

British Columbia Early Learning Framework



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Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

British Columbia early learning framework

Co-published by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Issued by the Early Learning Advisory Group.

ISBN 978-0-7726-5925-5

1. Early childhood education - British Columbia.

2. Early childhood education. 3. Child development.

I. British Columbia. Ministry of Education. II. British Columbia. Ministry of Health. III. British Columbia. Ministry of Children and Family Development. IV. British Columbia. Early Learning Advisory Group.

LB1139.3.C3B74 2008 372.2109711 C2008-960031-2

Table of Contents

Section One: About This Document

Structure of this Document	1
Introduction	2
Purpose	3
The Image of the Child	4

Section Two: Background

The Context for Early Learning in British Columbia	5
Growing Up in British Columbia	5
Early Learning and Children's Health	7
The United Nations Rights of the Child	7
Regulations in British Columbia	7
Early Learning and Aboriginal Children	8
Early Learning and the Primary Program	8
Supporting Young Children's Early Learning	9
Children are Natural Learners	9
The Importance of Relationships	10
Environments to Support Early Learning	11
Learning through Play	12

Section Three: The B.C. Early Learning Framework

The B.C. Early Learning Framework at a Glance	13
Vision for Early Learning	14
Principles	15
The Areas of Early Learning	17
Well-being and Belonging	18
Learning Goals	18
Questions to Consider	19
Exploration and Creativity	23
Learning Goals	23
Questions to Consider	24
Languages and Literacies	29
Learning Goals	29
Questions to Consider	30
Social Responsibility and Diversity	33
Learning Goals	33
Questions to Consider	34
Glossary of Terms	37
Resources for Parents/Caregivers	39
Acknowledgements	42

Section One: About This Document

Structure of this Document

This Early Learning Framework document is organized into three sections:

- Section One includes an introduction and describes the purpose of the document. It also describes the image of the child in which the framework is grounded – an image in which all young children are capable and full of potential.
- Section Two describes the context for the development of this framework, including the B.C. social context, and human rights and legislative commitments relating to early learning. Section two also provides background information on how young children learn, and about the importance of children's caregivers and environments in supporting early learning, as well as the importance of play.
- Section Three contains the core elements of the Early Learning Framework: (a) the vision for early learning, (b) principles, (c) areas of early learning and learning goals and (d) a set of questions for each area of early learning to help the user put this framework into practice. The questions for reflection may be helpful to caregivers and educators planning experiences and environments for children. They are organized by age groups: 1) infants and toddlers and 2) preschool-aged children. Questions relevant to all young children, regardless of age, and are in both columns.

A glossary of terms and a list of resources for parents and caregivers follow section three.



Introduction

This document, British Columbia's Early Learning Framework, is intended to guide and support early childhood educators, StrongStart BC facilitators, early years professionals, service providers, communities and governments in providing rich early learning experiences for children from birth to kindergarten. The document may also be of interest for families with young children.



Early learning refers to the emerging and expanding of young children's physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and creative capacities. All children are born with a curiosity about themselves, other people, and the world around them, and in this sense are born learners. As they grow, they develop both their capacity and dispositions to learn through supportive relationships with their families, with other children and adults in their communities, and with their environments. Early learning is the foundation for lifelong learning, and the basis for individual, social, economic, and environmental well-being.

The framework describes in broad terms a vision, principles, and areas of early learning for British Columbia. It is designed to be put into practice

in different ways depending on the circumstances of individual children, families, and communities. For example, some Aboriginal communities have expressed interest in developing their own culturally-specific early learning framework. This document can serve as a starting point for discussion.

The framework recognizes that, while all children should have equal access to rich early learning experiences, no two children are the same. Each brings a wealth of individual, social, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic characteristics to their learning. These differences enrich their own early learning and that of other children.

The development of the Early Learning Framework was led by the Ministry of Education in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Children and Family Development. In creating this framework, the voices of numerous families, early childhood educators, teachers, researchers, post-secondary institutions, and other early years service providers in B.C. were heard. Inspiration was also drawn from other jurisdictions' early learning frameworks, particularly those of School District No.23 (Central Okanagan), the Province of New Brunswick, the city of Reggio Emilia in Italy, and the national early childhood curricula of Ireland, Sweden and New Zealand.

While influenced by these exemplary documents, this framework is meant to be uniquely British Columbian. The Province will continue to work in partnership with early childhood educators, teachers, researchers, and other early years service providers to implement the framework in communities across British Columbia.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this document is to support adults to create rich early learning experiences and environments that reflect the latest knowledge on how best to support young children's early learning and development.



If you are an early childhood educator, early years professional, or other type of service provider, this document will give you tools to reflect on the early learning experiences you create with and for children, to guide programs and activities you provide for children, and to support dialogue with and between families about their children's early learning.

If you are reading this framework as a parent

or caregiver, it may stimulate reflections on your children's early learning. If your children participate in child care, preschool, a StrongStart BC early learning centre, or any other community-based early learning program, this document can support you to engage in a dialogue with early childhood educators and others about your children.

This framework is also designed to help adults support and strengthen children's individual, social, cultural, and linguistic identities, and their respect and appreciation for other people's identities. In a province like B.C., with its rich diversity, this is seen as an essential element in early learning and development.

Finally, the framework provides a focal point for dialogue among British Columbians, so that together we can develop a common language and greater understanding of the vital importance of early learning for all young children.

The Image of the Child

Whether one is aware of it or not, everybody has an image of the child that is rooted in their culture, knowledge, personal histories, and aspirations for the future. 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.



The particular image of the child held by people strongly influences their decisions about young children, the way they interact with children, and how they construct the environments where children grow, develop and learn. If people believe that children are curious, capable beings full of potential with views and perspectives to share, then they are likely to interact with them in ways that allow these qualities to shine. Being aware of their own image of the child helps adults to reflect on and make conscious choices that foster children's early learning.

This framework supports the creation of a shared image of the child that can guide efforts to promote early learning at the local and provincial levels. It views young children as capable and full of potential; as persons with complex identities, grounded in their individual strengths and capacities, and their unique social, linguistic, and cultural heritage. In this image, children are rooted in and take nourishment from a rich, supportive ground, comprised of relationships with their families and communities, their language and culture, and the surrounding environment. As children grow and learn, they ask questions, explore, and make discoveries, supported by these roots and branching out to new experiences, people, places, and things in their environment. Within this complex ecology, every child belongs and contributes.

In putting forward an image of a capable child, full of potential, it is recognized that children differ in their strengths and capabilities, and that not all children have the same opportunities to develop their potential. However, a strong image of the child can inspire people who interact with children to promote their individual strengths, and to address conditions in children's environments—locally, provincially, and globally—that constrain opportunities to engage fully in early learning.

This is the image of the child projected in this Early Learning Framework. The vision, principles, areas of learning, and learning goals that follow are all expressions of how that image might be realized in the day-to-day lives of young children in British Columbia.

At the same time, the framework acknowledges that this image of the child is not universal, varying in response to people's experiences, beliefs, and aspirations, and according to who participates in the dialogue about childhood.

In a province as diverse as B.C., views about childhood and children may differ profoundly, and these differences can both challenge and enrich the dialogue about early childhood. Whatever your own image of the child, the framework provides information and ideas to reflect upon, and to encourage you to take part in the dialogue about children and childhood.

Section Two: Background

The Context For Early Learning In British Columbia

This section outlines some of the key social, economic and health factors that affect young children's early learning in British Columbia. This section also identifies other important contextual factors for early learning and development, including commitments set out in human rights agreements and legislation.

Growing Up in British Columbia

Children differ in their physical, emotional, social, and intellectual capacities. Their families and communities represent great geographic, social, cultural, linguistic, and economic diversity. In some cases, these factors may present challenges but, overall, children's individuality provides a wealth of opportunities for early learning.

For example B.C. is a vast, unevenly populated province. Most of its over four million people live in urban centres, but it also has hundreds of vibrant and unique rural communities. Urban and rural communities offer different types of opportunities and face distinct challenges in providing high quality early learning experiences to children.

B.C. is also culturally diverse, reflecting the history of its Aboriginal peoples as well as generations of immigrants.

The province is home to almost 200 First Nations, speaking more than 30 ancestral languages and dialects, along with First Nations, Inuit, Metis and Aboriginal peoples from other parts of Canada and the world. Many First Nations are in a process of social, economic and political transformation, as well as cultural and linguistic revitalization, in which early learning is recognized as critically important. Aboriginal children also represent a fast-growing child demographic in the province. Aboriginal peoples account for 4% of the total population, while Aboriginal children account for 9% of the child population. These children live in a variety of settings, including urban, rural, remote, on-reserve and off-reserve communities.

