

# Capable, Confident, and Curious:

NOVA SCOTIA'S EARLY LEARNING  
CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

IMPLEMENTATION DRAFT 2018–2019



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**Capable, Confident, and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework**

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In particular, the Nova Scotia early learning curriculum framework acknowledges Australia's *Belonging, Being, and Becoming—The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. With permission, content in the sections Early Learning Practices and Learning Strategies draw heavily on the Australian framework.

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A young girl with dark hair, wearing a blue puffer jacket and a striped knit hat with braided earflaps, is peering out from a blue tunnel on a playground. She is smiling and looking directly at the camera. The tunnel is made of a light-colored material with a blue border. The background shows some greenery and a fence.

# Introduction





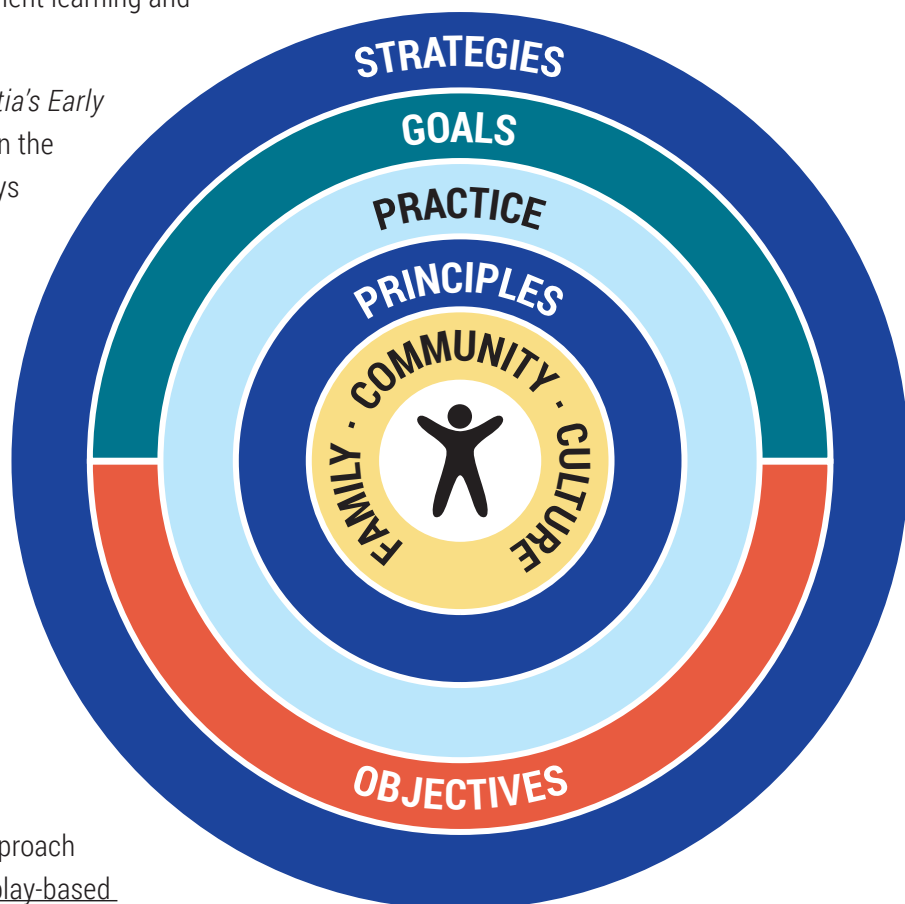
# Introduction

Many families across Nova Scotia regularly participate in early childhood education programs, such as regulated child care centres, and pre-primary programs. These programs are designed for, and welcome, children from infancy to early school years. The programs, and the educators who provide them, encourage children's learning and collectively contribute to their emotional, social, cognitive, linguistic, and physical development.

Research shows that high-quality early childhood education programs facilitate children's learning and development, and excellent educators' practices are essential to quality outcomes for children. In particular, it is the quality of the daily interactions between educators and children that have the greatest influence on children's development (Kelly and Camilli 2007; Myers 2004; Shonkoff 2000). The implementation of an early learning curriculum framework that guides educators' practices also contributes to creating and maintaining quality programming and excellent learning and developmental outcomes for children.

*Capable, Confident, and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework* is based on the concept of the Image of the Child which says that everyone's personal Image of the Child is influenced by their own experiences, biases, and knowledge. This framework's Image of the Child sees children as curious, creative, full of potential, capable, and confident. It values and honours children for who they are today, and for who they will become. It also values how all children's families, cultures, and communities influence on and contributions to children's learning and development. These beliefs informed each of the following sections of the document:

- **Principles:** Define how educators approach early learning, with an emphasis on play-based learning; relationships; inclusion, diversity and equity; learning environments; and reflective practice
- **Practice:** Support the principles through holistic approaches, responsiveness to children; intentional teaching; valuing cultural and social contexts of children; continuity in experiences and successful transitions; and authentic assessment



- **Learning Goals:** Set broad categories of focus for children's development—Well-being, Discovery and Invention, Language and Communication, and Personal and Social Responsibility
- **Learning Objectives:** Further define the learning goals and provide direction on which areas of the goals educators should give the most attention to
- **Learning Strategies:** Outline examples of how children's behaviours may demonstrate each of the objectives, and how to support children in achieving those objectives; educators are strongly encouraged to develop strategies that reflect high-quality practices within the context of their communities, informed by the cultures of the families, and the individual characteristics of the children in the program

The framework has been developed for directors, pedagogical leaders, and educators involved with early childhood education programs in the province. It focuses on programs for children from infancy to eight years old and its implementation depends on a solid understanding of child development and strong pedagogical leadership.

The framework is designed to be of use and interest to other professionals who work with children (e.g., family home child care programs, family resource centres, libraries) and parents and families.

Educators are important people in children's lives. They understand and respect child development, and ensure that children have opportunities to play, investigate, explore, question, pursue their own interests, be recognized for their abilities, and develop friendships. Educators encourage children's capacity to learn through self-directed and increasingly complex play; opportunities to express their ideas, engage in conversation, and learn to appreciate others' perspectives and opinions; and to actively explore their environments.



The framework informs educators' expectations of children, and engages them in critical thought and reflective practice. It supports a model of decision-making that uses an ongoing cycle and requires educators draw on their professional expertise, including their in-depth knowledge of each child, their families and communities, and cultural background(s). Building on the current practices of educators in Nova Scotia, it guides them as they extend and enrich children's development, learning, and care through

- planning and preparing early learning environments that reflect and respond to children's interests, abilities, and curiosities
- planning and preparing early learning environments that reflect the communities where children live, their familial and cultural backgrounds, and the language(s) they speak
- scaffolding children's knowledge with new experiences and extending their learning
- reflectively and critically examining their practice in consultation and professional collaboration with colleagues
- documenting children's learning and using authentic assessment to measure children's progress
- communicating with parents, guardians, and other professionals
- identifying and pursuing ongoing professional development opportunities

Nova Scotia's early learning curriculum framework provides a consistent approach for all early childhood education programs including a common language for communicating with parents and other educators, and a system to examine and reflect on their philosophical approaches to early childhood education. It also allows for the early childhood education programs to implement the goals and strategies in their own way, integrating influences from their communities, skills and interests of educators and children, and cultures and traditions of the families and children in their programs.

This framework is part of Nova Scotia's plan to make early childhood education accessible, affordable, and inclusive for all families because high-quality early learning programs are the foundation for lifelong learning and development. When government, educators, parents, families, communities, and children work together it enhances early childhood education programs and ensures that the youngest generation of Nova Scotians have opportunities for future success.

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**Note:** Throughout this document, the term **educator** refers to early childhood educators and early childhood practitioners who work directly with children in early childhood education programs and settings. Definitions for underlined terms are included in the glossary.

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# A Vision

for Children's Learning



# A Vision for Children's Learning

*Learning is joyful and engaging. It nourishes children's developmental health and well-being.*

—Survey feedback from a Nova Scotia early childhood educator

## Image of the Child

An individual's Image of the Child—and definition of childhood itself—is influenced by that person's experiences, culture, values, and beliefs. This image is often influenced by their own experiences as a child. Family circumstances provide children with a variety of life experiences; a child growing up in a large extended family with many siblings, cousins, aunts, and uncles who are all involved in their life has a different perspective on what family and childhood means than a child who is an only child, even though both children are equally as loved and cherished. Children come from many different family backgrounds. People all draw on a vast range of experiences to inform their own Image of the Child.

Everyone's Image of the Child shapes their decisions and beliefs about how children learn. The image influences the types of early learning environments that are provided for children, the role of the educators in preparing early learning environments, and relationships with children and families. If an educator believes that children are capable human beings, that their ideas and interests matter, and that their natural curiosity and love of learning inspires them to explore their environments—then the early childhood environment will be designed and structured to allow children to explore, use their senses, and confidently express their own ideas and opinions.

The framework views children's learning as dynamic, complex, and holistic. Physical, social, emotional, personal, spiritual, creative, cognitive, and linguistic aspects of learning are all interrelated. It allows children to actively construct their own understandings, act independently, and contribute to the learning of others. Children have a right to participate in making decisions that affect them and to have their ideas and opinions welcomed, respected, and valued. Respecting these rights encourages children to share their ideas with confidence, and listen to and respect the ideas and opinions of others.

The Principles, Practices, and Learning Goals, Objectives, and Strategies described in this document are based on children as eager and avid learners, with individual strengths, capacities, and interests.



This image sets out expectations and responsibilities for educators to be:

- knowledgeable about child development
- respectful and responsive to children
- inclusive in their interactions with children and their families
- reflective of the communities where children and families live
- respectful of the cultures, languages and traditions of children

*In many ways, the image of the child reflects not only a person's beliefs about children and childhood, but also their beliefs about what is possible and desirable for human life at the individual, social, and global levels.*

(British Columbia Ministry of Health and Ministry of Children and Family Development 2008, 4)

## Early childhood pedagogy

The term pedagogy is a fairly new term to educators across Nova Scotia. The term pedagogy stems from the Greek terms *país* (child) and *ágō* (to lead, to guide). Pedagogy refers to the holistic nature of an educator's professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships. Early childhood pedagogy is different than a program plan, or defined activities intended to produce a defined outcome. It encourages educators to ask questions—about what they do, and why—and what impact their decisions have on how children learn. Pedagogy informs curriculum decision-making, and the facilitation of learning in a rich and inviting child-centered environment.



Early childhood pedagogy is not focused on merely providing experiences for children. It also encourages educators to observe children, engage in conversations, and guide children's activities based on what they learn. In this way, the curriculum is co-constructed by children and educators. At the same time, educators explore and learn from families and communities, which helps to inform the construction of curriculum.

When educators view children as capable learners and establish respectful and caring relationships with them and their families, everyone works together to co-construct curriculum and learning experiences relevant to children in their local context. These experiences gradually expand children's knowledge and understanding of the world.

Professional judgement is a key component of early childhood pedagogy, and central to facilitating children's learning. It requires educators to be reflective and intentional, to consider what they do, why they practice as they do, and how their actions impact children and their families. Professional judgement is driven by a vision of children's potential.

In making professional judgements, educators weave together their

- professional knowledge of child development, children's learning, and skills to guide children's learning in an intentionally planned play-based environment
- knowledge of children, families and communities, and cultural traditions
- awareness of how their beliefs, values, and Image of the Child impact children's learning

Nova Scotia's early learning framework is a social pedagogical framework that emphasizes relationships and experiences. It builds on developmental (*Is this appropriate for a two-year old's stage of development? What activities would help to develop these skills for three-year olds?*), and socio-cultural perspectives (*What do I need to consider about this child's family and cultural background? Are the books in our library representative of the families and cultures of the children in the program?*), and emphasizes the need for fairness, justice and equity for all children (*Do all children have the same chance for success at this activity? Is the language we use free of bias about gender, race?*).

***A social pedagogical approach recognizes the context of children's learning and the importance of attending to the today-ness of children's lives and their diverse personal, social, and cultural experiences. A curriculum grounded in this approach has the simultaneous effect of promoting overall well-being and capacity for learning.***

(University of New Brunswick Early Childhood Research and Development Team 2008, 183)





Nova Scotia's

# Families, Communities, and Cultures



# Nova Scotia's Families, Communities, and Cultures

## Family, community, and culture

Children's lives are shaped by their families, communities, and culture. Their earliest development and learning takes place through these relationships, particularly within families, who are children's most influential teachers. As children participate in daily life, they develop interests, construct their own identities, and make meaning of the world they live in.

*Families are composed of individuals who are competent and capable, curious, and rich in experience. They love their children and want the best for them; they are experts on their children. Families are the first and most powerful influence on children's learning, development, health, and well-being. Families bring diverse social, cultural, and linguistic perspectives to the learning situation. Families belong, are valuable contributors to their children's learning, and are engaged in a meaningful way.*

(Ontario Ministry of Education 2014, 7)

A sense of belonging is integral to human existence. Children belong first to a family, then a cultural group, then a neighbourhood, and then their wider community. The framework acknowledges children's interdependence with others and the basis of relationships in defining identities. In early childhood and throughout life, relationships are crucial to a child's developing sense of self—they shape who children are and who they become.

## Nova Scotia's people and cultures

Nova Scotia's people reflect diverse cultures, many which are language-based. In relation to child development and learning, culture influences the way that children engage in and form relationships, and how they provide information to and communicate with others. Culture is the understandings, patterns of behaviour, practices, and values shared by a group of people. Collectively, these shared understandings help people make sense of the world and communicate with one another. Culture represents a group's accepted values, traditions, and lifestyles that guide the way people lead their day-to-day lives. Children and families may identify as belonging to more than one culture. Today, more than 100 cultures are represented across the province, providing educators with a wealth of creative opportunities to celebrate the province's peoples and cultures, as well as the responsibility to be inclusive and responsive to children in their programs.

Nova Scotia's Indigenous people, Acadian/Francophone population, African Nova Scotian, and the Gaels communities have greatly underpinned the uniqueness of the province's population. An awareness of the history of Nova Scotia's founding cultures is necessary to developing relationships with children's parents, families, and communities, and to creating environments that reflect the cultures and traditions of all Nova Scotians.

Respecting cultural and linguistic differences is more than celebrating different holidays—it involves a deep understanding of the culture's values, the experiences of its members, and their ways of knowing. Cultural identity comes from having access to your own culture—its institutions, land, language, knowledge, social resources, economic resources; the institutions of the community (lifestyle) and its codes for living related to social, environmental, and physical respect such as nutrition, safety, protection of physical, spiritual and emotional integrity of children and families; as well as cultural expression and cultural endorsement (Durie 2003).

