quality of the program.

Results benefit children by informing decisions about pedagogy and curriculum. The assessments and evaluations support reciprocal communications with parents and are sensitive to the cultural and community context of children's lives.

Monitoring early child development at the community level helps practitioners understand how well individual early childhood settings are meeting the needs of families with young children.

Early Learning For Every Child Today has an impact on three levels and can align itself with other measurement approaches currently in use in Ontario early childhood settings.

The terms “assessment,” “evaluation” and “monitoring” are often interchanged with each other. In the context of this document, the term “assessment” is used when focusing on individual children. “Evaluation” will refer to early childhood settings and the implementation of the framework. “Monitoring” will be mainly associated with identifying and measuring the impact of *Early Learning for Every Child Today*.

Assessment, evaluation and monitoring are conducted in early childhood settings for the following reasons (Kagan et al., 1998):

- Child assessment to observe, document and support children's development.
- Child assessment to identify possible developmental problems.
- Program evaluation of quality.
- Community monitoring of program impact.
- Provincial monitoring of program impact for public policy analysis and accountability.

When considering ways to assess children's development, it is impossible to see a child as separate from his/her family and community, nor it is likely to be productive to evaluate a program without considering the impact, role and expectations of the surrounding community or, finally, the overall context of Ontario's early learning and care system.

Early childhood settings can help to change the daily lives of children and their families and, given enough resources, can transform whole communities.

Assessment of the Child

Assessment is based on observation and documentation of what children's experiences are and how they illustrate emerging developmental skills.

The primary purpose is to support curriculum planning that is based on where the child is at and what interests the child.

Early childhood practitioners document individual levels of knowledge and abilities as a basis for planning curriculum and they record the progress of development and learning over time, in order to ensure that the child is benefitting from the early childhood setting.

Practitioners use information from continuous assessments about individual children to plan curriculum and to tailor interactions that respond to their strengths and needs. This information ensures that the program meets its goals for children's learning and developmental progress and can inform what improvements are needed to improve the program.

Further, systematic assessments help to identify children who may be experiencing developmental difficulties and may need additional developmental assessment and specific interventions.

The Kindergarten Program outlines a framework for assessment and evaluation strategies. Assessment is viewed as the gathering of evidence through observing what the child can do, say and apply.

That evidence is evaluated to determine the child's progress in achieving learning expectations, cognitive, social and emotional development.

Observation and Documentation

Continuous assessment through observation and documentation of each child's development is an essential part of the professional practice in early childhood settings. This is the child's right and it is crucial to delivery of programs that promote child development.

Early Learning For Every Child Today envisions the compilation of individual profiles of learning and development, based on *The Continuum of Development* (for example, observations, learning stories, children's creations and work) to create a holistic picture of the child's experiences and learning.

Assessments are intended to identify, document, support and promote children's learning and development; to this end, the continuum includes indicators of children's development and suggests possible methods of facilitating the documentation and communication of child development.

Families and other caregivers can contribute to assessments that are based on observation and documentation. They can bring forward what is meaningful to the child and expand practitioners' understanding about where the child is at and what the child can do.

Assessments that are organized into portfolios are conversation starters among practitioners and families that build everyone's understanding of child development.

Learning stories from early childhood programs offer snapshots of children's learning and development in action by describing actual, unique experiences (Carr, 2001; Dickinson, 2006). They document children's activities. Early childhood practitioners can assess what learning and development is taking place and plan for the next steps.

The observation, documentation and analysis of learning stories creates a sample of children's learning that is rich in context, articulate and complete in terms of the situation, the actions and the conclusion.

Learning stories are narrations that document children's engagement in learning experiences, including the analysis or assessment of that learning and the child's emerging developmental skills. The stories and assessments can be presented in children's portfolios for children, families and practitioners to read and re-read.

Learning stories from early childhood settings offer snapshots of children's learning and development in action by describing actual, unique experiences. They depict early childhood practice and the active involvement of adults and children in learning.

Learning stories show how development and learning are integrated in programs and how content is meaningful to children. They reflect the community and cultural and linguistic diversity.

Learning stories stay close to the children's real experiences and provide an alternative to mechanistic and fragmented approaches.

Learning stories allow early childhood practitioners to assess complex outcomes in early childhood that can be excluded from assessments. Simple and low level outcomes and goals often take their place.

Developmental Screening

Early childhood practitioners can use screening tools to identify special needs or delays in development that would indicate the need for intervention and referral to specialized services. In the early years, development is rapid, and it is crucial that early intervention occurs in a timely manner in order to be preventative in nature.

Identification of concerns or delays depends on knowledgeable and observant parents and professionals recognizing when the continuum of development is delayed or significantly atypical.

Screening tools are valuable for both parents and professionals as a means of sharing observations and discussing any concerns that may indicate the need for referral of additional support.

The *Nipissing District Developmental Screen* (NDDS) is used and recognized provincially as a general developmental screening tool. OEYC and other family support programs, Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, and early identification and intervention programs and many regulated child care programs are using NDDS with parents.

The report of the Expert Panel on the 18-Month Well Baby Visit recommended NDDS as part of the primary health care developmental review.

NDDS includes screens from one month to six years and is currently in use in Ontario Early Years Centres, Healthy Babies, Healthy Children programs and other family support programs. It is becoming more common in regulated child care programs and in junior kindergarten registration.

The NDDS is a tool that can support conversations among early childhood settings, primary health care and families. It is organized around children's physical, social, emotional, language, linguistic and cognitive domains of development.

Guidelines for Child Assessment

Concerns about assessing children's development and the use of the information that an assessment can provide are legitimate. Standardized assessments carried out in early childhood have limited validity for comparative or predictive purposes (Kagan et al., 1998). However, if properly carried out, assessment has an important role to play in planning and supporting children's learning, and for documenting and communicating this to parents and other professionals as relevant. It can also contribute to the identification of developmental difficulties.

The following principles apply to the assessment of children in early childhood settings:

- Observing and documenting the progress of young children is central to the practice of early childhood practitioners (NAEYC, 2005; College of Early Childhood Educators, 2005).
- Documentation of young children's learning must incorporate information from a variety of means, including observation in comfortable and natural settings, learning stories, samples of children's work and parental input, in addition to well-researched tools.
- Children should be assessed as individuals with unique patterns of development and learning, not assessed in comparison to others.
- Formal and informal assessment tools must be developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate.
- Assessments should be administered by professionals appropriately trained for the purpose and tools utilized, and results of assessments should be used only for the purposes for which they were designed; it is extremely important to differentiate between screening, documentation of current development and in-depth assessment and how the resulting information should be communicated and used.
- Results of assessments should not be used as a barrier to access to early childhood settings.
- The child must be the primary beneficiary of any assessment; individual assessments should not be aggregated for the purposes of evaluation of early childhood programs.
- The value of observations, learning stories and screening tools (such as the Nipissing Developmental Screen) for beginning the conversations with parents about their children's development should be recognized as a prime factor in the use of assessment results.
- When assessing the development of children who are new to Canada and/or have a first language other than French or English, it is essential to take these realities into account, particularly when assessing skills against a screen or standardized benchmarks.

Program Evaluation

Evaluating an early childhood setting is a multi-faceted affair; it must include consideration of its structural characteristics such as ratios, educational requirements and compensation.

However, this panel's considerations are primarily oriented towards the content of the program and the pedagogy, as well as the quality and type of interactions and relationships that support the children's development and learning.

The practice guidelines are a starting point to evaluate *Early Learning for Every Child Today's* impact on curriculum and pedagogy. The guidelines support the implementation of the framework and are to be used in addition to health, safety and nutrition requirements and structural characteristics such as ratios, educational requirements and compensation.

Early Learning for Every Child Today needs to be supported and evaluated by tools that respect the unique nature of each program, while ensuring a common set of evaluation criteria across the province.

Monitoring the Impact at the Community Level

Early childhood practitioners gain useful insights about children and their families when they are aware of children's development within the context of their community environment.

Communities influence child outcomes. The family within the community is the primary place where children grow and learn.

Being able to describe and understand the community is essential to curriculum development, individual program and service planning and assessing development. Understanding of the community is not limited to knowledge and understanding of children and families enrolled in an early childhood setting.

Inclusive programs strive to know, understand and involve those families that do not (from choice or otherwise) participate. Although the community context cannot be just reduced to maps, charts and statistics, knowing information about families including family income, education and occupation, immigration, languages spoken and available community resources helps to better understand the developmental opportunities that children need to thrive.

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is an accepted community level measure of early development at the time of entry to Grade 1 (Janus & Offord, 2000; Kershaw et al., 2006; Mustard, 2006). The EDI assesses domains that are closely aligned to the domains of development and many of the individual EDI items are reflected in *The Continuum of Development*.

Early childhood settings can use community data, including EDI data in context of other information about income, parental education, home languages to plan programs for young children and their families. Communities may choose to use community level EDI to establish specific targets and develop corresponding planning and monitoring mechanisms⁴.

⁴ For example, in 2005 the City of Toronto adopted 80th percentile EDI scores as benchmarks for community planning purposes.

Glossary

Early Learning for Every Child Today

A framework for Ontario early childhood settings



Glossary

Often even the simplest words such as those related to child care, development, learning, curriculum, standards and assessments for young children are burdened with unclear or different meanings depending on who is considering them.

Our objectives in preparing this glossary are to:

- inform practice using the best in international academic and scientific research, and
- enhance a shared understanding of the complexity of *Early Learning for Every Child Today*.

This glossary has been developed from the context of Ontario's Best Start Plan. The glossary defines essential and relevant terms, based on the shared values identified by the Expert Panel on Early Learning informed by academic, researched-based definitions as well as including definitions from Best Start documents and other Expert Panels.

Belonging

– the experience of security, inclusion, respect and competence in a group setting.

Best Start Demonstration Sites

– the three communities in Ontario, Hamilton, Lambton/Chatham-Kent and Timiskaming, selected to implement all components of Best Start, while all other communities implement only Phase I components. The demonstration communities were chosen to provide a mix of urban, rural and Francophone/northern communities. Lessons learned in the demonstration communities will be used to enhance the roll-out of Best Start across the province (Best Start Glossary).

Child assessment

– the process of noticing children's learning and development, recognizing its significance, and responding in ways that foster learning. It means documenting some of what children can do and how they do it in order to make learning visible (Ministry of Education, New Zealand).

Child outcome standards

– clear, specific descriptors of broad developmental goals (Bennett 2004) and milestones or stepping stones toward the achievement of developmental milestones (ShIPLEY 2002), based on a thorough knowledge of development, both general and individual (Early Childhood Education Consortium, 2005) in all domains, including health and physical well-being, social competence, emotional well-being; cognitive development and approaches to learning; development of communication, language(s) and symbols systems; creativity and specific, relevant knowledge about their community and culture(s).

Child with special needs

– includes any child who displays challenges in learning and functioning in one or more areas of development and increased vulnerability to environmental and non-environmental stresses (Allen et al., 2006), and who may require additional assistance, planning or support.

Cognition

– the construction of knowledge, learning strategies and ways of thinking and reasoning that enable children to learn about themselves, others and the world they live in.

Continuum of Development

– a description of growth and learning of the sequences of development that make up root skills and their indicators, organized into developmental domains with interactions that demonstrate how adults support the child’s learning and development, that represents the continuity, progression, inter-connectedness, complexity and unique timetables of children’s development, across different social contexts and over time. The developmental continuum represents stages as approximations only. Individual children, as well as groups of children, can be in various stages of development across domains depending on a range of variables.

Culturally responsive practice

– practice which reflects and celebrates our pluralist society and allows children to develop and learn while experiencing a sense of belonging and respect.

Culture

– the understandings, patterns of behaviour, practices and values shared by a group of people. Children and families may identify as belonging to more than one culture.

Curriculum

– the sum total of experiences, activities and events which occur within an inclusive environment designed to foster children’s well-being (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996, learning and development, created by early childhood practitioners in collaboration with children and parents).

Development

– a description of the relatively stable and predictable sequences of growth and change toward greater complexity, organization and internalization that occur at varying and unique rates, patterns and timing, as a result of interactions between biological maturation and environmental influences, including relationships, experiences, social and cultural backgrounds (NAEYC, 1987).

Developmental difficulties

– a behaviour or learning problem or challenge that could interfere with children’s optimal development (McCain & Mustard, 1999).

Diversity

– differences and uniqueness that each child brings to the early learning setting including values and beliefs, culture and ethnicity, language, ability, education, life experiences, socio-economic status, spirituality, gender, age and sexual orientation

Documentation

– The collection of learning stories, observations, language samples, children’s drawing and early attempts at writing, etc., for the purpose of demonstrating and sharing evidence of development and learning with parents and others.

Domain of development

– a broad area or dimension of development, each equally important to the child’s learning, health and well being, and including social, emotional, language, cognition and physical.

Early childhood education

– professional practice which includes the assessment and promotion of the well-being and holistic development of children through the planning and delivery of inclusive play-based learning and care programs within the context of diverse family, school and community groups (College of ECE).

Early childhood educator

– an early childhood practitioner who has an ECE credential from a postsecondary institution.

Early childhood practitioner

– an adult who works in the field of ECE, including early childhood educators, family child care providers, family resource personnel, Kindergarten teachers and OEYC staff, in partnership with families and collaboration with other professionals.

Early childhood professional

– all practitioners in early childhood settings who are represented on the Best Start Quality and Human Resources Career Ladder/lattice including: early childhood educator, lead early childhood educator, resource teacher, interventionist, resource consultant, family resource/OEYC practitioner, home child care coordinator/visitor, Junior/Senior Kindergarten teacher, centre director/supervisor, executive director.

Early childhood settings

– all programs that provide early learning and care to more than five children not of common parentage under twelve years of age for a continuous period including child care centres, Kindergarten, family support program, family child care, nursery schools, school readiness programs, preschool programs and preschool early intervention group.

Early Development Instrument (EDI)

– a teacher-completed checklist that measures Kindergarten children’s readiness to learn at school in five domains: physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills and general knowledge. It is intended to help communities assess how well they are doing in supporting young children and their families and assist in monitoring changes (Best Start Glossary).

Early identification and intervention

– refers to screening and other approaches to identify the early signs or symptoms of a problem with health or child development, as well as the services provided to help correct or resolve the problem. Problems that are identified and responded to early are less likely to have a long-term impact on a child’s development. Examples of early identification and intervention programs include: Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, 18-Month Well Baby Visit, Preschool Speech and Language, Infant Hearing Program, Preschool Intervention Program for Children with Autism (Best Start Glossary).

Early learning and care

– see early childhood settings.

Early learning environment

– an environment focused on relationships between children, parents and early childhood professionals that provides care, nurturing and education as a complex and coherent whole, with the goals of holistic development and overall well-being. It includes schedules, routines, physical environment, interactions, materials, activities and experiences.

Early learning team

– those who provide the daily learning and care program, including early childhood educators, early childhood assistants, Kindergarten teachers, educational assistants, family support practitioners, and may include special needs service professionals if they are part of the daily program delivery.

Early learning standards

– describe the expectations for the learning and development of young children across the domains of: health and physical well-being, social and emotional well-being; approaches to learning; language development and symbols systems; general knowledge about the world around them (Early Childhood Education Consortium, 2005).

Emotional well-being

– the degree to which children feel at ease, act spontaneously, show vitality and self-confidence, indicating their basic needs have been satisfied (OECD, 2004).

Empathy

– an awareness of and responsiveness to the emotions of others, that develops into the ability to understand and feel concern for the feelings and needs of others.

Equitable outcomes

– clear, specific descriptors of culturally and individually appropriate pattern(s) of development, and the steps to the next stage, recognizing the wide diversity in both individual and group development across domains (Early Childhood Education Assessment Consortium, 2005).

Evaluation

– the process of reviewing early childhood settings and programs for evidence of practices that support *Early Learning for Every Child Today*, quality and effectiveness of programs across the province, using a common set of criteria, in order to make decisions about the impact of the framework and the need for change.

Evidence-based Practice

– the delivery of high-quality early learning and care programs based on the best empirical evidence available, in conjunction with professional judgment.

Experiences

– what children actually do with the provisions professionals make for them. Traditionally called activities, but experiences are broader. They are occasions for learning (Office of Childcare, 2004).

Guidance

– strategies used to support children’s self-control and development of empathy and social competence, while preserving each child’s sense of worth, autonomy, positive inclusion in the group and trust in the educator.

High risk

– a term used in early identification and intervention programs to describe a situation where, based on the results of a complete assessment and professional judgment, there is a serious risk that a child may not reach his/her potential and that the family may benefit from more intensive support (Best Start Glossary).

Inclusive practice

– practice which is based on the belief that all individuals have equal worth and rights, and which actively promotes acceptance and participation of all children and families in their programs, providing differential and appropriate learning support according to individual strengths, needs and background (Early Childhood Resource Teacher Network of Ontario, 1997).

Indicators

– behaviours or comments that are markers of what a child knows or does that show a particular skill is emerging, being practised or elaborated.

Inquiry

– the process of exploring, observing, gathering information, discovery of patterns and relationships in order to understand the environment.

Interactions

– adult-child interactions that support and enable the child’s learning and skill development.

Learning

– the process of adapting to new experiences and environments, and actively building new understanding from these new experiences upon the foundation of existing development and knowledge.

Learning stories

– a means of documenting children’s learning and development in action, through descriptions of actual unique experiences. Learning stories depict early childhood practice and the active involvement of adults and children in learning, showing how development and learning are integrated in programs and how content is meaningful to children, and reflecting community and individual cultural and linguistic diversity.