B.C. is also home to people from many different parts of the world—some are new to B.C., while others have lived here for generations. These diverse peoples with their distinct histories and contexts contribute to the rich social fabric of this province, offering young children the chance to experience the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity that is a part of today's world, and to develop the skills, attitudes, and dispositions that promote social equity and justice.

Social and cultural diversity also characterize the nature of family life and the context for early learning in B.C. In many families, parents are the primary caregivers while in others, grandparents and other relatives may play an equally significant role. Many children grow up in blended families, families headed by single parents, and foster families. And many receive additional early education and care outside the home in group child care centres, family child care homes, preschool programs, and other community-based early learning settings. Whether children receive early education and care in the home or the community, it is important that their early learning experiences draw on the unique strengths of their relationships with their families.

While all families have strengths, many face distinct challenges. For example, children cannot fully engage in early learning unless their basic needs for food, shelter, physical safety, and adequate health care are met. The families of children with special needs face significant challenges and may require support to function optimally, while other families face stresses that can compromise their ability to support their children's early learning. Regardless of income, social status, geographic isolation, and other potential barriers, all children should have opportunities to build on their unique strengths.

Finally, in spite of their differences, young children in B.C. also share much common ground. For example, they are growing up in a society that faces unprecedented environmental challenges. The social and environmental pressures created by climate change and resource depletion require innovative approaches—and changes in the ways we carry out our daily lives. Children, with their boundless imagination and sense of adventure, along with the different ways of living and learning that are part of their individual, social, and cultural heritage, will be the leaders and innovators who shape British Columbia in the future.



Early Learning and Children's Health

Children's early learning and health are inextricably linked. Experiences during the early years strongly influence life-long health and learning. Many factors, often referred to as "determinants of health," influence children's ability to reach their potential. These determinants include children's environments, histories, biology and genetics, personal skills, and their family's socio-economic status. The communities in which children and their families live, the norms of their society and the ease in which a healthy choice is possible are also important influences.

Quality early learning experiences have the potential to improve children's overall health and well-being for a lifetime. Similarly, children who are healthy tend to learn better, further underlining the health-learning connection.

The United Nations Rights of the Child

In 1991, Canada ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It affirms the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family, including children, as the necessary foundation for freedom, justice, and peace in the world. The Convention recognizes children as citizens with the right to reach their fullest potential, to be treated with dignity and respect, to be protected from harm, to exercise a voice, to engage in play and recreational activities, and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. This framework can help adults ensure these rights are upheld.

In 2002, Canada participated in the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, the most important international meeting on childhood since the 1990 World Summit on Children. This meeting led to the development of A World Fit for Children, (http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/docs_new/documents/A-RES-S27-2E.pdf)

a declaration and plan of action to improve the situation of children around the world. Based on this declaration, Canada has developed A Canada Fit for Children, a national plan of action that identifies key issues affecting children and opportunities to improve their lives. One of the four central themes of Canada's action plan is promoting education and learning, including the importance of positive stimulation and nurturing in the early years in laying foundations for lifelong learning, health, and behaviour.

Regulations that Support Early Learning in B.C.

Most young children in B.C. experience early learning both in their homes and in other settings. B.C. sets minimum standards so that children in certain settings receive services from qualified staff, and that the physical environment promotes and protects children's health, safety and well-being.

The Community Care and Assisted Living Act and the Child Care Licensing Regulation (<http://www.healthservices.gov.B.C.ca/ccf/child/index.html>) define required child/staff ratios, group size, health and safety measures, and early childhood educator training requirements for various child care settings, including group child care, family child care, preschool, child-minding, and so on. Child care providers who care for three or more children are required to work within these legislative and regulatory frameworks in all licensed programs.

In addition, the Child Care Sector Occupational Competencies set out the knowledge, skills, and abilities that early childhood educators must demonstrate to be certified in B.C. The learning goals in this framework are congruent with some of the competencies and training curriculum for early childhood educators.

Providing high quality early learning experiences for young children depends on the ongoing partnerships between different levels of government, between different provincial ministries, and between government and early learning and child care organizations and practitioners. This collective work is vital to maintaining and strengthening the infrastructure that supports high quality early learning and child care experiences in B.C.

Early Learning and British Columbia's Aboriginal Children

Every child has his or her own unique identity, built and strengthened from birth through the various stages of childhood and shaped by family, community, history, culture, tradition, and experience. This framework recognizes the importance of every child's identity – as well as the particular focus on cultural identity that is so essential for Aboriginal children.

That focus stems in part from a history in which Aboriginal peoples experienced cultural chauvinism and forced assimilation. Today, as many Aboriginal communities revitalize their languages, cultures and traditions, the development of children's cultural identity is considered a top priority in early learning. Aboriginal leaders have also emphasized the importance of preserving ancestral languages and supporting their children's spiritual development.

Cooperative and collaborative community partnerships between local Aboriginal communities and early learning providers support quality environments that meet the needs of Aboriginal children. Non-Aboriginal children's learning can also be enhanced through the inclusion of Aboriginal culture and spirituality in early learning settings.



Early Learning and the Primary Program

Children in B.C. enter the Primary Program around the time they turn five. The provincial document *The Primary Program: A Framework for Teaching* describes five areas of development for children in kindergarten to Grade 3: (1) aesthetic and artistic development, (2) emotional and social development, (3) intellectual development, (4) physical development and well-being, and (5) the development of social responsibility. The Primary Program Framework articulates the particular importance of human and social development during the early years of school as the basis for intellectual



development. It also appreciates the importance of play in young children's learning and welcomes children's diverse learning styles and their individuality in mastering skills through learning experiences.

The B.C. Primary Program's emphasis on the "whole child" is consistent with the approach adopted in this Early Learning Framework. Children who have had rich early learning experiences in the areas of learning outlined in this framework are likely to enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

In addition, the Early Learning Framework opens up new opportunities for dialogue and partnership between early childhood educators, other early years practitioners and educators in the K-12 system. For example, kindergarten teachers are collaborating with researchers at the Human Early Learning Partnership to implement the Early Development Instrument (EDI) in all school districts across B.C. The EDI provides a snapshot of the overall development of children in their communities in five areas: physical health and well-being; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive development; and communication skills and general knowledge. Many community partners now use EDI results to create or strengthen early learning and development programs, to build on local strengths, and to address local challenges.

Enhanced partnerships between early years practitioners and the K-12 education system increase opportunities for collaboration on community-based early learning. Given the specialized knowledge, skills, training, and experience of early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers, such partnerships have the potential to ensure that children make smooth transitions to the Primary Program. This framework has the potential to enrich the dialogue about young children's learning between early childhood educators and elementary school teachers.

Supporting Young Children's Early Learning

This section of the Early Learning Framework outlines the background knowledge about children's learning and development that has influenced the image of the child this document supports, as well as the vision, principles, areas of learning, and learning goals described in Section 3. (For more on the image of the child, see page 4.)

Children Are Natural Learners

Early childhood is an important time in a person's life, launching the journey of lifelong learning. During the first years of life, children's brains and bodies are developing rapidly. Current research suggests that there are windows of opportunity in children's development: periods when children are especially receptive to certain kinds of stimulation in order to create the neural connections and pathways that allow them to explore their physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and creative capacities over their lifetimes. For example, children's language development is profoundly affected by the quality of their communicative interactions with their caregivers during infancy and early childhood. The basis for emotional control, mathematics, and logical thinking is created during the first three to four years of life. In other words, for the sake of their lifelong health and well-being, it is vital that children have rich early learning experiences in their homes and communities.

Infants are born with a natural curiosity about the world around them, and have surprising abilities that allow them to learn quickly. Virtually from birth, young infants can imitate facial expressions and distinguish between the sounds of every human language. Months before the emergence of their first words, infants can use hand gestures and signs to point at people and objects in their environment, and to express their desires and intentions. Before they have reached their first birthdays, most infants understand that human beings behave in purposeful ways, and can figure out the best way to carry out simple, physical

actions. As infants become toddlers, they develop the ability to share simple goals and intentions with other people—the very foundation of community and social life.

It is on the foundation developed in infancy that toddlers build as they learn to walk and talk, to regulate their emotions and behaviour, and to create their identities as members of social, cultural, and linguistic communities. A toddler's spontaneity and capacity to live in the moment are often irresistibly charming and provide unique opportunities to support rich early learning.

Toddlers who have both a supportive environment and opportunities to explore will develop a secure sense of self and a healthy spirit of adventure.

As toddlers become preschoolers, they begin to develop self-awareness and to explore different ways to represent their experiences symbolically—through language, art, music, movement, games, and other forms of expression. It is also around this time that young children begin to classify objects and events in their world and to imagine and act out other people's perspectives. These activities are important expressions of their social, linguistic, and cultural identities, and of their capacity to develop the mutually respectful relationships essential for them to live responsibly in a diverse world.

