

Language, Communication, and Literacy

Language, Communication, and Literacy describes how children attend to, understand, and use communication to connect with others, participate in learning, and make meaning. From birth through age five, children are learning to:

- Listen and respond
- Share attention
- Communicate needs and ideas
- Build vocabulary
- Engage in conversations
- Use home language(s), English, signs, gestures, AAC, and other communication modes
- Enjoy books and stories
- Notice print and symbols
- Use marks, drawing, and writing to show ideas
- Develop early reading foundations, including phonological awareness, print knowledge, and early decoding skills

These skills grow through responsive relationships, back-and-forth communication, shared attention, songs, stories, play, everyday routines, family and community language practices, and meaningful opportunities to communicate in familiar ways.

Children develop language, communication, literacy, and multilingual skills at different rates and in different ways. Children may show understanding and expression through:

- Facial expressions
- Body language
- Eye gaze
- Gestures
- Vocalizations
- Spoken language
- Sign language
- Home language(s)
- English
- AAC
- Touch cues
- Object cues
- Tangible symbols
- Pictures
- Written words, including Braille
- Drawing
- Movement
- Play
- Storytelling
- Quiet observation
- Mixed-language communication
- Other familiar modes

Children's family, background, language exposure, family goals, abilities, communication supports, community experiences, interests, relationships, lived experiences, and opportunities to hear and use language all shape how they understand, communicate, engage with books and print, tell stories, and build knowledge across languages and settings.

For children who are developing more than one language, emergent multilingualism reflects their growing ability to understand, communicate, participate, and build knowledge across home language(s), English, and other communication modes. Continued growth in children's home language(s) supports learning while providing a strong foundation for developing English and other languages over time.

Inside This Learning and Development Area

This area includes 11 strands and 22 learning goals. To make the area easier to use, the table below groups related strands into three connected parts and shows how children build language, communication, literacy, and multilingual skills through relationships, routines, play, and meaningful experiences.

Strands cover...	Children are learning to...	Adults support learning by...
Language and communication: Attending and understanding, communicating and speaking, vocabulary, and emergent literacy	Attend to, understand, and respond to communication; express needs, ideas, feelings, questions, and experiences; build vocabulary and concepts; take part in back-and-forth conversations; and use communication to connect with others and participate in routines, play, and learning.	Noticing and responding to children's cues, sharing attention, using rich language, allowing wait time, using gestures, visuals, signs, AAC, and adapted materials, expanding children's communication, and supporting conversations during caregiving, routines, play, and shared experiences.
Literacy: Phonological awareness, print and alphabet knowledge, comprehension and text structure, and writing	Engage with books, stories, songs, rhymes, sounds, letters, print, symbols, drawing, and writing; make meaning from pictures and texts; and use marks, drawings, symbols, and writing to show ideas.	Offering shared reading, songs, rhymes, storytelling, environmental print, writing tools, adapted books and materials, playful experiences with sounds and letters, and meaningful opportunities to draw, write, retell, ask questions, and share ideas.
Multilingual language and literacy: Understanding and responding across languages and communication modes, communicating and expressing ideas across languages and communication modes, and engaging in multilingual language and literacy experiences	Use home language(s), English, mixed-language communication, signs, gestures, AAC, and other communication modes to understand, communicate, participate, build relationships, and make meaning across routines, play, literacy experiences, and learning areas.	Partnering with families, learning and using familiar words and phrases, affirming home language(s), accepting communication in any language or mode, supporting language mixing and transfer, and providing meaningful access to English while continuing to support home language development.

Play Across Language, Communication, and Literacy

The play continuum shows how children build language, communication, literacy, and multilingual skills through a balance of child-directed, shared, and adult-supported play experiences. Across the continuum, children have opportunities to listen, respond, share attention, communicate ideas, tell stories, use home language(s) and English, engage with books and print, play with sounds, draw, write, pretend, collaborate, and make meaning in many ways.



Play Across Language, Communication, Literacy, and Multilingual Development



Children build language, communication, literacy, and multilingual skills through many kinds of play that invite shared attention, conversation, storytelling, book engagement, print exploration, and meaning-making across languages and communication modes.



Connections Across Language, Communication, Literacy, and Multilingual Development

For infants and toddlers, language, communication, early literacy, and multilingual development grow together through relationships, everyday routines, songs, rhythm, gestures, shared attention, book reading, mark-making, symbolic representation, environmental print, home language practices, and responsive interaction. For preschool-age children, these foundations continue to grow and develop into more specific language, communication, literacy, and multilingual skills while remaining closely connected.

This area brings together skills that were previously described separately in Language and Communication, Literacy, and Multilingual Development. The strands should be read as connected rather than separate. Children use communication to build relationships, use language to make meaning, use books and symbols to understand the world, and use their full linguistic repertoire across routines, play, relationships, and content learning.

How to Interpret Multilingual Development

Children's multilingual pathways may look different across languages and settings. Children may understand more than they can say or write, use one language more strongly than another, mix languages, or apply vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, storytelling patterns, or literacy knowledge from one language to another. These are expected parts of multilingual development and should be understood as evidence of learning, not as confusion or delay. It is also common for children to observe quietly while adjusting to an environment that uses a language that is new to them.

When observing and supporting multilingual children, look across all languages and communication modes the child has opportunities to use. Using only a small amount of English should not be interpreted as limited understanding, delayed language development, or limited content knowledge. Adults should notice how children use their full linguistic repertoire across relationships, routines, play, and content learning, rather than expecting strict separation of languages.

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)**Strand 1. Attending and Understanding****Goal 1. Child attends to, understands, and responds to communication and language from others.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Turns toward others, attends to verbal and non-verbal communication, and interacts through turn-taking.	Understands familiar caregivers' verbal and non-verbal communication and responds with attention, facial expressions, gestures, words, or actions.	Recognizes words, phrases, and simple sentences and shows understanding by responding with gestures, words or behavior.	Acknowledges comments or questions and attends to short conversations using spoken language, sign language, AAC, gestures, facial expressions, body language, or other communication modes.	Acknowledges detailed comments or questions and attends to longer, multi-turn conversations using spoken language, sign language, AAC, gestures, facial expressions, body language, or other communication modes.
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors				
• Turns toward a familiar voice, face, sign, gesture, or expression during play, caregiving, or routines. • Responds to communication with facial expression, movement, sounds, quieting, smiling, or re-engaging. • Participates briefly in back-and-forth interactions, songs, lap games, book sharing, or familiar routines.	• Looks toward a person, object, or place when a familiar adult gestures, signs, names, or shows it. • Responds to familiar words, signs, gestures, tone, or routines by joining, stopping, giving an object, or changing action. • Participates in simple back-and-forth exchanges using facial expressions, gestures, signs, sounds, words, actions, or movement.	• Responds to familiar words, phrases, or simple sentences by following a direction, making a choice, joining, or changing behavior. • Shows understanding by bringing an item, using materials, completing a familiar action, or responding to a comment. • Participates in short conversations using any mode of communication.	• Uses spoken language, sign language, AAC, gestures, actions, or other communication modes to comments or questions. • Stays with a short conversation during stories, play, small groups, outdoor exploration, routines, or peer interaction. • Takes a conversational turn by answering, commenting, asking a related question, adding an idea, or showing understanding.	• Responds to detailed comments or questions with related answers, ideas, explanations, actions, or follow-up questions. • Attends to longer conversations during group discussions, play, storytelling, problem-solving, projects, or routines. • Builds on what another person communicates by adding detail, asking a connected question, offering another idea, or staying on topic.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Offer warm interactions that invite children to notice voices, signs, gestures, facial expressions, actions, and turn-taking. • Pause during songs, routines, book sharing, caregiving, and social play so children have time to respond. • Use clear words, signs, gestures, objects, pictures, and actions so children can connect communication with meaning. • Partner with families to use familiar home-language words, signs, gestures, routines, and interaction patterns.			• Offer opportunities for spoken, signed, AAC-supported, and multimodal conversations during play, meals, outdoor experiences, and routines. • Model how to listen, watch, take turns, stay on topic, and respond to comments or questions. • Ask open-ended and inferential questions and give children time to answer using speech, signs, gestures, AAC, movement, drawing, or other supports. • Support conversations with visuals, wait time, partner talk, familiar topics, home languages, and shared experiences.	

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)

Strand 1. Attending and Understanding

Goal 2. Child understands, responds to, and learns from increasingly complex communication and language from others.