Literacy

– reading, writing and oral language abilities consisting of the following components: acquiring vocabulary and language, phonological awareness, knowledge of print, knowledge of letters and words, comprehension of meaning, awareness of story-telling, books and other texts, and seeing literacy as a source of knowledge, information and pleasure.

Monitoring

– identification and measurement at community and provincial levels, through the use of various tools, such as the Early Development Instrument and other relevant information.

Narrative

– an aspect of literacy which involves describing, sequencing and telling of ideas, events or stories.

Numeracy

– a proficiency mainly in mathematics that involves developing confidence and competence with numbers and measures, and requiring understanding of the number system, a repertoire of mathematical techniques, and an inclination and ability to solve quantitative or spatial problems in a range of contexts (UK Department of Education and Skills).

Observation

– the ongoing process of watching, listening and being attuned to children’s behaviour, emotional state, interests and abilities and patterns of development, in order to meet the needs of children and evaluate children’s development and learning.

Ontario Early Years Centres

– a series of centres across the province that provide support for families with children up to age six. The centres provide parenting programs and resources, play programs, screening and assessment services, and referrals to other early years services (Best Start Glossary).

Parents

– the person(s) primarily responsible for the day-day care of children and taking on commonly understood parenting role, including biological or adoptive parents, step-parents, legal guardians or extended family (grandparents, aunts or uncles, etc.).

Parent participation

– the range of strategies, actions, interactions and relationships in which parents engage on behalf of children’s well-being and learning (Office of Childcare).

Partnership

– relationships between families and service providers based on mutual trust and respect that are sensitive to family culture, values, language and composition.

Pedagogy

– the understanding of how learning takes place and the philosophy and practice that supports that understanding of learning.

Philosophy

– statement outlining the fundamental beliefs, values and ideals that are important to individuals involved in Early Childhood Education – directors/supervisors, practitioners, parents, families and community. A philosophy identifies what is special about (and fundamental to) the program, and is the basis for decisions about the way the program is managed and about its direction in the future (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2005).

Play

– a naturally occurring, freely chosen and non-literal activity in which children are intrinsically motivated, characterized by imagination, exploration, delight, capriciousness and a sense of wonder, that reflects the unique experience of children, and through which children express their ideas and feelings, and come to understand themselves, others and their world.

Play-based pedagogy

– an educational approach which builds upon children’s natural inclination to make sense of the world through play, where early childhood practitioners participate in play, guiding children’s planning, decision-making and communications, and extending children’s explorations with narrative, novelty and challenges.

Portfolio

– portfolios are a means of documenting a child’s learning over time. Portfolios may contain samples of artwork, writing, retellings of favourite stories, math work or any other collected evidence of the child’s learning and development. Both adults and children choose items for inclusion in portfolios.

Pretend play

– freely chosen involvement with people, materials and the environment, which reflects children’s perceptions, inspirations, imagination and creativity.

Professional expertise

– knowledge and pedagogy, based in observation and reflection, considered in relation to current theories, research and evidence-based practice, leading to best practices.

Projects

– in-depth investigations that include community field trips, community experts and relevant artifacts from home and community to promote learning.

Program standards

– indicators of quality in early learning and care programs whose success has been demonstrated by research, describing the human resources, supports, activities and methodology needed to promote children’s learning (Shore, Bodrova & Leong, 2004). These include characteristics such as staff qualifications, group size, ratio, environment, materials and supports available to children and families (Shore et al., 2004) in order to create optimal learning environments and equitable outcomes.

Quality

– components of early learning and care programs whose success has been demonstrated by research to contribute to optimal learning environments and equitable outcomes, including human resources, staff qualifications, group size, ratio, supports, methodology, environment, materials, activities and child and family supports. Quality must always consider the perspective and experiences of the child.

Reflective practice

– the systematic, reflective, collaborative process used by early childhood professionals to plan, evaluate, make decisions and create and implement change through consideration of relevant literature, current practice, learning environments, observations of children’s development, behaviour, social interactions, learning and knowledge of families.

Responsive relationships

– positive and beneficial interactions between adults and children that occur when adults observe and read children’s signals and communication and then respond with understanding to give the children a feeling of being cared for and cared about.

Root Skills

– skills that emerge and are practised in the early years, which are important in their own right, are the first steps along pathways for learning, behaviour, and health and are also valued as foundations of later learning and associated with lifelong health and learning.

Scaffolding

– a process involving the provision of opportunities for play and interaction that relate to children’s experiences and support from educators to help children move beyond their current levels of understanding and abilities (Vygotsky, 1934/1986).

Screening

– a process of identifying special needs or delays in development, using observation or specifically designed tools, such as the Nipissing Developmental Screen, for the purpose of referral to specialized services.

Seamless day

– describes a system of organizing and integrating services for young children so that they can move easily from one service (e.g., child care) to another (e.g., Junior Kindergarten), and the services are complementary and harmonized with one another, and contribute to healthy child development (Best Start Glossary).

Self Regulation

– the ability to monitor and control emotions, behaviour and attention.

Skills

– specific processes, abilities and competencies that exist within each domain of development and form the foundation pathways for learning and health that emerge early and are elaborated over time.

Social inclusion

– a philosophy, environment and practice that values all forms of differences and encourages a sense of belonging for all children and families.

Theory of Mind

– the awareness or understanding of how one’s thoughts and feelings influence one’s behaviour, and the understanding that other people also have thoughts and feelings that affect their behaviour.

Whole child

– a term used to convey the necessity of viewing development as a holistic, complex and interrelated process that includes the domains of emotional, social, cognitive, communication, language and physical learning, growth and well-being.

Appendices

Early Learning for Every Child Today

A framework for Ontario early childhood settings



Appendix 1

International Curriculum Framework Literature Survey Prepared for the Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning

Dr. Pat Dickinson, September 2005

The terms of reference for the Best Start Early Learning Program specify the intent to develop an early learning program for pre-school children that can link to, and ultimately integrate with, the Junior Kindergarten-Senior Kindergarten (JK/SK) learning program. This literature survey of existing curriculum frameworks was completed to support this intent.

Selection of Curriculum Documents and Organization of Review

The following documents are included in this review:

• Australia (Tasmania)	• Singapore
• Belgium (EXE)	• Sweden
• Canada (Quebec)	• United Kingdom (England)
• Finland	• UK (Scotland) (specifically Information Communication Technology ICT)
• Italy (Reggio Emilia)	• United States (High Scope)
• Japan	• United States (PreK Standards)
• New Zealand	• United States (Illinois State Curriculum)

The reviews have been organized using the following categories, as applicable/available:

- Definitions
- Context/Policy
- Overall Vision
- Intent of the Curriculum Framework
- Roles
- Organizational Structure
- Continuity between Pre-school Curriculum and School Age Programs
- Planning, Evaluation, Special Populations
- Issues/Special Relevant to Best Start/ELF

Background for the literature survey included a review of three sets of criteria for early childhood curriculum/guidelines:

- one from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) review of five curricula¹
- one from the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI)²
- and one from John Bennett, program manager of the OECD early childhood reviews.³

The criteria detailed in these three reviews provide a useful lens through which to view the curriculum frameworks outlined in this survey and from which to eventually construct a framework for the Early Learning Program.

To assist in this process these three sets of criteria have been summarized in a comparison chart included as Appendix 1a.

¹ Directorate for Education, OECD. (2004). *Starting strong: Curricula and pedagogies in early childhood education and care: Five curriculum outlines*. March 2004.

² Association for Childhood Education International. (2000-2002). *Global guidelines for early childhood*. <http://www.udel.edu/bateman/acei/wguides.htm>.

³ Bennett, John. (2004). *Curriculum issues in national policy-making*. Keynote address. Paris, OECD//Malta, EECERA.

Curricular/Pedagogical Approaches to Early Childhood Education

Bennett highlights two broad curricular/pedagogical approaches that are prevalent:

- the pre-primary approach (UK, Belgium, France, Netherlands)
- and the social pedagogic (Nordic and Central Europe).

Traditional pre-primary programs are often understood as the initial stage of organized instruction. Group sizes are large, ratios are high, programs are mainly teacher directed, and the emphasis is on standards and the evaluation of same.

Social pedagogical traditions value early childhood as distinctive from, albeit continuous with, formal elementary education. Bennett also notes that in countries promoting social pedagogic approaches, there is also a large national investment in early childhood resulting in smaller staff ratios, more opportunity for adult-child interaction, etc.

He provides the following comparison chart of the two approaches (See also Appendix 1b):

Pre-primary tradition	Social pedagogy tradition
Centralized development of curriculum, with frequently detailed goals and outcomes.	A broad central guideline with local curriculum development encouraged and supported.
A focus on learning standards, especially in areas useful for school readiness. Teacher-child relationships tend to be instrumentalized through reaching for detailed curriculum goals.	Focus on broad developmental goals as well as learning is stressed, interactivity with educators and peers encouraged and the quality of life in the institution is given high importance.
Often prescriptive: clear outcomes are set at national level to be reached in all centres.	Broad orientations rather than prescribed outcomes. A diffusion of goals may be experienced, with diminished accountability.
Assessment often required. Goals are clearly defined. Graded assessment of each child with respect to discrete competences is an important part of the teacher's role.	Assessment not required. Goals are broad, outcomes for each child are set by negotiation (educator-parent-child) and informally evaluated unless screening is necessary. A growing focus on individual language and communication competences.

While suggesting there is broad agreement on the principles and aspirations of early childhood programming in official curricular documents, Bennett notes a wide diversity of approach in implementation.

France, Ireland and Mexico follow strong pre-primary traditions, dictated in large part by programmatic and structural conditions (age-cohort groups, classrooms similar to primary school, high child/staff ratios).

Germany and Hungary, which have better child/staff ratios, mixed-age groupings, plentiful resources and materials, have a greater emphasis on play, wide choice of activities, well-trained staff who demonstrate high levels of interaction with children.

Canada and Korea were seen in Bennett's review as different from the other two groupings, both representing a relative balance between the two models (pre-primary and social pedagogic). For example, while Canada demonstrates aspects of the pre-primary tradition, this was balanced by relative freedom from province to province with regard to curriculum and ratios that were viewed more favourably than those in Mexico, France and Ireland.

Well-funded, universally accessible kindergartens in Canada were also seen as a plus. The devolution of responsibility for curriculum to the provinces was seen as positive; however to ensure success OECD teams encouraged the following measures: flexible, nationally agreed curricular frameworks; high quality pre- and in-service training linked to the national pedagogical framework; national monitoring and support systems to measure adherence to goals.

Generally, Bennett noted that obstacles to pedagogical quality arose not from a particular tradition, but from structural and orientation failures, in particular:

- The absence of structural supports that allow the implementation of quality curriculum.
- Inadequate pedagogical theory and practice.

Traditionally, the Nordic countries have benefitted from strong structural supports (desirable child-staff ratios, adequate training, resources and materials) that have allowed them to fully engage in the social pedagogy approach.

Those countries exemplifying the social pedagogic approach tend to have ratios of approximately 1:5-8 for the three-to-six year old age group, maximum group sizes of twenty, high levels of trained staff, staff trained on an equal par with primary school teachers; i.e., three-to-four year university degrees.⁴

⁴ OECD (2001). *Starting strong: Early childhood education and care.*, Appendix 1: An overview of ECEC systems in participating countries, 147-185.

In response to challenges about the appropriate focus on literacy, numeracy and technology goals in early childhood and the current demand for standards and accountability, Bennett identifies the following *options for progress*:

- The co-construction of agreed curricular or pedagogical frameworks (co-constructed with professionals, parents, children, community).
- Adequate program standards to allow curriculum implementation (highly trained staff; adequate investment in infrastructure (buildings, ratios, materials, resources); appropriate monitoring and support for accountability).
- Improved pre-primary curricula and practice (need to both reform inadequate practice and increase government investment in early childhood; more research is needed on the effect of current focus on early literacy, standards).
- Adaptation of frameworks to changing cultural needs (how best to integrate literacy, numeracy, technology into a child-focused, open, emergent curriculum that fully involves children, parents and community in decision-making).

A Canadian research perspective relevant to the increased emphasis on early literacy in the education of young children⁵ suggests that typical pre-school reading readiness activities only work for two-thirds of the children.

Trusted features of good practice identified throughout the OECD reviews include:

- favourable structural conditions;
- secure relationships ensured by permanent, experienced staff;
- the nurturing and upbringing atmosphere of centres;
- the attention to attitude formation and group socialization especially through modelling and living out desired behaviour;
- the encouragement of autonomy and self-directed learning, of group project work and a wide range of expressive activities (movement, art, drama photography, pottery, drawing, cookery, sport, outdoor activity);
- the outreach practised toward parents and communities.

An interesting comment in this article related to pedagogy was a suggestion that the traditional KSA context (knowledge, skills, attitude) should be flipped to reflect more of an ASK approach (attitude, skills, knowledge). It was felt that with the development of proper *attitude*, *skills* almost always develop and *content/knowledge* is there to be accessed as needed.⁶

An example of this would be emergent curriculum in which children/teacher introduce a topic of relevance after which both co-construct an in-depth knowledge of the topic while honing skills of inquiry, representation, aesthetic expression, etc.

⁵ Siefert, Kelvin. (2004). *Cognitive development and the education of young children*.

Paper prepared for Spodek, B. & Saracho, O. (Eds.) (2005). *Handbook of Research on the Education of Young Children*. Mahwah, NH: Erlbaum.

⁶ Bennett, John. (2004). *Curriculum issues in national policy-making*. Keynote address. Paris, OECD//Malta: EECERA.

A study investigating the impact of different approaches and levels of investment in early intervention on child outcomes⁷ concluded that the multiplicity of factors influencing child outcomes makes it very difficult to determine the relative impact of any one variable (such as pedagogical approach).

Similarities and differences were identified in curricula from various countries. Similarities included forward-looking, purposeful curricula which set expectations and were goal oriented.

Differences were found in the ages covered by the curriculum; which service it applies to; the type, principles and content of the curriculum; and the degree of prescription or autonomy in implementation.

Most countries focus on the three-to-six age group; exceptions include New Zealand, Tasmania and the Nordic countries that have developed curriculum addressing early childhood from birth onwards or from ages one-to-five.

Provision for children with special needs is gradually being brought within mainstream services. Each country has attempted to link curricula for early childhood services with entry to school in some way. This varies from a simple recognition of the importance of linkages, to an elaborate listing of the links between ECEC and school curriculum.⁸

In most curricula, pedagogy or the process of teaching and learning is as important as the curriculum; i.e., there are substantive sections on the importance of a particular process strategy such as documenting children’s work, encouraging responsibility and ownership, as well as on the specific outcomes that children are expected to achieve.

As indicated previously by Bennett, practice varies along the pre-primary/socio-pedagogical spectrum. Some of these differences also seem related to the overall goals of ECEC; i.e., school readiness or social entitlement/enhanced development.⁹

School readiness seems to be the primary focus in the curricula from England and the United States (US). The instructivist/constructivist distinctions are represented by these authors as follows (See also Appendix 1b):

Instructivist Approach	Constructivist Approach
Teacher-initiated-directed	Child-initiated
Teacher-centred	Child-centred
Didactic/traditional	Play-based, progressive
Basic academic skills	Personal/social development
Developmentally inappropriate	Developmentally appropriate
Product oriented	Process oriented
Formal/structured	Informal/emergent
Core knowledge	Children constructing their own knowledge

⁷ McQuail, Susan, Mooney, Ann, Cameron, Claire, Candappa, Mano, Moss, Peter, Petrie, Pat. (2003). *Early years and childcare international evidence project, October 2003*. Department for Education and Skills. Sure Start.

⁸ New Zealand Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te whariki: Early childhood curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media., p. 48-49, 54-55, 64-65, 72-73, 82-83, 94-98.

⁹ McQuail, Susan, Mooney, Ann, Cameron, Claire, Candappa, Mano, Moss, Peter, Petrie, Pat. (2003). *Early years and childcare international evidence project, October 2003*. Department for Education and Skills. Sure Start.

These authors position European countries with school-based systems (France and Belgium) and the United States within the Instructivist approach (along with England where parental preference dictates it in the private sector).

The Nordic countries, Germany, Reggio Emilia and aspects of the US High/Scope approach include key elements of the Constructivist approach.

Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain and the UK (England) were thought by these authors to sit somewhere in between these two approaches with a holistic view of children while also giving explicit priority to emergent literacy.

In general, pre-school experience can have a positive effect on developmental outcomes, but is not as powerful as family influences. Although early childhood services benefit disadvantaged populations most, pre-school experience benefits children from all social groups.

The length of years that a child attends ECEC service, particularly those of high quality, is positively related to outcomes, although whether the child attends part time or full time is not.

Features of quality include adult:child ratios and group size; education and working conditions of staff; stability and continuity of care.

Other factors affecting positive outcomes are the level of parent and community influence and parent satisfaction.¹⁰

A recent study from New Zealand showed that particular aspects of early education continue to be associated with children's scores in literacy, mathematics and social skills with peers as measured at age ten.

These aspects are flexible learning environments that focus on children's interests and engage children's minds by encouraging them to use language to think things through (as opposed to highly structured didactic teaching).¹¹

¹⁰ McQuail, Susan, Mooney, Ann, Cameron, Claire, Candappa, Mano, Moss, Peter, Petrie, Pat. (2003). Op cit.

¹¹ Wylie, C. (2001). *Why quality matters in early childhood education: The research evidence*. Paper presented at the New Zealand Council for Educational Research Conference, Early childhood Education for a Democratic Society. Wellington., NZ, October 2001.

Summary of Curriculum Framework Review

The development of early childhood curriculum seems to be a high priority in nearly all developed countries. This review provides a range of frameworks reflecting a broad spectrum of approaches for the Curriculum Workgroup to consider.