By the time most children reach kindergarten and begin to experience more formal instruction, they have built a foundation for lifelong learning and have developed their own unique character as learners. No two children take this journey in the same way, or at the same rate, and every culture has its own particular way of promoting early learning.

The Importance of Relationships

North American research on child development suggests that in order to establish a secure foundation to explore the world, infants and young children need to form a strong attachment to their primary caregivers. Strong attachments give young children the confidence they need to form meaningful connections with other children and adults, and with places and things in their communities.



Young children's powerful drive to learn is inextricably linked to their emerging identities as members of social, cultural, linguistic, and geographic communities. Children's curiosity inspires them to interact with other people, and with things and places in their environments, virtually from birth. It is in the dance between children and other children and adults that language and culture are created and recreated from generation to generation. In this dance, children are sometimes the leaders, and adults the followers, and vice versa. Adults' responses to children's activities—whether they respond, the appropriateness of their responses, and the creativity of their responses—affect young children's early learning capacities and their

growing sense of themselves as members of their communities. These interactions also give adults the opportunity to learn, grow, and change, and to cultivate a disposition that welcomes children's contributions.

Adults who are skilled at supporting early learning and development are careful observers of children and encourage them to go beyond their current level of understanding or skill. Parents, grandparents, and other family members are often in the best position to notice the details of children's behaviour, and to share the meaning of that behaviour with early years service providers.

Early childhood educators and other early years professionals also have expertise and unique perspectives to offer on early learning. By working in partnership with families, early childhood educators can learn more about the circumstances of individual children, and families can learn more about promoting early learning.

Environments to Support Early Learning

Young children's innate capacity to learn and caregivers' responses to children's initiatives go a long way in shaping the quality of children's early learning experiences. However, the importance of the child's environment—sometimes referred to as the "third teacher"—cannot be underestimated.

Adults have the opportunity and the responsibility to create environments that promote early learning experiences for young children. Children learn holistically: their physical, emotional, social, linguistic, visual, auditory, and intellectual learning are closely inter-related and occur simultaneously. The inter-weaving of these different areas of experience is what makes learning meaningful for children. Children's learning environments should, therefore, be flexible enough to support their holistic learning style. By talking to children about their environment, and by giving them some control over it, adults may gain valuable insights about what children are noticing, and may be in a better position to adapt the environment to support children's learning and healthy development. Ideally, the environment should be a dynamic expression of children's learning, and of their capacity to shape their own experiences.

Environments that support physical activity are needed for healthy child development. Physical activity enhances brain development, coordination, social skills, gross motor skills, emotions, leadership, and imagination. Supporting children to engage in physical activity also helps them to build confidence and self-esteem, and to learn to enjoy being active.

Natural environments may play a particularly important role in promoting children's early learning. Exposure to natural environments strengthens children's relationship to nature, building the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual connections that are a necessary motivation for environmental stewardship. Natural environments also provide the perfect setting for holistic learning.

Language plays a special role in nurturing children's capacity to express, extend, and shape their own early learning. Language-rich environments provide children with the chance to experience language as a powerful tool to communicate, to explore relationships, to tell stories, to question, and to shape the world around them. Adults can encourage children to explore their rich linguistic potential by following a child's lead and by providing communicative input that is appropriate to the context and to the child's level of linguistic development. It is also important for adults to create environments where children are exposed to diverse ways of using language, and where children can play with their own language and with other languages spoken in their communities.

Learning through Playing

Most of children's early learning takes place through play. Play is so important that its significance in children's lives is recognized by the United Nations as a specific right in addition to the right to recreation and leisure.

Of course, in playing, children are having fun. The positive emotions associated with play are as important as the skills they are building in creating a disposition that embraces learning.

In playing, children express, explore, combine, and extend what they have learned about the sights, sounds, smells, and textures of the world around them; about the words, signs, symbols, and customs of their language and culture; and about their own and other people's thoughts, feelings, ideas, and sensations. In the play scenarios children invent and explore by themselves and with other children, they bring together everything they have learned and are wondering about. In play, children represent and transform the world around them, providing other children and adults with a window into their thoughts and perceptions, and often helping adults to see the world in new ways.



Play is vital to young children's daily lives and promotes their healthy physical and intellectual development in ways that cannot be achieved by focusing on narrow pre-academic skills, such as counting to 10 or learning the alphabet. For example, when children play with blocks, sand, and water, they are learning the basis of logical and mathematical thinking, scientific reasoning, and cognitive problem-solving.

During active play children learn to have fun while being physically active. Regular physical activity through play allows children to release their energy, display calmer behaviour during the day, and sleep better at night.

During group play activities with their peers, children are building relationships, combining ideas, compromising, developing oral narratives, and learning to take the perspective of others—key elements of social competence, creative thinking, imagination and early literacy.

Section Three: The B.C. Early Learning Framework



Vision

This vision for early learning in British Columbia is based on the image of the child as capable and full of potential. Early learning is envisioned as a dynamic process, actively supported by families and other adults who care for and teach children in their homes and communities. Children, adults, and environments play distinct but interacting roles in promoting early learning.

The vision for children aged 0-5 is that they will experience physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual well-being. All children will feel safe, secure, and enjoy a sense of belonging in their homes and communities. They will be able to communicate their own thoughts and feelings, and to listen to, acknowledge, and empathize with the thoughts and feelings of others. Within the context of their individual and cultural identities, children will be thinkers, doers and players who are curious, creative, explorative, and self-confident. Young children will feel pride in their linguistic and cultural heritage, exercise social responsibility, understand their relationship with nature and the earth, and be active participants in their communities.

The vision of families, communities, and governments is that they will work in partnership to support children in building the foundations for early development and lifelong learning. All adults who care for children in their homes and communities will play an active role in supporting children's learning and development. Adults will see young children holistically, provide rich learning environments, listen to and value children's thoughts, feelings, and contributions, nurture their individuality and uniqueness, and promote and practise respect for linguistic and cultural diversity. As part of their efforts to understand, value, and accept responsibility for promoting early learning, all levels of government and communities will work together to nurture and support children and families, and to support parents, grandparents, and other family members in their efforts to promote children's learning and overall well-being. Relationships and dialogue among families, early childhood educators, and other early years professionals will contribute to the creation of a common language and understandings about early learning.

The vision of children's environments is that they will be inclusive, reflective of the cultural and linguistic context of communities, and intellectually and aesthetically stimulating. Children's environments will be designed with the intention of securing their well-being, nurturing positive relationships, and supporting movement, exploration and play. Early learning environments will stimulate all aspects of children's learning, promote respect for diversity, and foster their connection to their communities and to the earth.

Principles

The Early Learning Framework is based on a common set of principles that can guide the decisions of early childhood educators, early years professionals, service providers, families, communities, and governments. While these principles may be applied in many different ways, they are intended to be relevant for all children, regardless of ethnicity, gender, culture, language, temperament, ability, special needs or socio-economic status.

Children are born with the innate desire to learn.

From birth, children are naturally curious and motivated to make sense of the world around them. Children's relationships, experiences, and environments during the early years greatly influence whether, and in which ways, they realize their full potential to learn. Children learn in a variety of ways, develop at different rates, and have different needs. When children's individual strengths and needs are supported, their learning and well-being are enhanced.

Families are the primary caregivers of children and have the most important role in promoting their children's well-being, learning, and development in the context of supportive communities.

Early learning programs and activities should value and support the important contributions of families in all their diversity. Regardless of their circumstances, every family has unique social and cultural resources and strengths that can contribute to early learning. Open, honest, and respectful partnerships with families are essential to promote the best interests of children. To build on families' intimate knowledge of their children, strong relationships between families, early childhood educators, and other early years professionals are vital.

Play is vital to children's healthy development and learning.

Play is the "work" of children. Through play, children interact with, explore, and make sense of the world around them. Children find joy and fulfilment in play, whether they are playing by themselves or in groups.

Consistent, responsive and nurturing relationships are essential to the well-being and early learning of children.

Children's relationships influence their well-being, development, and learning. Trusting, loving, two-way relationships with adults and other children in their families and in the community are essential to early learning and to the sharing of knowledge from one generation to the next. Consistent, secure, responsive, and respectful relationships with caring adults are vital to children's well-being.

All aspects of children’s development and learning—physical, social, emotional, cultural, linguistic, and intellectual—are interrelated and interdependent.

Children are active and holistic learners: development in one area influences development in other areas. For example, activities that promote physical development also encourage social, emotional, and intellectual development.