In Focus: What Is Joint Attention?

Joint attention happens when a child and another person share focus on the same object, person, event, book, or activity and respond to each other about it. Children may show shared attention through:

- Looking
- Body orientation
- Reaching
- Showing
- Gestures
- Signs
- Sounds
- Words
- Movement
- AAC
- Touch cues
- Object cues
- Tangible symbols
- Facial expressions
- Body language
- Other familiar communication modes

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Responds to voices, facial expressions, gestures, and shared interactions by focusing attention on people, objects, or events.	Responds to and begins initiating joint attention by following another person's focus and directing attention through gestures, sounds, words, or eye gaze.	Initiates and sustains joint attention with adults and peers by directing, sharing, and maintaining focus on objects, activities, or experiences during interaction.	Understands and responds to longer sentences, simple questions, and stories using spoken language, sign language, AAC, gestures, actions, or other communication modes.	Understands longer spoken, signed, or supported statements, questions, and stories with multiple connected ideas and responds in ways related to the topic.

Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)

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Joint attention happens when a child and another person share focus on the same object, person, event, book, or activity and respond to each other about it. Children may show shared attention through:

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|--------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Looking | • Sounds | • Tangible symbols |
| • Body orientation | • Words | • Facial expressions |
| • Reaching | • Movement | • Body language |
| • Showing | • AAC | • Other familiar communication modes |
| • Gestures | • Touch cues | |
| • Signs | • Object cues | |

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
• Turns toward a familiar adult during interaction, caregiving, play, or shared routines. • Looks between an adult and a nearby person, object, picture, or event. • Participates briefly in shared attention through looking, stilling, smiling, vocalizing, moving, or responding.	• Shifts attention between an adult and an object, picture, animal, other person, or event. • Follows another person's gesture, sign, movement, or verbal cue toward something of interest. • Uses gesturing, reaching, showing, signs, vocalizations, movement, AAC, or other familiar modes to share attention.	• Shares focus with an adult or peer on the same object, activity, book, game, event, or topic. • Shows interest or understanding during songs, stories, pretend play, constructive play, outdoor exploration, or routines. • Returns to a shared activity after a brief distraction with adult, peer, visual, or routine support.	• Responds to longer spoken, signed, or supported sentences by answering, acting, gesturing, signing, using AAC, or changing behavior. • Answers or responds to simple questions during conversations, stories, play, routines, or investigations. • Shows understanding of connected ideas by commenting, gesturing, signing, acting, or responding in another familiar way.	• Responds to statements and questions that include more than one idea. • Shows understanding of stories, explanations, directions, or conversations by answering, retelling, acting, asking questions, or responding on topic. • Maintains attention to longer discussions, stories, projects, games, or routines and responds in ways connected to the topic.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide warm interactions that invite children to notice voices, signs, gestures, facial expressions, shared focus, and turn-taking. • Gesture to, name, sign about, show, and look at people, objects, pictures, animals, and events during routines, play, outdoor experiences, and book sharing. • Follow children's interests and join their focus before extending attention to something new.			• Use longer spoken, signed, or supported language during routines, conversations, storytelling, play, inquiry, projects, and collaborative activities. • Ask questions and provide wait time so children can respond using speech, sign language, AAC, gestures, movement, actions, object cues, or other communication modes.	

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)

Strand 1. Attending and Understanding

Goal 2. Child understands, responds to, and learns from increasingly complex communication and language from others.

In Focus: What Is Joint Attention?

Joint attention happens when a child and another person share focus on the same object, person, event, book, or activity and respond to each other about it. Children may show shared attention through:

- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Looking | • Sounds | • Tangible symbols |
| • Body orientation | • Words | • Facial expressions |
| • Reaching | • Movement | • Body language |
| • Showing | • AAC | • Other familiar communication modes |
| • Gestures | • Touch cues | |
| • Signs | • Object cues | |

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
• Use gestures, visuals, movement, real objects, and familiar materials to support shared attention. • Acknowledge looking, gesturing, reaching, showing, signs, vocalizations, AAC, movement, and other shared-attention behaviors as meaningful communication.			• Use read-alouds, storytelling, shared inquiry, dramatic play, nature study, and group problem-solving to build understanding of connected ideas. • Support comprehension with visuals, props, gestures, repeated language, AAC, adapted materials, Braille, and familiar languages.	

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)**Strand 2. Communicating and Speaking****Goal 1. Child uses communication to seek information, continue interaction, and participate in learning.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Takes turns in communication using facial expressions, sounds, gestures, movement, or signs to continue interaction and share interest.	Uses gestures, signs, sounds, words, or changes in pitch or intonation to seek information, help, clarification, or continued interaction.	Asks or communicates simple questions using words, signs, gestures, AAC, or short phrases, including question words such as “what,” “who,” or “why,” to seek information.	Early communication exchanges help children ask for help, seek information, and take part in conversation. As they grow, children use language more intentionally to ask questions, share ideas, solve problems, and participate in learning across settings.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Responds to an adult’s facial expression, sound, gesture, sign, or action with a sound, movement, expression, pause, or other response. • Takes simple back-and-forth turns during face-to-face play, songs, caregiving routines, lap games, or social games. • Uses smiles, coos, babbles, body movement, gestures, or re-engagement to begin or continue an interaction.	• Uses gesturing, showing, reaching, facial expressions, signs, sounds, words, movement, or rising intonation to ask about a person, object, or event. • Looks to an adult or peer and communicates to seek information, help, clarification, or continued interaction during play, book sharing, routines, or outdoor exploration. • Repeats a gesture, sign, word, sound, or intonation pattern when a first question or communication attempt is not answered right away.	• Asks or communicates simple questions using words, signs, gestures, AAC, short phrases, or any familiar communication modes. • Uses question words such as “what,” “who,” or “why” during conversations, book reading, pretend play, outdoor exploration, or daily routines. • Uses questions to learn about unfamiliar words, objects, events, changes, problems, or experiences with adults and peers.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Engage children in warm, responsive turn-taking during routines, songs, lap games, book sharing, outdoor exploration, and social play. • Respond to children’s sounds, expressions, gestures, signs, movements, looks, words, and AAC as meaningful communication attempts. • Pause during interactions so children have time to notice, respond, ask, repeat, revise, or take another turn. • Model and expand simple question forms using gestures, signs, intonation, words, visuals, AAC, and home-language connections during meaningful activities. • Provide rich experiences and materials, such as books, photos, natural materials, toys, dramatic play, sensory play, storytelling, and shared inquiry, that invite children to seek information and ask questions.				

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)**Strand 2. Communicating and Speaking****Goal 2. Child communicates needs, wants, and ideas by providing increasing amounts of information to meet the demands of the situation.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Uses gestures, movements, words, or signs to communicate needs, wants, interests, discomfort, or requests for help.	Uses gestures, signs, and/or words to communicate needs, wants, and interests with others.	Combines words and/or signs, including from more than one language, to form phrases and sentences to communicate needs, wants, or ideas with others.	Uses spoken language, sign language, AAC, gestures, or other communication modes for different purposes and sometimes provides enough detail to communicate needs or ideas.	Uses spoken language, sign language, AAC, gestures, or other communication modes for a variety of purposes and provides enough detail to communicate needs, thoughts, feelings, or ideas.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Uses cries, body movements, facial expressions, sounds, gestures, or attention shifts to communicate. • Reaches, looks, turns, leans, pushes away, or moves toward people, objects, or activities. • Engages in back-and-forth exchanges during play, caregiving, music, or routines.	• Uses gesturing, reaching, showing, giving, looking, or moving toward people, objects, or activities to communicate. • Uses single words, approximations, signs, sounds, gestures, or facial expressions to express needs or preferences. • Combines gestures with sounds, words, signs, movement, or other familiar modes to request, share interest, or make a choice.	• Combines words, signs, gestures, AAC, or other familiar modes to communicate needs, wants, ideas, or interests. • Uses phrases from one or more languages, including mixed-language phrases, during play, routines, or social interaction.	• Makes requests and comments, asks questions, shares ideas, or expresses needs through spoken language, sign language, AAC, gestures, or other modes. • Provides some detail, such as naming which object, where to go, what happened, or what help is needed. • Adjusts communication slightly based on purpose, partner, or situation.	• Explains, requests, negotiates, tells stories, or expresses feelings through spoken language, sign language, AAC, gestures, facial expressions, body language, or other modes. • Provides enough detail for others to understand needs, thoughts, feelings, ideas, experiences, directions, or problems. • Engages in extended conversations during play, group activities, routines, problem-solving, or shared learning.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Respond promptly to children’s cries, movements, gestures, signs, vocalizations, words, AAC, and expressions as meaningful communication. • Model and expand gestures, signs, words, home-language words, and simple phrases during routines, play, caregiving, reading, music, and interactions. • Provide opportunities for children to make choices, communicate preferences, request help, share interests, and participate across settings. • Use visuals, gestures, signs, objects, AAC, modeling, and wait time to support expression and understanding. • Partner with families to learn and use familiar communication modes, including home languages, signs, AAC, and familiar patterns.			• Model varied communication, including requesting, describing, questioning, explaining, negotiating, storytelling, and expressing feelings. • Prompt children to add detail or clarify ideas with questions such as “Which one?”, “What happened?”, “What do you need?”, or “Can you tell me more?” • Provide rich communication opportunities during dramatic play, storytelling, projects, outdoor activities, peer interaction, problem-solving, and routines. • Ensure broad-based supports, such as visuals, AAC, sign language, home language use, gestures, wait time, and adapted materials.	