It is generally accepted that children's cultural backgrounds influence their learning. In early infancy, children do not consciously make sense of and analyze their surroundings—but they very quickly begin to understand patterns of activities, different ways of responding, and the sounds and tones of their first language.

## **Nova Scotia's founding cultures: A brief history**

This section was developed by contributors from the early childhood education field and EECD. It provides brief histories and contexts of four major cultural groups in Nova Scotia: the Mi'kmaq, Acadians, African Nova Scotians, and the Gaels.

### **Mi'kmaq people**

The Mi'kmaq are the original people of Nova Scotia and remain the predominant Indigenous group within the province. Nova Scotia is within the traditional, ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq, who, for time immemorial, have lived and prospered on this land. The traditional territory is divided into seven smaller territories across what is known as Mi'kma'ki.

The territory stretches from the southern portion of the Gaspé Peninsula eastward to Newfoundland and encompasses New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island.

Nova Scotia has 13 Mi'kmaw First Nation communities. The culture, language, and Indigenous knowledge of the Mi'kmaq has been passed down orally through hundreds of generations, and still guides Mi'kmaw way of life.

The Mi'kmaw language is an ancient language that has developed over the centuries in Mi'kma'ki. It is a sacred language, given to the people by Kisu'lkw. The Mi'kmaw language is the way in which Mi'kmaw values, customs, beliefs, and attitudes are passed on from generation to generation. To learn the language, therefore, is to deepen one's understanding of Mi'kmaw consciousness and identity.

Mi'kmaw language is a verb-oriented language. This means that all words in a clause are based around the verb and not, as in English, around the subject. Unlike French, there is no gender in the Mi'kmaw language, but there is a clear distinction between animate and inanimate objects. Mi'kmaw language has free word order; there is no predetermined syntax. When the language is written in Nova Scotia, the Smith-Francis orthography is the recognized writing system.

Mi'kmaw language education is holistic in nature and unifies language, knowledge, and culture. Consciousness and identity are at the heart of the Mi'kmaw language. There is no disconnect between language and culture; the culture is embedded in the language. Promoting the understanding and expressions of Mi'kmaw worldview through the use of the Mi'kmaw language is crucial.

Recently, there has been a tremendous increase in the development of technology that supports language development, especially apps, digital books, videos, and web resources. This increase in technologies that reinforce language development will help teachers to support students of all learning modalities. Community support is integral to Mi'kmaw Education. The community has an obligation to support language revitalization, enhancement, promotion, and development. Educators should find ways to involve the community in the school through events and activities in order to enhance language development. Educators should also provide opportunities for Elders to be present in the classroom as a resource, because Elders are the keepers of knowledge and language.

All Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia have Kindergarten–4 (K–4) programs for children the year before they enter primary. These programs are either stand-alone programs or combined with Aboriginal Head Start Programs on Reserve or child care programs.

Early childhood programs in Mi'kmaw communities do not fall under provincial regulations and do not receive provincial funding. However, educators are educated in provincial programs and follow as closely as possible guidelines for provincially regulated care. They also follow guidelines for programs that are specific to First Nation programs. There is a great deal of consistency between provincial programs and those offered in Mi'kmaw communities.

## **Acadian Nova Scotians**

The Acadian population of Nova Scotia has a unique place in this province's history. They are descendants of one of the first permanent French settlers in North America, having arrived with Samuel de Champlain in Port Royal in 1605. In July 1755, approximately 6,000 Acadians were deported from mainland Nova Scotia, mainly for refusing to take an oath of allegiance to the British Crown. Most were captured and sent by ship to colonies along the Atlantic Coast. However, some were imprisoned in Halifax, others sent to France and a small number went into hiding or spent many years wandering. By 1764, Acadians were given permission to return to what was then Acadia, but had to settle on lands that were not taken by the British settlers. Today's Acadian communities are dispersed throughout Nova Scotia and located mainly in Digby, Yarmouth, Inverness, Richmond, Antigonish, and Halifax counties.



In the mid 1800s, the Government of Nova Scotia condoned bilingual Acadian schools until after 1969, when the federal government proclaimed the Official Languages Act. The Act gave French-language minorities in Canada official rights to services in their language. In 1982, Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms became a major stepping-stone in the advancement of French-language minority education in Canada. It clearly defined the rights of all Canadians to have their children educated in their own official language.

After a Canadian Charter challenge based on the interpretation of Section 23 in 1996, the Government of Nova Scotia created a single school board to manage all Acadian and French schools for the entire province—the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP). It took yet another court challenge that ended in October 1999 to replace the existing bilingual school system with homogeneous French first language schools. In 2004, the Province of Nova Scotia enacted the French-language Services Act, giving official status to the delivery of French-language services by the public service.

Since the 1970s, Acadian and Francophone early childhood education programs have been developed in various French minority language communities across Nova Scotia. They have played an important role in valuing the Acadian language and culture in all aspects of the child's life at home, in society, and at school. The integration of these French early childhood centres or *centres de la petite enfance* within French schools has become a fundamental catalyst to redress past injustices and provide the official language minority with equitable access to high-quality education. The French Early Years Centre and the CSAP's allocation of space for many early childhood education programs, including their own 4-year-old language acquisition program *Grandir en français*, are positive indicators of restorative progress.

Due to a bilingual population, there are many challenges facing the Acadian and Francophone community with regard to the early years including assimilation, reclaiming lost language, access to French early years services, training for educators, and exogamous or mixed language (English and French) families. Statistics bring to light an urgent need to support mixed language families in order to ensure the survival and future of the Francophone community of Canada.

In 2006, of the nearly 64,000 right-holder's children from birth to age 4 living in Francophone minority provinces, 61 per cent are part of French exogamous families; and only 38 out of every 100 speak French at least regularly at home. In Nova Scotia, 3.8 per cent of the population possess French as their first language and, for children –from birth to age 4, this falls to a mere 1.9 per cent. In addition, 71.9 per cent of Nova Scotia children are part of exogamous families and French is transmitted to these children less than 20 per cent of the time. For the 2011–2012 school year, Nova Scotia's French schools were faced with nearly 68 per cent of new children who speak little to no French, a direct consequence of these factors (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages 2016).

French being one of Canada's two official languages, it is important that all children and their families have access to equitable services in their language of choice. High-quality French

first language early learning programs and environments build strong cultural identities for not only today's children but for future generations as well. By understanding that the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits begins at birth, Acadian and Francophone educators are in a unique and ideal position to counteract the linguistic and cultural assimilation of the Acadian and Francophone population. By effectively addressing the specific cultural and linguistic needs of Nova Scotia's Acadians and Francophones, they can become the instrument of change for the historically downward trajectory of the Acadian-Francophone culture and language.

## **African Nova Scotians**

People of African ancestry have deep roots in the history of Nova Scotia. They were part of the earliest non-indigenous settlement of our province and, as a founding culture, African Nova Scotians continue to contribute to the diversity and infrastructure that defines Nova Scotia today. Their history is woven into the very fabric of Nova Scotian culture. They represent a myriad of ethnicities, cultural experiences, and knowledge.

The first recorded African believed to have visited Nova Scotia was Mathieu de Costa. He was hired to serve as an interpreter between the French and Mi'kmaq when the first settlement in Nova Scotia was established at Port-Royal.

By 1769, almost 8,000 New England Planters had settled in Nova Scotia. It is estimated that approximately 200 Africans accompanied the New England Planters. Among them was Barbara Cuffy and her family, the only known free Black settlers to arrive with the Planters. Barbara Cuffy is a compelling figure as she was a Black woman landholder in Nova Scotia during the 1760s, fifty years before slavery was extinguished in the province and more than one hundred and fifty years before women got the vote.

The end of the American Revolution prompted the first large wave of immigration to Nova Scotia. Between April and November of 1783, approximately 50,000 Loyalists arrived in Nova Scotia. About 10 per cent of them were of African ancestry. Among them were approximately 3,500 free Black Loyalists and 1,500 enslaved Africans. These Black Loyalists had risked their lives to reclaim their freedom. They were people with remarkable determination and survival skills. These brave men and women settled in every Township of the province and they established the first of the more than 50 African Nova Scotian communities in the province including at Guysborough, Granville, Birchtown, Brindley Town (Digby), Little Tracadie, Halifax, and others.

In 1796, 600 exiled Jamaican Maroons settled in the Preston area. Less than four years after their arrival, most of the Maroons set sail for Sierra Leone. Only a few families chose to stay behind. However, their legacy endures, they helped build new fortifications at the Halifax Citadel and they worked at the Government House and the Governor's Farm.

The War of 1812 between the United States and Britain provided more enslaved Africans the opportunity to reclaim their freedom. By 1816, approximately 1,800 Black Refugees had come

to Nova Scotia. Most were settled at Preston and Hammonds Plains. Others settled in Halifax and smaller communities around the province including at Cobequid Road, Five Mile Plains, Porter's Lake, Fletcher's Lake, Beechville, and Prospect Road.

Despite almost insurmountable hardships, by the 1830s, Black immigrants to the province had started to create a unique African Nova Scotian identity. Black churches and schools were established in most African Nova Scotian communities. As their communities organized, African Nova Scotians started to become a political force in the province. Led by Richard Preston, African Nova Scotians began an era of activism. They honoured the memory of their motherland Africa and they remembered her in the names of their organizations such as the African Baptist Association and the African Friendly Society.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Nova Scotia's landscape was further enhanced by the immigration of almost 500 men and women from the Caribbean (formerly known as the West Indies). As citizens of the British Commonwealth, these individuals were intentionally recruited for employment within the steel mill and coal mining industries of Cape Breton. Immigrating by choice, they fully expected to receive the same rights and privileges afforded all Commonwealth citizens and Canadians. They included expert tradespeople, entrepreneurs, professionals, and students who hoped to attend university. Most were settled in the Whitney Pier area of Sydney. Others settled in Glace Bay, New Waterford and Sydney Mines. These newcomers to Nova Scotia were educated, resourceful, politically engaged, and trailblazers. Their accomplishments and those of their ancestors positively impacted various facets of the Nova Scotian landscape towards a more equitable society.

People of African ancestry continue to immigrate to Nova Scotia. They come from Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States and, just like the earliest Black immigrants to our province, dream of building a better life for themselves and their families in Nova Scotia. These newcomers continue to strengthen Nova Scotia's vibrancy and actively contribute to its economic viability and identity.

African Nova Scotians have made and continue to make important contributions to the political, social and cultural life of our province and our country. They have served with distinction in various military conflicts and they have captivated audiences with their poetry, singing, acting and writing. They have been leaders and pioneers in every profession and they have served as the vanguard for equal rights in Nova Scotia. With a legacy that spans more than 400 years, African Nova Scotians continue to represent our province with honour and their achievements endure as a great source of pride for all Nova Scotians and all Canadians.

## **Gaels in Nova Scotia**

From 1773 up to the 1850s an estimated 50,000 Gaels from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland arrived in Nova Scotia. Gaels settled along family and religious lines in Nova Scotia—this phenomenon of uprooting whole communities and relocating in the New World context became referred to as chain migration. Settlement occurred in Colchester, Pictou, Antigonish, Guysborough, Inverness, Richmond, Victoria, and Cape Breton counties. For the

majority, Gaelic would have been their only language.

Gaelic language and its cultural expression, family, relatives, the broader community, and the Christian faith are what Gaels valued most and it is these aspects that sustained immigrant Gaels through many challenges in the Nova Scotia context. The Gaels' presence as a people through language, culture, and identity underpinned the social and economic fabric of communities in the province's eastern districts and throughout Cape Breton Island. It is estimated that by the later 1800s there may have been as many as 100,000 Gaelic speakers in Nova Scotia.

It is estimated that over two dozen Gaelic dialects were introduced into Nova Scotia; 1,000s of fiddle and pipe tunes were composed; regional step dance styles, such as Mabou, Iona, and Glendale, thrived; thousands of songs—some brought over from Scotland and others composed here—were shared; over 300 place names; thousands of personal nicknames; and between 1791–1902; there were one dozen different Gaelic publications initiated.

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Gaels experienced marginalization and exclusion as their language was not supported in official institutions, like the government, churches, universities, and public school programs in the province. This resulted in significant loss of Gaelic language and cultural expression, and severely eroded the collective Gaelic identity. While the reasons for language, cultural expression, and identity loss are complex, evidence reveals how low status for Gaelic language directly impacted the loss of cultural expression and identity across Gaelic settlement districts in the province.

UNESCO's position on language loss reflects, in large measure, the experience of Gaels in Nova Scotia:

***Cultural/political/economic marginalization/hegemony. This happens when political and economical power is closely tied to a particular language and culture so that there is a strong incentive for individuals to abandon their language (on behalf of themselves and their children) in favor of another more prestigious one. This frequently happens when indigenous populations, in order to achieve a higher social status, have better chance to get employment, or are forced to it in school, adopt the cultural and linguistic traits of a people who have come to dominate them through colonisation, conquest, or invasion.***

(Austin and Sallabank 2011)

During the 20th century, efforts by the Gaelic community and changes in societal attitudes allowed for greater appreciation, acceptance and inclusion of Gaels' language and cultural expression in community, institutions, and government. These efforts and changes led to the creation of *Comhairle na Gàidhlig* (the Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia) in 1990 and the Office of Gaelic Affairs in 2006. By October 2015, over 4,000 Nova Scotians were engaged in Gaelic language programming and 288,180 Nova Scotians or 31.9 per cent indicated Scottish ethnic

origins (2006 Canada Census). Over time, social and economic reasons caused some Gaels to migrate, so today there are Nova Scotians who claim Gaelic background in almost all regions of the province.

Nova Scotia's Office of Gaelic Affairs' Gaelic language and cultural programs assist with language acquisition and use, cultural mentorships aimed at reclaiming a Gaelic group identity in the province, and raising greater awareness, appreciation, and understanding of Gaels.