Language plays a central role in connecting thought and learning.

Language is vital to learning throughout the lifespan: it helps to build memories, gives access to the thoughts and perspectives of other people, and provides a way of representing real and imaginary times, places, and events in play and problem-solving. Children benefit from exposure to rich language experiences. Oral language, signs and symbols, including written language, should be embedded into young children’s environments and experiences. Adults model the use of language, helping to stimulate children’s learning, including their linguistic creativity. Children should be supported to learn their first language and other languages.

Children are active participants in their families and communities.

Children’s abilities, interests, previous experiences, and desire for independence motivate their interactions with other people and with their environments. Children make important contributions in the lives of families and communities. Families and communities benefit when they hear, value, and respect children’s views.

The individual, cultural, and linguistic identities of children and families are respected and integrated into early learning settings, programs, and activities.

Early learning environments should promote a sense of belonging for all children and demonstrate respect for diversity. Rich and varied experiences support children’s ability to value individual, social, and cultural diversity, including differences in gender, age, language, ethnicity, family structure, and economic circumstances.

The physical environment shapes children’s learning and well-being.

Children’s early learning benefits from their interaction in—and with—a broad range of settings. Children should have access to a variety of settings in their homes and communities—both indoors and outdoors, natural and built—to enrich their learning, draw on their natural curiosity, promote a sense of belonging, and inspire respect for the natural environment. It is important to balance the need for safe physical environments with opportunities for rich and varied experiences.

The Areas of Early Learning

This framework outlines four areas of early learning that are based on the vision and principles set forth in this document:

Well-being and Belonging

Exploration and Creativity

Languages and Literacies

Social Responsibility and Diversity



By providing children with rich experiences in these four areas, early childhood educators, early years professionals, service providers, families, and communities can support children to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are the foundation for lifelong learning in a complex and changing society.

This framework recognizes that there are no pre-set ways to promote the four areas of early learning. Many factors, including the children's setting, caregivers, language, culture, heritage, religion, temperament, and abilities, shape the experiences that support early learning. This section outlines some key goals in each area of learning. It also provides questions for reflection to guide people who care for and educate children in providing learning experiences that support young children's optimal well-being.

It is important to note that the areas of early learning are all inter-related: learning in one area is likely to support learning in all three

other areas. As such, the learning goals outlined in each section, and the questions to consider in designing environments to support them, overlap and strengthen one another.

Well-Being and Belonging

A sense of well-being and belonging is vital to children as they learn about and explore the world around them. In the first years of life, children develop increasing mastery over their bodies and daily routines, supporting health and well-being over their lifespan and providing them with a sense of place – a feeling of being grounded in their immediate environment, their communities, their culture, and the wider world. This confidence is essential to children as they begin to explore their creative capacities as family members, friends, thinkers, citizens, and stewards of the natural environment.

Learning Goals

To promote a sense of well-being and belonging, adults provide an environment where young children can:

- feel safe and respected
- learn ways to keep themselves healthy, including nourishment, sleep, and physical activity
- feel confidence in and control of their bodies
- enjoy being and choose to be physically active
- understand and follow routines
- feel a sense of security, self-respect, and self-regulation
- express a sense of personal well-being
- recognize, accept, and express a wide range of emotions, thoughts, and views
- adapt to and enjoy experiences of change, surprise, and uncertainty
- feel valued and explore their own strategies for learning
- build healthy relationships with both adults and children



Well-being and Belonging

Questions to Consider

In designing learning experiences to promote well being and belonging, adults may wish to consider the following questions.

Learning Goal	Questions to Consider	
	Infants and Toddlers	Preschool-aged Children
Feel safe and respected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In what ways do adults convey to infants and toddlers a sense of safety in their environments? ● How do adults convey to infants and toddlers that they can be themselves in the environment? ● How do individual infants and toddlers feel recognized and respected? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do adults communicate to children that the environment is safe for them? ● How do adults convey to children that they can be themselves in the environment? ● How do adults show children that they are accepted without reservations?
Learn about ways to keep themselves healthy, including nourishment, sleep, and physical activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In what way are infants involved in their routines, such as diapering, feeding and sleeping? In what ways are toddlers encouraged to develop self-help skills? ● How are meals structured for enjoyment and healthy choices? ● How do adults provide an environment that is safe, clean, and inviting? ● How are children's individual needs for sleep and food recognized and responded to? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are self-care skills in washing, dressing, toileting, and eating being fostered? ● How are children encouraged to make healthy food choices? ● What opportunities do children have to influence eating and sleeping routines? ● What opportunities do children have to experience and express a sense of physical well-being in their homes and communities? ● In what ways are children encouraged to incorporate daily routines into their imaginary play?
Feel confidence in, and control of, their bodies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do adults observe and change the physical environment to respond to the needs of the children? ● What opportunities do infants find in their environment to practice their increasing variety of skills (e.g., skills of climbing and jumping, holding and carrying, dumping and filling, picking up and letting go)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How does the environment encourage children to move in different ways, and at different paces? ● In what ways are children supported to develop coordination, balance, stability, locomotion, and rhythm? ● What opportunities do children have to develop muscles in their hands and fingers? Do the children have access to a wide variety of materials that involve the use of their hands?

Enjoy being and choose to be physically active.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What opportunities do infants and toddlers have for play, physical activity and time outside? ● How do the opportunities in the environment provide infants and toddlers freedom to move on their own and in their own time? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are children encouraged to participate in physical activity every day? ● How are physical activities varied to promote the acquisition of different physical skills? What opportunities do children have to crawl, walk, run, leap, jump, hop, gallop, skip, and climb?
Understand and follow routines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How is a flexible schedule constructed to respond to the individual rhythms and needs of the infants and toddlers? ● How is a predictable, dependable environment provided for infants and toddlers? ● How do infants and toddlers see their families' values and traditions reflected in the daily routines and rhythms? ● In what ways are the children's cultures woven into, and celebrated, in daily routines? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What possibilities exist for flexibility in daily routines? ● How are routines used as positive, interactive learning experiences? ● What image of the child is expressed in the routines, rhythms, and customs that are part of the child's everyday life? ● In what ways are children's cultures woven into, and celebrated, in daily routines?
Feel a sense of security, self-respect, and self-regulation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are relationships of trust and care established between adults and children? ● What arrangements are made for infants' and toddlers' personal space and personal belongings? Are these arrangements suitable for the children, the adults, and the setting? ● Do adults interpret the behaviours of infants and toddlers as communication and respond sensitively? ● How do adults show that they respect family and cultural practices through the routines and the environment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In what ways are children encouraged to develop healthy relationships with other children, and with adults, in one-on-one and group contexts? ● How do children receive attention and affection? ● What steps are taken so that children know they can always find familiar adults who know and care about them? ● How are children's desires for their own personal space and personal belongings accommodated? How well do these accommodations work for the children, the adults, and the setting? ● How is behaviour addressed so that children maintain self-respect? ● How are children supported to embrace and shape their cultural, social, and linguistic identities?

Express a sense of personal well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How is the environment arranged so that each child has a familiar space for sleeping, eating and playing? ● How are children's individual needs and rhythms responded to? ● How are infants and toddlers supported for who they are and the capabilities they have? ● How can changes to materials, activities, and the environment be introduced thoughtfully? ● How are families honoured through photos, cultural materials, and items from home? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What features help children feel a sense of belonging in their environment(s)? ● How often, and in what circumstances, can children get one-on-one attention from adults? ● In what ways are the children's materials, activities, and environment varied or adapted so that children have the opportunity to experience personal well-being in a range of situations? ● How are children given the opportunity to explore and express their identities in their environments (e.g., by including linguistic and cultural materials from home in community settings)?
Recognize, accept, and express a wide range of emotions, thoughts, and views.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do adults respond to infants' and toddlers' expressions and emotions? ● In what ways do adults model healthy and creative ways of expressing their thoughts, feelings, and views? ● Do adults take the time to reflect and assess their interactions with children? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are children encouraged to express their feelings? How are children's feelings respected when they are upset or confused? ● In what ways do adults model healthy and creative ways of expressing their thoughts, feelings, and views? ● Do adults take the time to reflect and assess their interactions with children?
Adapt to and enjoy experiences of change, surprise, and uncertainty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How is a predictable, dependable environment provided for infants and toddlers? ● How can changes to materials, activities and the environment be introduced thoughtfully? ● How do adults help children through change and uncertainty? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do adults support children to develop and negotiate strategies to respond to new or surprising events and uncertain situations? ● In what ways do adults respond creatively to unexpected events in daily life? ● How are children given the opportunity to experience change, surprise, and uncertainty in a variety of settings (e.g., in both home and community settings)? ● How are children's questions about major life events, such as birth, illness, and death addressed? ● In what ways do adults model the attitude that uncertainty and "not knowing" are important aspects of being a learner?