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)**Strand 2. Communicating and Speaking****Goal 3. Child uses longer and more detailed language to express self in increasingly complex ways.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Explores speech sounds by making vowel and consonant combinations and engaging in vocal play.	Initiates and participates in communication using sounds, gestures, words, and/or signs to communicate about people, objects, and events.	Participates in conversations using spoken and/or signed language, including simple sentences, questions, and responses, and sometimes talks about past or future experiences.	Communicates clearly to familiar adults using spoken language, sign language, AAC, gestures, or other communication modes and, with adult support, shares two or three related ideas on a topic.	Communicates clearly enough to be understood by familiar and, with support as needed, less familiar communication partners using spoken language, sign language, AAC, gestures, or other communication modes while sharing multiple pieces of information on a topic.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Makes repeated vowel and consonant sounds, such as cooing, babbling, or sound combinations. • Uses vocal play during interaction, songs, movement games, social play, or quiet routines. • Combines sounds with facial expressions, body movement, gestures, volume, rhythm, or tone.	• Initiates communication by babbling, gesturing, signing, showing, giving, moving, or using words. • Responds in back-and-forth exchanges about people, objects, actions, or events happening now. • Uses sounds, words, signs, gestures, or other familiar modes to comment, request, share attention, or continue interaction.	• Participates in conversations using simple sentences, questions, answers, signs, gestures, AAC, or other familiar modes. • Communicates about what is happening now and sometimes about what already happened or may happen next. • Uses one or more languages to share ideas, experiences, wants, feelings, questions, or responses.	• Shares needs, ideas, feelings, experiences, or related details with familiar adults and peers. • Shares two or three related ideas about a topic, event, plan, book, play idea, or experience with adult support. • Responds to questions and adds information when asked for clarification, detail, or what happened next.	• Uses longer spoken, signed, AAC-supported, or multimodal communication to explain, describe, ask, respond, tell stories, or share more than one idea. • Communicates clearly with familiar and less familiar conversation partners, with support as needed. • Shares several related details about a topic, event, problem, story, plan, or experience.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Respond to children’s cries, movements, gestures, signs, vocalizations, words, AAC, and expressions as meaningful communication. • Join children in back-and-forth communication during play, routines, meals, caregiving, reading, music, movement, and outdoor experiences. • Model simple words, signs, gestures, phrases, questions, and responses connected to what children are doing and noticing. • Expand communication by adding one or two words, signs, details, sequence words, or feeling words without interrupting the conversation.			• Engage children in conversations that invite them to explain, describe, retell, answer questions, and share more than one idea. • Model longer connected language during play, storytelling, reading, routines, inquiry, peer play, and group discussions. • Prompt for more detail with questions such as “What happened next?”, “Can you tell me more?”, or “What else should we know?” • Use meaningful topics, stories, materials, visuals, signs, AAC, and partner supports so all children can share extended language successfully.	

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)**Strand 2. Communicating and Speaking****Goal 4. Child uses communication to engage others and participate in social interactions and conversations.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Uses facial expressions, gestures, or sounds to engage familiar adults in social interaction.	Uses actions, sounds, or words to initiate or maintain social interactions.	Uses words, signs, phrases, or simple sentences to initiate, continue, or extend conversations about experiences, thoughts, or feelings.	Engages in short conversations of 2–3 turns with others and, with adult support, begins to adjust communication, tone, or volume for different situations.	Maintains multi-turn conversations by responding to others, asking questions, adding related ideas, and adjusting communication, tone, or volume to match the situation.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Uses smiles, coos, babbles, facial expressions, movement, gestures, or sounds to invite interaction. • Looks toward a familiar adult and uses sounds, movements, expressions, or gestures to continue social exchange. • Responds during back-and-forth social play with expressions, sounds, movements, or re-engagement.	• Uses actions such as waving, clapping, showing, giving, gesturing, or moving toward someone to start or continue interaction. • Uses sounds, signs, gestures, words, facial expressions, or actions to get attention, greet, request interaction, or keep an exchange going. • Participates in simple back-and-forth routines with adults or peers during play, books, meals, songs, or movement games.	• Uses words, signs, phrases, simple sentences, AAC, gestures, or other familiar modes to start or continue conversations. • Communicates about experiences, preferences, thoughts, feelings, play ideas, or shared activities. • Responds to what another person communicates and adds a related comment, question, action, or idea with support.	• Participates in short conversations of two or three turns during play, routines, group activities, meals, outdoor play, or shared experiences. • Responds to comments or questions and adds a related idea, question, detail, gesture, sign, or action. • Begins to adjust communication, tone, volume, or supports with reminders or modeling.	• Maintains multi-turn conversations by responding, asking questions, adding ideas, or building on another person’s communication. • Asks questions to clarify, learn more, share feelings, solve problems, or keep a conversation going. • Adjusts communication, tone, volume, or supports with reminders, modeling, or support across settings and partners.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Respond warmly to children’s facial expressions, sounds, gestures, signs, words, movements, AAC, and body language as meaningful communication. • Provide frequent back-and-forth interactions during caregiving, play, songs, routines, books, meals, and outdoor experiences. • Imitate, expand, and respond to children’s sounds, expressions, gestures, signs, words, and actions to sustain interaction. • Model simple ways to greet, invite, respond, request interaction, and continue social exchange using actions, words, signs, gestures, visuals, AAC, or home-language words.			• Create regular opportunities for short and extended conversations during play, projects, storytelling, routines, group discussions, outdoor activities, and social problem-solving. • Model how to maintain a conversation by listening, responding, asking questions, adding connected ideas, and staying with the topic. • Use role play, puppets, social stories, partner talk, visuals, signs, AAC, sentence starters, and real classroom situations to practice conversation skills.	

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)**Strand 3. Vocabulary****Goal 1. Child understands an increasing number of words and shows awareness of categories and relationships among words.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Looks at or identifies familiar people, animals, or objects when they are named.	Looks at or gestures to named people or objects and follows simple one-step directions.	Understands an increasing number of words or signs used in simple sentences during conversations.	Uses known words in the correct context and, with adult support, begins to group words into broader categories.	With adult support, identifies examples of familiar word categories and simple synonyms or antonyms.
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors				
• Looks toward a familiar person, animal, object, voice, toy, or everyday item when named or signed. • Reaches, smiles, becomes alert, or responds differently to familiar names. • Shows recognition of familiar names during songs, stories, caregiving, play, or shared routines.	• Looks at, gestures to, signs about, reaches toward, or moves toward a named person, object, picture, or place. • Follows simple one-step directions during play and routines with support as needed. • Responds to familiar words, signs, gestures, visuals, or routines by moving, stopping, bringing an item, or joining.	• Responds to simple sentences by following directions, making choices, changing actions, or using materials. • Shows understanding of familiar words or signs during conversations, stories, songs, play, and routines. • Gestures to, gives, uses, and moves toward named objects or places and responds to people named in simple sentences.	• Uses familiar words, signs, AAC symbols, pictures, or other modes correctly during conversations, play, storytelling, and routines. • Groups words, pictures, materials, or objects into simple categories with adult support. • Communicates how words, objects, or materials go together during play, books, cleanup, small groups, or hands-on exploration.	• Names or identifies examples of familiar categories, such as foods, animals, vehicles, clothing, tools, feelings, places, or outdoor items. • Identifies simple words that mean nearly the same or opposite with adult support. • Connects new words to familiar categories, experiences, topics, AAC symbols, signs, pictures, Braille, or other supports.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Name familiar people, animals, objects, actions, places, and routines often during play, caregiving, meals, transitions, outdoor exploration, songs, and shared reading. • Pair spoken or signed words with showing, gestures, facial expressions, visuals, objects, and actions so children can connect words with meaning. • Use family photos, familiar objects, stuffed animals, books, songs, dramatic play, natural materials to build vocabulary. • Give children time to respond and acknowledge understanding shown through looking, gesturing, moving, signing, vocalizing, speaking, using AAC, or acting. • Partner with families to use familiar home language words, signs, phrases, names, and familiar communication patterns across settings.			• Model familiar and new words in meaningful contexts during conversations, play, books, projects, routines, storytelling, writing, and shared experiences. • Provide opportunities to sort, group, compare, and discuss objects, pictures, materials, and words by category. • Use books, songs, nature materials, real objects, photos, picture cards, and familiar materials to make word relationships concrete. • Encourage children to name category examples and talk about how words, objects, or ideas are alike, different, related, opposite, or nearly the same.	

