
WISCONSIN EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

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About This Draft for Public Comment

This public review draft focuses on the proposed Wisconsin Early Learning and Development Guidelines (WI ELDGs) and is being shared to gather feedback and input. Additional introductory content describing the development and revision process, key updates from the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS), acknowledgments, and related background information will be included in the final published version.

The WI ELDGs build on the strengths of the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards while updating the content, structure, and guidance to reflect current research, statewide input, and the needs of Wisconsin's early childhood system. Major updates include:

- A birth-to-kindergarten-entry developmental progression.
- Updated learning areas, strands, goals, and developmental expectations.
- Greater emphasis on children's observable behaviors and supportive strategies.
- Expanded attention to play, multilingual development, welcoming participation, and family well-being.
- Addition of Family and Community Partnerships as a Learning and Development Area.

To learn more about the development of the WI ELDGs, the statewide engagement process, project timeline, and opportunities to provide feedback during the public review period, please visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/eldg>.

Purpose of the WI ELDGs

The Wisconsin Early Learning and Development Guidelines (WI ELDGs) provide a shared framework for understanding how young children grow, learn, and develop from birth to kindergarten entry. They are intended to support high-quality early learning experiences across all settings and communities where young children learn, grow, and experience the world around them. Further, they have been intentionally designed to support all children, recognizing their strengths, abilities, languages, backgrounds, experiences, and developmental pathways.

Reflecting a whole-child approach, the Guidelines are organized into six interconnected Learning and Development Areas:

- Social and Emotional Development
- Approaches to Learning
- Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
- Language, Communication, and Literacy
- Cognition and General Knowledge
- Family and Community Partnerships

The WI ELDGs are intended to be flexible and responsive to children's individual development. They are a resource for reflection, partnership, and responsive practice, not a compliance tool, and are designed to strengthen understanding, collaboration, and continuous learning in service of Wisconsin's children and families.

The WI ELDGs ARE: • A shared framework for understanding children’s learning and development from birth to kindergarten entry. • A resource for planning, reflection, and responsive practice. • A tool for supporting collaboration among families, professionals, programs, schools, and communities. • A guide for creating well-rounded, responsive, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences.	The WI ELDGs ARE NOT: • A curriculum. • An assessment tool. • A checklist for evaluating children. • A mandate for when or how individual children must develop. • A tool for labeling, tracking, comparing, or excluding children. • A compliance tool for evaluating children, families, professionals, or programs.
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Who Uses the Wisconsin Early Learning and Development Guidelines?

Primary Users: Early Childhood Professionals

The Wisconsin Early Learning and Development Guidelines (WI ELDGs) are designed primarily for the early childhood professionals who work directly with young children and families across Wisconsin’s mixed-delivery early childhood system, including:

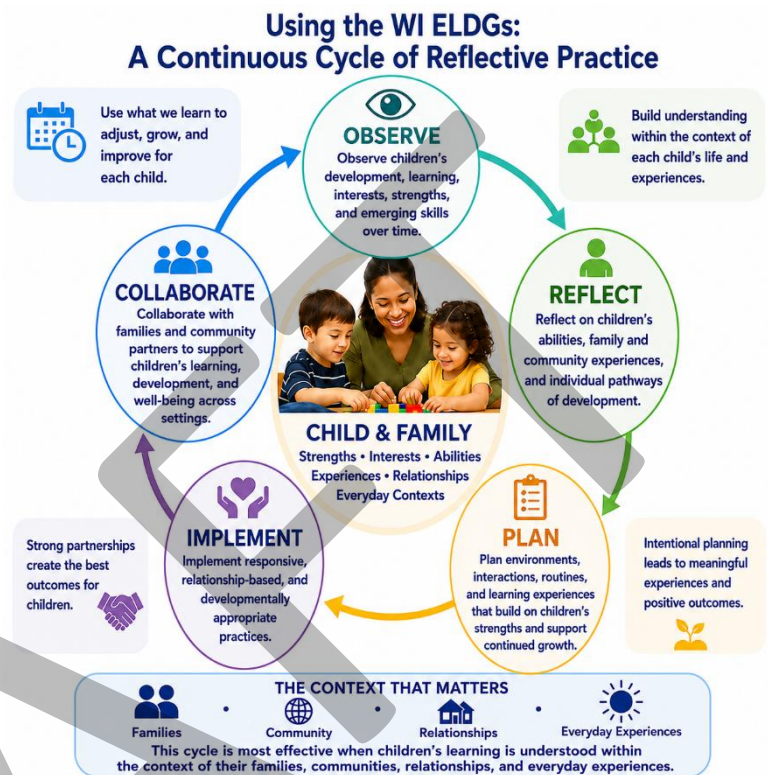
- Child care providers
- Family child care providers
- Head Start and Early Head Start staff
- 4K and preschool educators
- Home visitors
- Family support professionals
- Early interventionists
- Early childhood special educators
- Other professionals who support children’s learning, development, and well-being