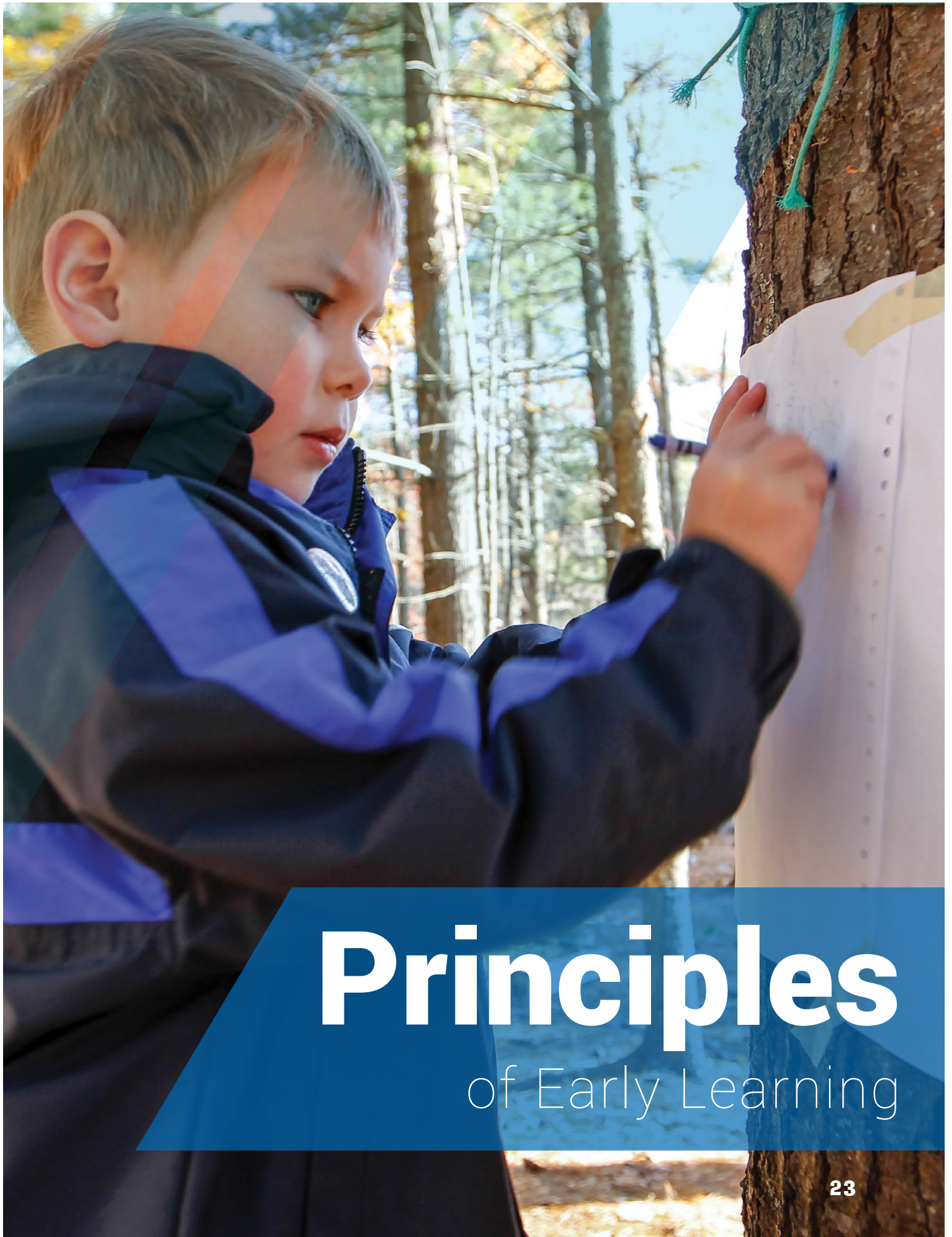
Today, Nova Scotia is the only jurisdiction outside of Europe where a Gaelic language, culture, and identity have been passed down from generation-to-generation in community.

## **Immigration**

Nova Scotia has a rich history of immigration. Halifax is the home of the national immigration museum, Pier 21. In 2016, 5,483 immigrants arrived in Nova Scotia, the highest number of immigrants since the end of the Second World War. The top five sources countries respectively included Syria, India, China, Philippines and Nigeria, with the top five mother languages being Arabic, English, Chinese, Talalog and Arabic–Syria. Of those that arrived in Nova Scotia in 2016, 1,445 were refugees and 670 were between the ages 0 to 4. These statistics are reflective of an evolving population, one that is changing the face of Nova Scotia as we know it and understand it.

A more diverse population certainly will have an impact on communities across Nova Scotia and therefore on early childhood education programs. These programs provide essential supports and resources for all Nova Scotians, including newcomer families. For example, these programs may see an increase in the number of newcomer children attending while their parents attend language training and other types of programs designed to ease their transition to Nova Scotia. Educators will need to find ways to welcome and support newcomer families, and try out new approaches, resources, and strategies necessary to engage and work with newcomer families. Building healthy relationships and establishing safe, inclusive early childhood education programs and practices is essential.

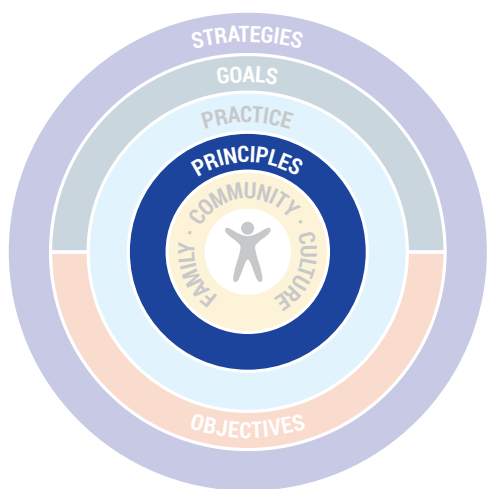
Working and supporting newcomer families brings with it many exciting opportunities for educators with respect to expanding their knowledge and learning. Families will have varying ideas and understanding about how children learn and develop based on their cultural and lived experiences. It is important, therefore, to be respectful of this uniqueness and talk with families about how to integrate these cultural experiences into the early childhood education program. There is an opportunity for educators to create learning environments that reflect the many cultures of the children and families they work with.



# Principles

of Early Learning





# Principles of Early Learning

The principles below draw on contemporary theories and research evidence that support early childhood education practices that are focused on children's optimal development, and encourage joyful and engaging approaches to learning in the context of Nova Scotia's Learning Goals for children from birth to eight years old.

These principles reflect what we know about how young children learn and develop. They are relevant to children of all abilities and cultural backgrounds, and may be applied to all types of educator programs and settings. Nova Scotia's principles of early learning include:

- Play-based Learning
- Relationships
- Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity
- Learning Environments
- Reflective Practice

## Play-based learning

*Research on the brain demonstrates that play is a scaffold for development, a vehicle for increasing neural structures, and a means by which all children practice skills they will need in later life.*

(Position Statement, Association for Childhood Education International)

In July 2012, the Council of Ministers of Education Canada unanimously endorsed the importance of play-based learning for children. Citing evidence on the importance of play, the Ministers agreed that:

*When children are manipulating objects, acting out roles, or experimenting with different materials, they are engaged in learning through play. Play allows them to actively construct, challenge, and expand their own understandings through making connections to prior experiences, thereby opening the door to new learning. Intentional play-based learning enables children to investigate, ask questions, solve problems, and engage in critical thinking. Play is responsive to each child's unique learning style and capitalizes on his or her innate curiosity and creativity. Play-based learning supports growth in the language and culture of children and their families.*

(Council of Ministers of Education Canada 2012)



Play provides opportunities for children to learn as they discover, create, improvise, and imagine. When children play together, they create social groups, test out ideas, challenge each other's thinking, and build new understandings. In play, children also experiment with the world, discover how things work, and learn to interact with others. Play provides a context for learning that is freely chosen by the child, and allows for the expression of personality and individuality. Educators understand that when they observe and document children's play, they discover children's interests and abilities, and assess their development and learning.

Play promotes positive dispositions toward learning, by providing supportive environments where children

- build competencies in all areas of development
- ask questions
- solve problems
- expand their reasoning skills and engage in critical thinking
- build language and communication
- negotiate with others
- resolve conflicts
- enhance their desire to know and to learn

Educators take on many roles when playing with children and use a range of strategies to support learning. They engage in sustained shared conversations with children to extend their thinking. Educators provide a balance between child-led and child-initiated, and educator-led and educator-supported learning. They create learning environments that encourage children to explore, solve problems, create, and construct. Consistent routines and carefully planned play experiences allow educators to interact with infants and children, demonstrate commitment to them, and create attachment bonds. Educators also recognize spontaneous moments as they occur, and use them to build on children's learning. Educators work with children to promote and model positive ways to relate to others, and actively support the inclusion of all children in play, help children recognize when play is unfair, and offer constructive ways to build caring, fair, and inclusive learning communities.

Educators know that play

- encourages curiosity and creativity
- helps children connect prior experiences and new learning
- engages children in the development of many types of skills
- allows children to develop genuine relationships and friendships
- promotes the development of language, reasoning, and different styles of communication
- stimulates a sense of well-being

Play also enhances the development of self-regulation by encouraging children to consider the perspectives of others, take on different roles, and learn to negotiate during times of disagreement.

Children's play develops and increases in complexity as children grow and mature. Infants play when they engage in back and forth interactions with other children and adults. As children develop, their increased motor control and eye-hand coordination allows them to touch, listen to, and taste objects. Learning to eat is a sensory experience, as babies play with their food to learn how it tastes, feels on their skin, and spreads or rolls.

Children move through different types of play in how they interact with others, from solitary, to parallel, to cooperative play. Literature on the concept of children's play identifies many different types of play, such as

- socio-dramatic play
- active play
- pretend or fantasy play
- rough and tumble play

By their early school years, children are better able to control their own behaviour and emotions, and play may become complex and sophisticated. At this age, play often involves games with rules.

*Children's play is rich in its complexity. When children are engaged in play, and especially in socio-dramatic pretend play, they are creating their own meaningful fantasy worlds. During this type of play, children are able to re-construct and test out theories or concepts in a secure, safe manner where the child is in control of the situation. By assuming various roles and responsibilities in the play activity, the child is able to integrate the learning that comes from reviewing and re-thinking the experience.*

*Complex socio-dramatic play gives children opportunities for language development, conflict resolution, negotiation skills, social skills, problem solving, inquiry based learning, logic and reason, and opportunities to explore emotional responses to experiences. The ability to converse, explain, and think in stories helps children to develop the foundation for reading comprehension and indirectly prepares children for social studies, history, and an appreciation for literature.*

(Flanagan 2011, 17)

Based on their observations about how children choose and construct their own play activities, it is the responsibility of the educator to construct and adapt indoor and outdoor environments with the intention of preparing them for children's joyful learning. The educator's role is to scaffold children's learning—to expand on children's curiosity and questions, deepen their understanding, encourage their explorations, and challenge their skills—by introducing new elements to the play-based learning environments.

*You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than you can in a year of conversation.*

—Plato

## Relationships

Educators who are responsive to children's thoughts and feelings help children to develop a strong sense of well-being. They positively interact with young children in their learning and development. Research has shown that infants are both vulnerable and competent. Their first attachments within their families and other trusting relationships form the foundation for emotional development, and provide them with a secure base for exploration and learning (Community Child Care Victoria 2011; Lally 2009; Quinn 1982).

*Peers play important roles in children's lives at much earlier points in development than we might have thought. Experiences in the first two or three years of life have implications for children's acceptance by their classmates in nursery school and the later school years. Children who are competent with peers at an early age, and those who show prosocial behaviour, are particularly likely to be accepted by their peers.*

(Hay 2005, 3)

Widening networks of secure relationships helps children develop confidence and feel respected and valued. They become increasingly able to recognize and respect the feelings of others and to interact positively with them. By their early school years, children are better able to manage their behaviours and emotions, and engage in more complex play with their peers.

Educators who prioritize nurturing relationships and provide children with consistent emotional support will support children to develop the skills, understanding, and confidence they need to interact positively with others. They also help children to learn about their responsibilities to others, to appreciate their connections and interdependence as individuals, and to value collaboration and teamwork.

Children's learning and development are enhanced when educators value families as children's first and most influential teachers. An important part of the educator's role is to establish respectful relationships with parents and work in partnership with families.

Educators create welcoming environments for all children and families where they are respected and actively encouraged to collaborate on curriculum decisions, ensuring that learning experiences are meaningful. In school-age child care settings, educators recognize the unique role they play in being a link between schools and families, and the importance of those partnerships.

Partnerships with families are based on understanding each other's expectations and attitudes. They build on the strength and trust of each other's knowledge. Together, families and educators

- value each other's knowledge of each child
- value each other's contributions to and roles in each child's life
- communicate freely and respectfully with each other
- share insights and perspectives, including information about child development
- engage in shared decision-making

The partnerships between educators in school-age programs and teachers in elementary school ensure smooth transitions from one setting to the other. These partnerships depend on respect, confidential communication, and sharing of information and insights. Partnerships also involve educators, families, and support professionals working together to explore the learning potential in everyday events, routines, and play. This approach means that children with additional needs, including those that are most vulnerable due to developmental, social, economic, cultural, or linguistic challenges, are provided with daily opportunities to actively engage in early childhood education programs.



## **Inclusion, diversity, and equity**

Educators recognize that each child's social, cultural, and linguistic diversity, including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances, and geographic location, are important considerations to be factored into the implementation of the framework. The intent is to ensure that all children's experiences are recognized and valued; that all children have equitable access to resources and participation, and that all children have opportunities to demonstrate their learning and learn to value differences.

There is a consensus in the literature regarding the benefits of inclusive practice in programs for children (Lero 2010). In addition to the benefits of early intervention for children with developmental challenges who may need additional support, there is general recognition that there are similar benefits for all children who participate in the program. Whitty (2008) noted that all children participating in inclusive programs have opportunities to, "...a) learn empathy and sympathy for self and others; b) develop an understanding of and respect for diversity and acquire a positive regard for each other; and c) raise questions and act to change unfair practices." (12)

Early childhood education programs rich in cultural diversity help children develop broader language skills, increase their cultural awareness, and build respect and appreciation for differences. Culturally diverse programs celebrate similarities as well as differences, and help build a sense of connection with the child's community. The framework is founded on a commitment to inclusive early childhood education practices, and considers inclusive practice to be a core element of high-quality early childhood education. The concepts of inclusive practice and appreciation for diversity are further embedded in the framework (e.g., learning environment).

### **Respect for diversity**

There are many ways of living, being, and knowing. Children are born belonging to a culture, which is not only influenced by traditional practices, heritage, and ancestral knowledge, but also by experiences, values, and beliefs of individual families and communities. Respecting diversity within the framework means valuing and reflecting the practices, values, and beliefs of families.

Educators honour the histories, cultures, languages, and structures and traditions of families. They value children's different capacities and abilities and have respect for children's families. Educators recognize that diversity contributes to the richness of our society. When educators respect the diversity of families and communities and the aspirations they hold for children they foster children's motivation to learn and reinforce children's sense of themselves as competent learners. Educators design early learning environments that uphold children's rights to have their cultures, identities, abilities, interests, and strengths acknowledged and valued. They provide opportunities for children to learn about similarities, differences and interdependence, and ways in how we can learn to live together.