<p>Feel valued for and explore their own strategies for learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In what ways are infants' and toddlers' natural curiosity and desire to make sense of the world around them encouraged? ● How are relationships of trust and support created? ● How are children's likes/dislikes, preferences, and choices respected? ● What opportunities are infants and toddlers given for uninterrupted play? ● How do adults show they value differences in children's learning styles and temperaments? ● Do adults follow the children's lead and show a willingness to try new things in response to the children's interests? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In what ways are children's natural curiosity and desire to make sense of the world around them encouraged? ● How are children given the opportunity to ask for help, to provide help, and to help themselves in exploring the world? ● What opportunities are children given to work on their own and with others? ● How do adults demonstrate they value differences in children's learning styles (e.g., the talkative and the quiet child, the independent and the social child)? ● What is the balance between child- and adult-initiated activities? How do adults show a willingness to try new things in response to children's suggestions?
<p>Build healthy relationships with both adults and children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What opportunities do infants and toddlers have to establish a close relationship with a primary caregiver and also develop confidence in relationships with other trusted adults? ● How are infants and toddlers given opportunities to safely be together? ● How do adults talk to children about others around them and respond to children's interest in each other? ● In what ways do adults show respect, care, and connectedness to each other? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In what ways are children's strategies to establish and maintain healthy relationships supported? ● In what ways do adults model the healthy expression of physical affection and healthy boundaries? ● What opportunities do children have to establish different types of relationships in diverse settings (e.g., in home and community settings, with family members and non-family members, close relationships and acquaintances, within and outside a cultural, social, and/or linguistic group)?

Exploration and Creativity

The capacity to explore and create is vital to nurturing the zest for life that is the basis of all learning. Through play, children express their natural curiosity about the world and explore multiple early learning goals simultaneously. Supporting children's explorative play is perhaps the most important—and the most natural and accessible—means to promote meaningful learning in the early years.

Learning Goals

To promote exploration and creativity, adults provide an environment where young children can:

- explore the world using their bodies and all their senses
- build, create, and design using different materials and techniques
- actively explore, think and reason
- identify and try possible solutions to problems in meaningful contexts and situations
- be creative and expressive in a variety of ways
- develop a sense of wonder for natural environments
- express a zest for living and learning



Exploration and Creativity

Questions to Consider

In designing learning experiences to promote exploration and creativity, adults may wish to consider the following questions.

Learning Goal	Questions to Consider	
	Infants and Toddlers	Preschool-aged Children
Explore the world using their bodies and all their senses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In what ways are materials with different shapes, textures, and heights provided so that infants and toddlers can safely explore with their mouths, hands, feet, and bodies? ● How are infants and toddlers supported in exploring the environment with all of their senses? Are a variety of materials presented? ● What materials are provided for children to mouth, lift, push, pull, shake, and empty? ● Do adults respond to children’s interests with a variety of activities and expressive arts? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are children encouraged to use their bodies to make sense of the world (e.g., through using versatile tools, materials, and equipment)? ● What opportunities do children have to combine physical activities with music, language, and problem-solving? ● In what ways is the environment adapted so that children with special needs can use their bodies and senses in creative learning? ● Do adults respond to children’s interests with a variety of activities and expressive arts?
Build, create, and design using different materials and techniques.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are real materials (e.g., pots, pans, brooms) provided for children to interact with safely? ● In what ways are infants and toddlers given access to a variety of natural playthings that allow for creative expression and foster a sense of awe and wonder about the world? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In what ways are meaningful opportunities provided for children to use a variety of materials that serve specific and different purposes (e.g., “real” things, such as pots and pans, tools, and musical instruments)? ● What kinds of versatile playthings and equipment are used and how can their use be varied and expanded (e.g., doing music or art outdoors, using scientific or linguistic materials in artistic projects, and vice versa)? ● How are children given access to a wide range of materials that can be used flexibly and in many creative ways? In what ways are the children encouraged to transform the materials? ● How are children given the chance to take things apart, put them together, and figure out how they work? ● How are children given opportunities to enjoy and develop a sense of pride in arts and crafts (e.g., cutting, drawing, collage, painting, print-making, weaving, stitching, carving)?

Actively explore, think, and reason.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● How do adults' individual thinking styles support or limit infants' and toddlers' explorative strategies?● In what ways do adults observe, comment on, and respond to infants' and toddlers' natural curiosity and imagination?● How do adults respect and expand upon children's interests and ideas?● How is toddlers' zest for learning encouraged? How are children's families and cultures respected and included in their everyday lives? Are treasures and items of interest displayed thoughtfully and with honour?● How do adults notice, recognize, and respond to the explorations of infants and toddlers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Which thinking strategies are modeled by adults (e.g., looking for patterns, classifying, guessing, using trial and error, making comparisons, planning, listening to stories)?● How do adults' individual and cultural thinking styles support or constrain children's explorative strategies? In what ways do adults draw on children's natural curiosity and questions to develop activities?● What supports enhance children's ability to inquire, research, explore, generate, and adapt their own theories and ideas about the natural, social, physical, and material worlds?● How are children exposed to their own and other cultures' stories about the living world (e.g., myths, legends, oral, fiction, and non-fictional forms)?● How are children encouraged to discuss ideas, to predict and estimate, and to give reasons for their choices?● What opportunities do children have to collect and sort objects for a meaningful purpose?● How are materials selected and arranged to extend children's understanding of the physical world?
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<p>Identify and try possible solutions to problems in meaningful contexts and situations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are infants' and toddlers' explorations extended and enriched? ● How are children's relationships as cooperative learners with each other supported? ● How are infants' beginning explorations of the world encouraged? ● What opportunities are there for children to engage in collaborative play, and how does it contribute to their learning and development? ● How do adults' attitudes invite children to engage in problem-solving? ● How do adults model comfort with uncertainty? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are children's actions used to create learning opportunities? ● In what ways are children given the opportunity to learn from one another? In what ways are adults open to learning from children? ● What creative and constructive problem-solving activities encourage children to cooperate with and support each other? How effective are these activities? ● What opportunities are there for children to engage in collaborative play, and how does it contribute to their learning and well-being? ● How are everyday events and activities used to engage children in thinking about and discussing strategies to address social and environmental challenges? ● In what ways do adults model that uncertainty and "not knowing" are important parts of creative problem-solving?
<p>Be creative and expressive in a variety of ways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In what ways do toddlers have opportunities to be introduced to a variety of materials and expressive mediums? ● How do adults help toddlers and infants begin to think about thinking? ● How are expressive mediums of their own and other cultures incorporated into children's activities (e.g., different styles of music, dance, art, and storytelling)? ● In what ways do adults model a range of ways to be creative and expressive? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are children encouraged to use a wide variety of materials and expressive mediums to represent and communicate their ideas (e.g., languages, singing, musical instruments, drama, dance, sculpture, drawing, painting, murals)? ● How are children encouraged to make their thinking visible to others (e.g., maps, diagrams, models, photographs, and drawings)? ● What opportunities are children offered to develop their musical abilities (e.g., through singing, chanting, dancing, or moving in rhythm)? ● In what ways do adults model a range of ways to be creative and expressive? ● How are expressive mediums of their own and other cultures incorporated into children's activities (e.g., different styles of music, dance, art, and storytelling)?

Develop a sense of wonder for natural environments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What opportunities do children have to play in natural environments? ● Are natural materials brought into the indoor environment for children's exploration (e.g., branches, flowers, shells etc.)? ● How are infants and toddlers encouraged to explore important features in their natural environments (e.g., local plants, animals, rivers, forests, mountains, the ocean)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What opportunities do children have to play in natural environments? ● How are natural materials (e.g., branches, flowers, shells) incorporated into the child's environment? How are these materials used to encourage children's curiosity about nature? ● How are children encouraged to explore important features in their natural environments (e.g., local plants, animals, rivers, forests, mountains, the ocean)?
Express a zest for living and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What opportunities do infants and toddlers have to experience adults' joy in their becoming? ● How do adults share in the joy and excitement of the infants' and toddlers' explorations and discoveries? ● How do adults model a love for living and learning? ● What opportunities do children have to express their joy and amusement in learning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What opportunities do children have to engage in free play? ● How are children supported to meet challenges and take appropriate risks in their play and learning? ● What opportunities do children have to express their joy, amusement, and challenges in learning? ● In what ways do adults encourage occasions for joyful celebration throughout the day and throughout the year? ● How do adults model a love for living and learning?





Languages and Literacies

The development of languages and literacies among young children provides them with a strong basis for successful learning throughout their lifetimes.