The WI ELDGs are intended to support all children, recognizing that children develop and show what they know and can do in different ways shaped by their abilities, backgrounds, languages, experiences, relationships, and environments. The WI ELDGs promote responsive, developmentally appropriate practices that help every child belong, take part, and learn.

Using the WI ELDGs in Practice

The WI ELDGs are designed to support an ongoing cycle of observing, reflecting, planning, trying ideas, collaborating with others, and learning. Professionals may use the WI ELDGs in many different settings to:

- **Observe** children's development, learning, interests, strengths, and emerging skills over time.
- **Reflect** on children's experiences, abilities, family and community contexts, and individual development pathways.
- **Plan** environments, interactions, routines, and learning experiences that build on children's strengths and support continued growth.
- **Implement** responsive, relationship-based, and developmentally appropriate practices.
- **Collaborate** with families and community partners to support children's learning, development, and well-being across settings.



Key terms used throughout these guidelines are defined in the Glossary at the end of this document.

Essential Partners: Families

Families are children's first and most important teachers. Children thrive when early childhood professionals support, value, and partner with families. The WI ELDGs support two-way family-professional partnerships by providing a shared understanding of children's learning and development across home, early learning programs, schools, health care, and community settings.

Families may use the WI ELDGs to:

- Learn about their child's development and learning.
- Reflect on their child's strengths, interests, abilities, and experiences.
- Partner with professionals to support their child's growth, learning, and well-being.
- Share insights about their child's language, family traditions, background, priorities, and goals.
- Engage in meaningful conversations about their child's development across settings.
- Identify resources and supports that strengthen family well-being and children's development.
- Prepare for and manage important transitions between programs, services, and school settings.

The Family and Community Partnerships Learning and Development Area expands on these ideas by describing practices that strengthen family well-being, build two-way family-professional partnerships, connect families with community resources, and support children and families through important transitions across early childhood.