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)

Strand 3. Vocabulary

Goal 1. Child understands an increasing number of words and shows awareness of categories and relationships among words.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
			• Support participation with visuals, gestures, signs, AAC, Braille, repeated modeling, small-group conversation, and partner work.	

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)**Strand 3. Vocabulary****Goal 2. Child understands and uses an increasing variety of words in communication and conversation for a range of purposes.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Uses a word or sign to name familiar people or objects.	Imitates new words or signs and uses single words to name objects or make simple requests.	Uses an increasing number of words in conversation and regularly adds new vocabulary, including across languages for multilingual learners.	Shows rapid growth in vocabulary describing actions, emotions, objects, or ideas and repeats and uses new words introduced by adults.	Shows steady vocabulary growth with increasingly specific words and sometimes asks about the meaning of unfamiliar words.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Uses a familiar sound, word approximation, vocalization, or sign for a familiar person, animal, toy, food, or object. • Looks at, gestures to, reaches for, or holds up an object while naming, signing, vocalizing, or communicating about it. • Uses familiar names, signs, home language words, or vocalizations during routines, songs, books, caregiving, or play.	• Imitates a new word, sign, or sound used by an adult, peer, or family member. • Uses a single word, sign, sound, or approximation to name an object, person, action, or familiar experience. • Uses one-word or one-sign requests, such as “more,” “help,” “up,” or a familiar home language word.	• Uses more words, signs, AAC symbols, or other communication modes during conversations with adults and peers. • Adds new words for people, objects, actions, places, feelings, or experiences during reading, play, routines, and interactions. • Uses vocabulary from one or more languages to communicate ideas, needs, interests, experiences, or questions.	• Uses new words, signs, AAC symbols, or other communication modes to describe actions, feelings, objects, people, places, or ideas. • Repeats and uses new vocabulary introduced during stories, songs, movement, routines, inquiry, or shared experiences. • Uses descriptive words such as “big,” “little,” “fast,” “slow,” “same,” “different,” “excited,” “worried,” “heavy,” “smooth,” or “rough.”	• Uses more specific words, signs, AAC symbols, or other modes to describe people, objects, actions, feelings, observations, or ideas. • Chooses precise vocabulary, such as naming a specific animal, tool, feeling, position, material, action, or category. • Asks about unfamiliar words or shows interest when a new word is explained during stories, projects, investigations, or routines.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Model simple and new words, signs, home-language words, and AAC symbols for familiar people, objects, actions, routines, and experiences. • Repeat and expand children’s naming and word attempts, including approximations, signs, AAC, and home-language words during books, songs, meals, caregiving, outdoor play, social play, and routines. • Use photos, real objects, mirrors, visuals, gestures, songs, books, natural materials, and familiar materials to support vocabulary. • Partner with families to learn and use important words, names, signs, AAC supports, and home-language vocabulary.			• Introduce, repeat, and model specific vocabulary during real experiences, such as reading, storytelling, building, cooking, art, movement, gardening, investigations, and routines. • Explain unfamiliar words in simple ways and connect them to objects, actions, visuals, experiences, home languages, or classroom topics. • Encourage children to use new and more precise words when talking about play, feelings, observations, stories, problems, plans, and ideas. • Support understanding and expression with visuals, gestures, signs, AAC, object cues, Braille, and home-language connections.	

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)**Strand 4. Emergent Literacy****Goal 1. Child attends to, repeats, and uses rhymes, phrases, and sound patterns in spoken language with increasing awareness.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Listens and responds to familiar sounds, words, and rhymes in songs or stories.	Says or repeats a few words from familiar rhymes or repeated phrases in songs or stories.	Repeats or joins in saying familiar rhymes, phrases, or refrains from songs or stories.	Children continue to build on early experiences with songs, rhymes, rhythms, repeated phrases, and familiar sound patterns. They begin by responding to familiar songs, stories, signs, and rhymes. Over time, they join in repeated phrases, use familiar refrains, and play with the sounds and patterns of language during music, movement, book sharing, routines, and social interaction.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Looks toward a familiar voice, song, rhyme, chant, signed routine, or repeated phrase during play, caregiving, or story experiences. • Quiets, smiles, moves, vocalizes, or re-engages when hearing familiar words, sounds, rhythms, or rhymes from home, school, or community contexts. • Attends briefly to repeated sounds, rhythmic language, signs, gestures, or movement patterns in songs, finger plays, lap games, or simple stories.	• Joins in with a familiar word, sound, sign, gesture, or motion during songs, rhymes, chants, finger plays, or repeated story lines. • Repeats part of a refrain, such as a familiar word, sound effect, sign, movement, or predictable phrase, during shared book or music experiences. • Anticipates and attempts a repeated word, sound, sign, or action when a familiar rhyme, song, or story is repeated.	• Repeats or joins in familiar rhymes, phrases, refrains, or sound patterns during songs, stories, dramatic play, movement, or group routines. • Joins in repeated lines from favorite books, chants, poems, songs, or finger plays using words, signs, gestures, approximations, AAC, or movement. • Uses familiar phrases from songs, stories, rhymes, or oral traditions during pretend play, social play, transitions, or everyday routines.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide repeated songs, stories, chants, poems, finger plays, signed routines, and rhymes that include familiar words, rhythms, and sounds from children’s home languages. • Use warm interactions, expressive voice, gestures, signs, visuals, props, movement, and facial expressions to support attention and participation. • Repeat key words, refrains, sound patterns, and predictable phrases during caregiving, book sharing, music, movement, outdoor play, transitions, and quiet routines. • Pause before familiar refrains to invite children to join in with a word, sound, sign, gesture, movement, approximation, AAC, or other communication form. • Partner with families to learn and use familiar songs, rhymes, stories, signs, chants, and oral language traditions that comfort, engage, and reflect children’s experiences.				

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)**Strand 4. Emergent Literacy****Goal 2. Child engages with books and uses them to build understanding by asking and answering questions about stories and information.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Explores books by touching, holding, or mouthing them.	Holds books, turns pages, and looks at pictures while using sounds, signs, or words to identify objects or actions.	Pretends to read by turning pages and describing what is happening in the book, showing that print carries meaning.	Children continue to build on early experiences with books and stories as they grow. They begin by exploring books, looking at pictures, turning pages, and sharing book routines with adults. Over time, they pretend to read, talk, or sign about pictures and events, and connect books to shared reading, play, storytelling, and conversation.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Touches, pats, grasps, mouths, holds, or explores a book during lap reading, floor play, quiet routines, or shared book experiences. • Reaches toward, looks at, or brings a book closer when it is offered during songs, stories, caregiving routines, or play. • Shows interest in books by attending briefly, re-engaging, moving toward, or responding to pictures, pages, textures, adult voice, signs, or songs.	• Holds a book, turns pages, returns to favorite pages, or looks closely at pictures during shared or independent book exploration. • Gestures to, signs about, vocalizes, or names familiar objects, people, animals, or actions in a book. • Brings a book to an adult or peer to share and responds to comments, signs, gestures, or questions about pictures.	• Pretends to read by holding a book, turning pages, and talking, signing, gesturing, using AAC, or making sound effects about pictures or events. • Describes what is happening in pictures or familiar stories using words, signs, gestures, sound effects, movement, or other communication modes. • Shows awareness that books are for reading and that pictures and print carry meaning during book play, pretend play, shared reading, or routines.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide sturdy, safe, accessible books, tactile books, object books, adapted books, photo books, rhyme books, and books that reflect children’s families, backgrounds, languages, and everyday experiences throughout the day. • Offer books with varied textures, simple pictures, photos, familiar people, animals, objects, routines, families, communities, and nature experiences. • Model how to hold books, turn pages, gesture to pictures, and talk, sign, sing, gesture, or use AAC about what children notice. • Follow children’s cues during book sharing and encourage them to touch, hold, turn pages, vocalize, sign, gesture, say words, or use sound effects. • Provide books in cozy areas, dramatic play, outdoor spaces, routines, and shared reading so children can explore, revisit, and pretend to read in meaningful settings.				