“Literacies” is a broad term used to describe the development of the physical, emotional, social, creative, linguistic and intellectual means of communication among young children.

In cultivating language and literacies, it is essential to nurture the emotional, social, creative, and intellectual capacities that support the fluent use of a range of expressive mediums, rather than limiting learning activities to only “pre-reading” skills, such as learning the alphabet or counting to 10. By nurturing these capacities, and by encouraging children’s natural tendencies to engage in creative play, adults can help young children learn to respect, explore, and enjoy the languages and symbols of their own and other cultures.

Learning Goals

To promote the development of languages and literacies, adults provide an environment where young children can:

- communicate thoughts and experiences creatively using many different forms of expression
- develop diverse language abilities and the capacity to communicate with others in many ways
- be curious about vocabulary, concepts, and written language
- engage in sound and word play
- use numbers, measurement, and form in meaningful contexts
- experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures
- express their own points of view and reflect on others’ views

Cultural and linguistic revitalization is an additional learning goal of critical importance to First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples. Aboriginal communities are striving to ensure that First Peoples’ languages are acknowledged as living and relevant, appreciated, valued and honoured in all early learning contexts.



Languages and Literacies

Questions to Consider

In designing learning experiences to promote languages and literacies, adults may wish to consider the following questions.

Learning Goal	Questions to Consider	
	Infants and Toddlers	Preschool-aged Children
Communicate thoughts and experiences creatively using many different forms of expression.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do adults recognize and respond to infants' and toddlers' verbal and non-verbal languages? ● How do adults recognize, verbalize, and make visible infants' and toddlers' thinking? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are children encouraged to use a wide variety of materials and expressive mediums to represent and communicate their ideas (e.g., languages, music, drama, dance, art)? ● In what ways are children encouraged to make their learning visible to others (e.g., maps, diagrams, photographs, models, and drawings)? ● How are children encouraged to explore different ways of expressing a single idea (e.g., what is a joyful sound, a joyful shape or colour, a joyful movement, a joyful facial expression)? ● What opportunities do children have to use technology to explore their thoughts and ideas (e.g., computer software, websites, cameras, camcorders)?
Develop diverse language abilities and the capacity to communicate with others in many ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do adults use opportunities for one-to-one language and communication? ● In what ways do adults listen to infants and toddlers and encourage language and communication? ● How do adults use different communication strategies to provide a variety of models for communicating and speaking with infants, toddlers, and each other? ● How do adults accept and honour all of a baby's or a toddler's expressions of fear, joy, happiness, sadness, disgust, etc? ● How do adults model deep listening and conversation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What opportunities do children have for one-to-one language interaction, both with adults and other children? ● What strategies do adults use to extend conversations with children? ● How are children given opportunities to use language for a range of purposes (e.g., to express, direct, report, negotiate, imagine, guess, reason, and predict)? ● In what ways are children encouraged to use different ways of communicating (e.g., other spoken languages, sign language, nonsense words, facial expressions, hand gestures, intonation, signs, symbols)? ● How are children encouraged to express their feelings in appropriate non-verbal ways? ● How are children encouraged to develop listening and turn-taking skills? How do adults practise and model these skills?

<p>Be curious about vocabulary, concepts, and written language.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are the languages of a baby's or toddler's family used or acknowledged by the adults? ● What opportunities are there for infants and toddlers to use books? ● How are infants and toddlers being introduced to books and stories (oral, visual, and text)? ● How is written language made part of the rhythm of the program? How are drawings or pictures used to label or illustrate things? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do adults show curiosity about their language and other languages? How do adults teach children about other languages (e.g., sign, local First Nations languages, other languages used in the child's community)? ● In what ways do adults welcome the use of languages other than English in the child's environment (e.g., by encouraging bilingual children to use both languages, by singing songs in other languages)? ● What opportunities do children have to have stories told and read to them, and to discuss stories? ● What access do children have to books and other written materials (e.g., labels, signs)? ● How is written language meaningfully incorporated into children's daily lives? How are children exposed to the written languages and signs of other cultures (e.g., First Nations pictographs, Chinese characters)?
<p>Engage in sound and word play.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do adults respond to the sounds infants make (e.g., their squeals, growls, grunts, and babbling)? In what ways do adults show that they recognize these sounds as infants' early efforts at oral communication? ● How do adults play with language, using nonsense words or rhymes, enjoying the infants and toddlers as they communicate? ● In what ways are infants and toddlers exposed to a wide range of singing and speaking voices, in a variety of contexts? ● In what ways do adults encourage infants and toddlers to explore their sense of rhythm and melody (e.g., by singing to and with infants and toddlers, by dancing to music)? ● What opportunities do infants and toddlers have to play with musical instruments and to make music? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What word, rhythm, and rhyming games do adults play with children? How do adults encourage children to make up their own word games? ● In what ways do adults show that sounds are a source of delight and enjoyment (e.g., through rhymes, alliteration, poems, chants, songs, and dances)? ● What opportunities do children have to hear and respond to a wide range of singing and speaking voices, in a variety of contexts? ● In what ways do adults encourage children to explore their sense of rhythm and melody (e.g., through listening, singing, and dancing in a variety of musical styles)?

Use numbers, measurement, and form in meaningful contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do adults model using numbers, one-to-one correspondence, or measurement? ● How are infants and toddlers given vocabulary for counting, measuring, gathering, and sharing in the course of daily life? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What opportunities are there for children to use numbers for meaningful purposes (e.g., setting the table, counting change, creating shaped objects)? ● In what contexts, and for what purposes, do children see mathematics being used? How do these contexts encourage children's interest and ability in mathematics? ● How are children exposed to mathematical concepts in everyday situations (e.g., the use of numbers, length, weight, volume, shape, pattern in activities such as sorting, labelling, finding patterns, and sharing)? ● How can children be encouraged to use mathematical ideas and words in their play?
Experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do adults bring in stories, songs, and rhythms that connect to infants' and toddlers' cultures? ● How do adults incorporate oral stories into the daily routine? ● How well are the children's cultural backgrounds represented in the arts and crafts, stories, and symbols used from day to day? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What opportunities are there for children to hear stories, poems, chants, and songs? How well do these connect to the child's culture? ● What opportunities are there for oral story-telling (e.g., personal narratives, First Nations traditional stories)? How effectively are these opportunities used? ● How well are the children's cultural backgrounds represented in the arts and crafts, stories, and symbols used from day to day? How are these representations integrated into other aspects of learning?
Express their own points of view and reflect on others' views.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do adults listen and appreciate the ideas of toddlers and infants? ● How do adults model reflection and questioning of ideas? ● How do adults listen to the stories of children? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are children encouraged to express their ideas? ● How do adults model reflection about their own ideas? ● What opportunities are there for children to engage in oral story-telling?



Social Responsibility and Diversity

Children's learning experiences in the early years have long-term implications for their whole lives, and also for the future of their local, provincial, national and international communities, and the planet as a whole. Children benefit from opportunities to build relationships, to learn about their own heritage and culture and that of others, and to recognize the connection between their own actions and the wider world. These activities help build the ethical foundation for social and environmental health and well-being, now and in the future.

Learning Goals

To promote social responsibility and respect for diversity, adults provide an environment where young children can:

- explore and learn about family, community and the wider world
- express a positive regard for others and respect for self, others, and property
- participate in the making, following, and re-working of rules, rituals, and procedures in their everyday world
- understand fairness both for themselves and others
- begin to recognize discrimination and inequity and to respond appropriately
- learn to appreciate and celebrate diversity
- understand that all persons have value; accept and welcome individual differences
- understand how their own actions may affect nature and the planet
- show responsibility for themselves and begin to show responsibility for others

Aboriginal communities support early learning approaches that emphasize children's responsibilities and rights, consistent with each First Nation's cosmology and world view. This includes:

- respectfully using and caring for earth's gifts;
- showing respect for Elders, valuing the traditional knowledge Elders carry, and developing the ethic and practice of seeking wisdom and guidance from Elders; and
- discovering their place and their responsibilities within the social, economic, political, cultural and spiritual institutions (including the potlatch and the Big House) of their family, Clan and Nation.



Social Responsibility and Diversity

Questions to Consider

Adults may wish to consider the following questions in designing learning experiences to promote social responsibility and respect for diversity in young children.