Supporting Partners Across Wisconsin's Early Childhood System

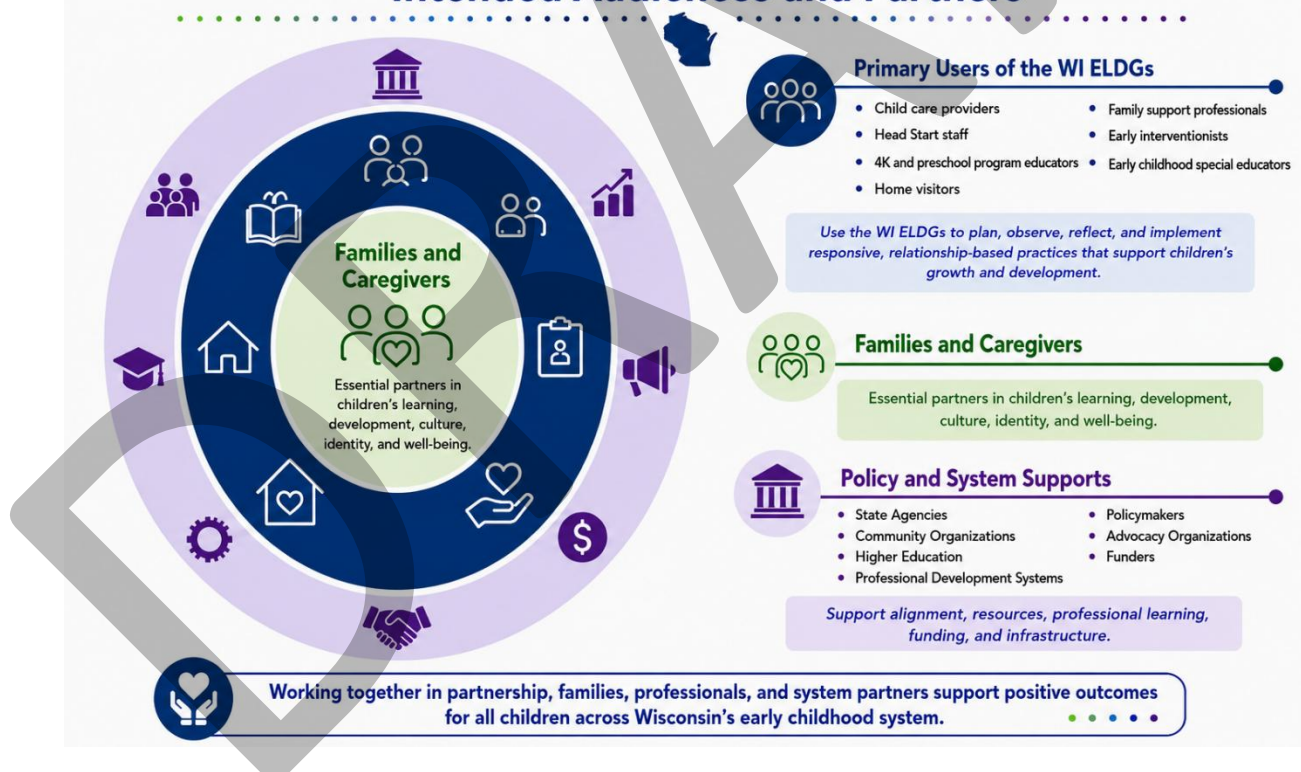
The WI ELDGs may also be used by others who support children's learning and development, including:

- Health, mental health, and community-based professionals
- Higher education faculty and students
- Professional development providers and coaches
- Program administrators and leaders
- Policymakers and system leaders
- Other cross-sector partners

These partners may use the WI ELDGs to support consistent approaches across programs and systems, collaboration, professional learning, program planning, and decision-making across Wisconsin's early childhood system.

Although different audiences use the WI ELDGs in different ways, they share a common purpose: supporting positive outcomes for children through responsive relationships, meaningful learning experiences, strong family partnerships, and coordinated community supports.

Wisconsin Early Learning and Development Guidelines (WI ELDGs): *Intended Audiences and Partners*



Structure and Organization of the Wisconsin Early Learning and Development Guidelines

The WI ELDGs are organized into six Learning and Development Areas that describe children's development from birth to kindergarten. Children's development is holistic and interconnected, with learning occurring across all areas through play, exploration, relationships, routines, and interactions with people and their environments. Each child develops along a unique pathway shaped by their relationships, languages, abilities, families, communities, and experiences. The six Learning and Development Areas below describe the primary focus of each area while recognizing that children's learning and development are interconnected.