## Gender-based diversity

As our understanding of gender evolves, it is important that educators create early learning environments that are gender inclusive, and that they avoid making gender-based assumptions about children and how they play. Seeing a child as capable and full of potential also means trusting their choices when it comes to toys, play, self-identification, and expression. In the early years, children may be observed to begin to develop a sense of gender identity, a sense of gender that may or may not match with the child's biological sex. As well, children in the early years may begin to express their gender identity (gender expression) through their appearance, dress, and behaviour. There are children who do not identify with their assigned sex, or with their assigned or expected gender roles. There are children who have different cultural or familial understandings of gender and how it impacts their own social contexts. All of these children need and deserve a place in the learning environment to be themselves.

## Equity

Educators who are committed to equity believe in all children's capacities to succeed, regardless of their life circumstances and abilities. Children progress well when they, their families, and their educators hold high expectations for their learning, and have appropriate and timely supports as required.

Educators recognize and strategize how to remove barriers to positive outcomes and optimal development for children. They challenge practices that contribute to inequities and make pedagogical decisions that promote inclusion and participation of all children. By developing their professional knowledge and skills, and working in partnership with children, families, communities, other services, and agencies, educators continually strive to find equitable and effective ways to ensure that all children experience learning opportunities.

## Learning environments

Learning environments are welcoming spaces when they reflect and enrich the lives and identities of children and families participating in the program and respond to their interests and needs. Environments that support learning are vibrant and flexible spaces, and are responsive to the interests and abilities of each child. Environments include the design of the physical space (indoor and outdoor), the furniture, materials available for children within those spaces, and the time (schedules and routines) allowed for children to freely explore, extend their play, and sustain their learning activities.

The early learning environment has been identified by a number of early childhood education proponents as a key feature in children's learning, such as Loris Malaguzzi and Maria Montessori.

Loris Malaguzzi was the founder and director of the renowned municipal preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, and defined the environment as the third teacher. In Reggio Emilia schools, the

environment is well-planned, flexible, and has the potential to, "...shape a child's identity as a powerful player in his or her own life and the lives of others." (Biermeier 2015)

Maria Montessori described the importance of the "prepared environment", where both the educators and the child influenced and were influenced by the learning environment. The role of the educator is to observe children's interaction with the environment, and continually modify the learning environment based on those observations.

Outdoor learning spaces are an important feature of children's learning environments. They offer a vast array of possibilities not available indoors. Play spaces in natural environments include plants, trees, edible gardens, sand, rocks, mud, water, and other elements from nature. These spaces invite open-ended interactions, spontaneity, risk-taking, exploration, discovery, and connection with nature. They foster an appreciation of the natural environment, develop environmental awareness, and provide a platform for ongoing environmental education.

Indoor and outdoor environments support all aspects of children's learning and invite conversations between children, educators, families, and the broader community. They promote opportunities for sustained shared thinking and collaborative learning.

Learning materials enhance learning when they are easily found in nature, such as sticks, rocks, and leaves, and familiar, while at the same time introducing novelty to provoke interest and more complex and increasingly abstract thinking. For example, the use of "loose parts" (materials that can be moved, taken apart, lined up, and put back together in multiple ways) encourage creativity and open-ended learning. Environments and resources can also highlight responsibilities to create a sustainable future and promote children's understanding about their own responsibility to care for the environment. These environments foster hope, wonder, and knowledge about the natural world.

Educators also encourage children and families to contribute their own ideas about the learning environment. They can support engagement by allowing time for meaningful interactions, providing a range of opportunities for individual and shared experiences, and finding opportunities for children to contribute to their local community.

## **Reflective practice**

*Stand aside for a while and leave room for learning, observe carefully what children do, and then, if you have understood well, perhaps teaching will be different from before.*

—Loris Malaguzzi

Educators continually seek ways to build their professional knowledge and share their insights with colleagues in various types of learning communities. They are co-learners with

children, families, communities, and other educators in early childhood education and school-based settings.

Reflective practice is a form of ongoing learning that involves engaging with questions of philosophy, ethics, and practice. Through their own reflective practice, educators gather information and gain insights that support, inform, and enrich decision-making about children's learning. As professionals, they examine what happens in their programs, and reflect on what works well and on what they might change.

Reflective practice is not necessarily something that is done by educators, alone. There is some evidence that reflective practice is more likely to lead to change if it is undertaken as an exercise with others. This type of professional collaboration requires trust among educators; reflection not only enriches educators' practices, but builds a culture of respect among all who are involved in children's lives.

The importance of reflective practice by educators working in early learning environments has been emphasized in almost every early learning curriculum framework developed over the past 20 years, across Canada, and around the world. While many cite Donald Schön's *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) as the beginning of a renewed focus on reflective practice in education (as well as other professions), educational and developmental theorists have long promoted a reflective approach, including John Dewey and Jean Piaget. In fact, the theory of reflective practice goes back to Buddhist teachings, Plato, and Socrates.

*Research tells us that educators who regularly reflect on what they do, why they do it and how this new knowledge can be used to improve their practice achieve the best outcomes for children and families.*

(MacNaughton 2005; Sylva et al. 2004; Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2008; Raban et al. 2007, as quoted in Marbina, Church, and Tayler 2010, 10)

Reflective practice also contributes to professional learning for adults. Through it, educators are able to identify topics for further exploration in ongoing professional lines of inquiry. These topics may be pursued through individual study, professional development for staff at individual early childhood education programs, or may be brought forward to professional organizations for inclusion in regional or provincial strategies for ongoing education for the early childhood education sector.

Reflective practice underpins intentional teaching. Schön identified three types of reflective practice: **reflection-in-action**, **reflection-on-action**, and **reflection-for-action**.

Reflection-in-action occurs naturally and continually during the day with children. When an educator spots a three-year-old climbing to the top of the slide, reflection-in-action considers whether the child has ever done this before, or whether the educator should move closer to the slide.



Reflection-on-action occurs after the fact, when educators reflect on the activities and interactions of the day, and question whether a situation may have been handled differently, or what new insights were gained as a result of children's interactions with each other or with adults. Such reflection can be done alone, or in conversation with other educators. Educators working in school-age programs may engage in this type of reflection with other school personnel.

Reflection-for-action describes critical reflection, which involves closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives. Educators often frame their reflective practice within a set of overarching questions, developing more specific questions for specific areas of inquiry. Critical reflection considers the educator's Image of the Child and the values they hold, which are framed against the present set of experiences and circumstances, with an eye toward future changes or actions.

A lively culture of professional inquiry is established when educators and those with whom they work—including those in the school system—are involved in an ongoing cycle of review, examining current practices, reviewing outcomes, and generating new ideas. In this climate, broad issues relating to curriculum, quality, equity, and children's well-being can be raised, explored, and debated.

Overarching questions that can be used to guide critical reflection may include:

- What personal and professional values influence my Image of the Child?
- What is my understanding of each child?
- What theories, philosophies and understandings shape and assist my work?
- Who is advantaged when I work in this way? Who is disadvantaged?
- What questions do I have about my work? What am I challenged by? How can I meet those challenges?
- What am I curious about? What am I confronted by?
- What can I do as an educator to expand this child's experience and development?
- Are there other theories or knowledge that could help me to understand better what I have observed or experienced? What are they? How might those theories and that knowledge affect my practice? Who else do I need to talk to?



# Practice

in Early Learning





# Practice in Early Learning

*Those things you learn without joy you will forget easily.*

—Finnish saying

Learning principles underpin each educator's practice, and draw on a rich repertoire of pedagogical practices to facilitate children's learning by

- adopting approaches that recognize the interrelated nature of children's learning and development
- being responsive to children
- teaching intentionally
- valuing the cultural and social contexts of children, their families, and communities
- providing continuity in experiences and enabling children to have successful transitions throughout early childhood
- monitoring and supporting children's learning and development through authentic assessment

## Holistic approaches

Holistic approaches to teaching and learning recognize the connections between mind, body, and spirit. When educators take a holistic approach, they pay attention to children's physical, personal, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being, as well as cognitive aspects of learning. While educators may plan or assess with a focus on a specific outcome or component of learning, they see children's learning as integrated and interconnected. They recognize the connections between children, families, and communities, as well as the importance of reciprocal relationships and partnerships for learning. Educators see learning as a social activity and value collaborative learning and community participation. Integrated, holistic approaches to teaching and learning also focus on children's connections to the natural world. Educators foster children's capacities to understand and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals, sea, and land.

## Responsiveness to children

Educators value and are responsive to all children's interests and competencies by recognizing

- children's lived experiences
- children's culture and ways of knowing
- children's language(s) spoken
- children's individual needs

Educators are also responsive to children's ideas and approaches to play, which form an important basis for curriculum decision-making. In response to children's evolving ideas and interests, educators assess, anticipate, and extend children's learning via open ended questioning. They also provide feedback, challenging children's thinking, and guide their learning, while making use of spontaneous teachable moments to scaffold children's learning.

*Responsive relationships are significant features of school age care settings. This form of collaborative engagement is evidenced between educators and children, among children, between educators and parents and various stakeholders including schools, working to support children, families and the community.*

(Australian Government Department of Education and Training 2011, 15)



Responsive learning relationships are strengthened as educators and children learn together and share decisions, respect, and trust. Responsiveness enables educators to respectfully enter children's play and ongoing projects, stimulate their thinking, and enrich their learning. Examples of how educators can reflect on their practice is found in the section on Learning Outcomes.

## Intentional teaching

Intentional teaching is deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful. Educators who engage in intentional teaching have specific knowledge of how children learn and develop. They not only have a repertoire of strategies to use with all children, but they also understand when and how to use such strategies. Intentional educators recognize that learning occurs in social contexts and that interactions and conversations are vitally important for learning.

*To be intentional is to act purposefully, with a goal in mind and a plan for accomplishing it. The teacher who can explain why she is doing what she is doing is acting intentionally—whether she is using a strategy tentatively for the first time or automatically from long practice, and whether it is used as part of a deliberate plan or spontaneously in a teachable moment.*

(Epstein 2014, 6)

Intentional teaching is influenced by the educator's Image of the Child, guided by professional knowledge of how children learn and develop, and shaped by reflective practice.

This type of teaching uses approaches that allow for the co-construction of knowledge between children and educators. This process of co-constructing knowledge results in new knowledge and meaning, rather than facts. It builds on, for example, Vygotsky's theories of children's learning, and recognizes children's intelligence, curiosity, and sense of discovery (Barnes 2012; John-Steiner and Mahn 1996).

*Co-constructing knowledge refers to an educators' decisions and actions that build on existing knowledge and skills to enhance learning; a responsiveness to what children know, what they wonder about, and their working theories about the world around them. When educators engage with, observe, and listen to children; discuss with other educators, children and families the possibilities for further, increasingly complex exploration, they contribute to the process of co-constructing knowledge.*

(Ontario Ministry of Education 2014, 15)

Intentional teaching extends to the environment as well as interactions with children. Educators use intentionality when they design the layout of the learning environment, the types of materials that are included, how the materials are made available to the children, and the schedule of activities—including the length of time for each type of activity and the balance of active and quiet times of the day.

## **Valuing the cultural and social contexts of children**

Educators who are culturally responsive respect all cultural ways of knowing, seeing, and living; celebrate diversity; and understand and honour differences. This is evident in educators' everyday practice when they demonstrate ongoing commitment to developing their own cultural responsiveness in a two-way process with families and communities.

Educators view culture and the context of family as central to children's sense of being and belonging, and to success in lifelong learning. Educators also seek to promote children's cultural responsiveness. Cultural responsiveness is much more than being aware of cultural differences. It is the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures. Culturally responsive practice means

- being aware of one's own world view
- gaining knowledge of different cultural practices, historical perspectives, and world views
- developing positive attitudes toward and appreciation of cultural differences
- developing skills for communication and interaction across cultures and languages

## **Continuity of learning experiences**

Children bring family and community to their early childhood education programs. When educators build on children's prior and current experiences, it helps them feel secure, confident, and connected to the familiar, which facilitates continuity in their lives. Continuity is key to helping children transition easily between home and their early childhood education programs, school and before and after school settings, or school and home. Different places and spaces have their own purposes, expectations, and ways of doing things.

In partnership with families, educators ensure that children have an active role in preparing for transitions. They assist children in understanding the traditions, routines, and practices of the settings to which they are moving, and in feeling comfortable with the process of change.

As children make transitions to new programs (including school), educators working in early childhood education programs and schools should arrange time to share information with teachers to build on children's earlier learning.

Educators work collaboratively with children's new educators and other professionals to ensure successful transitions.

## Authentic assessment

Authentic assessment approaches are part of an ongoing cycle that includes observation and documentation to assess children's development. Such practices allow educators to observe children in their own play environments, and in their relationships and exchanges with other children and adults. Educators are able to talk with children, and understand how each child thinks, plans, and understands.

*Authentic assessment allows teachers to “capture” what developmental checklists, rubrics, and some assessments do not—the children’s thinking and learning processes. With authentic assessment, teachers view individual children from a strength- based perspective, incorporating their individual interests and unique qualities. These observations assist teachers to design and develop classroom environments and select activities to scaffold each child’s learning. When done with intentionality, authentic assessment helps teachers create the link between assessment and developmentally appropriate curriculum.*

(Rice 2014, 1-3)

Authentic assessment provides opportunities to reflect on pedagogical practices and the appropriateness of learning environments. It involves communicating with parents and families, to give context to observations and to fully understand children's development in a more holistic manner. For example, sharing observations with parents may touch on a child's social, physical, and cognitive development by providing an analysis of how a child approached the activity, rather than simply speaking about one specific area of development.

Authentic assessment approaches, “...engage or evaluate children on tasks that are personally meaningful, take place in real life contexts, and are grounded in naturally occurring instructional activities. They offer multiple ways of evaluating students' learning, as well as their motivation, achievement, and attitudes.” (Epstein et al. 2004, 6) It also allows educators to partner with families, children, and other professionals to effectively plan for children's current and future learning, communicate about children's learning and progress, identify children who may need additional support to achieve learning objectives, and assist families in accessing specialist services.

Educators use a variety of strategies to collect, document, organize, synthesize, and interpret the information gathered to assess children's learning. They search for appropriate ways to collect rich and meaningful information that depicts children's learning in context, describes their progress, and identifies their strengths, skills, and understanding.



More recent approaches to authentic assessment also examine the learning strategies children use and reflect on how learning is co-constructed through interactions between educators and children. Used effectively, these approaches become powerful ways to make the process of learning visible to children and their families, educators, and other professionals.