Learning Goal	Questions to Consider	
	Infants and Toddlers	Preschool-aged Children
Explore and learn about family, community and the wider world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do adults respect infants' and toddlers' needs and routines, while including them in community events? ● How are children's families and cultures respected and included in their everyday lives? ● How is information about families and different cultures shared amongst children and adults? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What opportunities do children have to participate in day-to-day events within their communities? How are these opportunities used to support children's learning? ● In what ways are materials from the community incorporated into children's environments and activities (e.g., posters, brochures)? ● How is information about different cultures shared amongst children and families?
Show responsibility for themselves and begin to show responsibility for others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What opportunities do children have to help and support other children? ● How do adults model respectful, responsible behaviour? ● How do adults help infants and toddlers make connections between themselves, home and the community? ● What kinds of opportunities do children have to go on outings or be part of cultural events? Would other available outings or events be appropriate? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What opportunities do children have to help and support one another? ● How do adults model respectful, responsible behaviour? ● In what ways are children encouraged to draw connections between different settings that affect their lives (e.g., home, early learning settings, schools, workplaces, hospitals, supermarkets, community centres, and other local settings)? ● What kinds of opportunities do children have to go on outings or be part of cultural events? Would other available outings or events be appropriate?
Express a positive regard for others and respect for self, others, and property.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do adults model respect and kindness to each other? ● How are infants' interactions with each other supported by calm, gentle words from adults that help infants to learn about social relationships? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In what ways do adults encourage children of different ages and/or backgrounds to play together? ● How, and in what contexts, are children encouraged to initiate, maintain, and enjoy relationships with other children (e.g., turn-taking, problem-solving, negotiating, helping others, understanding other people's points of view, attitudes, and feelings)?

<p>Participate in the making, following, and re-working of rules, rituals, and procedures in their everyday world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How is a flexible schedule constructed to respond to the individual rhythms and needs of infants and toddlers? ● How are infants and toddlers involved in their care routines? ● How do adults follow infants' and toddlers' leads in creating the flow of the day? In what ways are children given opportunities to explore peaceful strategies for solving conflicts? ● In what ways do adults reflect and interpret infants' and toddlers' non-verbal communications? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How often, and in what ways, do adults change day-to-day routines or activities in response to a child's interests? ● How are rules and routines developed and how can they be adapted to changing needs? ● What opportunities do children have to assist in creating and managing everyday rules and procedures? ● In what ways are children given opportunities to explore peaceful strategies for resolving conflicts?
<p>Understand fairness both for themselves and others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are adults genuine and honest in their interactions with and responses to infants and toddlers? ● In what ways are toddlers' questions and concerns respected? ● Is there an atmosphere of mutual respect amongst adults and children? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are children encouraged to ask adults questions appropriately about day-to-day practices that they consider unfair to themselves or others? ● In what ways are children's questions and concerns respected? What steps are taken to accommodate children's perspectives on a day-to-day basis? ● How do adults show a commitment to treating other people fairly, and in what ways do they show that they expect to be treated fairly by others?
<p>Begin to recognize discrimination and inequity and to respond appropriately.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are adults sensitive and aware of supporting and strengthening the children's connections with each other? ● How do adults model inclusive language, attitudes, and practices? What effect does this have on children's responses and their environments? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How effective are adults in encouraging the inclusion of all children? ● How do adults model inclusive language, attitudes, and practices? What effect does this have on children's responses and their environments?
<p>Learn to appreciate diversity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do adults prepare themselves to address questions of individual, social, and cultural differences? ● Are the infants' and toddlers' interests, styles, and paces respected and accommodated? Are there other ways that their individual differences can be welcomed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do adults respond when children ask questions about individual, social, and cultural differences? How do these responses reflect the values of inclusion and respect for diversity? ● How are children's individual strengths, interests, and ways of doing things accommodated? Are there other ways that children's individual differences can be welcomed?

Understand that all persons have value; accept and welcome individual differences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is the diversity of humanity honoured and valued through books, dolls, posters, and other materials and activities? ● Are all infants and toddlers respected and supported in their learning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are materials (e.g., books, pictures, dolls, figures, songs) selected? In what roles are children of different genders, ethnicity, age, and abilities represented in these materials? ● In what ways, and how well, are children with special needs and/or with unusual interests or exceptional abilities supported in their learning?
Understand how their own actions may affect nature and the planet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are children made aware of the relationship between themselves and the environment? ● What opportunities do infants and toddlers have to care for their environments (e.g., cleaning, fixing, gardening, and helping others)? ● How do adults model environmentally sound practices in the child's environment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What steps are taken to make children aware of the relationship between human activities and environmental challenges? ● What opportunities do children have to care for their environments (e.g., cleaning, fixing, gardening, and helping others)? ● In what ways do children have the opportunity to participate in day-to-day practices such as recycling, reducing waste, water conservation, etc.? ● What opportunities do children have to begin to discuss their emergent ideas about stewardship of the earth?



Glossary of Terms used in this Document

Adult: any person 19 or older who may be involved with young children, including parents, extended family, early childhood educators, caregivers, service providers, and community members.

Culture: the shared understandings that help groups of people make sense of their worlds and communicate with one another. Culture is a group's accepted values, traditions, and lifestyles that guide the way people lead their day-to-day lives.

Early learning: the emerging and expanding of young children's physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and creative capabilities from birth to school entry. It is a natural, holistic and exploratory process that young children engage in from birth and that lays the foundation for later learning, whether formal or informal. Early learning is part of and related to early childhood development.

Early childhood development: the growth that takes place from birth until age six.

Early Childhood Educator: a person who has been licensed by the B.C. government's Early Childhood Educator Registry. Early childhood educators must complete the basic Early Childhood Education training program and First Aid, and have at least 500 hours of work experience in a recognized early childhood setting. (See also Infant/Toddler Educator and Special Needs Educator).

Early years professional: a more general term used to describe a person with specialized education, training, and/or experience in supporting children's learning and/or development in the early years. An early years professional may be a licensed early childhood educator and/or a person with other specialized training in promoting children's physical, social, and/or emotional health, development, and well-being.

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

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

Infants and toddlers: children who are 0 - 35 months old.

Infant/Toddler Educator : a qualified early childhood educator who has completed post basic Infant/Toddler Education requirements to provide care for children from birth to 36 months, and has registered as an Infant/Toddler Educator with the Early Childhood Educator Registry.

Learning goal : a skill, knowledge or a disposition that can be actively promoted by adults in children's environments. Children can play an active role in shaping learning goals as they develop.

Literacies : a broad term used to describe the development of the physical, emotional, social, creative, linguistic and intellectual means of communication among young children. It includes using a range of expressive mediums to communicate one's own thoughts and experiences, as well as to communicate with and understand others.

Pre-school aged children: children who are three to five years old.

Registry of Early Childhood Educators : a computer data base of all individuals who qualify for registration under the Community Care and Assisted Living Act, after completing basic and, if applicable, post basic requirements. The Ministry of Children and Family Development has provincial responsibility for the ECE registry.

Special Need : a physical, emotional, cognitive, or behavioural disability or condition that may require particular support to help a child participate in early learning. Supporting individual children's special needs may require adaptations to the physical environment and/or individualized strategies to foster a child's learning.

Special Needs Educator : a qualified early childhood educator who has completed post basic Special Needs Education requirements to provide care for children from birth to school age requiring extra support, and who has registered as a special needs educator with the Early Childhood Educator Registry.

StrongStart BC Facilitator : a licensed early childhood educator (see definition above) who leads a StrongStart BC early learning centre program. StrongStart BC early learning centres provide free, drop-in early learning programs for preschool-aged children accompanied by a parent or caregiver.

Temperament : an innate tendency to respond to the world in a particular way. For example, some children are naturally more sensitive or adaptable than others. Children's temperaments may affect their learning and the way adults support them to learn.

Well-being : a state of physical, social, or emotional comfort.

Resources for Parents/Caregivers

This Early Learning Framework is intended primarily to support early childhood educators, StrongStart BC facilitators, early years professionals, and other service providers to create rich early learning environments for young children. However, parents and caregivers may find the framework useful in their own efforts to foster their children's early learning, and in their dialogues with early childhood educators and other early learning professionals. Below is a list of additional resources that parents and caregivers may find useful in supporting their children's early learning and development.

Achieve BC

This provincial government website brings together the latest educational tools and information for promoting learning and achievement in early childhood, as well as helpful support for parents. Click on the links to "Booklets" and "Children: 3-5 Years" for information. Achieve BC also has information for parents on literacy. Click on "Literacy" to access proven reading, writing and oral language resources.

www.achievebc.ca

ActNow BC

This provincial initiative provides healthy living tips and resources for families, including information on healthy eating, physical activity, healthy schools and much more.

www.actnowbc.gov.bc.ca

Baby's Best Chance

A booklet for parents and caregivers on pregnancy and baby care (B.C. Ministry of Health).

www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2005/babybestchance.pdf

B.C. Child Care Resource and Referral Programs

These programs offer quality child care referrals, resources and support to all child care providers and parents in over 170 communities across B.C. The website provides a list of contacts for local Child Care Resource and Referral Programs.