Interrelated Learning and Development Areas

Learning and Development Area	Primary Focus
Social and Emotional Development	• Building secure relationships • Developing a positive sense of identity and belonging • Understanding and expressing emotions • Developing social skills and self-regulation
Approaches to Learning	• Developing curiosity • Creativity • Persistence • Attention • Flexible thinking • Self-regulation • Problem-solving
Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development	• Developing sensory processing • Movement • Coordination • Physical health • Safety • Nutrition • Motor skills
Language, Communication, and Literacy	• Understanding and expressing ideas through language and multiple communication modes • Developing communication across home language(s), English, and other communication systems • Building the foundations for reading and writing.
Cognition and General Knowledge	• Exploring • Remembering • Reasoning • Solving problems • Developing early mathematical, scientific, and social understanding • Building knowledge about themselves, their families, communities, and the world

Learning and Development Area	Primary Focus
Family and Community Partnerships	• Strengthening family well-being • Two-way family-professional partnerships and communication • Connections to community resources • Shared responsibility for supporting children’s learning, development, and successful transitions across settings

Organization of the WI ELDGs

The WI ELDGs are organized as developmental progressions from birth to kindergarten entry. The age ranges are used to show general patterns of development and are intended to support understanding of children’s learning over time rather than define rigid expectations. Children develop in different ways.

Each Learning and Development Goal follows a consistent structure that includes developmental expectations, examples of children’s observable behaviors, and examples of supportive strategies. Together, these components help adults observe, reflect, plan, and implement responsive practices that support children’s learning and development through relationships, routines, play, and meaningful experiences. Some Learning and Development Areas include additional preschool strands that build on foundations established during infancy and toddlerhood. The figure on the next page illustrates how to read a Learning and Development Goal.

How to Read a Learning and Development Goal

The Wisconsin Early Learning and Development Guidelines use a consistent structure across all learning areas to show how children's learning and development progress over time and how adults can support that growth.

SAMPLE GOAL PAGE


LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT AREA
 Social and Emotional Development


STRAND
 Relationships with Adults


GOAL
 Child learns to use adults as a resource to meet needs.

DEVELOPMENTAL EXPECTATIONS				
Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Communicates needs to familiar adults.	Seeks help from familiar adults.	Asks familiar adults for help.	Uses adults for guidance, support, and learning.	Uses adults as a resource while showing increasing independence.


EXAMPLES OF CHILDREN'S OBSERVABLE BEHAVIORS

- Looks toward a familiar adult when help is needed.
- Uses gestures, signs, words, or actions to seek help.
- Asks adults for assistance during challenging situations.
- Seeks out a familiar adult during routines or transitions.


EXAMPLES OF SUPPORTIVE STRATEGIES

- Respond promptly and consistently to children's cues and requests for help.
- Model help-seeking during play, routines, and problem-solving.
- Name needs and strategies: "You can ask me for help."
- Offer encouragement, guidance, and appropriate support.
- Build trusting relationships and routines where asking for help is valued.



Each goal page includes six key components.

Use this guide to understand what each part means and how to use the information.

1

Learning Area

Broad area of children's learning and development (e.g., Social and Emotional Development).

2

Strand

Related concepts or skills within a learning and development area (e.g., Relationships with Adults).

3

Goal

Broad statement describing an important developmental outcome for children.

4

Developmental Expectations

Broad descriptions of how children's learning and development progress across age bands from birth through kindergarten entry.

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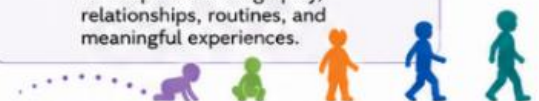
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors

Examples of what children may say, do, show, or demonstrate as their learning and development progress.

6

Examples of Supportive Strategies

Examples of adult practices and environmental supports that promote learning and development through play, relationships, routines, and meaningful experiences.



Key Design Features of the Wisconsin Early Learning and Development Guidelines

The WI ELDGs include several key design features that reflect current research, best practices, and extensive input from Wisconsin partners. These features shape how the WI ELDGs are organized, interpreted, and used to support children's learning and development across settings, communities, and experiences.