For example, the two frameworks from the United States (pre-k, Illinois Standards) are examples of the pre-primary tradition; Sweden and Finland reflect the socio-pedagogical tradition (both traditions are described by Bennett on p. 96).

Documents range from relatively brief pedagogical documents (Finland, Singapore, Japan, Quebec) to lengthy compendiums that provide extensive detail regarding standards, teaching methods, learning experiences, scenarios (New Zealand, England, Tasmania, United States: pre-k standards).

These more extensive documents tend to reflect the pre-primary tradition and have a much greater emphasis on early literacy, mathematics, technology. Some documents reflect elements of curricula that have existed for many years and have become institutionalized as particular approaches to early childhood curriculum (e.g., Quebec reflects a High/Scope approach; many curricula seem to contain certain elements of Reggio Emilia).

Other documents reflect a distinctive approach to early childhood curriculum that have been written specifically to address the unique profile of particular countries (e.g., New Zealand's *Te Whariki*; Tasmania's *Early Connections*, Finland's *National Curriculum Guidelines*). Some countries seem to have written curriculum mainly to adapt to changing social, cultural patterns and expectations for children in the modern day world (Japan, Singapore, Tasmania, Scotland).

Distinctions along the Instructivist/Constructivist dichotomy may be related more to program standards and structural issues than to pedagogical preferences; i.e., it is difficult to adopt a constructivist philosophy that allows children choice and freedom when group sizes and ratios are high and space and resources are limited.

As indicated previously, European countries with school-based systems (France and Belgium) and the United States are positioned within the Instructivist approach (along with England where parental preference dictates it in the private sector). The Nordic countries, Germany, Reggio Emilia and aspects of the U.S. High/Scope curriculum include key elements of the Constructivist approach. Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain and the UK (England) were thought to sit somewhere in between these two approaches with a holistic view of children while also giving explicit priority to emergent literacy.

A summary of these distinctions, along with a summary of the Overall Vision, Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF of each curriculum is included in Appendix 1c.

Reviews: Australia (Tasmania)

Essential Connections

Definitions:

Kindergarten: similar to our junior kindergarten (must have attained the minimum age of four on or by Jan. 1 in the year of admission; full or half-day; ten hours a week; optional attendance).

Preparatory: similar to our senior kindergarten (age five on or before Jan 1; full time compulsory).

Context:

Tasmania's population (456,652; 2001 census) constitutes 2.2 per cent of the total population of Australia (20 million) which is approximately the same percentage as New Brunswick (729,000) to the total population of Canada (30 million).

The Tasmanian Early Childhood framework was designed to co-ordinate early childhood/child care services for pre-schoolers with the newly-developed Tasmanian curriculum for early childhood education which includes children from ages four and up (See *Essential Learnings* and *Essential Connections* below). Both of these documents conceptualize children from birth onwards.

Essential Learnings, a mandated curriculum for schools to use from kindergarten (four year olds) through year ten, is the first curriculum in Tasmania designed for learners from birth to age sixteen.

Essential Connections provides a detailed explanation of the learning of children from birth to age five in relation to the *Essential Learnings Framework*. *Essential Connections* was created as part of the *Learning Together Initiative*, a partnership between the Department of Education and Early Childhood Australia, similar to the Association of Early Childhood Educators, Ontario (AECEO).

Ratios in schools are recommended rather than regulated and are similar to ratios for junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten in Ontario. One qualified* staff is required for every twenty-six children for combos of children between five-to-twelve, provided there are no more than eight children aged five.

**minimum of a two-year full-time or equivalent accredited post-secondary education in child care or education (early childhood).*

Intent:

Essential Connections is a practical document designed to help early years practitioners working with one-to-five year olds use the *Essential Learnings Framework* in planning and programming for young children's learning while meeting requirements for the Quality Improvement and Accreditation Systems (QIAS)* in those settings where they apply.

The *Essential Learnings Framework* is the required curriculum for Tasmanian schools; it is optional for Children's Services staff. It is welcomed by many child care staff because of the connection between the ways they already plan for learning and the five curriculum organizers: *Thinking, Communicating, Personal futures, Social Responsibility and World futures*.

*QIAS is a Commonwealth system that defines quality care in day care centres and provides a way to measure this quality and identify areas for on-going improvement.

Overall Vision:

Essential Connections and the *Essential Learnings Framework* both have a view about equity, respect, inclusiveness and the development of happy, successful children who can grow to lead fulfilling lives and to contribute to a caring society.¹²

Beliefs and Values underpinning the early years include *Partnerships, Learning, Educating and Diversity*.

Roles:

Partnerships are one of four beliefs underpinning the early years. Specific roles are not defined except to suggest that there should be effective communication between families and staff and between child care practitioners and teachers to enable continuous and integrated programs.

Organizational Structure:

The *Essential Learnings Framework* is just that – a framework – and it therefore needs the richness of real examples of children's learning to bring it to life.¹³

The *Essential Connections Guide* does this using the Essential Learning organizer and its Key Elements to provide key links between each Key Element and the '*Learning markers*' and individual '*Learning stories*' which offer snapshots of children's learning in action.

The *Learning markers* and *Learning stories* (which came from the research undertaken by five teams of practitioners across the State in real child care and school settings) have a true voice that helps readers to imagine 'their children' demonstrating similar learning.

¹² Department of Education, Tasmania. (2004). *Essential connections: A guide to young children's learning*. Hobart, Tasmania: Department of Education., p. 92.

¹³ Department of Education, Tasmania. (2004). *Essential connections: A guide to young children's learning*. Hobart, Tasmania: Department of Education., p.2-3.

Continuity between child care and school programs:

This is a clear strength since the two documents (*Essential Connections* and *Essential Learning*) are written for the same population, based on the same framework and are complementary in purpose and intent.

Planning, Evaluation, Special Populations:

Program Evaluation:

The Programming legislative standard requires centres to prepare a written program that is accessible to parents. Program evaluation is supported by the inclusion of a Self-Assessment Guide.

Individual Child Evaluation:

It is assumed that the Learning Markers in *Essential Connections* provide the basis for individual child evaluation but it is unclear whether Standard 1 is an exit standard from child care or an entrance standard into kindergarten (or neither or both).

Special Populations:

Diversity is one of the four beliefs underpinning this document; the developmental approach assumes that children will arrive at ‘markers’ at different rates.

Issues:

More in the form of praise than an issue, is the partnership (*Learning Together*) that created this document. Collaborative research that provided the material for the *learning markers* and *learning stories* resulted in a shared language about programs and goals for children. When these researchers observed and listened in high-quality environments, they saw ‘a rich and powerful child.’

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

This curriculum framework is of interest because of its comprehensiveness, unique organization/categories, intent and particular relevance to the Ontario situation.

The document is clearly linked to the existing document for the school years and both are developed from birth onwards. The school years context in Tasmania is similar to the Ontario context (school beginning at age four with two pre-school years).

It was developed within a collaborative research context based in real practice. The *Essential Learning Organizers* are minimalist, efficient and futuristic. The colour coding helps to organize the content. The language of the document is compelling; e.g., *Creating personal and world futures* (*Essential Learnings*), *Learning Markers* (*Benchmarks*), *Learning Stories* (*Evidence*).

A chart summarizes the entire curriculum, *Birth-to-Sixteen*. This is an excellent model for the ELF to consider when thinking of how to link to the junior kindergarten-senior kindergarten program.

Reviews: Belgium (Flanders)

EXE: Experiential Education – Effective Learning Through Well-Being And Involvement

Definitions:

Emotional well-being: the degree to which children feel at ease, act spontaneously, show vitality and self-confidence, indicating that their basic needs have been satisfied.

Involvement: concentration, strong motivation, fascination, a state of ‘flow,’¹⁴ Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development, all which lead to the concept of ‘deep-level learning.’

Context:

This curriculum originated when a small group of Flemish pre-school teachers and consultants began to reflect critically on their practice with particular attention to children as they seek ways to address the problems they meet. Gradually Experiential Education (EXE-theory) grew from these beginnings and has become an influential education model in both pre-school and elementary education in Flanders and the Netherlands. Since 1991 it has also been disseminated to other European countries.

Overall Vision:

The major goal of this curriculum is a search for quality in care and education.

What are the indicators of quality and how do you measure them once you have determined what they are? Rather than focus on either treatment (input, instruction, intervention) or outcomes (objectives, results), EXE-theory focuses on process, in particular on the degree of a child’s ‘emotional well-being’ and the level of ‘involvement.’

An added component is ‘linkedness’; i.e., the development of (future) adults who are self- confident, mentally healthy, curious, expressive, imaginative, well-organized, entrepreneurial, with developed intuitions about the social and physical world and with a feeling of belonging and connectedness to the universe and all its creatures.¹⁵

¹⁴ Csikszentmihayli, Mihayli. (1979). *The concept of flow*. In B. Sutton-Smith, *Play and learning* (p. 257-273). New York: Gardner.

¹⁵ Directorate for Education, OECD. (2004). *Starting strong: Curricula and pedagogies in early childhood education and care: Five curriculum outlines*. March 2004, p. 7.

Organizational Structure:

Ten types of initiatives were identified through teacher experience as favourable to the encouragement of well-being and involvement. The first six focus on the organization of materials and the provision of interesting materials and activities; item seven focuses on social relations, eight on supporting children’s exploration of feeling, thoughts and values and nine-to-ten focus on children with special needs.

Planning, Evaluation, Special Populations:

A major focus of the program is on evaluation in three major areas:

- A child’s ‘deep-level learning’ is assessed with the Leven Involvement Scale (LIS).
 - The interaction between teacher and children is assessed using the Adult Style Observation Schedule (ASOS) which is built around the three dimensions of stimulation, sensitivity and giving autonomy.
 - How well each child is doing in nine domains of development is assessed in real life situation at least three times a year using the Process-oriented Monitoring System (POMS).
-

Issues:

It is unclear whether this is primarily a curriculum framework or an assessment/evaluation tool.

If, in fact, assessment has a direct impact on programming, then this may be a reasonable approach for developing greater professional awareness and accountability around the major vision of this curriculum (to improve overall quality in care and education).

The designers of EXE-theory are explicit about focusing on the process (in particular the degree of a child’s ‘emotional well-being’ and the level of ‘involvement’) rather than on instruction or outcomes.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

Provides valuable assessment tools for evaluating children’s process outcomes (deep level learning and eight domains of development), as well as social interaction between adults and children.

May be more useful to the Measurement than the Curriculum Workgroup.

Reviews: Canada (Quebec)

Definitions:

Child Care Centres: provide educational child care for children from birth to kindergarten age, and meet the parents' child care needs.

Play: An activity that has pleasure as its principal characteristic. It assumes the child's free will; it cannot be imposed on the child.

Context:

In 1996, the Government of Quebec established full-day kindergarten (pre-school) for five year olds, created many new child care centres and proposed the development of an Educational Program for child care centres that would be consistent with the pre-school education program. A Quebec adaptation of the American High/Scope approach, emphasizing the development of the whole child, was distributed to child care centres with particular reference to disadvantaged children.¹⁶

Quality is one of the cornerstones of Quebec's child care expansion which also promotes the importance of well-paid, trained staff (four year degree for kindergarten teachers with mandatory practice in both kindergarten and elementary; two-thirds of staff in child care centres must have a college diploma or university degree in ECE.)

Overall Vision:

The Educational Program aims to foster the full and harmonious development of children; i.e., the realization of their full potential in every dimension of the being.

It emphasizes the development process (social-emotional, moral, linguistic, cognitive and psychomotor) rather than the acquisition of specific skills or the potential product of a child's action.

What is important is the children's ability to interact constructively with their environment, which may mean objects, people or even bits of information they receive.

Intent of the Curriculum:

The program was developed with the firm conviction that all those directly concerned – children, parents and educators (including persons responsible for home day care) – will take advantage of it.

This pre-school program common to all child care centres will make it easier to achieve continuity with the Quebec schools and to promote integration with social service agencies and other community agencies.

¹⁶ Government du Quebec. Ministère de la Famille et de l'Enfance. (1998). *Educational program for childcare centres*.

Roles:

Educators, child care personnel, trained child care teachers, untrained child care staff:

are responsible for providing the early childhood program in a child care setting.

Providers: are responsible for providing the early childhood program in a home setting.

Parents: play an important role on boards of directors, participation in daily life of the centres, full co-operation with the child care centre in applying the educational plan.

Children: are the primary agents of their development; they learn by acting, manipulating, exploring, experimenting, expressing themselves, observing and listening.

Organizational Structure:

The program is based upon five pedagogical principles:

- Each child is a unique person.
- Child development is a comprehensive, integrated process.
- Children are the primary agents of their development.
- Children learn through play.
- Co-operation between educators and parents contributes to the harmonious development of the child.

Influenced by the High Scope model, these guiding principles are developed into approximately 25 applications concerning the organization of space, the organization of activities and the educator-child relationship. The workshop consists of activities based on a theme that a child chooses to do. Within that choice, however, the child is encouraged to follow the plan-do-evaluate cycle.

The program includes some concrete examples of different aspects of daily life at the child care centre that take into account the particular features of each child care centre (collective or home environment), the needs of each child, the experiences of each educator and the contribution made by all the families involved.

Planning, Evaluation and Special Populations:

Program Evaluation: This was not addressed in the Educational Program.

Individual Child Evaluation: This requires the educator to observe the children from the perspective of their development as whole persons, to identify those who might tend to take part in activities in a way that fails to optimize their development as whole persons.

Issues:

It has been difficult in the face of cutbacks from a new government to implement this reform in a smooth and timely fashion given the popularity of the program and demand from families.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

This approach is built on an evidence-based curriculum that has demonstrated positive results. It provides a fairly open and flexible structure within which local programs can modify and adapt to their own realities.

Adopting this curriculum was an efficient way to provide direction within the rushed time-frame for childcare expansion in Quebec.

The Quebec document shows how the original High/Scope model has been molded somewhat to fit the provincial context.

Reviews: Finland

Definitions:

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): publicly operated, supervised and supported programs that comprise care, education and teaching. ECEC services include daycare centres, family daycare, various community-based activities, pre-school education (see context below) and children in compulsory education (age seven) if they use ECEC services.

Context:

Parents have approximately forty-three weeks of parental leave, followed by a period until the child is three when that they can opt to either care for their child at home on care leave and receive child home care allowance, child care in a private day care with the private child care allowance or in a municipal day care. As of 1996, the parents of all children under school age are guaranteed the right to a space in a day care provided by their local authority.

Children enter formal schooling in Finland at age seven and may attend a free voluntary program of pre-school education annually during the academic year. This would be comparable to full-day kindergarten although it is provided for six year olds and can be provided either in day care or school settings.¹⁷

A central resource for ECEC is competent staff. One staff in three of the staff must have a post-secondary level degree (Bachelor of Education, Master of Education or Bachelor of Social Sciences). Pre-school teachers are required to have either a bachelor or master's degree in education or a bachelor degree in social sciences with an additional pedagogical course.

Overall Vision:

The principal target of ECEC is to promote the child's overall well-being so as to ensure the best possible conditions for growth, learning and development.

The child is able to enjoy the company of other children and educators, experiencing joy and freedom of action in an unhurried, safe atmosphere.

The child is interested in his environment, and can direct his energy to play, learning and everyday activities with an appropriate level of challenge.

¹⁷ Valimäki, Anna-Leena, Lindberg, Paivi. (2004) *National curriculum guidelines on early childhood and care in Finland*. Helsinki; 26 Aug. 2004, p. 12.

Intent of the Curriculum Framework:

The *National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland* are intended to promote equity in the provision of ECEC throughout Finland, guiding both the development and the quality of activities by introducing uniform organizational principles. The curriculum guidelines form the basis for the development of local and unit-specific ECEC curricula.

Roles:

Educator: A multi-professional staff, who build a common ECEC culture by following the values and modes of action defined and jointly agreed in national policy documents.

Parents: Parents have the primary right to and responsibility for their child's education.

Child: Children's well-being is promoted while at the same time reinforcing considerate behaviour and action toward others and a gradual build-up of autonomy.

Organizational Structure:

Six **Overarching Categories** precede the main organization of the curriculum framework into **The Child's Way of Acting** (four categories) and **Content Orientations** (six categories).

This structure is summarized below:

Overarching Categories	The Child's Way of Acting*	Content Orientations
1. Child's well-being as a target	1. Playing	1. Mathematical
2. Care, education and teaching – an integrated whole	2. Physical activities	2. Natural sciences
3. The role of educators in ECEC	3. Artistic experiences and self-expression	3. Historical-Societal
4. The ECEC environment	4. Exploration	4. Aesthetic
5. Joy of Learning		5. Ethical
6. The role of language in ECEC		6. Religious-Philosophical

*Each of these categories is sub-categorized into three topics:

The child's meaningful experiences; the educator community's activity and the ECEC environment.

ECEC is considered a whole which integrates care, education and teaching with more emphasis given the younger the child to interactions between child, educators and the caring role. Good care provides a basis for all ECEC activities.

Language has a key role from the very beginning, supporting the development of the child's cognitive processes and communication of meanings. Play, fairy tales, storytelling, playing with words (rhyme and nonsense words) are of core importance and provide practice in the area of linguistic awareness. The environment allows the child to observe both spoken and written language.

Continuity between pre-school curriculum and school-age programs:

In ECEC, the child does not study or assimilate the content of different orientations or different subjects and there are no performance requirements. The orientations provide educators with a framework that tells them what kinds of experiences, situations and environments they should look for, give shape to and offer in order to ensure children's balanced growth and development. Language is a means of communication and interaction in the context of all orientations.¹⁸

Planning, Evaluation, Special Populations:

Program Evaluation: Staff draft unit-specific ECEC curriculum, however parents together, as well as children and the whole educational community, can influence its content and participate in its evaluation.