Each child demonstrates their learning in a variety of ways and authentic assessment allows educators to use assessment practices that are culturally and linguistically relevant and responsive to the physical and intellectual capabilities of each child. It allows for attention and consideration to be given to children's abilities and strengths, and allows them to demonstrate their competence.

The inclusion of children, families, and other professionals in the development and implementation of relevant and appropriate assessment processes allows for new understandings to emerge that would not be possible if educators relied solely on their own strategies and perspectives. The use of inclusive assessment practices with children and their families demonstrates respect for diversity, helps educators make better sense of their observations, and supports learning for both children and adults.

Assessment, when undertaken in collaboration with families, can assist them in supporting children's learning and empower them to act on behalf of their children beyond the early childhood setting. When children are included in the assessment process they develop an understanding of themselves as learners, as well as an understanding of how they learn best.



Reflective practice, when it is applied to an educator's role in children's learning and assessment, allow the educator to examine their own views and understanding of pedagogical theory, research and practice. This brings the following into focus:

- how experiences provide opportunities for children within the context of Learning Goals
- the extent to which they know and value culturally specific knowledge about children and learning embedded within the community where they are working
- each child's learning in the context of their families, drawing on family perspectives, understandings, experiences, and expectations
- learning opportunities build on what children already know
- how learning experiences are inclusive of all children
- how unacknowledged biases may influence their assumptions about children's learning or cause them to set lower expectations for some children
- how incorporating pedagogical practices that reflect knowledge of diverse perspectives and contribute to children's well-being and successful learning
- whether there are sufficiently engaging experiences for all children
- what evidence demonstrates children are learning
- how to expand the range of ways they assess to make assessment richer and more meaningful

Early learning curriculum frameworks from Canada and other countries have adopted similar approaches when assessing children's learning and development. While the language used to describe these approaches may be different, the message is the same:

- New Brunswick and New Zealand describe "learning stories" as part of the assessment and documentation process
- British Columbia refers to "pedagogical narration"
- Saskatchewan, Ontario, Reggio Emilia, and Sweden refer to "pedagogical documentation"
- Australia describes the process as "action research"

This framework refers to authentic assessment to capture the broad range of strategies used in early childhood education programs.

*Children, like adults, are natural assessors of their own progress and achievements. The adult can enrich and extend children's learning through assessment by identifying learning and development, feeding information back to children, celebrating their progress and achievement with them, and adapting practice and planning for further learning. In this way, assessment helps the adult create portraits which show the richness of children's learning and development. In doing this, assessment also guides the journeys children make as they go.*

(National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2009,102)





# Learning Goals





# Learning Goals and Objectives

*Free the child's potential, and you will transform him into the world.*

—Maria Montessori

Learning goals provide a structure for early learning practice, guide educators' reflections and critical thinking, and form the basis for the assessment of children's learning and holistic development. The four learning goals are

- well-being
- discovery and invention
- language and communication
- personal and social responsibility

These goals are consistent with the framework's image and vision of children as confident and capable learners. Each goal is supported by several Learning Objectives that provide educators with specific reference points. These reference points are there to identify, document and communicate children's progress to families, other early childhood professionals, and educators in schools. Over time, educators can reflect on how children have developed, how they have engaged with increasingly complex ideas, and how they have participated in increasingly sophisticated learning experiences.

Educators understand that children take different pathways to achieve these goals. Early learning does not focus exclusively on the endpoints of children's learning; educators give equal consideration to improvements made by individual children and recognize and celebrate not only the giant leaps that children take in their learning but the small steps as well.

## Well-being

*Receive the children in reverence, educate them in love, and send them forth in freedom.*

—Rudolf Steiner

Well-being is a holistic concept that focuses on children being happy, confident, and healthy in all aspects of their development. For children, well-being implies that they are loved, respected, protected, and supported by their families and communities.

*Dispositions to learn develop when children are immersed in an environment that is characterised by well-being and trust, belonging and purposeful activity, contributing and collaborating, communicating and representing, and exploring and guided participation.*

(New Zealand Ministry of Education 1996, 45)

Children's well-being is affected by all their experiences within and outside of their early childhood education programs. Educators know that when they attend to children's well-being by providing warm and trusting relationships, they are supporting children's learning and development. Educators understand that it is essential to ensure predictable and safe environments for children, that provide affirmation and respect for all aspects of their physical, emotional, social, cognitive, linguistic, creative, and spiritual needs. By acknowledging each child's cultural and social identity, and responding sensitively to their emotional states, educators give children confidence, a sense of well-being, and a willingness to engage in learning. As children experience being cared for by educators and others, they become aware of the importance of living and learning together with others.

Children develop their own well-being and confidence as they learn more about healthy lifestyles, emotional well-being, and healthy social relationships. As children become more independent they can take greater responsibility for their health, hygiene, and personal care, and become mindful of their own and others' safety. Routines provide opportunities for children to learn about health and safety. Educators understand that good nutrition is essential to healthy living and enables children to be active participants in play, and they are responsible for providing many opportunities for children to experience a range of healthy foods.

The state of children's well-being influences the way they interact in their environments. A strong sense of well-being provides children with confidence and optimism to develop new friendships, interact with groups of other children, participate in new types of activities, and

measure and calculate reasonable risks. It also influences children's readiness to persevere when faced with unfamiliar and challenging learning situations and creates opportunities for success and achievement.

Learning Objectives supporting the goal of well-being include:

- children feel safe, secure, and supported
- children become strong in their social and emotional well-being
- children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical well-being
- children develop knowledgeable and confident self-identities

## Discovery and invention

*Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.*

—Unknown

Children use a variety of processes such as exploration, collaboration and problem-solving to develop curiosity, persistence, and creativity. Children who are effective learners are transfer and adapt what they have learned from one context to another, and are able to locate and use resources for learning.

*Through play, children invent symbols to explore relations of power, truth, and beauty as they move between the world as it is and the worlds they create. In these possible worlds, children have the liberty to push the boundaries and explore who they are as members of communities engaged with age-old issues such as good and evil. Learning to be imaginative and creative requires open and flexible environments, rich in materials and role models that reflect the cultural life of their communities—the songs, crafts, languages and artifacts—and opportunities for children to invent their own cultural forms and symbols; to explore unique and innovative approaches to understanding their worlds.*

(Makovichuk et al. 2014, 99)

Educators recognize children as competent learners, and understand that they are capable of interacting with their indoor and outdoor environments to discover new concepts, problem solve, and create new ways of learning and playing. Children use their representational knowledge to invent new play—a rock may become a truck, a tree may become a house, and a line of chairs may become a train. Creativity allows children to create their learning environments over and over and in different ways. This type of active learning environment supports children's confidence to be involved learners who are increasingly able to take responsibility for their own learning, personal regulation, and contributions to the social



environment. Connections and continuity between learning experiences in different settings make learning more meaningful, and contribute to the integrated nature of children's learning and development.

Children develop an understanding of themselves and their world through active, hands-on investigation. A supportive, active learning environment encourages children's engagement in learning which can be recognized as deep concentration and complete focus on what captures their interests. Children bring their own sense of self and their previous experiences to their learning. They have many ways of seeing the world, different processes of learning, and their own preferred learning styles.

*An example of a learning disposition is the disposition to be curious. It may be characterized by: an inclination to enjoy puzzling over events; the skills to ask questions about them in different ways; and an understanding of when is the most appropriate time to ask questions.*

(New Zealand Ministry of Education 1996, 44)

Active involvement in learning builds children's understandings of concepts, as well as the creative thinking and inquiry processes that are necessary for lifelong learning. They challenge and extend their own thinking, and that of others, and create new knowledge in collaborative interactions and negotiations. Children's active involvement changes what they know, can do, and value, and transforms their learning.



Educators' knowledge of individual children is crucial to providing environments and experiences that optimize children's learning.

Learning Objectives intended to support discovery and invention include:

- children develop curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, and imagination
- children develop a range of skills and processes such as problem-solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesizing, researching, and investigating

## Language and communication

*Language is the tool of the tools.*

—Lev S. Vygotsky

From birth, children communicate with others using gestures, facial expressions, sounds, language(s), and assisted communications. Responsive adults support the development of language throughout early childhood

- by giving language to a baby's gestures (Oh, you want the teddy bear!) and expressions (Ah, you like this applesauce!)
- by repeating toddlers' expressions into full sentences (You want to read the book again?)
- by probing and extending possibilities for language development when engaging in conversations
- by providing opportunities for children to express their ideas, ask questions, and share stories

Educators appreciate that children are social beings who are intrinsically motivated to exchange ideas, thoughts, questions, and feelings, and who use a range of tools and media, including music, dance and drama, to express themselves, connect with others and extend their learning.

*Early Childhood Educators provide opportunities for children to be able to communicate their feelings, thoughts, and ideas through careful and thoughtful design of the environment, and the educators' own use of language and expression. Educators are skilled at maintaining a special balance in their exchanges with children—to respond to children's expressions in ways that inspire children to continue their communication, rather than replacing children's language with their own.*

(Flanagan 2012, 69)

Children's use of their first language underpins their sense of identity and their conceptual development. They feel a sense of belonging when their language, interaction styles, and ways of communicating are valued. Children who hear, not only their own first language but the languages of other children in their program and community, begin to learn about the rhythms and sounds of all languages, and cultivate a sense of personal attachment to their own language, which contributes to their sense of personal identity.

Educators understand that children communicate with more than their words. Their constructions with blocks, art work, playdough figures, and pretend play scenarios all provide information about various stages of childhood development, interests and abilities, and how children interact both with the learning environment and other children. Educators encourage children to ask questions, and by analyzing those questions, educators assess children's learning concepts, use of language, and pursue the types of things that children wonder about. When children are encouraged to re-tell an event, describe a painting, or explain what's happening in the dress up corner, they have the opportunity to practice sequential thinking and reasoning. This expression and communication helps both educators and parents learn about children's thinking, their ideas, and who they are.

Experiences in early childhood education programs build on children's range of experiences with language, literacy, and numeracy within their families and communities. Positive attitudes towards, and competencies in literacy and numeracy are essential for successful learning. The foundations for these are built in early childhood.

Learning Objectives supporting language and communication:

- children interact verbally and nonverbally with others
- children engage with a variety of texts and gain meaning from them
- children express ideas and make meaning with a variety of media
- children begin to understand how symbols and patterns work
- children use technology to access information, investigate ideas, and express their thoughts
- Acadian and Francophone children in French minority language communities develop strong foundations in French

## Personal and social responsibility

*What children learn does not follow as an automatic result from what is taught, rather, it is in large part due to the children's own doing, as a consequence of their activities and our resources.*

—Loris Malaguzzi (Edwardo et al. 2011)

From infancy, a child's relationships and experiences begin to influence the development of a uniquely personal sense of identity. Identity is not fixed at birth, but is shaped by a child's family and community, interactions with others, culture, language, and experiences. Children who grow and develop in safe, secure, responsive, and consistent environments are more likely to develop the confidence to explore their environment and seek out new experiences. Children who are respected for their ideas, competencies, talents, and aptitudes develop a sense of themselves as competent and capable individuals.

***Membership in communities involves interdependency. It is as simple and as complicated as this: we need to take care of each other, and we need to take care of the natural and constructed world around us. When children engage in respectful, responsive, and reciprocal relationships guided by sensitive and knowledgeable adults, they grow in their understanding of interdependency.***

(University of New Brunswick Early Childhood Research and Development Team 2008, 34)

Throughout the early years, children develop their own identities, and understand how they relate to others. Participation in high-quality, play-based early childhood education programs gives children the opportunity to test out different roles, such as taking turns being the doctor, patient, store clerk, and airplane pilot, and understand and appreciate other perspectives.

Interactions with other children and adults provide opportunities to learn how to listen to other opinions, promote one's ideas, and resolve conflicts. Outdoor play cultivates a respect for the environment, and allows children to experience their natural environments in a first-hand and concrete way, and to understand their roles and responsibilities in taking care of our world.

Infants and toddlers begin to develop a sense of personal responsibility when they learn to feed themselves and recognize their belongings. Toddlers take greater responsibility for themselves when they accomplish self-care tasks, such as toileting and washing their hands.

Helping children develop strong personal identities, awareness, and sense of responsibility means educators spend time developing skills and strategies to help children regulate their emotions, problem solve, and communicate with others. Educators understand their own

responsibility to model respect for children, families, and each other as professionals. They also understand the importance of creating inclusive environments that respect diversity and support all children to participate in activities regardless of their skill level or development.

*In school age care settings, children's sense of responsibility for their learning is co-determined and skills and attitudes towards life-long learning are consolidated. Children actively involved in community building develop common interests and learn about citizenship.*

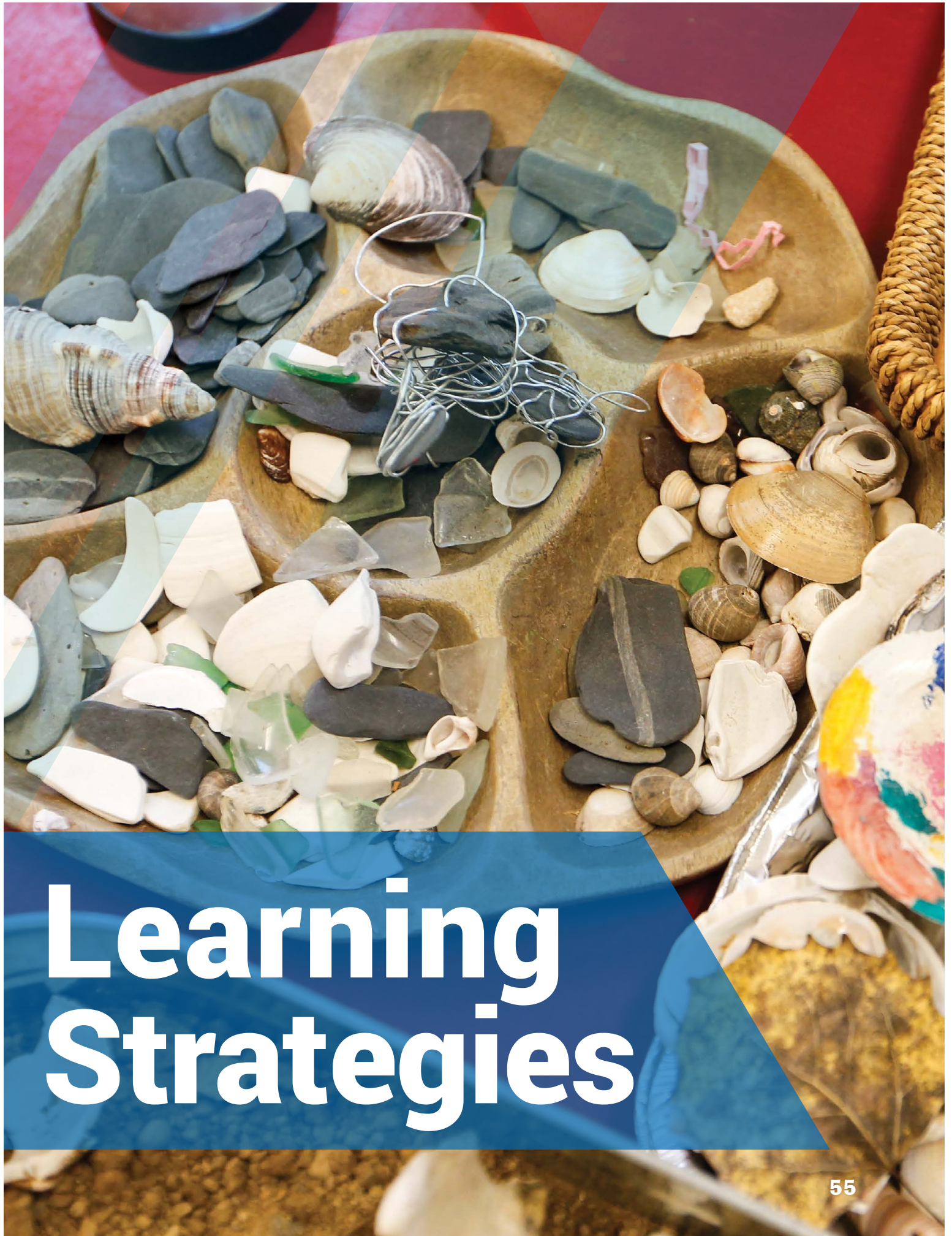
(Australian Government Department of Education and Training 2011, 7)

By the time children are in their early school years, they are able to create rules for fair play, and modify and re-shape those rules in consideration of fairness to the group, or to ensure that all children have a chance to be included. Participation in games with teams encourages a sense of fair play for all and a sense of responsibility to the team.