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)**Strand 4. Emergent Literacy****Goal 3. Child recognizes pictures, symbols, signs, object cues, tangible symbols, environmental print, written words including Braille, or other meaningful forms.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Looks at pictures of familiar people, animals, or objects as an adult gestures to and names them.	Gestures to, signs, or names animals, people, or objects in pictures or drawings.	Recognizes familiar pictures, symbols, signs, labels, names, environmental print, written words including Braille, or meaningful marks in books, routines, play, and familiar settings.	Children continue to build early print and symbol awareness as they grow. They begin by noticing pictures, photos, familiar symbols, signs, and meaningful print. Over time, they gesture to, name, sign about, or use pictures, symbols, signs, letters, numbers, and familiar print to communicate meaning during books, play, routines, and everyday experiences.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Looks at pictures of familiar people, animals, objects, or daily experiences when an adult gestures to, names, or signs about them. • Turns eyes, head, or body toward a picture, photo, drawing, or simple book image during shared reading, songs, routines, or quiet play. • Reaches toward, pats, touches, smiles at, vocalizes, or re-engages with pictures of familiar faces, animals, objects, or experiences.	• Gestures to, touches, signs about, names, or vocalizes about familiar people, animals, objects, or actions in books, photos, drawings, or displays. • Brings attention to a picture, photo, sign, label, or familiar image by gesturing, showing, vocalizing, signing, looking, or moving toward it. • Uses picture books, photo displays, environmental print, or familiar visual materials during play and routines to notice and communicate about what is seen.	• Notices familiar pictures, symbols, signs, labels, names, object cues, tangible symbols, environmental print, written words including Braille, or other ways of communication in books, routines, play, and familiar settings. • Identifies or gestures to letters in own name, familiar signs, labels, logos, pictures, symbols, or other meaningful print during play, routines, shared reading, or community experiences. • Uses pictures, symbols, signs, labels, print-like marks, familiar marks, or other ways of communication during drawing, pretend play, writing play, book making, or message-making.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide sturdy books, family photos, picture cards, drawings, symbols, object cues, tangible symbols, labels, signs, and meaningful visual materials that reflect children’s families, languages, experiences, routines, and communities. • Gesture to, name, sign about, touch, and talk about pictures, symbols, signs, labels, names, and familiar print during book sharing, play, caregiving, meals, transitions, outdoor exploration, and community experiences. • Pause during shared reading and routines so children can look, gesture, touch, vocalize, sign, gesture, use AAC, or otherwise communicate about what they notice. • Include meaningful print and visuals in play areas, routines, books, outdoor spaces, classroom displays, dramatic play, art, bookmaking, and shared writing experiences. • Support participation with visuals, AAC, signs, touch cues, object cues, tangible symbols, adapted tools, accessible print, written words including Braille, home-language print, and repeated exposure across settings.				

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)**Strand 4. Emergent Literacy****Goal 4. Child comprehends and conveys meaning from pictures and stories through storytelling and retelling.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Looks at picture books and listens as an adult talks about the pictures.	Gestures to pictures, makes sounds, or says words while interacting with an adult during book reading.	Talks about books and acts out events from stories using words learned during reading.	Children continue to build story understanding as they grow. They begin by looking at pictures, listening as adults talk about books, and responding during shared reading. Over time, they talk, sign, gesture, act out, or otherwise communicate about characters, events, and ideas from stories during reading, play, storytelling, and routines.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Looks at pictures in a book while an adult names, signs about, gestures toward, or talks about what is shown. • Turns eyes, head, or body toward a book, picture, adult voice, signs, gestures, or expressions during lap reading, quiet routines, or shared floor play. • Shows interest in familiar books or pages by stilling, smiling, vocalizing, touching, patting, reaching, or re-engaging during shared book experiences.	• Gestures to, touches, pats, signs about, vocalizes, or names pictures while an adult reads or talks about a book. • Turns pages, returns to favorite pages, or brings a book to an adult or peer for shared reading. • Responds to questions or comments about pictures by looking, vocalizing, gesturing, signing, naming, or otherwise communicating about something in the book.	• Talks, signs, gestures, uses AAC, or otherwise communicates about pictures, characters, actions, or events from a familiar book during or after reading. • Uses familiar words, phrases, actions, sound effects, or story language from books during pretend play, storytelling, social play, or daily routines. • Acts out simple events from stories using body movement, props, puppets, dramatic play materials, signs, gestures, or other familiar communication modes.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide sturdy picture books, photo books, rhyme books, adapted books, and books reflecting children’s families, languages, communities, everyday experiences, nature, and varied abilities. • Hold books so children can see pictures and the adult’s face, signs, gestures, expressions, or communication supports during shared reading. • Talk, sign, gesture, use AAC, and respond to pictures using simple, meaningful language during lap reading, songs, routines, and play. • Repeat favorite books, key words, phrases, actions, and sound effects so children can join in and use story language in familiar ways. • Provide props, puppets, pictures, dramatic play materials, movement, drawing, and AAC supports so children can respond to and act out story events in different ways.				

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)**Strand 4. Emergent Literacy****Goal 5. Child makes increasingly purposeful marks and uses them to represent objects, actions, and ideas.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Explores books, paper, marks, and writing-related materials through looking, touching, mouthing, reaching, and early grasping with adult support.	Uses hands and simple writing tools to explore marks, surfaces, and materials through sensory and motor actions.	Makes scribbles, lines, circles, or other marks with growing purpose and begins to communicate that marks can stand for objects, actions, or ideas.	Children continue to build early writing skills as they grow. They begin by exploring books, paper, writing tools, and marks through sensory and motor actions. Over time, they use purposeful marks, scribbles, drawings, and simple symbols to represent people, objects, actions, stories, plans, and ideas during play, routines, and shared experiences.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Looks at, reaches toward, pats, mouths, or explores books, paper, marks, pictures, or safe writing-related materials during play and routines. • Grasps, waves, taps, or bangs a large crayon, marker, adapted tool, or other safe writing-related material during supervised exploration. • Shows interest in high-contrast marks, pictures, lines, textures, or adult mark-making by looking, touching, moving, or re-engaging.	• Grasps a large crayon, marker, adapted tool, or other writing tool and makes marks on paper or another writing surface with support as needed. • Uses repeated arm or hand movements to create lines, dots, scribbles, patches of color, or marks during play and exploration. • Looks at marks being made and returns to the surface, tool, or material to make more marks.	• Makes scribbles, lines, circles, marks, drawings, or other symbols and communicates that they stand for something. • Uses words, signs, gestures, actions, AAC, or other communication modes to tell what a scribble, mark, drawing, or symbol means. • Creates purposeful marks during art, pretend play, bookmaking, outdoor play, message-making, play plans, or routine-based writing experiences.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide safe, supervised opportunities to explore sturdy books, tactile books, paper, adapted materials, large writing tools, textured surfaces, and safe writing-related materials. • Model simple mark-making while talking, signing, gesturing, or using AAC about what children see, do, notice, or create. • Offer repeated opportunities for mark-making during art, sensory play, outdoor experiences, dramatic play, block play, bookmaking, message-making, and everyday routines. • Respond to children’s marks as meaningful and invite them to talk, sign, gesture, use AAC, or otherwise communicate what the marks mean. • Include familiar print, home-language print, symbols, object cues, tangible symbols, accessible writing tools, adapted materials, Braille, and message-making experiences that reflect children’s lives and communication modes.				