Individual Planning/Evaluation: An individual ECEC plan is drawn up for each child in collaboration with parents and the plan is monitored and assessed regularly. Special support is provided in the context of general ECEC services so that, as a member of a group with other children, social interaction is supported.

ECEC can be provided in a domestic language immersion program (Swedish or Finnish), in a foreign language, and using alternative pedagogical or education approaches; e.g., Steiner, Montessori, Freinet and Reggio Emilia.

Issues:

The key task of pre-school education is to develop the child's creative imagination in all situations rather than the teaching of substantive knowledge and facts.

An interesting observation is that, although Finland has scored significantly higher than any other country in the world in international test scores in literacy, there is no specific mention made of traditional early literacy content and skills in the ECEC guidelines and children do not begin formal schooling until age seven.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

This document is organized into three major categories that would be easy for professionals to internalize and implement (Overarching Categories; The Child's Way of Acting; Content Orientations).

The latter category makes direct links to the curriculum in the primary school.

The focus seems to be overwhelmingly on the child's overall well-being so as to ensure the best possible conditions for growth, learning and development. This relates well to the social-emotional competence focus of the ELF.

¹⁸ Valimäki, Anna-Leena, Lindberg, Paivi. (2004) *National curriculum guidelines on early childhood and care in Finland*. Helsinki; 26 Aug. 2004, p. 24-25.

The Reggio Emilia Approach – Truly Listening To Young Children

Definitions:

Atelieristas: Studio teacher, adults highly trained in the visual arts who work closely with the children and teachers.

Pedagogistas: Pedagogical co-ordinator who serves a group of schools and supports both teachers, atelieristas and children.

Context:

Reggio Emilia (RE) has become synonymous with a particular philosophy/approach to early childhood education, but is actually a municipality in Italy that has become famous because of the commitment it brings to early childhood development.

A motto of the city for many years has been “Investment in children is a fundamental cultural and social investment.” *As much as forty per cent of the municipal budget is allocated to education.*

There is also a sustained commitment to parent and citizen participation reflecting the philosophy that the city’s schools are “a system of relations between children, teachers, parents and the community where the school is located.”¹⁹

Overall Vision:

In a continuous process, children raise questions and construct theories and meaning in an interplay with the surrounding world.

Reciprocity of interaction, relations and communications and concepts such as subjectivity and inter-subjectivity are at the core of RE pedagogy. Children modify and enrich their conceptual maps if, and only if, they have the opportunity to make these shifts in a group context, and if they both listen and are listened to, express their differences and are receptive to the differences of others.

The result is knowledge that is bountiful, enriched by the contributions of many.

Intent of the Curriculum Framework:

RE is a way of life in the community in Italy in which it was created. It has been adopted by many individual child care centres, as well as by municipalities and communities around the world. The intent of using RE varies within these contexts.

¹⁹ Directorate for Education, OECD. (2004). *Starting strong: Curricula and pedagogies in early childhood education and care: Five curriculum outlines*. March 2004., p. 13.

Roles:

In addition to the roles identified in the definitions above:

Teachers: Are learners alongside the children, a resource and guide as s/he lends expertise to children by carefully listening, observing and documenting children’s work and growth.

Children: Are viewed as having rights and as competent, active learners, continuously building and testing theories about themselves and the world through collaboration, dialogue and investigation.

Parents/citizens: Participate regularly as partners, help to form the educational objectives for the school.

Organizational Structure:

The distinct pedagogical features that characterize a Reggio Emilia approach are:

- 1. The hundred languages of children.** Children are encouraged to explore their understanding of their experiences through different modes of expression including the arts: drama, dance, music, visual art.
 - 2. A contextual curriculum.** There are no planned goals or standards indicating what is to be learned since “these would push our schools toward teaching without learning.”²⁰
 - 3. Educational projects.** Projects emerge from children as in-depth studies of concepts, ideas, interests.
 - 4. Collaboration.** Collaborative group work is valuable and necessary to advance cognitive development.
 - 5. Teachers as Researchers.** The role of the teacher is first and foremost as a learner alongside the children.
 - 6. Documentation.** Teachers record children’s project experience and work to provide children with a visual memory, give educators an insight into child’s learning process, provide parents and the public detailed information about what happens in schools.
 - 7. Environment.** Environment is considered the ‘third teacher.’
-

Continuity between pre-school curriculum and school age programs:

This may not be an issue in the community of Reggio Emilia and elsewhere in Italy where the RE philosophy seems to have been fully embraced. Continuity between RE philosophy and school age programs may be more of a concern in cultures in which the emergent nature of the RE philosophy doesn’t fit as well with a more prescriptive school age curriculum.

²⁰ Directorate for Education, OECD. (2004). *Starting strong: Curricula and pedagogies in early childhood education and care: Five curriculum outlines*. March 2004., p. 12.

Planning, Evaluation and Special Populations:

Plans emerge from interaction between teachers, atelieristas and children. Evaluation is an ongoing feature of the program in the form of teacher reflection (program evaluation) and documentation (individual child evaluation).

Issues:

When considering criteria that impact on the successful implementation of a particular curricular philosophy, the overwhelming support of early childhood within the RE communities is an aspect that cannot be overlooked.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

The focus on deep, contextual learning, with the role of the adult as an observer, co-structor and interpreter of children’s learning, provides a unique model for professionals to consider.

There is a strong focus on emergent curriculum and growth both for the children and for the professionals in the program.

The focus on multiple representations, documentation and the role of the environment provides unique perspectives for consideration.

As with High Scope, it is prominent within the Ontario early childhood community.

Reviews: Japan

Definitions:

Kindergarten: provided for those who wish to start their three-to-five year old children in a school environment.

Day care centres: both public and private provide for children from a year old up to five years of age.

Pre-school education: encompasses both of the above groups.

Context:

Schooling in Japan has traditionally been year round with Saturday morning attendance but many areas have changed to a five day school week and two terms instead of three.

While there are nine subjects in elementary schools, the emphasis is on reading and writing. Not only are children required to learn Japanese, they are also required to learn by the end of grade six, a minimum of one thousand and six Chinese characters.²¹

The time spent in kindergarten is nearly twice the average of a half-day Canadian kindergarten.

Overall Vision:

The environment should be created with the intention of ensuring voluntary activities among children, based on an understanding and anticipation of the individual actions of each child.

Teachers should there create an enriching physical and psychological environment in view of the importance of the relationship between a child and other people, and things.²²

Intent of the Curriculum Framework:

Each kindergarten is encouraged to formulate their own curriculum appropriate to young children's development of mind and body and to the context of the kindergarten and its local community "in accordance with the Law and the National Curriculum Standards for Kindergartens."

Roles:

Not addressed specifically except to indicate that kindergarten life should be developed with full co-operation with the home (particularly with those children entering kindergarten at the age of three).

²¹ Info provided on the internet from a Japanese Embassy www.asianinfo.org/asianinfo/japan/education_literacy.htm.

²² Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture. (2000). *National curriculum standards for kindergartens*.

As detailed in a press release from Arima Akito, The Minister of ESSC., p. 2. www.mext.go.jp/english/news/2001/04/010401.htm.

Organizational Structure:

The National Standards consist of the Basic Ideals (represented in the Overall Vision above); Goals of Kindergarten Education; Aims, Contents and Dealing with the Contents for each of five areas:

- **Health** (a healthy mind and body)
- **Human Relationships** (self-reliance and the ability to communicate with and support others)
- **Environment** (ability to relate with the environment with curiosity and inquisition)
- **Language** (fostering the understanding in and ability to express language)
- **Expression** (to express oneself and enhancing creativity through expressing in one's own words what one experienced and thought)

Continuity between Kindergarten Standards and Elementary Curriculum:

This document is intended to support the elementary curriculum (but does so in a variety of ways, see *Issues* below).

Planning, Evaluation, Special Populations:

Program Evaluation: Teachers are instructed to conduct appropriate review and evaluation of the instructional process to make continuous improvement in plans.

Individual Child Evaluation: not mentioned.

Issues:

The intense competition to get into top level schools in Japan is labeled 'examination hell'. Reported side effects result in bullying, violence, and 'school allergy' as early as the elementary school years and are targeted as the cause of suicide and murder from pre-teen onwards. Blame is placed both on the schools and the parents for creating undue pressure to succeed. Kindergartens vary from unstructured environments that emphasize play to highly structured environments that focus on having the child pass the entrance exam at a private elementary school.²³

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

The five areas through which the curriculum is conceptualized are worthy of consideration: Health, Human Relationships, Environment, Language, Expression. The strong focus on social emotional development and the development of positive social interactions provides an interesting model for consideration, especially when considered within the context of a culture not noted for this emphasis.

²³ Information provided on the internet from a Japanese Embassy www.asisaninfo.org/asianinfo/japan/education_literacy.htm.

Reviews: New Zealand

Te Whariki

Definitions:

Adult: Whanau (members of an extended family and its supporting network who form a context for the care and guidance of a child), parents, extended family, staff members, supervisors, child care workers, teachers, specialists, caregivers and any person beyond school leaving age who may be involved in an early childhood setting.

Context:

Early childhood services have been central to the national political debate regarding the respective role of government, private enterprise and parents in New Zealand. In 1986, child care, kindergartens and parent co-operatives were all brought together under the Ministry of Education. As part of this reform, a three year diploma was established as the benchmark for licensing and New Zealand's first national early childhood curriculum, *Te Whariki*, was developed (1993, 1996).

Overall Vision:

Rather than employing a one-world view of human development emptied of context, or articulating a curriculum with the subject-based learning areas and essential skills of the school, *Te Whariki* chooses a socio-cultural approach to curriculum based on a desire to nurture learning dispositions, promote bi-culturalism and to reflect the realities of the young children in the services.²⁴

The four guiding principles of *Te Whariki* are that:

- the curriculum should reflect the holistic development of children;
 - the empowerment of the child should be a key factor (a Maori principle);
 - family and community links should be strengthened;
 - children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships.
-

Intent of the Curriculum Framework:

The curriculum is defined as a document for all adults involved in young children's development and learning.

The concept of *Te Whariki* (a woven mat), is a metaphor for the many perspectives, cultures and approaches represented by the curriculum. As such it constitutes a broad framework of agreed principles and approaches for all adults involved in young children's learning and development rather than a traditional content or activities curriculum and could be put into practice differently in different services.²⁵

²⁴ Directorate for Education, OECD. (2004). *Starting strong: Curricula and pedagogies in early childhood education and care: Five curriculum outlines*. March 2004., p. 17.

²⁵ New Zealand Ministry of Education (1996). *Te whariki: Early childhood curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Roles:

Educator: This term does not seem to be used in New Zealand; rather all persons trained in the three year ECE option are called teachers and may be called professionals or caregivers depending on the context or setting.

Parent: Parents and whanau (see definitions) are recognized in the wider world of family and community in one of the four broad principles as an integral part of the early childhood curriculum.

Child: The child is conceptualized developmentally through the stages of infant, toddler and young child, from totally dependent to struggling for independence to individuals capable of experiencing challenge, sustained and co-operative ventures.

Organizational Structure:

Te Whariki (the woven mat) consists primarily of four guiding principles (Empowerment, Holistic Way, Family and Community, Relationships) and five aims or strands for children (Well-being, Belonging, Contribution, Communication, Exploration). Each of these strands is then elaborated into eighteen developmental, cultural and learning goals for children.

Continuity between pre-school curriculum and school age programs:

The document was written with the intent of making specific links to the New Zealand Curriculum Framework. Each strand (e.g., Exploration) details the knowledge, skills and attitudes that a child will likely attain as they move from EC settings to the early years of school. Clear links are made between these strands and the essential learning areas and skills in the NZ Curriculum Framework.

Planning, Evaluation and Special Populations:

The curriculum framework provides detailed descriptions and questions for the adults responsible for implementation to help them plan for all ages of children addressed by the program (infants, toddlers, young children).

The purpose of assessment and evaluation is to evaluate the program rather than the child; consequently, the focus is on the adult's responsibility toward children. This makes assessment and evaluation of individual children a challenge since the document is not written in terms of outcomes for children.

According to the curriculum document, *Te Whariki* is designed to be inclusive and appropriate for all children and anticipates that special needs will be met as children learn together in all kinds of early childhood education settings.

Issues:

As indicated above, assessment is challenging because of the emphasis on ‘holistic’ rather than knowledge and skill based goals that are more typical of the primary school curriculum and expectations.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

The level of specificity about the adult’s role in relationship to infants, toddlers and young children is informative and provides clear direction to all adults working with these three age groups as well as a clear focus for program evaluation.

The document is relevant to the panel because of the emphases on bi-cultural values, continuity with school curriculum, accountability placed squarely with the adults rather than on the shoulders of children.

Reviews: Singapore

Definitions:

Kindergarten/Pre-school: Used interchangeably to reflect education for three-to-six year olds prior to regular school entry.

Primary: Years one-to-four (six-to-ten year olds).

Context:

Singapore, with a population of only four million people, has a presence in the global market and enjoys a high standard of living and life expectancy.

This seems to be due primarily to their ability to find a niche in the technology market and, subsequently, become a world class trading partner. Perhaps these economic realities partly explain their language policy in schools (English is the first language of instruction, Chinese, Malay or Tamil is the second).

In addition, in the primary grades, the time allotment in schools is mandated as follows: 33% English; 27% Mother Tongue; 20% Mathematics, 20% on all others subjects. Pre-school education is managed within the pre-school education unit of the Ministry of Education. No information was located regarding program standards in pre-school or primary.

Overall Vision:

The major aim of the kindergarten program is to prepare children for lifelong learning and to support and foster the holistic development of the child which involves:

- Nurturing and accepting young children’s spontaneous, natural and varied responses.
- Adult and peer support that can extend children’s individual skills and knowledge of the world to more elaborate and complex ways of learning, doing, and understanding.

It is not just a preparation for primary school, is vitally important in itself, and should not be confused with trying to accelerate learning in the kindergarten years by providing children with a simplified primary curriculum.²⁶

More specifically, kindergarten should help children to learn to think and think to learn, develop strong language skills, and emphasize values.

²⁶ Pre-school Education Unit. (2000-2001) *Nurturing early learners: A framework for a kindergarten curriculum in Singapore*. Ministry of Education, Singapore.

Intent of the Program:

It was designed to explain Singapore’s view on what constitutes quality kindergarten education. While not meant to be prescriptive, it points the way regarding appropriate learning and how teaching ought to be carried out in the kindergarten years.

Organizational Structure/Continuity between pre-school and primary education:

There is a strong emphasis on continuity between pre-school, primary and later education. This is reflected in the continuity between the outcomes for kindergarten and the desired outcomes in primary.

Planning, Evaluation and Special Populations:

Planning is identified as the fourth feature of good practice and teachers are given a few guidelines for how best to plan appropriate curriculum for children. Program and individual child evaluation are discussed within the context of observing and recording children’s progress and referring often to these notes and records to make programmatic adjustments. Teachers are encouraged to document children’s work within a variety of formats.

Issues:

On the surface, this document seems to espouse a social pedagogic approach to curriculum similar to those described in the introduction to this review. A final statement in the document suggests that to prepare our children for education is to ensure that they are joyful, curious and gracious learners.

However, one item under ‘Good practice 5’: *Setting up Resources* suggests that: *Worksheets and activity sheets are not meant to be the goal of the instruction, but to consolidate what has been taught.* The idea that workshops and activity sheets would be used for any purpose, even consolidating what has been taught, seems to be a contradiction to the effective early childhood practices espoused in the rest of the document.

This inconsistency may reflect that an early childhood consultant from England wrote the document. This may result in a disconnect with conventional practice in Singapore that could make implementation of the new curriculum difficult.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

This document provides an interesting example of how a country that has gone through recent and dramatic social-economic change is attempting to provide national direction in the area of early childhood education.

The document has a clearly Western orientation that may have been influenced by the consultant who is acknowledged in the credits to the document. Some of the inconsistencies between the socio-pedagogical philosophy and the high expectations for language proficiency in Singapore suggest a cultural inconsistency that the ELF would be wise to avoid.

Reviews: Sweden

Goals for a modern pre-school system

Definitions:

Pre-school: All centre-based programs providing full-time care for children, one-to-five, of parents who work or study full time.

Pre-school Class: A half day program provided free of charge as part of the school system (optional attendance) for all six year olds.

Context:

Daycare (one-to-five) and the pre-school class (six year olds) were taken over in 1996 by the Ministry of Education and Science from the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs.

The pre-school class for six-year-olds is a recent development, similar to our kindergartens, provided on a half-time basis. Mandatory full time attendance begins at age seven, as in Finland.

The curriculum being reviewed in this document is specific to the one-to-five pre-school rather than the pre-school class for six year olds which follows an introductory version of the national curriculum.

Long before these developments, the educational function of both day care and the pre-school were recognized along with key notions of interaction, communication and dialogue and professionals working in day care and the pre-school class were expected to have similar training and work on similar content for children of all ages.

Decisions are meant to be taken at the municipal level, and even more direction is given to the level of pre-school centres, at the level of children and teachers.

The population of Sweden is approximately the same as the population of Ontario and the climate and inhabitable land are comparable (mostly in the south of the country).

Sweden has extensive social (house and child benefit allowances), family (parental leave for maternity and sickness) and health benefits (full coverage) that ease the responsibility for child care faced by families in many developed countries in the world.

In addition to these entitlements, families have access to pre-school for one-to-three year olds and three-to-six year olds. (These programs are called pre-school because of the long time philosophy in Sweden that care and education should be linked.)