Learning Objectives supporting personal and social responsibility

- children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy, and respect
- children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities, and how they can actively participate in them
- children respond to diversity with respect
- children become aware of fairness
- children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment





# Learning Strategies





# Learning Strategies

*The wider the range of possibilities we offer children, the more intense will be their motivations and the richer their experiences.*

—Loris Malaguzzi (1920-1994), Founder of the Reggio Emilia schools

The strategies presented here are intended to support educators in their efforts to implement the framework's Learning Goals and Objectives. The strategies draw on what educators already know about what works and what doesn't work, as well as what makes children happy.

These learning strategies are not intended to be a checklist of required activities, nor are they meant to be limiting. They do not replace good early childhood education practices already in place in programs across Nova Scotia. They are intended to stimulate ideas and initiate discussion among educators, children, and families as to the rich array of activities, materials, and experiences that form the learning environments in early childhood education programs.

Just as each child brings a unique blend of interests, talents, ideas, questions, and cultural influences to an early childhood education program, so too do educators. They bring their own expertise, creativities, specific interests, and cultural traditions. Directors are responsible for tapping into that rich mix of skills, abilities, and experiences to enrich the nature and types of learning strategies that bring the goals and outcomes of the early learning curriculum framework to life.

*Everything children do has meaning for them. Curriculum decisions in early learning and child care begin with children. (Learning) goals help early learning and child care educators think about and describe what children are experiencing in the early childhood environment and consider further possibilities that can enrich children's care, play, learning, and development. In addition, (learning) goals provide educators with a common professional language as they share the stories of children's experiences with families and colleagues.*

(Makovichuk et al. 2015, 84)



# Well-being

## STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE 1:

### Children feel safe, secure, and supported

#### THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN CHILDREN

- build secure attachments with one and then more familiar educators
- recognize routines and predict transitions
- communicate their needs for comfort and assistance
- demonstrate a feeling of belonging through their behaviour and language
- establish and maintain respectful and trusting relationships
- openly express their feelings and ideas when interacting with others
- respond to ideas and suggestions from others
- initiate interactions and conversations with trusted educators
- confidently explore and engage with social and physical environments through relationships and play
- initiate and join in play
- explore aspects of identity through role play, such as being the mother or new baby in dramatic play

#### EDUCATORS PROMOTE THIS LEARNING WHEN THEY

- plan for consistency in routines to allow children to predict transitions
- acknowledge and respond sensitively
- to children's cues and signals
- respond sensitively to children's attempts
- to initiate interactions and conversations
- support children's secure attachment through consistent, warm, and nurturing relationships
- support children in times of change and bridge the gap between the familiar and the unfamiliar
- build upon culturally valued child rearing practices and approaches to learning
- are responsive to children, and support children's expressions of thoughts and feelings
- recognize that feelings of distress, fear or discomfort may take some time to resolve
- acknowledge each child's uniqueness in positive ways
- spend time interacting and conversing with each child

- 
- Add your own examples:
-

**STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE 2:**

## Children become strong in their social and emotional well-being

**THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN CHILDREN**

- demonstrate trust and confidence
- remain accessible to others at times of distress, confusion, and frustration
- share humour, happiness, and satisfaction
- seek out and accept new challenges, make new discoveries, and celebrate their own efforts and achievements and those of others
- increasingly co-operate and work together with others
- enjoy moments of solitude
- recognize their individual achievement
- make choices, accept challenges, take considered risks, manage change and cope with frustrations and the unexpected
- show an increasing capacity to understand, self-regulate and manage their emotions in ways that reflect the feelings and needs of others
- experience and share personal successes in learning and initiate opportunities for new learning
- assert their capabilities and independence while demonstrating increasing awareness of the needs and rights of others
- recognize the contributions they make to shared projects and experiences

**EDUCATORS PROMOTE THIS LEARNING WHEN THEY**

- show genuine affection, understanding, and respect for all children
- collaborate with children to document their achievements and share their successes with their families
- ensure that all children experience pride in their attempts and achievements
- promote children's sense of belonging, connectedness, and well-being
- challenge and support children to engage in and persevere at tasks and play
- build upon and extend children's ideas
- maintain high expectations of each child's capabilities
- value children's personal decision-making
- welcome children and families into the program space, sharing aspects of children's cultural and spiritual lives
- talk with children about their emotions and responses to events with a view to supporting children's understandings of emotional regulation and self-control
- acknowledge and affirm children's effort and growth
- mediate and assist children in negotiating their rights in relation to the rights of others, such as helping children resolve who gets to use the painting easel first

- 
- Add your own examples:

**STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE 3:****Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical well-being****THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN CHILDREN**

- recognize and communicate their physical needs, such as thirst, hunger, rest, comfort, and physical activity
- are happy, healthy, safe, and connected to others
- engage in increasingly complex sensory-motor skills and movement patterns, such as clapping, jumping, and turning around
- combine gross and fine motor movement and balance to achieve increasingly complex patterns of activity
- use their sensory capabilities and dispositions with increasing integration, skill, and purpose to explore and respond to their world
- demonstrate spatial awareness and orient themselves, moving around and through their environments confidently and safely
- manipulate equipment and manage tools with increasing competence and skill
- respond through movement to traditional and contemporary music, dance, and storytelling
- show an increasing awareness of healthy lifestyles and good nutrition
- show increasing independence and competence in personal hygiene, care, and safety for themselves and others
- show enthusiasm for participating in physical play and negotiate play spaces to ensure the safety and well-being of themselves and others
- understand and assess risk, and accept challenges in their play

**EDUCATORS PROMOTE THIS LEARNING WHEN THEY**

- plan for and participate in energetic physical activity with children, such as dance, drama, movement, and games
- draw on family and community experiences and expertise to include familiar games and physical activities in play
- provide a wide range of tools and materials to resource children's fine and gross motor skills
- actively support children to learn hygiene practices
- promote continuity of children's personal health and hygiene by sharing ownership of routines and schedules with children, families and the community
- discuss health and safety issues with children and involve them in developing guidelines to keep the environment safe for all
- engage children in experiences, conversations and routines that promote healthy lifestyles and good nutrition
- model and reinforce health, nutrition and personal hygiene practices with children
- provide a range of active and restful experiences throughout the day and support children to make appropriate decisions regarding participation
- provide opportunities for children to learn to assess and manage risk in their play activities

- 
- Add your own examples:

**STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE 4:**

## Children develop knowledgeable and confident self-identities

**THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN CHILDREN**

- feel recognized and respected for who they are
- explore different identities and points of view through dramatic play
- share aspects of their culture with the other children and educators
- use their home language to construct meaning
- develop strong foundations in both the culture and language(s) of their family and broader community without compromising their cultural identities
- develop social and cultural knowledge of their heritage through engagement with community members
- reach out and communicate for comfort, assistance, and companionship
- celebrate and share their contributions and achievements with others

**EDUCATORS PROMOTE THIS LEARNING WHEN THEY**

- promote a strong sense of who children are and their connectedness to others
- ensure all children experience pride and confidence in their achievements
- share children's successes with families
- show respect for diversity, acknowledging all children, families, communities, and cultures
- acknowledge and understand that children construct meaning in many different ways
- demonstrate deep understanding of each child, their family, and community contexts in planning for children's learning
- provide children with examples of the many ways identities and culture are recognized and expressed
- talk with children in respectful ways about similarities and differences in people
- provide rich and diverse resources that reflect children's social worlds
- listen to and learn about children's understandings of themselves
- actively support the maintenance of children's home language, and culture

- 
- Add your own examples:
-

# Discovery and invention

## STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE 1:

Children develop curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, and imagination

### THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN CHILDREN

- express wonder and interest in their environments
- are curious and enthusiastic participants in their learning
- use play to investigate, imagine, and explore ideas
- follow and extend their own interests with enthusiasm, energy and concentration
- initiate and contribute to play experiences emerging from their own ideas
- participate in a variety of rich and meaningful inquiry-based experiences
- persevere and experience the satisfaction of achievement
- persist even when they find a task difficult

### EDUCATORS PROMOTE THIS LEARNING WHEN THEY

- recognize and value children's involvement in learning
- provide learning environments that are flexible and open-ended
- respond to children's displays of learning dispositions by providing encouragement and suggestions to extend thinking and learning
- encourage children to engage in both individual and collaborative exploratory learning processes
- listen carefully to children's ideas and discuss with them how to further develop them
- provide opportunities for children to revisit their ideas and extend their thinking
- model inquiry processes, including wonder, curiosity and imagination, try new ideas and take on challenges
- reflect with children on what and how they have learned
- build on the knowledge, language(s), and understandings that children bring to their early childhood education programs
- explore the diversity of cultures and social identities
- promote a strong sense of who children are

- 
- Add your own examples:

**STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE 2:**

Children develop a range of skills and processes such as problem-solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesizing, researching, and investigating

**THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN CHILDREN**

- apply a wide variety of thinking strategies, such as reviewing and questioning, to engage with situations, solve problems, and adapt these strategies to new situations
- create and use representations to organize, record, and communicate mathematical ideas and concepts, such as conducting a survey or creating charts to demonstrate how many children have been in an airplane
- make predictions and generalizations about their daily activities and aspects of the natural world and environments
- use patterns to generate or identify observations, such as how many children have blue eyes, and communicate these findings using language and symbols
- explore their environment
- manipulate objects and experiment with cause and effect, trial and error, and motion
- contribute constructively to discussions and debates
- use reflective thinking to consider why things happen and what can be learned from these experiences

**EDUCATORS PROMOTE THIS LEARNING WHEN THEY**

- plan learning environments with appropriate levels of challenge where children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks in their learning
- recognize mathematical understandings that children bring to learning and build on these in ways that are relevant to each child
- provide babies and toddlers with resources that challenge, intrigue, and surprise them, support their investigations, and share their enjoyment
- encourage children to use language to describe and explain their ideas
- provide opportunities for involvement in experiences that support the investigation of ideas, complex concepts and thinking, reasoning and hypothesizing, and problem-solving
- encourage children to make their ideas and concepts visible to others
- model scientific language and language associated with the arts
- join in children's play and model reasoning, predicting, and reflecting processes and language
- intentionally scaffold children's knowledge
- listen carefully to children's attempts to hypothesize and expand on their thinking through conversation and questioning

- 
- Add your own examples:

# Language and communication

## STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE 1:

### Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others

#### THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN CHILDREN

- engage in playful interactions using verbal and non-verbal communication
- build on home, family, and community literacies to convey and construct messages with purpose and confidence
- respond verbally and non-verbally to what they see, hear, touch, feel, and taste
- use language and representations from play, music, and art to share and project meaning
- contribute their ideas and experiences in play, and in small and large group discussions
- give cues that they are listening to and understanding what is said to them
- initiate conversations and demonstrate the ability to meet the listener's needs
- interact with others to explore ideas and concepts, clarify and challenge thinking, negotiate, and share new understandings
- exchange ideas and feelings using language and representations while playing
- express ideas and feelings, and understand and respect other perspectives
- use language to communicate thinking about quantities to describe attributes of objects and collections, and to explain mathematical ideas
- show increasing knowledge, understanding, and skill in conveying meaning

#### EDUCATORS PROMOTE THIS LEARNING WHEN THEY

- engage in enjoyable interactions with babies as they make and play with sounds
- pay attention to children's cues and respond sensitively and appropriately to their efforts to communicate
- understand and respond to the communication styles of individual children
- listen to and respond to children's approximations of words
- value children's linguistic heritage, and with family and community members encourage the use of and acquisition of language
- recognize that children enter early childhood programs having begun to communicate and make sense of their experiences at home and in their communities
- model language and encourage children to express themselves through language in a range of contexts and for a range of purposes
- engage in sustained communication with children about ideas and experiences, and extend their vocabulary
- include real-life resources to promote children's use of mathematical language, such as larger, more, and fewer
- design language-rich learning environments that provide opportunities for children to build their vocabularies and experiment with expressing themselves through mediums such as visual arts, music, literacy, and movement

- 
- Add your own examples:

**STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE 2:**

Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from them

**THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN CHILDREN**

- listen and respond to sounds and patterns in speech, stories and rhymes in context
- view and listen to printed, visual, and multimedia texts and respond with relevant gestures, actions, comments and questions
- sing and chant rhymes, jingles, and songs
- begin to understand key literacy and numeracy concepts and processes, such as the sounds of language, letter-sound relationships, concepts of print, and the ways that texts are structured
- take on roles of literacy and numeracy users in their play, such as using pencil and paper to take orders in a restaurant
- explore texts from a range of different perspectives and begin to analyze the meanings
- actively use, engage with, and share the enjoyment of language and texts in a range of ways
- recognize and engage with written and oral constructed texts