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)

Strand 5. Phonological Awareness

Goal 1. Child attends to, repeats, and uses rhymes, phrases, and sound patterns in spoken language with increasing awareness.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
This goal builds on earlier language and communication experiences, including listening, shared attention, songs, rhymes, rhythm, repeated phrases, gestures, and responsive interaction. Infants and toddlers begin by joining songs, chants, stories, finger plays, and playful sound patterns. These early experiences help children notice that spoken language has sounds, rhythms, rhymes, syllables, and beginning sounds that they can play with more intentionally in preschool.			Enjoys rhymes and alliteration and, with adult support, distinguishes rhyming words and words with the same beginning sound.	Recognizes rhyming words, notices sound changes in spoken words, and begins to identify syllables and sounds in words.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Repeats and enjoys rhyming words, playful alliteration, and sound patterns during songs, poems, chants, stories, and word play. • Notices when two words rhyme or alliterate during shared reading, music, movement games, or playful conversation with adult support. • Uses rhyme and sound play during pretend play, storytelling, outdoor games, or playful talk with peers and adults.	• Identifies which words rhyme in songs, poems, chants, stories, or word games. • Notices when a word in a familiar song, rhyme, or phrase sounds different or has been changed. • Claps, taps, marches, or counts syllables and identifies beginning sounds in familiar spoken words during music, movement, games, conversation, or shared reading.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Provide songs, poems, books, chants, and playful oral language experiences that feature rhyme, alliteration, syllables, and sound patterns across the day. • Model listening for rhyming words, beginning sounds, syllables, and playful sound changes during stories, transitions, music, movement, and small-group play. • Use pictures, objects, names, natural materials, and familiar words to help children compare sounds in meaningful ways. • Encourage children to clap, tap, sort, match, move, or respond to rhymes, syllables, and sounds through playful, easy, and optional activities. • Adapt participation with gestures, visuals, repeated modeling, partner responses, AAC, and home-language connections so all children can engage.	

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)**Strand 6. Print and Alphabet Knowledge****Goal 1. Child identifies letters of the alphabet and produces correct sounds associated with letters.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
This goal builds on earlier language, communication, and early literacy experiences, including shared book engagement, meaningful print, name recognition, symbolic representation, and mark-making. Infants and toddlers begin by noticing names, signs, labels, books, pictures, and familiar symbols. These early experiences help children understand that letters have names, shapes, and sounds that can be used in reading, writing, and play.			Shows awareness of alphabet letters by singing alphabet songs, recognizing letters in own name, or naming familiar letters.	Recognizes and names at least half of the alphabet, including letters in own name, and produces the sounds of many letters.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Joins in singing or reciting parts of alphabet songs, chants, or playful letter routines. • Recognizes and gestures to letters in their own name or in the names of familiar people during sign-in, book sharing, or play. • Notices, names, matches, sorts, builds, traces, or chooses familiar letters during play and routines.	• Recognizes and names many uppercase and lowercase letters, including letters in their first and last name. • Produces the sounds of many recognized letters during songs, word play, shared reading, writing, or games. • Uses letter knowledge during meaningful reading and writing experiences, such as signing in, labeling work, making signs, or writing messages.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Provide daily exposure to alphabet songs, letter chants, and playful routines that make letters memorable and meaningful. • Highlight letters in children’s names and familiar environmental print during routines, play, and shared reading. • Offer varied materials such as magnetic letters, puzzles, stamps, blocks, chalk, sand trays, alphabet books, sensory letters, and familiar print so children can explore letters in multiple ways. • Connect letter names and sounds to children’s names, familiar words, favorite books, signs, home-language connections, and familiar relevant print. • Adapt supports with visuals, tactile materials, AAC, sign, home-language connections, movement, repeated modeling, and accessible tools so all children can participate in letter and sound learning.	

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)

Strand 6. Print and Alphabet Knowledge

Goal 2. Child recognizes pictures, symbols, signs, and words and shows understanding of how print is used and works.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
This goal builds on earlier language, communication, and early literacy experiences, including joint attention, shared reading, and recognition of familiar symbols and images. Infants and toddlers begin by interacting with books, pictures, symbols, and meaningful print. These early experiences help children understand that print carries meaning and follows predictable patterns.			Distinguishes print from pictures and shows that print carries meaning.	Shows understanding that print represents spoken language and follows basic print conventions such as holding a book correctly and moving left to right.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Gestures to or talks about print separately from pictures in books, signs, charts, labels, or drawings. • Uses print in play as meaningful, such as pretending to read a sign, label, recipe, map, or list. • Shows that print carries meaning by asking what words say or treating written words as something to be read, followed, or used.	• Shows understanding that print stands for spoken, signed, or otherwise communicated language during reading, writing, or shared language activities. • Holds a book right side up, turns pages in order, and follows print in the expected direction during shared reading. • Uses basic print conventions during play and routines, such as making signs, books, lists, labels, or messages.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Model the difference between pictures and print during shared reading, environmental print walks, play, and daily routines. • Point or gesture to print as it is read in books, charts, signs, labels, recipes, maps, and classroom messages. • Provide print-rich materials in dramatic play, block play, art, science, outdoor exploration, and routine areas. • Use familiar books, signs, charts, oral stories, and other texts in one or more languages so children can connect communication, print, and meaning. • Support all children with visual cues, repeated modeling, AAC, tactile supports, adapted books, and accessible print materials so they can participate fully in print-focused experiences.	

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)

Strand 7. Comprehension and Text Structure

Goal 1. Child comprehends and conveys meaning from pictures and stories through storytelling and retelling.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
This goal builds on earlier language, communication, and early literacy experiences. Infants and toddlers begin by sharing attention, looking at books, responding to pictures, hearing repeated story language, joining songs, using gestures, pretending, and acting out familiar routines. These early experiences help children understand story events, retell important parts, use sequence, and share meaning through speech, sign, movement, drawing, AAC, dramatic play, or other familiar communication modes.			With adult support, tells one or two key events from a story or acts out the story using pictures or props.	With adult support, retells 2–3 key events from a familiar story in order using simple sequencing words, pictures, props, drawings, movement, speech, sign, AAC, or other communication modes.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Tells, signs, acts out, or otherwise communicates one or two important events from a familiar story with adult prompts, pictures, or props. • Uses familiar story language, character names, repeated phrases, pictures, props, puppets, or dramatic play materials to retell or act out key parts of a story. • Responds to adult questions about what happened first or next in a familiar story during book discussion, pretend play, small-group work, or storytelling activities.	• Retells two or three important events from a familiar story in order using words such as “first,” “next,” “then,” and “last,” with support as needed. • Uses pictures, props, puppets, drawings, dramatic play, peer support, speech, sign, AAC, or movement to retell important story events in order. • Describes what happened to characters across the beginning, middle, and end of a familiar story during conversation, play, storytelling, book discussions, or group activities.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Provide repeated readings of familiar stories and use prompts, pictures, props, story cards, wait time, and modeling to support children in identifying and retelling important events. • Model simple sequencing language, such as “first,” “then,” “next,” “after,” “before,” “because,” and “last,” during shared reading, dramatic play, shared writing, storytelling, and project work. • Offer story cards, puppets, props, drawings, peer partnership, AAC, signs, gestures, and movement-based reenactments so all children can participate in retelling. • Encourage children to retell stories in multiple ways, including speech, sign, AAC, drawing, acting, storytelling, and collaborative play. • Include familiar, relevant books and oral storytelling traditions so children can connect story events to meaningful experiences.	