The government also guarantees a space in pre-school from age one onwards (fifteen months paid maternity leave benefits ensure that all infants are cared for by their parents) to children whose parents work or are in school full time.

This government policy has resulted in a ten-fold increase in child care spaces in the past two decades. During that time the parental fee has increased from 10% to 16.5% of the total cost. Pre-school teachers complete a three-year free university training program.

Overall Vision:

The child's learning is grounded in play and meaning making.

Knowledge is not to be found in the child or in the world (including adults) but in the relationship between them; consequently the child's search for knowledge should be developed through "play, social interaction, exploration and creativity, as well as through observations, discussion and reflection."

Language, learning and identity are closely entwined; meaning is created in children's communication and play.

Intent of the Curriculum Framework:

To be used as guidelines by all centre-based programs for one-to-five year olds.

Roles:

Teachers: Primary responsibility for ensuring that curriculum is followed and for ensuring that children follow their own intentions so that they will become self-reliant; i.e., not dependent on either their teacher or ready-made knowledge.

Parents: Have traditionally had a very strong role in pre-school programs but are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain this because of work, societal demands.

Children: Are seen as having intentions, especially in play, when they choose and set personal goals.

Organizational Structure:

Five groups of goals are outlined that each centre should aim to achieve:

- **Norms and values:** Care and respect for other people, justice and equality.
- **Development and learning:** A pedagogical approach in which care, nurturing and learning together form a coherent whole.
- **Influence of the child:** presupposes that children, according to age and abilities, are given greater responsibility for their own actions and for the environment in the pre-school; the needs and interests of children subsequently provide the foundation for shaping the environment and planning pedagogical activities.
- Pre-school and home.
- Co-operation between the pre-school class, the school and the leisure time centre.

Continuity between pre-school curriculum and school age programs:

In the Swedish curriculum for pre-school, teaching does not mean providing pieces of knowledge to children, but supporting them to engage in conscious, independent action toward a goal.

The child's interest and motivation are seen as critical to real learning. All activities during the day are intended to develop children's skill and understanding, but not through the kind of structured lesson plans that characterize the school.

Education is built on communication, especially the dialogue between the child and the adult. Diversity of viewpoints, ways of learning provide opportunities to stimulate children's thinking.

Planning, Evaluation, Special Populations:

Planning: Pre-schools must have an individual developmental plan for each child to ensure that they will reach the five groups of goals. All children, irrespective of special needs, are entitled to a space in the pre-school program.

Program evaluation: There is criticism that no overall evaluation or research on how the new curriculum has influenced children's learning have been undertaken.

Immigrant children: Since the parents of immigrant children (eighteen per cent of Swedish population) usually do not qualify for pre-school spaces (parents aren't working or in school full time), a type of program (free, daily three hour session) is provided for them in conjunction with parents' second language training programs.

Issues:

There is criticism that Swedish teachers still focus mainly on children's security and social skills rather than the five major goals emphasized in the curriculum. On the other hand, there is some concern that children are being taught content whether or not they desire it.

There is also concern that government cutbacks have impacted negatively on the quality of the program and that recruitment for pre-school teachers is a challenge.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

This curriculum provides a strong example of the social pedagogical, constructivist approach to curriculum, emphasizing relationships rather than products/outcomes.

Care, nurturing and learning are seen as a coherent whole. The emphasis on relationships fits well with the Working Group's focus on Social-Emotional competence and the ASK approach to curricular frameworks referred to on page 96.

Reviews: United Kingdom (England)

Definitions:

Practitioners: Adults who work with children in the settings, whatever their qualifications.

Parents: Refers to mothers, fathers, legal guardians and the primary carers of children in public care.

Curriculum: Everything children do, see, hear or feel in their setting, both planned and unplanned.

Foundation Stage (Early Years): Begins when children reach the age of three.

Context:

England's National Curriculum was implemented a few years ago and identified outcomes goals for Key Stage 1: Years 1 and 2 (six and seven year olds). In 1999 a document was released called *Early learning goals*. The current document, *Curriculum guidance for the early years*, incorporates these goals into a more thorough framework addressing the early years. Legal entitlement to a nursery space for all four year olds is gradually being extended to include all three year olds (2.5 hours, five days a week). Children enter full-day reception classes at age five; however, the child staff/ratios in these classes can be quite high (1:30).

Overall Vision:

The document outlines and elaborates on thirteen principles for early years education. Most of these have to do with the practitioners' knowledge about children, learning and teaching; working in partnership with parents; providing an inclusive environment where children feel secure and valued.

Intent of Document:

All settings and schools that receive grant funding for the education of children aged three to five are required to plan activities and experiences that help children make progress in their development and learning. Most children are expected to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the foundation stage. Practitioners should plan a curriculum that helps children make good progress toward, and where appropriate, beyond, these goals.²⁷

²⁷ Department for Education and Employment. (2000). *Curriculum guidelines for the foundations stage*. London: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

Roles:

The document promotes the importance of the parent's role throughout. Little, if any, mention is made of the child's role in their own learning. The emphasis is more on the goals (stepping stones) and the practitioner's/parent's role in ensuring that these are reached.

Organizational Structure:

Aims for the Foundation Stage are outlined at the outset and include such items as personal, social and emotional well-being; positive attitudes and dispositions; social skills; attention skills and persistence; however, the areas and aspects of learning for the foundation stage (see Appendix C) include only six categories:

- Personal, social and emotional development (PSED);
- Communication, language and literacy (CLL);
- Mathematical development (MD);
- Knowledge and understanding of the world (KUW);
- Physical development (PD);
- Creative Development (CD).

There are many pages of *Stepping Stones* and *Examples* of what children do that reflect each *Stepping Stone*, for each category (approximately forty-five pages in all). The final (bolded) stage indicates which of the seventy-one Key Learnings it is hoped will have been achieved by the end of pre-school.

Planning, Evaluation, Special Populations:

There is a clear emphasis on both planning and evaluation as evidenced by the publication of a supporting document entitled *Planning for learning in the foundation stage*.²⁸

Practitioners are expected to make long-range plans (up to a year) to ensure that all six areas of learning are given equal emphasis and covered regularly and frequently; medium-range plans to bridge the gap between long-range plans and short-range daily planning.

There is specific mention of meeting the diverse needs of children including travelers (Gypsies), refugees, asylum seekers, children from diverse linguistic backgrounds as well as children with special needs.

²⁸ Department for Education and Employment. (2001). *Planning for learning in the foundation stage*. London: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

Continuity between Foundation Stage and Reception Classes:

The early learning goals are in line with the objectives in the frameworks for teaching literacy and mathematics referenced in the *Guidance on the organization of the National Literacy Strategy in reception classes* and *Guidance on the organization of the daily mathematics lesson in reception classes*. In order to ensure a smooth transition into year 1, it is recommended that the literacy hour and daily mathematics lesson should both be in place by the end of the reception year.

Issues:

This document, in which teachers are advised to focus on ‘well-planned play’ presents a clear contrast to those from the Nordic Countries, Reggio Emilia and even New Zealand. Rather than an emphasis on children’s choice, there is an emphasis on meeting the seventy-one specific Key Learnings for the Foundation Stage.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

This is the most comprehensive of all the documents included in this survey. It is clearly linked to the primary school curriculum which enjoys the same level of specificity and comprehensiveness.

There is a clear focus on outcomes that create a model to consider for assessment and evaluation. These outcomes are set within a ‘Stepping Stones’ framework and colour-coded to age levels. As such, they constitute a continuum, however, it is a continuum related to specific age expectations.

Nevertheless, the continuum model would be useful for the ELF to consider, especially the way in which the final step in the continuum links to Key Stage 1, the first stage of formal schooling in England.

The categories of: *Stepping Stones; Examples of what children do; What does the practitioner need to do* could be helpful.

Reviews: United Kingdom (Scotland)

Definitions:

ICT: Information and communications technologies including those embedded in children's everyday experiences; e.g., bar codes in supermarkets, microwave ovens, vacuum cleaners, traffic lights at pedestrian crossings, as well as video/DVD players, cell phones, internet, cameras, audiocassettes, computers, email, video games, etc.

Context:

This document is not actually a curriculum framework but a support document to the document, *Curriculum Framework for Children 3 to 5*, which in turn links to *Learning and Teaching Scotland*, the National Curriculum for five-to-fourteen year olds. Within Scotland all three- and four- year old children (pre-school) whose parents wish it, have the right to a place in an early years centre prior to school entry.

Overall Vision:

The document is based on the belief that the current generation of young children live in the information age, a world rich in media resources.

Their natural curiosity and enthusiasm often lead to increased interaction with ICT in their homes and communities. In order for adults to enhance this reality and to help children develop dispositions and attitudes which will be of value now and in the future, early years educators must further develop their own enthusiasm for and confidence in using ICT.

It is also based on a belief that ICT brings proven benefits in terms of improved attainment.

Intent of Program:

The document is intended to provide information to early years practitioners and to inform the planning and delivery of professional development related to the potential uses of ICT.

Organizational Structure:

The document is based on four principles:

- **Understanding the different ways in which children learn**, and how ICT is only one of a range of learning tools that can support this learning. Staff should be able to make informed choices about how and when to use ICT.
 - **Relationships and interactions** lie at the heart of all learning experiences, including those involving ICT. Adults who are confident in the use of ICT will be able to interact with children in ways that will most effectively promote children's learning and development of self-esteem.
 - **Inclusion** is promoted through a rich and varied ICT environment. This includes children who benefit from additional support and those for whom a closing of the 'digital divide' will smooth their transition into the current ICT environment.
 - **All children can access** a range of appropriate ICT within their early years setting.
-

Issues:

This document is based on research²⁹ indicating that:

- ICT use in early years setting is rarely part of explicit planning.
 - Observing and recording children's ICT use is not common practice at present.
 - Staff members tend not to interact in a planned way with children using the computer.
 - There is therefore little scope for reflection on children's use of ICT.
 - There is a belief that young children learn computer skills almost automatically and with little effort.
-

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

This document fulfills a need in early childhood for attention to the ICT world in which most of our children function. It incorporates guidelines and research that provide direction to early childhood curriculum developers. When combined with similar emphases in the Australian (Tasmania) curriculum, it provides some beginning thoughts about how the ELF could integrate this component into the curricular framework.

²⁹ Stephen, C. and Plowman L., (2002) *Come back in two years!: A study of the use of ICT in pre-school settings during spring and summer*. Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2003.

Reviews: United States

The High Scope Curriculum – Active Learning Through Key Experiences

Context:

This curriculum was developed more than forty years ago by David Weikart and his research team, with the specific purpose of helping children from disadvantaged areas to be successful in school and society.

It has been carefully researched using longitudinal studies demonstrating that children from the High Scope program have adapted better to societal demands and found themselves in a better life with higher education and employment than children in the control group.

While originally intended for pre-school, it has been adapted for elementary and adolescent programs. It is viewed as valid for children from all cultures since it has been successfully adapted in countries all over the world, is widely used in Ontario and has been adapted for use in Quebec (See Canada: Quebec).

Overall Vision:

Children learn best at all ages through active experiences with people, materials, events and ideas rather than through direct instruction or sequenced exercises.

Roles:

Adults: Participate as facilitators of children’s activities rather than relating to children primarily as managers or supervisors; they share control, focus on children’s strengths, form authentic relationships, support children’s play ideas and adopt a problem-solving approach to conflict.

Children: Create their own knowledge within the frames of culture, biological maturity and the enriched human and material environment of the centre. Children are encouraged to make choices about materials and activities in planning through the day.

Organizational Structure:

The High Scope approach is a set of guiding principles and practices intended as an ‘open framework’ that can be adapted to the special needs and conditions of the specific group, setting and community. Within this open framework, fifty-eight ‘key experiences’ in children’s development have been identified and categorized into the following five groups: *Creative Representation, Language and Literacy, Initiative and Social Relations, Movement and Music, Logical Reasoning.*

Continuity between pre-school curriculum and school age programs:

High Scope pre-school teachers don't teach formal school subjects through 'school like' activities. Instead they focus on providing experiences and materials that will help children develop broad language and logical abilities that provide the foundation for later academic learning.

Planning, Evaluation, Special Needs:

Teachers plan a consistent routine within which children engage in a 'plan-do-review' sequence (children state an intention, make a plan, carry it out during work time, reflect on what they have discovered and review it through discussion with other children and the teacher).

Program Evaluation: Administrators use the Pre-school Program Quality Assessment (PQA) instrument to evaluate programs.

Individual Child Evaluation: Teachers make anecdotal notes during children's normal activities to evaluate their developmental progress along the fifty-eight key experiences. Teachers discuss these notes during daily team planning sessions and use both notes and discussions to complete the Pre-school Child Observation Record (COR).

Issues:

This program is probably the most 'institutionalized' of the curriculum under review in this survey. It has been written up into many documents, developed into an international training program, implemented worldwide.

As such, it isn't so much a particular jurisdiction's approach; rather it is a commercial program that has been adapted for use by many jurisdictions.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

High Scope is the only early childhood curriculum that has been extensively researched and has demonstrated positive results over the long term.

It has a strong constructivist focus and provides clear pedagogical direction for professionals. Children are seen as competent, actively engaged in their own learning.

It is used in many programs throughout Ontario. The ELF framework should acknowledge its place within the Ontario context.

Two Frameworks

Two additional US documents were reviewed; the first is the *PreK Standards document* produced by a panel of national experts in early childhood education and reviewed by Carnegie Corporation of New York, underwritten by McGraw-Hill Education.³⁰

The second is a document produced by the Illinois State Board of Education entitled *Illinois Early Learning Standards*.³¹

The documents are quite similar in that they are primarily a cataloguing of standards and benchmarks for early childhood education. The *PreK Standards* document applies to programs for three-to-five year olds; the standards/benchmarks in the Illinois document appear to apply to early learning programs for children from birth-to-eight.

These two documents were selected because they are the only state documents that seem to apply to pre-school rather than kindergarten (school age) programs.

Because of this very specific focus on outcomes/benchmarks, particularly in the *Illinois Early Learning Standards* document, it was not possible to follow the same organizational format as was used in the other documents. *The PreK Standards* is the more comprehensive document, but since it is an independently developed curriculum unrelated to any specific area or state, the Illinois document was also included.

³⁰ Carnegie Corporation of New York. (2003). *PreK standards*. McGraw-Hill Education.

³¹ Illinois State Board of Education: Division of Early Childhood Education. (2002). *Illinois early learning standards*.

Overall Vision:

A statement of principles that guide the development of the standards.

Organizational Structure:

The standards themselves are organized around three domains, each of which is followed by three guidelines:

- Self-knowledge, social skills, and motivation to learn.
- Basic symbol systems of each child’s culture.
- Knowledge of the world in which they live.

Each of the twelve guidelines begins with a research base that essentially provides the rationale for why it is included. This is followed by multiple goals, objectives, what children will need to experience, benchmarks and vignettes illustrating the benchmarks.

This document begins with a general description of developmental stages of three, four and five year olds and the appendices of this document contain a summary of developmental stages for normal three, four and five year olds across five categories: Self, Social and Motivational Development, Language and Mathematics, Scientific Inquiry and Knowledge of the World, Large and Fine Motor Skills and Art and Music.

However, there is no attempt to link this developmental information with the benchmarks in the document.

The major focus of the curriculum seems to be based on the seventh final principle:
Children’s learning can be clarified, enriched, extended.

Special Relevance for the ELF:

The document is written by recognized early childhood specialists in the US and provides a very comprehensive compendium of appropriate learning experiences and goals for three-to-five year olds, grounded in early childhood research and supported by real life vignettes. The model of providing a brief research base for each of the Guidelines and Goals results in a very rich document that would make an excellent professional development tool. It is written within the context of a developmental continuum. Modelling is provided for both teachers and family members.

Reviews: United States

Illinois Early Learning Standards

This document consists of 105 benchmarks spread fairly evenly across eight categories: Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Physical Development/Health, Fine Arts, Foreign Language, Social/Emotional Development except for Language Arts and Mathematics which had more benchmarks than the other categories (twenty-one and twenty respectively). The Early Learning Standards are organized to parallel in content the Illinois Learning Standards for K-12 Education.

Overall Vision:

The vision is reflected in seven guiding principles.

After these guiding principles, the document consists of a rather atomistic description of each goal, standard and related benchmarks. The Goal and Learning Standards are derived from the Illinois Learning Standards for K-12; the benchmarks are the skills related to the standard and goal that are to be achieved in early childhood programs.

Issue:

This document provides a clear example of a program based primarily on Standards/Outcomes with the Early Learning Panel suggested by avoided. It is included in this review for comparison purposes.

Special Relevance to ELF:

The document provides a clear and direct link to the Illinois Standards for K-12.

Appendix 1a: Summary of Guidelines



OECD Review of Five ECEC Curriculum	AECI Global Guidelines for ECEC in 21st Century	Bennett: Curriculum Issues in Policy
1. A direction for children's learning based on values and norms.	1. A plan exists for fostering children's learning.	1. A statement of <i>principles and values</i> that should guide early childhood centres.
2. The largest freedom possible within the overall (freedom for centres, teachers, children).	2. Flexible, comprehensive plans that are oriented to the child, family, and cultural contexts are implemented.	2. <i>Pedagogical guidelines</i> that outline the process through which children achieve the outcomes proposed.
3. Children benefit most from a combination of associative and logic-analytic thinking.		
4. The same learning goals at all levels of education but at different levels of complexity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 10 below 	
5. A continuity of perspectives through ECEC and the school.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 3 below
6. Children's learning must be focused on creating meaning.	3. The early childhood curriculum emphasizes content that is connected to real world experiences, values, hopes, dreams and expectations of families and communities. Young children are active contributors to the curriculum.	
7. Curricula must also look to the future.	4. The curriculum gives children the opportunity to master information and practice the skills that they need to function effectively in society.	
8. A quality program can be based both on culture and learning research.	5. Adequate curriculum materials and equipment are provided that are appropriate to the children's special needs and that maintain the integrity of their own cultures, such as art, music, dance and drama.	