**EDUCATORS PROMOTE THIS LEARNING WHEN THEY**

- read and share a range of books and other texts with children
- display print in languages spoken by children in the group
- sing and chant rhymes, jingles, and songs
- engage children in play with words and sounds
- talk explicitly about concepts such as rhyme, letters, and sounds when sharing texts with children
- incorporate familiar family and community texts and stories
- join in children's play and engage them in conversations about the meanings of images and print
- engage children in discussions about books and other texts that promote consideration of diverse perspectives
- teach art as language and how people use artistic elements and principles to construct visual, musical, dance, and media texts
- provide opportunities for children to engage with familiar and unfamiliar culturally constructed stories and texts
- design learning environments to engage children in a range of activities accessible to all abilities, languages, and experiences

- 
- Add your own examples:



**STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE 3:**

## Children express ideas and make meaning using a variety of media

**THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN CHILDREN**

- use language and engage in play to imagine and create roles, scripts, and ideas
- share the stories and symbols of their own culture and re-enact well-known stories
- use the creative arts such as drawing, painting, sculpture, drama, dance, movement, music and storytelling to express ideas and make meaning
- experiment with ways of expressing ideas and meaning using a variety of media
- begin to use images and approximations of letters and words to convey meaning
- use increasingly complex and rich expressions of meaning

**EDUCATORS PROMOTE THIS LEARNING WHEN THEY**

- build on children's family and community experiences with creative and expressive arts
- provide a range of resources that enable children to express meaning using visual arts, dance, drama, and music
- ask and answer questions while reading or discussing books and other texts
- provide resources that encourage children to experiment with images and print
- facilitate the development of children's skills and techniques that will enhance their capacity for self-expression and communication
- join in children's play and co-construct materials such as signs that extend play and enhance literacy learning
- respond to children's images and symbols, talking about the elements, principles, skills, and techniques they have used to convey meaning

- 
- Add your own examples:
-

**STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE 4:**

## Children begin to understand how symbols and patterns work

**THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN CHILDREN**

- use symbols in play to represent and
- make meaning
- begin to make connections between, and see patterns in their feelings, ideas, words, and actions, as well as those of others
- notice and predict the patterns of regular routines and the passing of time and seasons
- develop an understanding that symbols are a powerful means of communication and that ideas, thoughts, and concepts can be represented through them
- develop awareness of the relationships between oral, written, and visual representations
- develop skills in recognizing patterns and relationships, as well as the connections between them
- develop skills in sorting, categorizing, ordering, and comparing collections and events, and attributes of objects and materials, in their social and natural worlds
- listen and respond to sounds and patterns, such as rhyme and alliteration in speech, stories, finger plays, and songs
- develop skills in recognizing, sequencing, and prediction, and draw on memories of sequences to complete a task
- draw on their experiences in constructing meaning using symbols
- engage in play using symbols and patterns, such as clapping games, preparing the table for snack, and arranging boots in the coat room

**EDUCATORS PROMOTE THIS LEARNING WHEN THEY**

- draw children's attention to symbols and patterns in their environment, and talk about patterns and relationships, including the relationship between letters and sounds
- provide children with access to a variety of everyday materials they can use to create patterns and sort, categorize, order, and compare
- engage children in discussions about symbol systems, such as letters, numbers, time, money, and musical notation
- provide children with opportunities to engage in patterns in movement, such as dancing, finger plays, and clapping
- encourage children to develop their own symbol systems
- provide children with multiple opportunities in the learning environment to use both symbols and patterns in everyday activities, such as all the children wearing red, or anyone whose name begins with a particular sound

- 
- Add your own examples:

**STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE 5:**

Children use information and communication technologies to access information, investigate ideas, and represent their thoughts

**THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN CHILDREN**

- identify the uses of technologies in everyday life and use real or imaginary technologies as props while playing, such as texting someone, making a telephone call, looking something up on internet
- use information and communication technologies to access images and information, explore diverse perspectives, and make sense of their world
- use information and communication technologies as tools for designing, drawing, editing, reflecting, and composing
- engage with technology for fun and to make meaning

**EDUCATORS PROMOTE THIS LEARNING WHEN THEY**

- provide children with access to a range of technologies, including computers, digital cameras, and recording equipment
- integrate technology into children's play experiences and projects
- provide props for children's play to represent various forms of technology
- teach skills and techniques, and encourage children to use technologies to explore new information and represent their ideas
- encourage collaborative learning about and through technologies between children, and between children and educators

- 
- Add your own examples:
-

**STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE 6:**

## Acadian and Francophone children in French minority language communities develop strong foundations in French

**THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN CHILDREN**

- hear French spoken at all times during daily activities
- acquire and use new French vocabulary and sentence structures
- speak to their peers, staff, and parents in French
- realize that there are other French-speaking people
- feel comfortable and confident when speaking French
- understand what others are saying in French
- show pride in their French language abilities and are not afraid to make mistakes
- build upon their positive experiences in French to develop a strong cultural identity and sense of belonging to the Nova Scotian and Canadian Francophonie
- listen to and sing French music
- listen to, look at and read French books and other printed material
- express their emotions and needs in French
- interact with others in French
- engage in French learning experiences and projects
- begin to identify with the French language, cultural symbols, customs, and traditions
- recognize and become aware of Acadian and other dialects within the French language
- explore French arts, media, resources, and information from various Canadian and international sources

**EDUCATORS PROMOTE THIS LEARNING WHEN THEY**

- adopt and adhere to a language policy that promotes French as the language of learning, discovery and communication of the program
- provide a learning environment rich in French materials, resources, and experiences including conversations, transitions, and routines; background music or radio; books; visuals; educational games and toys; and activities and projects
- speak exclusively to children and staff in French
- ensure children and parents with limited French language abilities understand what is going on in ways that sustain a trusting and reassuring relationship
- conduct all community activities involving children and parents in French, such as daily activities, meetings, and fundraising events
- help children, parents, and staff acquire knowledge of and a positive attitude towards French, and the Acadian language and dialects
- are aware that some children, staff, and parents from minority language communities may feel insecure when it comes to the French language
- help children develop their communicative competency in the French language
- recognize and respond positively to French language efforts and strengths in ways that allow children and adults with limited French language abilities to take risks without being afraid to make errors and to try again
- create meaningful and fun experiences that reassure the children of their language abilities
- model for and help children learn to express their emotions and needs in French
- encourage children to help one another to speak French
- support children and their families with the transition to French language school

- Add your own examples:

# Personal and social responsibility

## STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE 1:

Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy, and respect

### THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN CHILDREN

- show interest in other children and in being part of a group
- engage in and contribute to shared play experiences
- express a wide range of emotions, thoughts, and views constructively
- empathize with and express concern for others
- display awareness of and respect for others' perspectives
- reflect on their actions and consider consequences for others
- develop social skills and strategies to express their own feelings and opinions
- engage in conflict resolution through play
- can use language to express their opinions and defend their positions with persuasion

### EDUCATORS PROMOTE THIS LEARNING WHEN THEY

- initiate one-on-one interactions with children, particularly infants and toddlers, during daily routines
- organize learning environments in ways that promote small group interactions and play experiences
- model care, empathy, and respect for children, staff, and families
- model explicit communication strategies to support children to initiate interactions
- join in play and social experiences in ways that sustain productive relationships with other children
- acknowledge children's complex relationships and sensitively intervene in ways that promote consideration of alternative perspectives and social inclusion

- 
- Add your own examples:

**STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE 2:**

Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and how they can actively participate in them

**THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN CHILDREN**

- begin to recognize that they have a right to belong to many types of communities—social, geographic, special interest, such as sports teams, dance groups, gymnastics, and music
- cooperate with others and negotiate roles and relationships in play episodes and group experiences
- take action to assist other children to participate in social groups
- show evidence of a broadened understanding of the world
- express an opinion in matters that affect them
- build on their own social experiences to explore other ways of perceiving and interacting
- participate in reciprocal relationships
- gradually learn to read the behaviours of others and respond appropriately and with empathy
- understand different ways of contributing through play and projects
- demonstrate a sense of belonging and comfort in their environments
- are playful and respond positively to others, reaching out for company and friendship with children
- contribute to fair decision-making about matters that affect them

**EDUCATORS PROMOTE THIS LEARNING WHEN THEY**

- promote a sense of community within the early childhood education program
- build connections between the early childhood education program and the local community
- provide opportunities for children to investigate ideas, complex concepts and ethical issues that are relevant to their lives and their local communities
- model language that children can use to express ideas, negotiate roles and collaborate to achieve goals
- ensure that children have the skills to participate in and contribute to group play and projects
- develop and implement strategies to improve children's skills for group play and project work
- plan opportunities for children to participate in meaningful ways in group discussions and shared decision-making about rules and expectations
- plan and provide opportunities for the children to participate in community events, such as local parades, planting tulips in the park, and bringing donations to the food bank

- 
- Add your own examples:

**STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE 3:**

## Children respond to diversity with respect

**THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN CHILDREN**

- begin to show concern for others
- explore origins of diversity, such as culture, heritage, gender identity, background and tradition
- understand and appreciate that diversity presents opportunities for new ideas
- become aware of connections, similarities and differences between people
- listen to others' ideas and respect different ways of being and doing
- practice inclusive ways of achieving co-existence, such as a child invites a child who is alone to join in play
- notice and react in positive ways to similarities and differences among people
- feel comfortable and secure to ask questions, or to share doubts and uncertainty about conflicting messaging that they may hear
- recognize bullying behaviours

**EDUCATORS PROMOTE THIS LEARNING WHEN THEY**

- reflect on their own responses to diversity
- design and plan for environments that reflect diversity in culture, gender identity, and family structure, such as books and materials
- plan experiences and provide resources that broaden children's perspectives and encourage appreciation of diversity
- expose children to different languages and dialects and encourage appreciation of linguistic diversity
- encourage children to listen to others and to respect diverse perspectives
- demonstrate positive responses to diversity in their own behaviour and in conversations with children
- engage in interactions with children that promote respect for diversity and value distinctiveness
- explore the culture, heritage, backgrounds and traditions of each child within the context of their community
- explore with children their ideas about diversity and provide opportunities for them to ask questions or share doubts about inconsistent messages they hear
- provide children with social and communication strategies to deal with bullying

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- Add your own examples:
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## **STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE 4:**

### Children become aware of fairness

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#### **THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN CHILDREN**

- discover and explore a variety of connections among people
- become aware of the ways that people are included or excluded from physical and social environments
- develop the ability to recognize unfairness and bias
- develop the capacity to act with compassion and kindness
- are empowered to make choices and problem solve to meet their needs in different contexts
- begin to think critically about fair and unfair behaviour
- recognize bullying behaviours and the harm they cause
- are able to address bullying tactics and support the child being bullied
- begin to demonstrate understanding and evaluate the ways in which books texts construct identities and create stereotypes

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#### **EDUCATORS PROMOTE THIS LEARNING WHEN THEY**

- notice and listen carefully to children's concerns and discuss diverse perspectives on issues of inclusion and exclusion, and fair and unfair behaviour
- engage children in discussions about respectful and equal relationships
- provide opportunities for children to recognize behaviour that is considered bullying, whether through real life experiences or books, stories, and songs
- facilitate development of social and communication skills to use in cases of bullying behaviours, and how to support victims of bullying
- analyze and discuss with children ways in which texts construct a limited range of identities and reinforce stereotypes
- point out and draw children's attention to issues of fairness relevant to them in the early childhood program and broader community

- 
- Add your own examples:
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**STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVE 5:**

## Children become environmentally aware and show respect for the environment

**THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN CHILDREN**

- use play to investigate, propose, and explore new ideas about their environment—including indoor and outdoor environments, clean air, water, and the planet
- participate with others to solve problems, such as caring for the environment, recycling, and caring for bird feeders
- demonstrate an increasing knowledge of, and appreciation and respect for the environment
- show, through their behaviour and actions, how they can care for the environment
- explore, infer, predict and hypothesize to develop an increased understanding of the interdependence between land, people, plants, and animals
- explore relationships with other living and non-living things, and observe, notice, and respond to change
- develop an awareness of the impact of human activity on the physical environment
- develop an awareness of the interdependence of living things

**EDUCATORS PROMOTE THIS LEARNING WHEN THEY**

- provide children with access to a range of natural materials in their environment
- model respect, care and appreciation for the natural world
- find ways of enabling children to care for and learn from the land
- consider the nature of children's connectedness to the land and demonstrate respect for community protocols
- share information and provide children with access to resources about the environment and the impact of human activities on it
- embed sustainability in daily routines and practices
- look for and present examples of interdependence in the environment
- discuss the ways that life and the health of living things are interconnected
- share stories of children who have taken the initiative to lead community activities that support sustainable environments
- explore opportunities for children to become involved in relevant community initiatives

- 
- Add your own examples:
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# Definitions

**active learning environment:** A learning environment in which children are encouraged to explore and interact with it to make or construct meaning and knowledge through their experiences, social interactions, and negotiations with others. In an active learning environment, educators play a crucial role of encouraging children to discover deeper meanings and connections among ideas and between concepts, processes, and representations. This requires educators to be engaged with children's emotions and thinking. (*Adapted from Government of South Australia Department of Education Training and Employment 2001, 10 & 11*)

**authentic assessment:** A form of assessment that measures children's skills and abilities by observing how children perform in real-life every day activities; it is carried out by observing and documenting children's play, their interactions with peers, and conversations with parents, and other educators and professionals.

**belonging:** The experiences of security, inclusion, respect, and competence in a group setting.

**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 to make learning visible. (New Zealand Ministry of Education 1996)

**child/children with special needs:** Children who display challenges in learning and functioning in one or more areas of development, as well as increased vulnerability to environmental and non-environmental stresses (Allen et al. 2006); they may require additional assistance, planning, or support.

**child/children:** Individuals who range in age from infancy to early school years (eight years old), unless otherwise stated.

**co-construct:** A learning process that takes place in a social context as children interact with educators, other children, and materials as they work together in partnership. The process emphasizes the importance of social relationships in children's early learning.

**culturally responsive practice:** A process reflecting and celebrating our pluralist society and allows children to develop and learn while experiencing a sense of belonging and respect.

**curriculum:** In early childhood education settings "curriculum" means the sum of experiences, activities, and events that occur within an inclusive environment designed to foster children's well-being, learning, and development. This implies collaboration between educators, children, and parents.