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)

Strand 7. Comprehension and Text Structure

Goal 2. Child engages with books and uses them to build understanding by asking and answering questions about stories and information.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
This goal builds on earlier language, communication, and early literacy experiences. Infants and toddlers begin by sharing attention, handling books, looking at pictures, joining conversations, and recognizing familiar people, objects, actions, and events in books. These early experiences help children ask and answer questions, make predictions, use story details, and build understanding from stories, informational texts, oral storytelling, and shared discussions.			With adult support, asks and answers questions about characters, events, pictures, or information in familiar stories and informational texts and makes simple predictions.	With adult support, answers “who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” “how,” or “why” questions about stories and informational texts and begins to use details from pictures, text, or discussion to explain thinking.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Asks or answers simple questions about characters, events, pictures, story details, or information during shared reading and discussion. • Talks about favorite parts of a story or informational text, shares what was learned, or comments on what might happen next with adult support. • Uses pictures, props, movement, dramatic play, or other familiar communication modes to show ideas about story events, information, or predictions.	• Answers “who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” “how,” or “why” questions about familiar stories and informational texts using details from pictures, text read aloud, discussion, or remembered events. • Uses details from stories, informational texts, pictures, diagrams, charts, discussion, drawing, dramatic play, or retelling to explain an answer. • Participates in longer book conversations by listening to questions and giving connected responses with support as needed.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Ask simple “who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” “how,” and “why” questions during and after reading stories and informational texts, and give children time to respond in multiple ways. • Model wondering aloud, making predictions, and looking back at pictures, repeated phrases, earlier events, diagrams, charts, or facts to think about an answer. • Use picture supports, props, story boards, puppets, dramatic play, photos, charts, diagrams, maps, or other text features to help children ask and answer questions about stories and information. • Encourage children to answer through speech, sign, AAC, drawing, acting, movement, or collaborative storytelling so every child can participate. • Select familiar, relevant, and meaningful books, informational texts, and oral stories so children can connect prior experiences, content knowledge, and story details.	

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)

Strand 8. Writing

Goal 1. Child makes increasingly purposeful marks and uses writing to represent objects, actions, and ideas for a variety of purposes.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
This goal builds on earlier language, communication, and early literacy experiences. Infants and toddlers begin by exploring materials, making marks, pretending, noticing meaningful print, and watching adults use writing. Early experiences with paper, books, writing tools, drawing, symbols, signs, and print help children understand that marks, drawings, letters, and invented spelling can show ideas, stories, plans, messages, and information.			Draws and scribbles to show ideas and, with adult support, begins to form letters or letter-like shapes.	Uses drawings, scribbles, letter-like shapes, letters, and invented spelling to show ideas, stories, plans, messages, or information, with adult support for connecting sounds, letters, and meaning.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Draws or scribbles to represent people, ideas, stories, plans, or experiences during play and learning. • Tells what a drawing or writing attempt means and may add marks to clarify the message. • Combines drawing, scribbling, letter-like shapes, or a few recognizable letters to communicate an idea.	• Uses drawings, scribbles, letter-like shapes, letters, or invented spelling to communicate ideas, stories, plans, messages, or information. • Writes with clear purpose during play and routines, such as making signs, lists, cards, labels, messages, maps, or simple books. • Talks about what was written and may read it back using own words, signs, AAC, or explanations.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Provide writing-rich environments with paper, markers, crayons, chalk, clipboards, adapted tools, and varied writing surfaces across play areas and routines. • Model how drawing, scribbling, early letters, and invented spelling can be used to make signs, lists, labels, notes, stories, plans, and messages in meaningful contexts. • Encourage children to explain their drawings and writing and add details through talk, sign, gesture, AAC, drawing, or additional marks. • Support children in writing for real purposes during dramatic play, block play, outdoor exploration, projects, routines, and shared inquiry. • Treat invented spelling as a meaningful attempt to connect sounds, letters, and ideas in writing, and model connecting sounds to letters without requiring conventional spelling or overcorrecting early writing.	

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)**Strand 9. Understanding and Responding Across Languages and Communication Modes****Goal 1. Child attends to, understands, and responds to language across contexts using gestures, actions, home language(s), English, and other communication modes.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Responds to familiar voices, rhythms, sound patterns, tones, songs, chants, rhymes, gestures, signs, and routines in home language(s), English, and other languages used by familiar adults.	Recognizes and responds to familiar names, routine words, phrases, gestures, signs, songs, and actions in home language(s), English, or both, especially when paired with familiar people, objects, routines, repetition, and visual cues.	Understands familiar words, phrases, questions, and one-step directions in routines and play and responds using context, gestures, visuals, signs, home language(s), English, or mixed-language communication; may understand more than the child can express in one or both languages.	Understands related directions, questions, stories, explanations, and content-related language in routines, play, and learning experiences and responds using home language(s), English, peer or adult support, visuals, gestures, signs, AAC, or mixed-language communication as needed.	Understands increasingly complex directions, questions, descriptions, explanations, stories, classroom routines, and content-related language and responds using home language(s), English, visuals, gestures, signs, AAC, mixed-language communication, and support as needed; may show stronger understanding in one language than another depending on exposure and opportunity.

Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors

• Looks toward, quiets, moves, or responds to familiar voices, songs, chants, rhymes, rhythms, tones, signs, gestures, or routines in home language(s), English, or other familiar languages. • Responds to changes in tone, rhythm, intonation, facial expression, gestures, signs, or body language used by familiar adults. • Shows recognition of familiar routine words, sounds, signs, gestures, or phrases through movement, expression, gaze, vocalization, stilling, or body relaxation.	• Responds to familiar words or phrases in home language(s), English, or both, such as names, greetings, comfort words, safety words, or routine phrases. • Looks toward, gestures to, touches, or moves toward familiar people, objects, pictures, or places when named in a familiar language. • Observes and imitates adult or peer actions, gestures, signs, sounds, or words during songs, routines, play, book sharing, or social interaction.	• Follows one-step directions in familiar routines using home language(s), English, gestures, visuals, signs, objects, peer models, AAC, or context. • Responds to familiar questions by looking, gesturing, acting, signing, using home language(s), using English, mixing languages, or using AAC. • Shows understanding of a word, idea, question, or routine in the home language before, or instead of, showing the same understanding in English.	• Follows related two-step directions in familiar routines, play, or learning activities with visual, peer, adult, AAC, or language supports. • Responds to who, what, and where questions using home language(s), English, gestures, signs, visuals, AAC, actions, drawings, or mixed-language communication. • Shows understanding during stories, small groups, math, science, social and emotional development, pretend play, or routines through actions, words, drawings, gestures, signs, AAC, or home-language responses.	• Follows multi-step directions and classroom routines with visual, peer, adult, AAC, home-language, English, or other language supports. • Responds to why and how questions, descriptions, explanations, and story events using home language(s), English, gestures, visuals, signs, AAC, actions, or mixed-language communication. • Uses knowledge from one language to make meaning in another, such as connecting familiar words, sounds, story ideas, routines, or content concepts across languages.
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Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)

Strand 9. Understanding and Responding Across Languages and Communication Modes

Goal 1. Child attends to, understands, and responds to language across contexts using gestures, actions, home language(s), English, and other communication modes.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Partner with families to learn children’s names, comfort words, routine phrases, signs, gestures, songs, chants, rhymes, pronunciation, and communication patterns in the home language(s). • Use warm tone, clear intonation, timing, gestures, visuals, signs, objects, actions, and repeated routines to make meaning easier to understand. • Repeat important words and phrases in English and, when possible, in the child’s home language. Use English as an added support, not as a replacement for the child’s home language. • Provide songs, chants, rhymes, books, play interactions, and routines that include home language(s), English, and other languages used by familiar adults. • Give children time to observe, listen, imitate, gesture, sign, act, use AAC, or respond in the language or communication mode available to them.			• Model language usage to give directions, ask and answer questions, and describe and explain during play, routines, stories, and content-area learning while accepting responses in home language(s), English, gestures, signs, AAC, actions, drawings, or mixed-language communication. • Preview and repeat key words and concepts in many ways, such as using visuals, objects, movement, peer modeling, routine cues, AAC, home-language connections, and familiar words, or phrases from the child’s family. • Check understanding by inviting children to point, gesture, draw, act out, use a home-language word, sign, use AAC, or explain in a familiar language. • Use increasingly rich language across content areas and routines while offering visuals, gestures, AAC, peer support, familiar words from home or community, and time to process. • Assess understanding and content knowledge across all languages and communication modes the child has opportunities to use, not through English output alone.	