Appendix 1a: Summary of Guidelines



OECD Review of Five ECEC Curriculum	AECI Global Guidelines for ECEC in 21st Century	Bennett: Curriculum Issues in Policy
9. The quality of staff is paramount.	<p>6. Educators/caregivers must develop a supportive teaching and caring relationship with children.</p> <p>7. Educators/caregivers must possess a basic understanding of pedagogical principles that provide guidelines for practice.</p> <p>8. Educators/caregivers have an expansive repertoire of methods upon which they can draw to recognize the children's own learning strategies and support the learning of every child.</p> <p>9. Educators/caregivers use local and natural materials as resources for teaching and learning.</p>	
10. ECEC curricula should deal with play and learning and the relationship between them.		
11. ECEC programmes must be open and make room for children's initiatives and experiences...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 6 above 	
12. ...and yet be inscribed in a life-long learning context with common learning objectives and approaches.	10. The program is evaluated regularly, using criteria that consider the overall contributions and relevance of the program to every child and the society.	3. A short outline of <i>content and outputs</i> , that is, the knowledge, skills, dispositions and values that children at different ages can be expected to master.
13. Strong evaluative processes built in.	<p>11. Each child's strength and assets are recognized. Individual progress is monitored and shared with parents and families in appropriate ways.</p> <p>12. Young children learn the skills of self-evaluation and their learning is evaluated not only in terms of knowledge, but also in terms of their learning processes and performance.</p>	
14. Quality and its measurement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 12 above <p>13. The program is comprehensively and continuously evaluated in terms of its attainment of local, regional, national and international standards for excellence in the care and education of young children.</p>	4. A summary of <i>program standards</i> ; that is, how programs should be supported to facilitate learning; e.g., reasonable child-staff ratios, higher education qualifications.
15. Democracy and gender questions.		
16. Both care and education should be reflected in the curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 13 above 	

Appendix 1b

Pre-primary tradition	Social pedagogy tradition
Centralized development of curriculum, with frequently detailed goals and outcomes.	A broad central guideline with local curriculum development encouraged and supported.
A focus on learning standards, especially in areas useful for school readiness. Teacher-child relationships tend to be instrumentalized through reaching for detailed curriculum goals.	Focus on broad developmental goals as well as learning is stressed, interactivity with educators and peers encouraged and the quality of life in the institution is given high importance.
Often prescriptive: clear outcomes are set at national level to be reached in all centres.	Broad orientations rather than prescribed outcomes. A diffusion of goals may be experienced, with diminished accountability.
Assessment often required. Goals are clearly defined. Graded assessment of each child with respect to discrete competences is an important part of the teacher's role.	Assessment not required. Goals are broad, outcomes for each child are set by negotiation (educator-parent-child) and informally evaluated unless screening is necessary. A growing focus on individual language and communication competences.

Bennett, John. (2004). *Curriculum issues in national policy-making*. Keynote address. Paris: OECD//Malta, EECERA.

Instructivist Approach	Constructivist Approach
Teacher-initiated-directed	Child-initiated
Teacher-centred	Child-centred
Didactic/traditional	Play-based, progressive
Basic academic skills	Personal/social development
Developmentally inappropriate	Developmentally appropriate
Product oriented	Process oriented
Formal/structured	Informal/emergent
Core knowledge	Children constructing their own knowledge

McQuail, Susan, Mooney, Ann, Cameron, Claire, Candappa, Mano, Moss, Peter, Petrie, Pat. (2003). *Early years and childcare international evidence project, October 2003*. Department for Education and Skills. Sure Start.

Pre-Primary		Social Pedagogic
England*	New Zealand*	Finland
United States*	Tasmania*	Sweden
	Quebec	Singapore
	Japan*	Reggio Emilia
	High/Scope	EXE
Instructivist		Constructivist
United States*	New Zealand*	Finland
England*	Tasmania*	Sweden
(when dictated by parents)	Japan*	Reggio Emilia
	England	High/Scope*
	Singapore?	Quebec
	EXE?	England (Muslim, etc.)

*Curriculum Frameworks that link clearly to the school curriculum.

Appendix 1c: Summary of the Reviews

Experiential Education: EXE (Belgium)

Overall Vision:

The major goal of this curriculum is a search for quality in care and education. What are the indicators of quality and how do you measure them once you have determined what they are? Rather than focus on either treatment (input, instruction, intervention) or outcomes (objectives, results), EXE-theory focuses on process, in particular on the degree of a child's 'emotional well-being' and the level of 'involvement.'

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

Provides valuable assessment tools for evaluating children's process outcomes (deep level learning and eight domains of development), as well as social interaction between adults and children. More useful to the Measurement than the Curriculum Workgroup?

ICT (UK Scotland)

Overall Vision:

It is based on the belief of the writers that the current generation of young children live in the information age, a world rich in media resources. Their natural curiosity and enthusiasm often lead to increased interaction with ICT in their homes and communities. In order for adults to enhance this reality and to help children develop dispositions and attitudes which will be of value now and in the future, early years educators must further develop their own enthusiasm for and confidence in using ICT. It is also based on a belief that ICT brings proven benefits in terms of improved attainment.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

This document fulfils a need in early childhood for attention to the ICT world in which most of our children function. It incorporates guidelines and research that provide direction to early childhood curriculum developers. When combined with similar emphases in the Tasmanian curriculum, it provides some beginning thoughts about how the ELF could integrate this component into the curricular framework.

The High/Scope Curriculum (US)

Overall Vision:

Children learn best at all ages through active experiences with people, materials, events and ideas rather than through direct instruction or sequenced exercises.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

High/Scope is the only early childhood curriculum that has been extensively researched and has demonstrated positive results over the long term. It has a strong constructivist focus and provides clear pedagogical direction for professionals. Children are seen as competent, actively engaged in their own learning. It is used in many programs throughout Ontario. The ELF framework should acknowledge its place within the Ontario context.

The Swedish Curriculum

Overall Vision:

The child's learning is grounded in play and meaning making. Knowledge is not to be found in the child or in the world (including adults) but in the relationship between them; consequently the child's search for knowledge should be developed through "play, social interaction, exploration and creativity, as well as through observations, discussion and reflection." Language, learning and identity are closely entwined; meaning is created in children's communication and play.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

This curriculum provides a strong example of the social pedagogical, constructivist approach to curriculum, emphasizing relationships rather than products/outcomes. Care, nurturing and learning are seen as a coherent whole. The emphasis on relationships fits well with the Working Group's focus on Social-Emotional competence and the ASK approach to curricular frameworks.

Te Whariki (New Zealand)

Overall Vision:

This curriculum emphasizes the critical role of socially and culturally mediated learning and of reciprocal and responsive relationships for children with people, places and things.

The four guiding principles of *Te Whariki* are that:

- the curriculum should reflect the holistic development of children.
- the empowerment of the child should be a key factor (Maori principle).
- family and community links should be strengthened.
- children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

The level of specificity about the adult's role in relationship to infants, toddlers and young children is very clear and provides clear direction to all adults working with these three age groups and a clear focus for program evaluation. The document is written for ALL adults who interact with these children in whatever setting and it encompasses bi-cultural values.

The empowerment of the child is an overriding principle as is continuity with the school curriculum. The document is worthy of our serious study for a variety of reasons: bi-cultural values; continuity with school curriculum, accountability placed squarely with the adults, rather than on the shoulders of children.

The Reggio Emilia Approach (Italy)

Overall Vision:

In a continuous process, children raise questions and construct theories and meaning in an interplay with the surrounding world. Reciprocity of interaction, relations and communications, and concepts such as subjectivity and inter-subjectivity are at the core of RE pedagogy.

Children modify and enrich their conceptual maps if, and only if, they have the opportunity to make these shifts in a group context, and if they both listen and are listened to, express their differences and are receptive to the differences of others. The result is knowledge that is bountiful and enriched by the contributions of many.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

The focus on deep, contextual learning, with the role of the adult as an observer, co-creator and interpreter of children's learning provides a unique model for professionals to consider. There is a strong focus on emergent curriculum and growth both for the children and for the professionals in the program.

The focus on multiple representations, documentation and the role of the environment provide unique perspectives for consideration. It is prominent within the Ontario early childhood community and the ELF should acknowledge this.

Singapore

Overall Vision:

The major aim of the kindergarten program is to prepare children for lifelong learning, to support and foster the holistic development of the child which involves:

- Nurturing and accepting young children's spontaneous, natural and varied responses
- Adult/peer support to extend children's individual skills and knowledge of the world.

It is not just a preparation for primary school, is vitally important in itself, and should not be confused with trying to accelerate learning in the kindergarten years by providing children with a simplified primary curriculum.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

The document has a clearly Western orientation (influenced by UK consultant acknowledged in the credits to the document?) Some inconsistencies between the socio-pedagogical philosophy and high expectations for language proficiency in Singapore suggest a cultural disconnect that the ELF would be wise to avoid.

The Early Years (United Kingdom: England)

Overall Vision:

The document outlines and elaborates on thirteen principles for early years education. Most of these have to do with the practitioners' knowledge about children, learning and teaching; working in partnership with parents; providing an inclusive environment where children feel secure and valued.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

This is the most comprehensive of all the documents included in this survey. It is clearly linked to the primary school curriculum which enjoys the same level of specificity and comprehensiveness.

There is a clear focus on outcomes that create a model to consider for assessment and evaluation. These outcomes are set within a 'Stepping Stones' framework and colour coded to age levels. As such, they constitute a developmental continuum, however, it is a continuum related to specific age expectations.

Nevertheless, the continuum model would be useful for the ELF to consider, especially the way in which the final step in the continuum links to Key Stage 1, the first stage of formal schooling in England. The categories of: *Stepping Stones; Examples of what children do; What does the practitioner need to do* could be helpful.

Japan

Overall Vision:

The environment should be created with the intention of ensuring voluntary activities among children, based on an understanding and anticipation of the individual actions of each child. Teachers should there create a physical and psychological environment in view of the importance of the relationship between a child and other people, and things. Teachers should also play various roles in response to the situations of individual child's activities and should strive for making activities more enriching.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

The five areas through which the curriculum is conceptualized are worthy of consideration: Health, Human Relationships, Environment, Language, Expression. The strong focus on social emotional development and the development of positive social interactions provides an interesting model for consideration, especially when considered within the context of a culture not noted for this emphasis.

Canada (Quebec)

Overall Vision:

The Educational Program aims to foster the full and harmonious development of children or, in other words, the realization of their full potential in every dimension of the being. Consequently, it emphasizes the development process (social-emotional, moral, linguistic, cognitive and psychomotor) rather than the acquisition of specific skills or the potential product of a child's action. What is important is the children's ability to interact constructively with their environment, which may mean objects, people, or even bits of information they receive.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

This approach is built on an evidence based curriculum that has demonstrated positive results, provides a fairly open and flexible structure within which local programs can modify and adapt to their own realities.

Adopting this curriculum was an efficient way to provide direction within the rushed timeframe for childcare expansion in Quebec. The Quebec document suggests that the original High/Scope model has been molded somewhat to fit the provincial context. This provides a useful model for how the ELF might also acknowledge the High/Scope model.

United States

Overall Vision:

This document begins with a statement of principles that guide the development of the standards. These include:

- Children are active learners.
- Development and learning are interrelated.
- Growth and learning are sequential.
- Each child is an individual learner.
- Development and learning are embedded in culture.
- Family involvement is necessary.
- Children's learning can be clarified, enriched and extended.

Special Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

The document is written by recognized early childhood specialists in the US and provides a very comprehensive compendium of appropriate learning experiences and goals for three-to-five year olds, grounded in early childhood research, and supported by real life vignettes.

The model of providing a brief research base for each of the Guidelines and Goals results in a very rich document that would make an excellent professional development tool. It is written within the context of a developmental continuum. Modelling is provided for both teachers and family members. (See Domain 3 *Children will need to experience.*)

United States

Overall Vision:

The Guiding Principles for this document are:

- Early learning and development are multidimensional.
- Developmental domains are highly interrelated.
- Young children are capable and competent.
- Children are individuals who develop at different rates.
- Children will exhibit a range of skills and competences in any domain of development.
- Knowledge of how children grow and develop, together with expectations that are consistent with growth patterns, are essential to develop, implement and maximize the benefits of education experiences for children.
- Young children learn through active exploration of the environment in child-initiated and teacher-selected activities.
- Families are the primary caregivers and educators.

Special Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

The six page summary at the end of the document provides an at-a-glance listing of skills. The document provides a clear and direct link to the Illinois Standards for K-12.

Early Connections (Australia – Tasmania)

Overall Vision:

Beliefs and Values underpinning the early years include *Partnerships, Learning, Educating and Diversity*.

Partnerships refers primarily to building strong relationships with families but also related professionals.

Learning implies that young children are actively involved in making meaning of experience and are in control of their own learning which should be rewarding, enjoyable and based on play and exploration.

The *educative* role of adults should be realized through providing a stimulating environment, positive interactions with children and the fostering of productive interactions between children. All children and families deserve equal respect.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

The document is clearly linked to the existing document for the school years and both are developed from birth onwards. The school years context in Tasmania is similar to the Ontario context. It was developed within a collaborative research context based in real practice. The Essential Learning Organizers are minimalist, efficient and futuristic. The colour coding helps to organize the content. The language of the document is compelling; e.g., Creating personal and world futures (Essential Learnings), Learning Markers (Benchmarks), Learning Stories (Evidence). It includes a chart that summarizes the entire curriculum, Birth-16. This is an excellent model for the ELF to consider when thinking of how to link to the JK-SK program.

Finland

Overall Vision:

The principal target of ECEC is to promote the child's overall well-being so as to ensure the best possible conditions for growth, learning and development. The child is able to enjoy the company of other children and educators, experiencing joy and freedom of action in an unhurried, safe atmosphere. The child is interested in his environment, and can direct his energy to play, learning and everyday activities with an appropriate level of challenge.

This vision is encouraged in an environment that honours children's individual needs, personality and family culture in a fair and equitable environment. Relationships with parents, educators and other children are fostered so that they have a feeling of belonging within a peer group.

Specific Relevance to Best Start/ELF:

This document is organized into three major categories that would be easy for professionals to internalize and implement (overarching categories; child's way of acting; content orientations). The latter category makes direct links to the curriculum in the primary school. The focus seems to be overwhelmingly on the child's overall well-being so as to ensure the best possible conditions for growth, learning and development. This relates well to the social-emotional competence focus of the ELF.

Appendix 2

Best Start: Parent Involvement

As we consider an early learning and care framework for Ontario's Best Start program, it is important to keep in mind that the first learning and care is in the home. Parents provide both learning and care.

'Learning' begins as infants seek patterns and begin to recognize the familiar voices and faces of their parents; parents in turn, respond to infant cues setting in motion a dynamic learning system.

Contingent and sensitive responsiveness of parents to children's signals is a natural form of teaching and learning.

As children grow, the learning that parents provide is based on the deep knowledge they have of their children. This can take the form of talk in the home, shared reading, outings, recreational activity and other meaningful moment-by-moment experiences.

'Care' begins prior to birth as parents begin to nurture the unborn baby and continues throughout life through feeding, sheltering, and protecting.

In essence, care and learning are not separated since high quality care includes learning and high quality learning is dependent on care.

When parents cannot provide full-time learning and care at home due to employment, schooling or other circumstances, it is critical that we maintain that balance for children. It is the first duty of a society to provide high quality learning and care for all children. It is also the case that some parents do not 'naturally' provide optimal early learning opportunities or optimal care for their children.

Programs that can help these parents to catch up may have long-term benefits for children. Other parents may provide an optimal home environment but may need support to continue in the tough job of parenting.

In all cases, parents will benefit from the support of a high quality early learning and care program. A program that has parent involvement built into its foundation will meet the variety of needs that parents have regarding early learning and care. While some parents will benefit from child care, and others from kindergarten, all parents will benefit from 'involvement.'

Involvement and engagement can take many forms, as is readily seen in the research literature. Nevertheless a new system of early learning and care will be built on the framework of parent involvement and it will be necessary that this framework is flexible.

Parents will not all be involved in the same way because their needs will be different. Yet all children have the right to high quality early learning and care and to their parents' engagement in their lives.

In order to consider the framework for parent engagement and involvement, it is necessary to review the growing research literature and to put forward a new model that could work for Best Start.

Review of Research on Parent Involvement

Parent involvement in Ontario's early learning and care program will be key to high quality in programs and to the sustainability of benefits for children.

We know from international research, for example, that parent and community involvement has been a focus for educational improvement (Davies & Johnson, 1996; Epstein & Sanders, 2002; Ho, 2000; OECD, 1997; van der Werf, Creemers & Guldemond, 2001).

This attention to parent involvement has affected other social supports for children, such as child care, child protection (Kamerman & Kahn, 1997) and health (Crowson & Boyd, 1995; Tinsley, 2002).

In all of these sectors, best practices are those that involve families. In spite of support for parent involvement found in individual programs and projects, it is difficult to find evidence that large-scale programmatic efforts to increase parent involvement in education have actually had a significant impact on student achievement (see Mattingly et al., 2002 for a review; White, Taylor & Moss, 1992). Nevertheless numerous individual research projects have shown exciting benefits of parent involvement in early education (Albritton, Klotz & Roberson, 2003; Graue, Weinstein & Wallber, 1983; Jaynes, 2003; Pelletier & Corter, 2005; Pelletier & Brent, 2002).