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/parents.htm

BC Council for Families

The BC Council for Families offers training, resources and publications designed to strengthen and support families. Call to request a catalogue of resources or check the council's website. Publications may be ordered online, by phone, or by fax.

Call: 1-800-663-5638 or 604-660-0675 in Vancouver.

www.bccf.bc.ca

B.C. Health Authorities

Health authorities provide services and supports for children's health and development. Contact your local health authority if you have questions related to nutrition, hearing, dental, speech, immunization, or overall health and development. Each health authority has a Community Care Licensing program, which operates under the direction of the Medical Health Officer.

For the health authority in your area look under the blue pages in your telephone book or follow the link below.

www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/socsec/index.html

BC HealthGuide Handbook and First Nations Health Handbook

The BC HealthGuide Handbook has 190 health topics, including advice on when to see a health professional. The First Nations Health Handbook provides information and specific resources for First Nations people in B.C. Both handbooks are available to B.C. residents free of charge by calling the Ministry of Health Information Line at 1-800-465-4911.

BC HealthGuide OnLine

The BC HealthGuide OnLine website provides reliable, medically approved information on more than 3,000 common health topics, tests, procedures and other resources to B.C. residents. Log in with your B.C. postal code at:

www.bchealthguide.org

BC HealthFiles

The BC HealthFiles are a series of over 150 one-page, easy-to-understand fact sheets on a wide range of public and environmental health and safety issues, including immunizations.

www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/index.stm

BC NurseLine

Confidential health information, advice and referrals are available from specially trained registered nurses 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Nurses provide timely assessment, health information and resources to help you make wise health decisions for yourself and your family, including when to see a health care professional. Nurses do not provide medical diagnosis, and their advice does not replace that of physicians. Pharmacists are also available to answer medication-related calls from 5 pm to 9 am daily.

Call: 1-866-215-4700 toll-free across B.C. or 604-215-4700 in Greater Vancouver.

Deaf and hearing-impaired (throughout B.C.) call toll-free 1-866-889-4700.

Translation services are available in 130 languages.

B.C. Public Library Services

This is an online list of contacts for local public libraries provided by the B.C. Ministry of Education.

www.bcpl.gov.bc.ca/public/contacts.php

The Virtual Reference Desk for Public Libraries of British Columbia provides Internet links and an online catalogue for B.C. public libraries.

www.bcpl.gov.bc.ca/VRD

Child and Family Canada Virtual Library

This public education website provides quality, credible resources on children and families. Information is also available in French.

www.cfc-efc.ca

Dial-A-Dietitian

Dial-A-Dietitian is a free nutrition information line available to British Columbians in over 130 languages including English, Cantonese, Mandarin and Punjabi. Registered dietitians offer easy to use nutrition information and advice from 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to

Friday, and offer referrals to the BC NurseLine when indicated.

Call: 1-800-667-3438 toll-free across B.C. or 604-732-9191 in Vancouver.

www.dialadietitian.org

Eating Well With Canada's Food Guide

This Internet resource describes how you can use Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide to make wise food choices for everyone aged two and older.

www.healthcanada.ca/foodguide

Eating Well With Canada's Food Guide —

First Nations, Inuit and Métis

A national food guide which reflects the values, traditions and food choices of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. This new tailored food guide includes information on both traditional foods and store-bought foods that are generally available, affordable and accessible across Canada, along with unique images and content.

Visit: www.healthcanada.ca and click on "First Nations and Inuit Health".

For a direct link to the Food Guide, click: http://hc-sc.gc.ca/fnih-spni/index_e.html

Family Resource Programs

The B.C. Association of Family Resource Programs is a not-for-profit organization that provides interactive programs for families with children 0-6 years.

www.frpbc.ca

Health Canada

The latest health information including headlines, advisories, warnings and recalls of products, links to health organizations and an A-to-Z index including information for Aboriginal peoples. The website is in English and French.

www.healthcanada.ca

Invest in Kids

"Comfort, teach and play." The Invest in Kids website has all sorts of ideas for supporting your child's development at different stages, in English and French. Call: 1-877-583-KIDS.

www.investinkids.ca

Mental Health Information Line

Provides taped information on provincial mental health programs as well as symptoms, causes, treatment, support groups and publications relating to a number of mental illnesses. Staff can provide local contact information for parents. This is a 24-hour line.

Call: 1-800-661-2121 or 604-669-7600 in Vancouver.

Ministry of Children and Family Development: Child Care

This website provides information for parents, child care providers and early childhood educators on programs and services available in British Columbia.

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/index.htm

Ministry of Children and Family Development: Early Childhood Development

Regional offices can provide information for families on local childhood development resources. Check the blue pages of your phone book for local listings. Links to early childhood development programs and information are available on the ministry website.

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/early_childhood/index.htm

Ministry of Education: Early Learning

This website provides information on the Ministry of Education's Early Learning Initiatives, such as StrongStart BC Program, Ready Set Learn and the British Columbia Early Learning Framework. The website also provides resource links for families and service providers.

http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/literacy/early_learning/

Ministry of Health: Child Health

Find handbooks on parenting and nutrition online and at B.C.'s public health units, available free of charge.

<http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/prevent/cyhppublications.html>

Ministry of Health: Community Care Facilities

Information on licensed child care facilities, including group day care centers, preschools, out of school care and family child care facilities.

<http://www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/ccf/>

Ministry of Health: Child Care Licensing

Information on the Child Care Licensing Regulation and Updates is available, as well as a number of child care publications and checklists.

www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/ccf/child/index.html

Parents as Literacy Supporters (P.A.L.S.)

PALS is a highly successful, culturally responsive family literacy program offered in 12 school districts and many Aboriginal communities around the province.

www.2010legaciesnow.com/pals

Ready, Set, Learn

A school readiness initiative where elementary schools offering kindergarten host open-house type events for families and their three-year olds. Families attending a Ready, Set, Learn event receive an age-appropriate book for the child, a parent/family kit with helpful tips for supporting preschoolers' learning and development, and any additional information chosen by the school.

www.bced.gov.bc.ca/literacy/rsl/

StrongStart BC Centres

StrongStart BC centres, located in elementary schools, offer free early learning programs for preschool-aged children attending with their families or caregivers. Contact your local school district office to find a centre in your community.

www.bced.gov.bc.ca/literacy/early_learning/ss_centres.htm

ReadNow BC

ReadNow BC is a government action plan that promotes literacy programs and resources to help all British Columbians improve their reading skills.

www.readnowbc.ca

Toddler's First Steps

This resource, available online or from your local public health unit, assists parents and caregivers of children six months to three years of age in understanding what contributes to their children's healthy growth and development.

www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/cpa/publications/firststeps.pdf



Acknowledgements

The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Children and Family Development would like to thank all those who contributed to the creation of this document. Literally thousands of people have had a voice in its creation.

In particular, the Ministry acknowledges the work of the members of the *Early Learning Advisory Group*:

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Lisa Rogers	Child and Maternal Health, Ministry of Health
Marie Thom	School District No. 38 (Richmond)
ViAnne Zirnhelt	Early Childhood Education Thompson Rivers University

The Ministry of Education also acknowledges the work of the following individuals:

Enid Elliot	Allison Benner	Ian Kirkpatrick
Mary-Anne McNeney	MaryLynne Rimer	

The Ministry of Education also acknowledges the work of the following staff:

Christine Ambrose	Melanie Gordon	Emilie Hillier
Janet Powell		

Appreciation goes to the many individuals and groups that reviewed one or more drafts of the document during its development and provided their valuable input:

- BC Aboriginal Child Care Society
- BC Association of Family Resource Programs
- BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils
- BC Council for Families
- BC School Trustees Association
- BC Healthy Child Alliance
- BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association
- British Columbia Teacher's Federation
- Children First
- Early Childhood Educators of BC
- Early Years Branch, Ministry of Children and Family
- Education Advisory Committee
- Federal Off Reserve Head Start Committee
- First Call
- First Nation Education Steering Committee
- Investigating Quality Practitioners, University of Victoria
- 2010 Legacies Now-LEAP BC
- Ministry of Advanced Education
- Child Care Licensing Branch, Ministry of Health
- Child Care Programs Branch, Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Child and Maternal Health Branch, Ministry of Health
- Provincial Child Care Council
- Representative for Children and Youth
- Success by Six

A draft of the *Early Learning Framework* was posted on the Ministry of Education's website from May 1, 2007 to June 1, 2007 to provide an opportunity for public feedback. Many British Columbians responded. Additionally focus groups were held with parents and representatives from multi-cultural organizations. Thank you to all who provided feedback.