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)**Strand 10. Communicating and Expressing Ideas Across Languages and Communication Modes****Goal 1. Child communicates needs, ideas, and experiences using gestures, sounds, signs, home language(s), English, and other communication modes.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Uses sounds, gestures, facial expressions, body movements, gaze, or signs to communicate with familiar adults and participate in early back-and-forth exchanges.	Uses gestures, signs, sounds, vocalizations, first words, or home-language words to communicate needs, interests, feelings, and attention; may imitate familiar sounds, words, signs, or routine phrases.	Combines gestures, signs, sounds, and words from home language(s) and/or English to request, comment, refuse, ask, imitate, and share ideas; may observe quietly, use the words most available, mix languages, or show uneven vocabulary across languages depending on exposure and opportunity.	Uses words, phrases, simple sentences, gestures, signs, visuals, AAC, home language(s), English, or mixed-language communication for different purposes, including requesting, asking, answering, storytelling, social interaction, and explaining.	Uses expanding vocabulary, phrases, sentences, stories, early writing/drawing, gestures, signs, visuals, AAC, home language(s), English, and mixed-language communication to share ideas, ask questions, explain thinking, and participate in relationships, play, routines, and learning; may be stronger in one language than another while continuing to develop across languages.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Uses sounds, gestures, facial expressions, body movements, gaze, or signs to communicate interest, need, comfort, discomfort, or desire for interaction. • Vocalizes, smiles, looks, reaches, moves, or changes expression to gain attention or continue an interaction with a familiar adult. • Engages in back-and-forth exchanges with familiar adults through sounds, movements, gestures, facial expressions, shared attention, or other familiar communication modes.	• Uses gestures, signs, sounds, first words, home-language words, English words, or other familiar communication modes to request, refuse, greet, label, get help, or share interest. • Gestures to, shows, gives, reaches, waves, signs, vocalizes, or moves toward people, objects, or activities to express needs and interests. • Observes and imitates adult or peer sounds, words, gestures, signs, facial expressions, actions, or routine phrases during play and routines.	• Combines gestures, signs, sounds, words, AAC, or emerging phrases to make a message clearer. • Uses mixed-language communication, such as a home-language word with an English word, to express meaning during play, routines, or social interaction. • May be quiet, watch carefully, imitate, use simplified grammar, or use vocabulary unevenly across languages depending on exposure, opportunity, context, and comfort.	• Uses simple phrases or sentences to express needs, ideas, feelings, experiences, or questions. • Participates in brief conversations with adults or peers using available communication tools, gestures, signs, visuals, AAC, drawings, actions, or mixed-language communication to share ideas, ask questions, and explain thinking.	• Uses longer phrases, sentences, stories, drawings, signs, gestures, visuals, AAC, home language(s), English, or mixed-language communication to share ideas, ask questions, and explain thinking. • Uses one or more languages for social and learning purposes, such as negotiating play, describing a process, explaining a phenomenon, telling about an experience, or participating in a group activity. • Draws on knowledge from one language to support another, including vocabulary, grammar patterns, pronunciation, storytelling, or meaning-making.

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)

Strand 10. Communicating and Expressing Ideas Across Languages and Communication Modes

Goal 1. Child communicates needs, ideas, and experiences using gestures, sounds, signs, home language(s), English, and other communication modes.

Birth to 9 months

8 to 18 months

16 to 36 months

3–4 years

4–5 years

Examples of Supportive Strategies

- Respond warmly to children’s sounds, gestures, facial expressions, body movements, gaze, signs, words, AAC, home language(s), English, and mixed-language communication as meaningful.
- Use turn-taking interactions, songs, chants, rhymes, routines, play, and family-shared words to support communication across languages and modes.
- Model simple words, signs, gestures, AAC, routine phrases, and short sentences while accepting communication attempts in any language or mode.
- Invite families to share words, phrases, signs, gestures, and communication patterns children use at home and use them respectfully in daily routines.
- When the adult does not speak the child’s home language, use context, visuals, family-provided words, gestures, and warm acknowledgment to affirm the message and expand in the language available to the adult.

- Model phrases and sentences while accepting responses in home language(s), English, gestures, signs, visuals, AAC, drawings, actions, or mixed-language communication.
- Ask open-ended and inferential questions and allow children to answer by showing, gesturing, drawing, acting, signing, using home language(s), English, or a combination of communication modes.
- Use peers, multilingual staff, interpreters, family-shared words, visuals, objects, and AAC to support communication during play, routines, and learning.
- Extend conversations by affirming meaning, adding vocabulary, modeling language naturally, and avoiding too much correction or discouraging home-language use.
- Offer opportunities to explain, retell, compare, negotiate, draw, write, act, ask questions, and share ideas using children’s full linguistic repertoires across learning areas.

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)**Strand 11. Engaging in Multilingual Language and Literacy Experiences****Goal 1. Child engages in conversations, stories, songs, and early literacy experiences in home language(s), English, and other communication modes to build meaning and relationships.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Attends to songs, rhymes, chants, voices, books, signs, gestures, and shared interactions in home language(s), English, and other communication modes.	Participates in songs, books, finger plays, routines, and shared interactions using gestures, sounds, signs, actions, or home language(s) and/or English.	Participates in repeated stories, songs, pretend play, books, environmental print, and routines using familiar words, phrases, gestures, signs, actions, or mixed-language communication; may join first by watching, imitating, gesturing, or using home-language words.	Engages in conversations, storytelling, songs, books, pretend play, early literacy, and content-area learning using home language(s), English, and other communication supports with adult or peer support; uses language for varied purposes across play, literacy, math, science, social and emotional development, social systems, and the arts.	Engages in extended conversations, storytelling, songs, books, print, drawing/writing, pretend play, and early literacy experiences using home language(s), English, language transfer, and other communication supports with growing participation; begins to use the full linguistic repertoire flexibly to build meaning, relationships, and knowledge across content areas.
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors				
• Attends to communication and interactions in home language(s), English, or other familiar languages. • Shows interest in shared book experiences through looking, touching, moving, vocalizing, calming, or re-engaging. • Responds to interactive routines, finger plays, repeated phrases, rhythms, or familiar language patterns used by family members or familiar adults.	• Participates through gestures, sounds, signs, movement, actions, or repeated words. • Gestures to, touches, looks at, signs about, or vocalizes about pictures, objects, people, symbols, or print during shared books or routines. • Repeats or approximates sounds, signs, actions, words, or phrases from stories, songs, family routines, peer interaction, or adult talk.	• Uses words, gestures, signs, props, actions, or mixed-language communication to participate in activities. • Uses familiar home-language words, English words, signs, gestures, AAC, or mixed-language communication during play, books, songs, stories, or routines. • Joins group routines, story time, songs, or learning activities by watching, imitating, gesturing, signing, moving, acting, or contributing words in a familiar language.	• Uses available communication modes to participate in activities. • Asks or answers questions about stories, pictures, print, songs, routines, or experiences using one or more languages or communication modes. • Uses language and communication to build meaning across learning areas, such as describing, counting, comparing, explaining feelings, naming community roles, wondering about the natural world, or sharing ideas through the arts.	• Chooses from a variety of available communication modes to participate in activities. • Transfers knowledge across languages when opportunities exist, such as recognizing related story ideas, concepts, symbols, vocabulary, print functions, communication patterns, or ways of making meaning. • Uses available languages and ways of communicating with growing flexibility to build understanding, relationships, and knowledge across activities and learning areas, such as retelling, explaining, comparing, exploring, working out play with others, or sharing ideas with different conversation partners.

Learning and Development Area. Language, Communication, and Literacy (LCL)

Strand 11. Engaging in Multilingual Language and Literacy Experiences

Goal 1. Child engages in conversations, stories, songs, and early literacy experiences in home language(s), English, and other communication modes to build meaning and relationships.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Sing songs, chants, rhymes, lullabies, and rhythmic language in home language(s), English, and other familiar languages whenever possible. • Provide simple books, pictures, objects, songs, stories, environmental print, and interactive routines that reflect children’s home life. • Use face-to-face interaction, gestures, signs, touch, movement, objects, visuals, and repeated phrases to build shared meaning during songs, books, routines, and play. • Read simple books daily and invite participation through gestures, signs, movement, sounds, actions, AAC, home-language words, or English words. • Encourage all participation including watching, imitating, gesturing, signing, acting, home-language words, English words, AAC, and mixed-language communication.			• Guide storytelling, book talk, pretend play, songs, early literacy, and content-area conversations using home language(s), English, props, pictures, gestures, signs, drawings, AAC, or mixed-language communication. • Introduce and revisit content vocabulary across routines and learning areas using visuals, objects, movement, family-shared words, peer models, multilingual supports, and meaningful experiences. • Invite children to show understanding by retelling, drawing, acting, gesturing, using home language(s), using English, signing, using AAC, or combining languages and modes. • Offer opportunities to read, tell stories, discuss, draw, write, explain, compare, count, investigate, and share ideas in home language(s), English, or both when materials and supports are available. • Affirm language mixing and language transfer as children use their full linguistic repertoire to build meaning, relationships, and knowledge across content areas.	