Parent involvement in schools has different goals and effects for diverse cultural and linguistic groups. For example, we know that English second-language families choose to participate in their child's pre-school or kindergarten education in order to give their child an academic advantage and in order to learn more themselves. English first-language families on the other hand, may choose to participate in their child's program for socialization reasons, both for themselves and their child (Lubek & deVries, 2000; Pelletier, 2004; Pelletier, 2002).

We know that recently immigrated families hope to enhance their children's opportunities for employment and give their children a better life than they themselves had. They view education as a means to accomplish this (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Pelletier, 2002). However, it is often the case that while newly immigrated families want to make connections, they feel disempowered due to language and cultural differences (Lubek & deVries, 2000; McWayne & Owsianik, 2004; Ramirez, 2003).

The diversity of parent beliefs about education can challenge traditionally held notions of schooling and what that means for home-school connections. Thus different belief systems of parents and schools may relate to the effectiveness of parent involvement programs.

In order to be effective, parent involvement practice and policy need to go beyond *whether* parents are involved and focus on *how* they are involved and what happens as a result (Corter & Pelletier, 2004). There is surprisingly little research examining how different forms of parent involvement in school alter children's learning environments and how context may affect children's outcomes.

A Canadian intervention effort that included collaborative prevention programs for pre-school and school-age children across diverse cultural groups showed that benefits were greatest when there was explicit programming for children and parents (Peters, 2003). Sites with more general or community focus did not produce significant child outcomes. Programs that simultaneously target the home and school may have maximum benefits (e.g., Webster-Stratton, Reid & Hammond, 2001).

Parent involvement in early learning has been interpreted in light of several ‘models’ (Corter & Pelletier, 2004). For example, Epstein’s typology model (Epstein & Sanders, 2002) includes partnership activities such as parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community.

Some activities require more action on the part of the parent and others require more of the school. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) employ a psychological model that includes parent behaviour related to the school, personal support for schooling and cognitive stimulation. Mediating pathways include children’s attitudes and motivation. Their model includes teacher reports on both parent involvement and children’s achievement. Family demographic factors such as family constellation and maternal education are associated with outcomes.

Another psychological model asks why parents become involved and how parents construct their roles vis-à-vis involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; 1997). Finally, ecological models (e.g., Lerner, Rothbaum, Boulos & Castellino, 2002) examine the complex interactions between outcomes and process. Outcomes for parents may in turn be processes that affect child outcomes (Pelletier & Corter, 2005).

Diversity enters this mix when we consider which parents tend to be involved in school and whose children are successful. Factors such as low SES, minority language status, culture and single parenthood operate against parent-school partnerships (Evans & Fuller, 1999; McWayne & Owsianik, 2004; Swick & McKnight, 1989; Williams & Gregory, 2001) and potential benefits for children.

For example, within families considered to be at higher ‘risk,’ those who are better functioning may take up invitations by schools to become involved, resulting in the neediest families being left behind. When programs are universal, parents who are more advantaged may participate at higher rates than parents who are disadvantaged.

Connecting families to schools during the early school years must go beyond simply getting children ready to learn. Connections involve multiple levels of support that target the communities in which families live and schools are built. Research has shown that neighborhoods are a predictor of subsequent school success (Kohen, Brooks-Gunn, Leventhal & Hertzman, 2002). Thus it makes sense to make links within communities, links that bring together families, schools and other services.

Using the school and community as the hubs for access to and delivery of services makes sense from a fiscal standpoint (good use of community space) and from an ease of access standpoint (located in every community). Promising school-based initiatives in the US include Zigler's Schools for the 21st Century (Zigler, Finn-Stevenson & Stern, 1997), James Comer's school-community approach (Comer, Haynes, Joyner, Ben-Avie, 1996) and full-service schools (Dryfoos, 1994).

These models of schools as community hubs support children and families; Zigler's model includes child care and other pre-school services. Although these models have tremendous promise, it is difficult for schools and other agencies to implement or scale up the models, and changes in state governments can affect sustainability (Levine & Smith, 2001).

Early Head Start provides comprehensive, targeted support to many families, but it is not universally available. Universal access recognizes that all children, including those from middle-class homes, may be at risk for school difficulties (Mustard, 2004).

Integration of services has different meanings in different contexts (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992). It can mean loose co-location of services with some co-ordination among agencies. Or, it can mean co-ordination of referrals through case management (Gilliam, Zigler & Leiter, 2000).

Seamless programs have higher levels of integration. Deep integration may mean common curricula for children and parents, integrated staffing, common governance and funding. Organizations themselves can become integrated (Melaville & Blank, 1996).

A question for research is whether levels of service integration relate to impact on family involvement at the school. This leads us to the Best Start plan which will offer universal integrated early childhood care, education and community services to the young children and families of Ontario.

Nevertheless Ontario presents a particular challenge as it will need to meet the needs of a wider range of linguistic and culturally diverse families than in many Canadian provinces and more than in the US from where much of the parent involvement research has been drawn.

Context of Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

Ontario is a province of many cultures, religions and languages, particularly in urban centres. In the Toronto region for example, more than fifty per cent of children arrive in kindergarten speaking a language other than English. Second language groups often cluster into regions within and outside of urban contexts; some examples are Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Punjabi, Spanish, Tagalog, Ukrainian, Urdu and French.

Not only is the English language unfamiliar to many children and their families, but so is the culture. Negotiating the ‘culture of schooling’ represents one of many transitions for these families.

Given the increasing evidence that the pre-school years are critical for setting in motion the developmental trajectories for developmental health and well-being (Keating & Hertzman, 1999; McCain & Mustard, 1999; Corter & Pelletier, 2004), it is particularly important to support recently immigrated families during this period, since being disconnected to schools and services creates a vulnerable group of ‘have nots’ – those who have not had the benefit of good pre-school learning and care along with supports to families.

Thus, the transition to school is important from the standpoint of the knowledge, skills and experiences that children bring to school and the supports that are in place to optimize children’s potential. Research has shown that as a result of factors such as recent immigration, language status and socio-economic hurdles, many young children begin school at significant disadvantage (Epstein, 2005; Swick & McKnight, 1989).

Neither they, their families, nor the school system, are prepared for this critical transition. Related to the transition to school is the issue of access to services for child care, health, recreation and other social needs. New families may find themselves unable to find good quality child care, get referrals for child health issues, nor access recreational programs such as athletics and libraries.

Even families who are fortunate enough to ‘get in’ may encounter a system, or non-system, of fragmented services that requires access through different routes. Many are left without access or give up trying.

In order to help these diverse families connect to schools and community services, programs are needed to reach out to these many groups and to make the school a ‘hub’ of community activity and access to resources. Ontario’s Best Start program will go a long way to meeting this need.

An example of an integrated parent involvement program

Toronto First Duty (TFD) is a universal program of seamless care, early learning and parenting support that takes the 'school as hub' model as its focus. All families, regardless of language, cultural or immigration status, are encouraged to participate.

In the five pilot sites, the proportion of families for whom English is not a first language is very high. In order to make the initial connections, invitations are extended in a variety of ways and languages; for example, translated flyers left in mailboxes, posted in grocery stores, community centres, the local school and sometimes delivered personally by a member of that language group.

Parents are invited to participate in any or all of the services that are offered at that site. These include but are not limited to: kindergarten (half, full or extended day according to family need), child care, parenting and family literacy centres, health screening, empathy and social skills training for children, summer readiness programs, weekend activities and family barbeque nights.

The goal of TFD is to move toward an integrated model of service delivery using five factors as guides: integrated early learning environment, integrated early childhood staff, integrated governance, seamless access and parent/community involvement.

The research goals are to describe the process of implementation and to evaluate its impact on children, parents and communities. The research employs qualitative measures with features of case study, design research (e.g., Bereiter, 2002; Cobb, Confrey, diSiessa, Lehrer & Schauble, 2003) and traditional quantitative methods.

The effect of pre-school parent involvement on involvement in kindergarten

A study from the Harvard Family Research Project (Kreider, 2002) showed that parent involvement in pre-school or child care was related to positive outcomes in kindergarten. Parents read more to their children and were more likely to visit their child's kindergarten classroom. Furthermore, parents were more likely to establish peer networks with other parents and to have more information about the school.

The study concluded that early childhood programs set the stage for partnerships across families and schools. The involvement itself helped parents to support their children's learning at home by providing them with "just the simplest things that [parents] would never think of" (Kreider, 2002).

The involvement helped parents to feel connected to professionals who could help them solve problems such as transportation, housing, employment and child care. Trusting relationships and lasting connections showed parents that professionals had faith in them. These led to leadership opportunities as parents became members of parent councils and other community organizations.

Suggestions are provided for supporting parent involvement. These include:

- hosting special events prior to kindergarten in which school staff meet parents and answer their questions;
- capitalize on routine meetings with parents to give them information;
- create portfolios and collections of children's experiences to engage adults in children's progress;
- encourage parent networking by creating support lists and functions for parents of same age children;
- offer reassurance to parents that their feelings are normal;
- personalize the learning environment by posting photographs of the kindergarten teachers and inviting pre-schoolers to visit the kindergarten space frequently.

Another study identified a multi-dimensional construct of pre-school parent involvement that is summarized by three dimensions:

- supportive home environments provided by parents who spend time talking with children and promoting learning;
- direct school contact in which parents become involved in school-based activities with school personnel;
- inhibited involvement that occurs because of barriers related to time or other constraints (McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004).

The model is claimed to boost parents' feelings of self-efficacy, to promote parents' sense of welcomeness and familiarity with school, to provide a means of communicating with parents about their child's transition from pre-school to kindergarten and to represent a model of collaboration across early childhood programs, kindergarten, communities and families.

In a report on the transition to kindergarten Bohan-Baker and Little (2002) describe 'promising' rather than 'best' practices in transition to school involving parents. To begin, these authors note that ninety-five per cent of kindergarten teachers claim that talking to parents is a key transition strategy.

They also note that more proactive approaches to engaging families are necessary. Citing Pianta et al.'s work (Pianta, Rimm-Kauffman & Cox, 1999), three principles for parent engagement are outlined:

- reaching out between pre-school and kindergarten;
- reaching backward to families before kindergarten begins;
- reaching with appropriate intensity that ranges from flyers to personal contacts and home visits.

These three principles offer the names of specific programs across the US that are designed to involve families. One key aspect of the transition programs is a ‘transition co-ordinator’ who bridges families, pre-schools and kindergartens. This concept is elaborated through the recommendation of ‘school and program transition teams’ that include pre-school and kindergarten teachers, family workers, principals, parents and community agencies.

Before considering a proposed parent involvement and engagement model for Best Start, it is useful to consider factors that are associated with greater parent involvement and engagement. A study with Head Start parents found that there were particular parent, teacher and classroom characteristics that were associated with more successful parent involvement strategies (Castro, Bryant, Peisner-Feinberg & Skinner, 2004).

For parents, it was found that volunteering was the most common type of parent involvement and that on the average, parents volunteered in their child’s Head Start class once or twice a year. There was less volunteerism from fall to spring, thus timing was an important predictor. Other forms of parent involvement included participation on field trips, help in the classroom and attendance at parent-teacher meetings.

It was found that employed parents participated significantly less than unemployed parents; indeed, employed parents were less likely to volunteer in any activity. Mothers with more education were less likely to volunteer, presumably because they were more likely to be employed. Parents who perceived fewer barriers were more likely to be involved. Furthermore, parents who were involved at school were more likely to be involved in home learning activities.

From the perspective of teacher factors, teachers with more experience in Head Start had more volunteers, but this was not related to teachers’ education levels. It is believed that teachers with higher education levels would not be teaching in Head Start programs; therefore this factor was not associated with parent participation. Teachers whose classes received higher quality ratings had a greater number of parent volunteers. Thus high program quality is important for parent involvement; however, this study did not disentangle the possible bidirectional influences; that is, greater parent involvement could be the result of improved quality or could be one of the reasons for higher quality ratings.

In any case, the implications of this and other studies that examine parent and teacher factors are that parent involvement and engagement programs need to be flexible to meet the needs of working parents. This might involve evening and weekend opportunities. It is suggested that these parent involvement activities should be used to help children rather than the program itself, and would be best targeted to the whole family rather than the parents alone (Castro et al., 2004).

A proposed parent engagement model for Best Start – Components

1. Practice and policy

This piece will tie to the HR panel and beyond. This section considers the establishment of respectful relationships with parents that come about through pre-service and in-service training. Policy for parent involvement will be built into Best Start.

As one example of practice, teachers/ECEs will carry out an intake (or orientation) interview with each parent. But unlike interviews that may currently be in place, this format will allow parents to interview the teacher, promoting a two-way partnership in which neither party is seen as the authority.

Hoover-Dempsey and her colleagues offer a model for in-service practitioner education for enhancing parent involvement (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones & Reed, 2002). The program, Teachers Involving Parents, was designed to enhance teachers' beliefs, skills and strategies related to parent involvement.

The program addresses parental barriers such as differences in teachers' and parents' goals for children, language differences, structural constraints, family commitments and personal issues.

Similarly the program addresses teacher-related barriers such as lack of practical support to implement parent involvement, lack of confidence in dealing with parents and the tendency to give up trying if parent involvement efforts do not appear to be working.

The program employs four principles for success:

- **Respect for the expertise of participants.** Facilitators of the program record all discussion and return the discussion transcripts to participants for review and feedback. This discussion and feedback is then worked into the next professional development session. Anonymous ratings of the professional development sessions are returned to the group with specific strategies outlined as to how the feedback ratings would influence implementation. Practitioners are paid an honorarium of \$25 a session, an amount believed to “convey professional respect without suggesting coercive inducement” (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002).
- **Collegial interaction.** The development of a community of learners underlies the goal of collegial interaction. Facilitators create a safe and challenging learning community that is founded on trust among participants. The group offers ideas, examines their beliefs and experiences and generates alternatives toward successful parent involvement strategies.

-
- **Learning processes.** It is important to include high-level content with reflection, feedback and program planning. Content is based on both theoretical and empirical literature that provide a foundation for group reflection. Participants provide and are given online feedback. This content and practitioner knowledge is used to develop new plans for parent involvement. The issues are ‘group’ rather than ‘individually’ defined so that no one individual feels singled out and that there is consensus about best practices.
 - **Program goals and processes.** The logistics of the program implementation are made transparent. For example, the names of participants and facilitators are treated as important; addressing each other by name is considered critical to the process. Refreshments play an important role in creating a motivating and relaxing professional development environment. Time is valued; participants’ time is honoured by keeping to a schedule and ending on time. Sessions generally begin with a social goal, such as an ‘ice-breaker’ activity to get the group talking and to acknowledge the need for transition from a busy teaching day to the professional development context.

Through the workshops, it was possible to derive a set of factors that were considered to support improved teacher invitations for parent involvement:

- The first factor was *teacher efficacy*; teachers who believed they could make a difference and believed that parent involvement was important, had the greatest success.
- The second factor was *teacher perceptions of parental efficacy*; that is, teachers’ beliefs that parents could help were important to success.
- The third factor was the *program design*; it was important to have programs designed with parent involvement in mind.
- The fourth factor was *collegial in-service*; teachers who felt supported as part of a collegial group had more success in implementing parent involvement strategies.

An earlier study by Swick & McKnight (1989) showed a number of factors associated with kindergarten teachers’ promotion of parent involvement. The first was the philosophical orientation of the teacher: teachers who did not believe that parent involvement was important had low rates of parent involvement in their classes. This was in turn tied to pre-elementary teaching experience, administrative support and class size. Teachers with more pre-elementary experience, who had support for parent involvement with small class sizes and who believed parent involvement was important, had greater success in involving parents. The study pointed to the need for pre- and in-service training, incentives and conditions conducive to parent involvement.

2. Supporting engagement.

This section is on strategies that early learning and care program staff will use to engage parents. This section outlines a framework for supporting parent involvement drawn from Joyce Epstein’s model of parent involvement in schooling (Epstein & Sanders, 2002):

Parenting:

This section pertains to supporting parents in parenting. Best Start hubs present an ideal opportunity to link parents to information and to services in the community. Although all parents will benefit from the convenience of co-located services, it will be of particular benefit to parents who, for reasons related to language and recent immigration status, are disconnected from community services and who have difficulty finding information about parenting (information, links to services, fostering networks of parent supports, etc.).

According to Sanders and Epstein (1998), ‘parenting’ is defined as helping all families establish a home environment that supports children as students. One process that has been shown to ‘ready’ parents for kindergarten is providing them with information and guidance and providing reassurance to parents about the ‘normalcy’ of parenting practices and feelings (Kreider, 2002). When parents develop a trusting relationship with staff, they tend to stay connected with other educators later on (Kreider, 2002).

It is important to match the particular needs of parents to particular programs. For example, it has been found that high-risk mothers benefit more from mental health and parent support interventions, whereas low-risk mothers benefit more from educational curricula (Brooks-Gunn et al., 2000). High maternal engagement in intervention programs is associated with higher IQ scores in children at age three. Many studies suggest that the relationship between program staff and parents is key to success for parents and for children; this has also been termed the ‘therapeutic alliance’ (Brooks-Gunn et al., 2000).

Communicating:

This section describes ways that parents and ELC staff can communicate about children.

Communicating involves designing and conducting effective forms of communication about programs that are available at the school and in the community as well as about children’s progress.