**curriculum framework:** An established set of values, principles, goals, and strategies that encourage a shared sense of purpose and communication between parents and early childhood centres. A curriculum framework is different from a prescribed curriculum because in early childhood settings, learning is integrated, episodic, experiential, and facilitated through social relationships. Curriculum frameworks guide the pedagogical practices of educators.

**developmental challenges:** Any single or cluster of behaviour(s), learning problems, or challenges that could interfere with children's optimal development (McCain and Mustard 1999).

**dispositions:** Enduring habits of mind and action; a tendency to respond in characteristic ways to situations.

**diversity:** Differences and unique qualities that each person brings to the early learning setting such as their culture and ethnicity, values and beliefs, language(s), abilities, education, life experiences, socio-economic status, spirituality, gender, age, and sexual orientation.

**documentation:** A systematic strategy for collecting information on the behaviour, emotional responses, interests, abilities, and patterns of development of an individual child or a group of children within a learning environment or aspects of that environment. Methods may include participant observation, portfolios, learning stories, developmental screening tools, checklists, anecdotal records, and daily recordings.

**early childhood development:** The growth that takes place between birth and age eight.

**early childhood education and care:** A professional practice that includes the assessment and promotion of the well-being and holistic development of children, achieved through the planning and delivery of inclusive play-based learning and care programs. This happens within a context of diverse family, school and community groups (College of ECE).

**early childhood education programs:** Programs that provide play-based early childhood education for children under age 12, including provincially regulated early learning and child care centres, and pre-primary programs.

**early childhood educator (ECE):** An adult who has an early childhood education diploma or degree from a post-secondary institution.

**early childhood practitioner:** An adult who works in the field of early childhood education, but may not be an educator.

**early childhood professional:** An individual with specialized education, training, or experience in supporting children's learning and development.

**early childhood settings:** Programs that provide early childhood education for children under age 12, such as family child care and family resource centres.

**early identification and intervention:** Approaches used to identify early signs or symptoms of problems with children's health or development, as well as the services provided to help correct or resolve the problems. Problems that are identified and responded to early are less likely to have a long-term impact on children's development.

**early learning:** A natural, holistic, and exploratory process that children engage in from birth and that lays the foundation for later learning, whether formal or informal. Early learning is a part of early childhood development.

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

**Early Years Centre:** A model of an early childhood education program in Nova Scotia that is designed and delivered in partnership with school boards, communities, and families. The Early Years Centre model includes three core services: a pre-primary program focused on a play-based early learning for children in the year before entering school; family supports and resources; and regulated child care that is responsive to family needs. Early years centres in or near schools and are designed to fit the needs of the communities they are in. The centres provide spaces to bring together programs and services delivered to families of children from birth to school entry. Family support and resources might include parenting support, health services, and programs.

**environment:** Any physical space where children spend their lives and engage in early learning, such as a home, playground, child care centre, pre-primary program, community centre or other public place, and natural settings. The environment can also refer to the organization of any one of these settings.

**environment as teacher:** A concept used in early childhood education, where the environment provides children with a sense of beauty, allows for an organization of time, presents materials and activities for learning, provides space for play and exploration, encourages friendships and relationships, allows for privacy, recognizes diversity, and welcomes families. Loris Malaguzzi referred to this as the environment as “third teacher”, and Maria Montessori referred to it as the “prepared environment”. (Ontario Ministry of Education 2014)

**equity:** The principle of fairness; a belief that seeks to eliminate challenges caused by biased or unfair policies, programs, practices, or situations that contribute to a lack of equality in educational performance, results, and outcomes.

**evaluation:** The systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project or program, its design, implementation, and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. (OECD 2002, 21)

**evidence-based practice:** The delivery of high-quality early childhood education programs based on the best empirical evidence available, in conjunction with professional judgment.

**gender:** The socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions, and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender-diverse people. It influences how people perceive themselves and each other, how they act and interact, and how power and resources are distributed in society. Gender is usually conceptualized as a binary (girl/woman, and boy/man), yet there is considerable diversity in how individuals and groups understand, experience, and express it. (Canadian Institutes of Health Research 2015)

**holistic:** An approach to early learning that encompasses the physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and creative development of a child. This approach focuses on the development of the whole child, rather than only concentrating on individual components.

**Image of the Child:** What people believe, understand, and assume about the role of children in education and society. This image includes how people think about children's capabilities, development, motivations, purpose, and agency. Social, cultural, and historical experiences influence a person's Image of the Child.

**inclusion:** The consideration of all children's social, cultural, and linguistic diversity, such as learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances, and geographic location, in curriculum decision-making processes. The intent is to ensure that all children's experiences are recognized and valued and that all children have equitable access to resources and participation, opportunities to demonstrate their learning, and learn to value difference.

**inclusive practice:** 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. This type of practice provides different and appropriate learning support according to children's strengths, needs, interests, and backgrounds.

**indicators:** The behaviours or comments that are markers of what children know or do that show a specific skill is emerging, being practiced, or elaborated.

**infants:** Children who are younger than 18 months.

**inquiry:** A disposition for learning, also described as wonder, curiosity, and imagination; a tendency to try new ideas and take on challenges.

**intentional teaching:** A form of teaching that encourages educators to be deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in their decisions and actions. Intentional teaching is the opposite of rote or continuing with traditions simply because things have always been done that way.

**learning goal:** Skills, knowledge, or dispositions that are actively promoted by adults in children's environments. Children can play an active role in shaping learning goals as they develop.

**learning objective:** Skills, knowledge, or dispositions that a child will attain and that educators actively promote in early childhood education programs, in collaboration with children and their families.

**learning story(ies):** A method of documenting children's learning and development in action, through descriptions of actual 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.

**learning strategy(ies):** The pedagogical techniques and practices employed by educators to engage children in the process of learning.

**literacy:** The capacity, confidence and disposition to use language in all its forms. It incorporates a range of modes of communication including music, movement, dance, storytelling, visual arts, media and drama, as well as talking, listening, viewing, reading and writing. Contemporary texts include electronic and print based media. In an increasingly technological world, the ability to critically analyze texts is a key component of literacy. Children benefit from opportunities to explore their world using technologies and to develop confidence in using digital media.

**narrative:** An aspect of literacy that involves describing, sequencing, and telling ideas, events, or stories.

**numeracy:** The capacity, confidence and disposition to use mathematics in daily life. Children bring new mathematical understandings through engaging with problem solving. It is essential that the mathematical ideas with which young children interact are relevant and meaningful in the context of their current lives. Educators require a rich mathematical vocabulary to accurately describe and explain children's mathematical ideas and to support numeracy development. Spatial sense, structure and pattern, number, measurement, data argumentation, connections and exploring the world mathematically are the powerful mathematical ideas children need to become numerate.

**observation:** The ongoing process of watching, listening, and aware of children's behaviour, emotional state, interests, abilities, and patterns of development, to meet the needs of children and evaluate their development and learning.

**parent(s):** A person or the people primarily responsible for the day-to-day care of children and taking on the commonly understood parenting role. The term parent refers to biological or adoptive parents, step-parents, legal guardians, or extended family such as, grandparents, aunts, and uncles.

**pedagogy:** The understanding of how learning takes place and the philosophy and practice that supports that understanding of learning. Pedagogy involves educators' professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision-making, teaching, and learning.

**philosophy:** a 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.

**play:** A naturally occurring and freely chosen activity in which children are self-motivated. It is characterized by imagination, exploration, delight, capriciousness, and a sense of wonder. It reflects the unique experiences of children, and the various ways children express their ideas and feelings, and come to understand themselves, others, and their world.

- **pretend play:** A type of play that includes freely chosen involvement with people, materials, and the environment which reflects children's perceptions, inspirations, imagination, and creativity.

**play-based learning:** A context for learning through which children organize and make sense of their social worlds, as they actively engage with people, objects, and representations. It is an educational approach that builds upon children's natural inclination to make sense of the world through play, and educators participate in play, guiding children's planning, decision-making, and communications, as well as extending children's explorations with narrative, novelty, and challenges.

The process through which learning happens in play is complex. Educators continually develop and deepen their understanding of that process through professional learning and classroom observation, interpretation, and analysis.

**play-based pedagogy:** An educational approach that builds upon children's natural inclination to make sense of the world through play, where educators participate in play, and guide children's planning, decision-making, and communications, as well as extending children's explorations with narrative, novelty, and challenge.

**portfolio:** A means of documenting children's learning over time. Portfolios may contain samples of artwork, writing, retellings of favourite stories, math work, and any other collected evidence of the child's learning and development. Both adults and children choose items for inclusion in portfolios.

**pre-primary program:** A universal, play-based program located in public schools and taught by educators. The program is for four-year-old children in the year before they start school (four-year-olds) and welcomes children and families into the school community by supporting children's development and laying the foundation for school success and lifelong learning.

**preschool-aged children:** Children who are 36 months old or older, but not yet attending school in the grade primary to 12 school system.

**professional expertise:** Knowledge and pedagogy based in observation and reflection, and considered in relation to current theories, research, and evidence-based practice, that leads to best practices.

**program standards:** The indicators of quality in early childhood education programs whose success has been demonstrated by research, describing the human resources, supports, activities, and methodology needed to promote children's learning (Shore et al. 2004). These include characteristics such as staff qualifications, group size, educator-to-child ratio, environment, materials and supports available to children and families (Shore et al. 2004) to create optimal learning environments and equitable outcomes.

**quality:** The demonstration of meeting the standards around certain criteria, such as human resources, staff qualifications, group size, ratio of educators-to-children, supports, methodology, environment, materials, interactions, activities, and child and family supports. When measuring quality in an early childhood education setting the perspective and experiences of children must always be considered.

**reflective practice:** A systematic process used by educators that forms the basis for intentional teaching. There are three types of reflective practice:

- **reflection-in-action:** Occurs naturally and continually throughout the children's day, as educators engage in and observe children's activities
- **reflection-on-action:** Occurs after the fact, when educators reflect on the activities and interactions of the day, and question whether a situation may have been handled differently, or what new insights were gained as a result of children's interactions with each other or with adults. Such reflection can be done alone or in conversation with other educators.
- **reflection-for-action:** Describes critical reflection. Critical reflection involves closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives. Educators often frame their reflective practice within a set of overarching questions, and develop more specific questions for particular areas of inquiry. Critical reflection also considers Image of the Child and values held, framed against the present set of experiences and circumstances, with an eye toward future changes or actions.

**responsive relationships:** The 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 which gives children a feeling of being cared for and cared about.

**scaffolding:** A teaching strategy developed by Lev Vygotsky. The premise of the strategy is that children learn through social interactions (socio-cultural theories), and that children can be supported in their learning by another more knowledgeable person (peers, older child, or adult) who helps the learner move to the next level through questions, hints, or directions.

**screening:** A process of identifying special needs or delays in development, using observation or specifically designed tools for the purposes of referring children to specialized services.

**self-regulation:** The ability to monitor and control emotions, behaviour, and attention.

**sex:** A set of biological attributes in humans and animals. It is primarily associated with physical and physiological features including chromosomes, gene expression, hormone levels and function, and reproductive and sexual anatomy. Sex is usually categorized as female or male but there is variation in the biological attributes that comprise sex and how those attributes are expressed. (Canadian Institutes of Health Research 2015)



**skills:** The specific processes, abilities, and competencies that exist within each area of development, and form the foundational pathways for learning and health that emerge early and are elaborated over time.

**social inclusion:** A philosophy and practice that values all forms of differences, and encourages a sense of belonging for all children and families.

**special needs:** The physical, emotional, cognitive, or behavioural conditions that may require additional or specific types of support to help children participate in early learning, and to attain typical developmental goals. Supporting children's special needs may require adaptations to the physical environment and individualized strategies to foster their learning. Special needs may encompass delayed or gifted abilities.

**spiritual:** A range of human experiences including a sense of awe and wonder, and an exploration of being and knowing.

**texts:** Items that are read, viewed, listened to, and created to share meaning. Texts can be print-based, such as books, magazines and posters or screen-based, such as internet sites and DVDs. Many texts are multimodal, and integrate images, written words, and sound.

**toddler:** Children who are between 18 months old and 35 months old, inclusive.

**transition:** The process of moving between home and childhood setting, a range of different early childhood settings, and an early childhood setting to full-time school. Transition may also refer to the process of moving from one activity to another during the day in an early childhood education program, such as from indoor to outdoor activities.

**well-being:** A state of physical, social, or emotional comfort. This includes happiness and satisfaction, effective social functioning, and the dispositions of optimism, openness, curiosity, and resilience.



# Appendix A:

## Early learning frameworks across Canada

<b>PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>PEI Early Learning Framework—Relationships, Environments, Experiences</i></li> <li>• <i>Cadre pédagogique pour l'apprentissage des jeunes enfants</i></li> </ul>
<b>NEW BRUNSWICK</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care—English</i></li> <li>• <i>Le Curriculum éducatif pour la petite enfance francophone du Nouveau-Brunswick</i></li> </ul>
<b>QUEBEC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Meeting early childhood needs: Quebec's educational program for childcare services</i></li> <li>• <i>Accueillir la petite enfance, Le programme éducatif des services de garde du Québec</i></li> </ul>
<b>ONTARIO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years</i></li> <li>• <i>Comment apprend-on? Pédagogie de l'Ontario pour la petite enfance.</i></li> </ul>
<b>MANITOBA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Early Returns: Manitoba's Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum for Preschools and Nursery Schools</i></li> <li>• <i>Des résultats précoces : Cadre d'élaboration d'un curriculum des programmes d'apprentissage et de garde des jeunes enfants du Manitoba pour les services de garde préscolaire et les prématernelles</i></li> <li>• <i>Early Returns: Manitoba's Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum for Infants</i></li> <li>• <i>Des résultats précoces : Cadre des curriculums d'apprentissage et de garde des jeunes enfants du Manitoba pour les programmes destinés aux enfants en bas âge</i></li> </ul>
<b>SASKATCHEWAN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Play and Exploration: Early Learning Program Guide</i></li> <li>• <i>Jouer et explorer, Guide du programme d'apprentissage pour la petite enfance</i></li> </ul>
<b>ALBERTA (pilot stage)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Play, participation, and possibilities: An early learning and child care curriculum framework for Alberta</i></li> <li>• <i>Jeu, participation et possibilités—Un cadre pédagogique pour les programmes d'apprentissage et de garde des jeunes enfants en Alberta</i></li> </ul>
<b>BRITISH COLUMBIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>BC Early Learning Framework</i></li> <li>• <i>Colombie-Britannique Cadre pédagogique pour l'apprentissage des jeunes enfants</i></li> </ul>

**Note:** In Newfoundland and Labrador, draft documents are currently in pilot stage and not publicly available.

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