A flexible and broad system will be necessary to meet the needs of diverse groups. In a study by Tresch Owen, Ware & Barfoot (2000), a parent-caregiver partnership scale was used to examine communication between mothers and care providers.

Communication in this study was viewed as an example of ‘partnership’ between parents and providers. Results showed that greater communication between parents and providers was associated with more supportive caregiver-child interactions in child care.

Albritton, Klotz and Roberson (2003) report ways that parents and early learning and care teachers have communicated effectively about children:

- school-home conferences in person or by telephone;
- regular notes to and from the teacher;
- reading the newsletters that teachers send home (these may need to be translated);
- observing their child's program;
- helping in the class;
- attending parent discussion groups;
- attending PTA or program council meetings.

Volunteering:

This section outlines types of volunteer activities that parents may do in the early learning and care program or for the program. It is important to keep in mind the research on parent involvement in early childhood programs such as Head Start.

Volunteerism has been shown to be the most common form of parent involvement; however, volunteerism has most often been in support of the program rather than of children per se.

That is, parents are most likely to accompany the class on field trips or to offer to help the teacher by preparing materials in the class.

It is also important to note that parents who are employed are unlikely to volunteer either in the program or at home. Mothers' education is associated with volunteerism; specifically, mothers with higher education are less likely to volunteer because they are employed.

McWayne & Owsianik (2004) found that disconnected parents reported more barriers to involvement, such as family stress or work responsibilities, and that lack of parent involvement was associated with higher rates of externalizing and internalizing behaviour among children.

In contrast, parents who actively promote learning at home, have direct and regular contact with the school such as volunteering or communicating, experience fewer barriers and have children who demonstrate positive engagement with peers, adults and learning.

The Best Start program for volunteering will need to include a flexible plan. A volunteering component will include recruiting parents, organizing ways in which parents can help and ways they can support early learning and care functions and activities, without necessarily being directly involved at the Best Start site. Explicit efforts should be made to bring in parents who have multiple stressors. Early childhood staff members will need specific training to help these parents and to build on the successful strategies that many parents already use at home.

Learning at home:

This section outlines specific activities that parents do at home to support their children's learning. Learning at home includes supporting parents to help their child with early learning and care-related projects or simply to learn how to talk to children about their early learning and care experiences.

Research has shown that involved parents provide rich learning environments at home, for example, they read stories, talk to their children, teach co-operation, self-control and pro-social behaviour. These children in turn have higher social skills, greater motivation and higher academic functioning (McWayne & Owsianik, 2004).

Brooks-Gunn, Berlin and Sidle Fuligni (2000) describe a number of family intervention models for supporting learning at home. The models range in the degree to which the focus of the intervention is on the child, the parent, the parent and teacher, or the parent and child.

In the case of learning at home in the area of literacy, a parent-focused program example is home visiting such as Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPPY). This program provides parent education regarding literacy but does not involve direct interaction with children.

A parent-focused centre and home example are parent workshops targeted to teaching parents about promoting literacy development. A parent-child program example is intergenerational literacy, or 'family literacy' in which the focus of the program is on parents and children together, although some parts of the program may be delivered separately to parents and children.

In these models, parents are viewed as a pathway through which early intervention programs influence children. According to Brooks-Gunn et al. (2000), the family or intergenerational literacy programs appear to show greater impact than the others.

Decision-making:

The literature suggests that programs can and should give parents leadership opportunities. Research has shown that parents value leadership opportunities.

Leadership, or decision-making, has been contrasted with simple participation (Lubek & deVries, 2000). It is important that parents feel as though they can have impact on their children's early learning and care programs rather than simply participate in meaningless activities.

Leadership opportunities have been associated with parents' increased sense of efficacy as their child's advocate and teacher (Kreider, 2002). One effective local program gave parents opportunities to become assistants in a parent-child drop-in readiness centre (Pelletier & Corter, 2005). These parents recruited other members of their cultural groups, served as translators in the program and at school-level meetings, took training in running some aspects of the readiness program, such as children's outdoor play time and parent education groups.

When parents are given leadership opportunities early, they tend to stay involved over time. These opportunities can provide the balance for diversity on school-wide councils, which typically are not representative of the community demographics and which have not been shown to be particularly effective in Ontario (Corter & Pelletier, 2005).

Collaborating with the community:

This section describes ways in which schools or hubs can engage the community by identifying and integrating resources and services to strengthen and support schools, children and families.

Some concrete examples from research include:

- hosting special events before the start of the early learning and care program;
- using community events to stress the importance of parent-teacher conferences;
- providing parent and community newsletters and other forms of regular communication;
- making portfolios and collections of children’s learning artefacts that are employed for assessment and for showcasing children’s achievements in the community;
- establishing parent peer networks and “buddy” lists;
- personalizing the environment with parent, child and teacher photographs (Kreider, 2002).

Bohan-Baker and Little (2002) provide additional suggestions including facilitating early registration to kindergarten or other early learning and care programs in order to establish community support, parent groups, home visits, health screening and to prepare the pre-schooler for the program.

Community supports include but are not limited to:

- health screening and referrals;
- social services;
- recreation information;
- parenting programs;
- social skills programs for children;
- multilingual translators to aide non English-speaking parents as they make the transition into the early learning and care program.

Reforming a system to support parent engagement and involvement

Epstein's Comprehensive School Reform Model (CSR) offers a framework to consider the implementation of the six types of parent involvement (outlined above) for the Best Start context.

Eight elements were considered essential for establishing high quality partnership programs. The eight elements involved the steps taken by one site to develop and implement effective parent partnerships.

Element 1 concerned leadership. Action teams comprised of teachers, parents and community members were responsible for representing their sector in planning.

Element 2 was teamwork. Five action teams were established with representation across sectors. The action teams addressed the following areas for improvement: reading, writing, mathematics, behaviour and partnerships.

Element 3 involved plans for action. Each action team produced annual plans that included all six types of involvement for families and communities. As one example, a new policy required that children would be able to demonstrate and discuss what they were learning with a family partner.

Element 4 was implementation. Each action team was charged to show improved quality of their area and to involve more families.

Elements 5, 6, 7, and 8 respectively were: funding, collegial support, evaluation and networking.

As one example of an action team's improvement plan, the 'partnerships group' developed 'Fun Connections.'

A Connections Day picnic was held prior to commencement of the program, a Pathways to Partnerships Newsletter was developed in three primary language groups, a family volleyball organization was established, a Career Day was held, a homework centre for older children in the school, an ice-cream social and a holiday photo night were established and maintained by the action group.

An on-site facilitator pulled all aspects of the reform project together and made the school a more welcoming place for families.

In addition, a monthly contact was made by a translator to all families who did not speak English. The translator informed families of announcements, invitations and discussed parents' questions.

This case study project showed the positive impact of these efforts to connect families to schools and showed that the model can help when it is used.

Appendix 3

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Considerations to be presented to Best Start Vision and Implementation Joint Work Group

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May 1, 2006

I. Purpose of Document

The purpose of our work group is to ensure that Ontario's Best Start reflects the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion for all children and families. This document outlines aspects to be considered by both Expert Panels: The panel on an Early Learning Framework (ELF) and the panel on Quality and Human Resources (QHR).

II. Principles – Frameworks

Guided by the Principles of Best Start, this document is informed by the Implementation Planning Guidelines for Best Start Networks. These networks work closely with parents to develop flexible implementation strategies that meet families' needs. More specifically, the planning for the early learning and care hubs will need to take into consideration the range and forms of difference each child and family brings to the early learning setting including appearance, age, culture, ethnicity, race, language, gender, sexual orientation, religion, family environment and developmental abilities.

Additionally, there is particular consideration for the unique characteristics of specific groups, such as the francophone, Aboriginal, rural and remote and ethnocultural communities.

This document is informed by a number of critical resources and background documents including international conventions and declarations, national level statements of rights and vision, and provincial documents relating to child care, education and Best Start.

III. Proposed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Vision

All children have a right to live in and learn in an equitable society. Children must grow up with a strong sense of self, in families and communities that promote attitudes, beliefs and values of equity and support their full participation.

As members of communities, educators who provide education and care to young children have the responsibility to develop their own understanding of diversity and inclusion and to partner with families, staff, administrators, institutions and governments to contribute to create a society where social justice is a reality.

The capacity of educators to help create such a society is built when principles, legislation and resources that promote equity and social justice are infused into values, program standards, practices, professional education and ongoing professional development.

Adapted from BANDTEC, A Network for Diversity Training. (2006). Retrieved March 17, 2006, from <http://www.bandtec.org/statement.html>

IV. Operationalizing the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Vision

All major documents regarding Best Start should have clear statements that reflect the proposed vision statement on diversity, equity and inclusion. To achieve this proposed vision, we present the following to be operationalized in the ELF and QHR Panel recommendations.

Expert Panel on Quality and Human Resources

A key question for the Quality and Human Resources Panel is to consider how to ensure that a stable, committed, knowledgeable and diverse workforce exemplifies the behaviours, attitudes and practices that reflect the proposed vision of diversity, equity and inclusion. Recommendations and strategies are required with respect to professional education, ongoing professional development, quality assurance and infrastructure support.

Professional Education

Colleges, universities and faculties of education must ensure that graduates have the appropriate knowledge, skills and values to meet the individual and diverse needs of children and families.

A framework of standards is necessary that includes appropriate professional education of educators at each level as well as ongoing professional development.

Community Colleges

The Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology have implemented, since 1996 (and updated in 2002), the following required program standard that addresses diversity:

Graduates must reliably demonstrate the ability to “act in a manner, consistent with principles of fairness, equity, and diversity to support the development and learning of individual children, within the context of his/her family, culture, and society.” (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities).

The elements of the performance include:

- Planning and providing a curriculum and environment which are inclusive.
- Recognize and express the value of diversity and commonality that exists among individuals.
- Utilize developmentally appropriate and inclusive practices in all aspects of work required.
- Foster learning environments which enhance growth and development and which are sensitive to issues of inclusion.
- Model relationships which are sensitive to, and inclusive of, all others.
- Recognize and express the value of diversity and commonality that exists among individuals.
- Demonstrate respect for the individual.
- Promote an environment of mutual respect amongst children.
- Implement experiences for children which are inclusive and sensitive to their diverse needs.
- Evaluate and revise inclusive approaches to curriculum.
- Validate communication initiated by individual children, families, and co-workers.
- Plan curriculum and develop programs that are responsive to the social and cultural needs of individual children and groups of children.
- Respond sensitively and appropriately to families.
- Provide behavioural interventions and guidance for children in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. (2002). *Early Childhood Education Program Standard - The Vocational Learning Outcomes*. Retrieved April 11, 2006, from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/college/progstan/humserv/eechedu.pdf>

There are accountability mechanisms for ensuring that these standards are met. This is done through regular program reviews of the community college ECE programs.

Universities

Despite the fact that there may be excellent programs and courses provided in individual universities, there is currently no province-wide standard that applies to undergraduate programs in such areas as Child, Youth and Family studies, Early Childhood Education, and Child and Youth care. These applied programs must ensure that graduates are prepared for their professional roles including a thorough understanding and knowledge of diversity equity and inclusion issues.

Faculties of Education

The Faculties of Education have to abide by the requirements set by the Ontario College of Teachers' Act (1996) and address the Ontario Curriculum. Faculties of Education must ensure that their courses prepare teacher candidates to “meet the individual needs of all pupils.” Graduates of the Faculties of Education are expected to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes required through their practice teaching experiences and course content that is related to diversity, equity and inclusion and an understanding of the individual and varied needs of children and families. Examples of meeting diversity/inclusion requirements are described in the College of Teachers Accreditation handbook and Code of Ethics (*see Appendix 3a*). Currently, the course work that meets these criteria is not required for all graduates.

Regulatory Colleges

The regulatory colleges (i.e., proposed College of Early Childhood Educators and the College of Teachers) play a critical role in assuring the standards of practice in two ways: One relates to accreditation requirements for professional programs and the other relates to the professional training and on-going professional development required for individual educators to be certified. All criteria need to clearly reflect the vision of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Ongoing Professional Development

Almost all professions require or strongly encourage ongoing professional development as a basic expectation of its members. The value of ongoing professional development in meeting the increasingly complex needs of children, families and communities has been well documented (Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud & Lange, 1997; Corson, 1998; Doherty, 2005).

Despite the fact that many educators engage in professional development, there is currently no required on-going professional development requirement. Moreover, in order for professional development opportunities to be affordable, accessible and relevant, an infrastructure needs to be in place to meet that purpose. This is critical for individual education, career ladders and for quality programs.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is a method for monitoring and improving quality on a continuing basis. It complements professional education and ongoing professional development and can provide valuable information in situ to address unique needs within programs. It should result in strategic quality improvement plans for individuals and programs.

Research shows that in child care programs in Ontario and across Canada, diversity continues to be one of the lowest scoring indicators on observational measures of program quality (Goelman, Doherty, Lero, LaGrange & Tougas, 2000). Inclusion quality is also variable (Irwin, Lero & Brophy, 2000).

Both can be improved dramatically through on site observation and consultation, appropriate professional development and access to critical program supports. Resources need to be allocated to ensure that Quality Assurance is practised and supported across the province.

Expert Panel on an Early Learning Framework

A key question for the ELF panel is how to ensure that the Early Learning Framework reflects the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion both in the content of the framework as well as in its implementation.

The following ELF shared beliefs will need to reflect an appreciation of diversity, equity and inclusion:

- Parents and families are the first and most powerful influence on learning and development.
- Early learning programs need reciprocal partnerships with parents, families and communities.
- The framework should be inclusive, supporting meaningful engagement and equitable outcomes for all children.
- The framework acknowledges a child's individual and diverse development and natural disposition to learn.
- Young children and their families live in communities that shape early experiences.

The overall training and implementation of the ELF should be respectful of the unique perspectives of communities. Matthews and Ewen (2006) recommend that directors conduct a needs assessment to identify the early care and education needs of immigrant families in their communities, and the gaps in services provision and participation.

Because many children live in mixed-status families, information collected should include migration history and details about extended family networks (Ali, Taraban & Gill, 2003; Bernhard, Landolt & Goldring, 2006; Orellana, Thorne, Chee & Lam, 2001; Yau, 1995; Young, 2004). This information can be used to improve access to services.

Achieving meaningful participation will require additional training for staff to implement teaching strategies for second language acquisition and more skills and knowledge to work with children from linguistically and culturally diverse families (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2004; Pacini-Ketchabaw, Bernhard & Freire, 2001).

ELF training should encourage healthy dialogue about the principles and shared beliefs that relate to inclusion, diversity and equity in a variety of settings.

Infrastructure and policy level supports needed

This section outlines the development of an infrastructure that will be the vehicle to turn a belief statement and principles into practice at the community level. It is important to ensure that there is congruence between all levels of the infrastructure.

1. In order to ensure effective implementation and sustainable supports for professional development across the province, the following are needed:

Resources need to be in place (e.g., mentoring, on-site consultation, professional development).

Co-ordinators need to be identified to do the mentoring work and deliver professional development programs. Partnerships may include CAATS and Universities, HBHC, Special Needs Resource Consultants, Professional Resource Centres, OEYCs, home child care agencies and municipalities.

2. Program operating criteria that reflect diversity, equity and inclusion need to be in place.

For example, a quality assurance strategy needs to be developed and used systematically (e.g., NAEYC document, Harms & Clifford, Dixie Mitchell's tool, Sharon Hope Irwin's SpecialLink Inclusion Principles scale).

Both the province and municipalities are responsible for ensuring quality standards are in place and are being met.

3. On-going support to build and sustain capacity with respect to diversity, equity and inclusion is essential. Specifically,

- Additional staff beyond ratio as needed to support inclusion.
- Technical support and special consultancy.
- Special equipment and materials.
- Interpreters to ensure effective communication with parents.

Appendix 3a: Ontario College of Teachers – Foundations of Professional Practice

The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Practice include the following five statements about diversity:

- Commitment to Students and Student Learning
- Professional Knowledge
- Teaching Practice
- Leadership and Community
- Ongoing Professional Learning

Included in these standards are key elements.

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers:

- help students to appreciate their own identity, to learn more of their cultural heritage;
- understand and use a range of teaching methods to address learning, cultural, spiritual and language differences, and family situations;
- accommodate the differences in students and respect their diversity;
- help students connect learning to their own life experiences and spiritual and cultural understandings;
- respond to learning exceptionalities and special needs;
- apply teaching strategies to meet student needs;
- reflect on current practice to determine if needs of individuals and groups of students are being met.

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers must know:

- how differences arising from cultural heritage, language, family, gender, community and other factors shape experience and impact on learning;
- that teaching students with exceptionalities requires the use of specialized knowledge and skills;
- ways to establish classroom management strategies that support learning and respect the dignity of students;
- ways to communicate and collaborate with parents and others involved in the education of students;
- (know ways to identify and respond to) the factors in a diverse and changing society that impact on learning.

Ontario College of Teachers- Standards: Foundations of Professional Practice - Section One. Retrieved on April 11, 2006, from http://www.oct.ca/publications/pdf/foundation_e.pdf

Ethical Standards – Ontario College of Teachers

- demonstrate impartial and consistent respect for all students as individuals with distinctive and ongoing learning needs and capacities;
- model respect for human dignity, spiritual values, cultural values, freedom, social justice, democracy and the environment;
- work with members of the College and others to create a professional environment that supports the social, physical, intellectual, spiritual, cultural, moral and emotional development of students;
- base relationships with parents or guardians in their role as partners in the education of students, on respect, trust and communication.

Ontario College of Teachers – Publications: Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession – Section Two. (2006). Retrieved on April 11, 2006, from <http://www.oct.ca/publications/documents.aspx?lang=en-CA>

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