Whole-Child Development and Integrated Learning

Children's learning and development are interconnected. Growth in one area supports and is supported by growth in others. For example, language and communication support relationships, thinking, and problem-solving; physical development enables exploration and participation in learning; and social and emotional development supports attention, persistence, self-regulation, and engagement.

The WI ELDGs are grounded in a whole-child approach that recognizes children develop through how social, emotional, physical, language, communication, thinking, and learning skills grow together. Although the Learning and Development Areas are organized separately to make the WI ELDGs easier to use, they should not be viewed as separate parts of development. Children learn through integrated experiences in which multiple areas develop together.

Everyday experiences, including play, responsive relationships, routines, conversations, exploration, and daily interactions, naturally support learning across multiple Learning and Development Areas at the same time. For this reason, adults should use the WI ELDGs to understand children's development as a connected, ongoing process rather than as a checklist of isolated skills.

Development Across a Birth-to-Five Continuum

The WI ELDGs are designed as a continuous birth-to-five framework that reflects the developmental progression of learning from infancy through kindergarten entry. Development builds over time, with early experiences and relationships providing the foundation for later learning.

Rather than presenting learning as a series of disconnected age-specific expectations, the WI ELDGs show how children's knowledge, skills, behaviors, and understandings become increasingly complex over time. This structure helps users understand how early skills support later learning while promoting greater alignment across programs, settings, and systems that serve young children and families.

Play as a Foundation for Learning

Play is the primary way young children learn about themselves, others, and the world around them. Through play, children explore ideas, build relationships, solve problems, express emotions, develop language, strengthen their bodies, and make sense of their experiences. Play supports all areas of learning and development and provides opportunities to practice emerging skills in meaningful and engaging ways.

Play takes many forms, including free exploration, imaginative and dramatic play, social and collaborative play, guided exploration, and games or structured play experiences. These forms of play often overlap and change as children grow and learn. Regardless of the form it takes, play supports curiosity, creativity, communication, self-regulation, confidence, and learning.

Adults have important roles in supporting children's play. They may observe, participate, extend children's thinking, introduce new materials or ideas, and create environments that encourage exploration while preserving children's active role in directing their learning.

The WI ELDGs treat play not as a separate area, but as a foundational context through which learning and development occur. Play is intentionally woven throughout the WI ELDGs in developmental expectations, examples of children's observable behaviors, and examples of supportive strategies.

Continuum of Play Experiences

The visual below illustrates several common forms of play along a continuum from child-directed to adult-supported experiences. These categories are flexible and do not need to happen in a set order, and many play experiences include features of more than one type. Children benefit from opportunities to engage in a variety of play experiences, with adults responding flexibly to children's interests, strengths, and learning needs.



Family and Community Partnerships: Families as Children’s First and Most Important Teachers

Children develop and learn through relationships. Families are children’s first and most influential teachers and remain central partners in children’s learning and development throughout early childhood. Family members provide caring relationships, experiences, values, backgrounds, languages, and everyday interactions that shape children’s understanding of themselves, others, and the world around them.

Children thrive when families are supported. Family well-being, including physical and mental health, social connections, economic stability, access to resources, and opportunities to build on family strengths, creates the conditions that help children feel safe, secure, connected, and ready to learn.

The WI ELDGs recognize that meaningful partnerships between families, professionals, and communities strengthen children’s learning, development, and well-being. Families bring unique knowledge about their children, while professionals bring knowledge about child development, learning, family support, and responsive practices. Together, families and professionals create a shared foundation for supporting children’s growth. Community organizations, health care providers, early intervention and special education providers, family support programs, libraries, Tribal community service providers, and other local partners also play important roles in strengthening families and expanding opportunities for children to learn and thrive.

Family and Community Partnerships is intentionally included as a Learning and Development Area because strong family-professional partnerships are more than a program practice; they are a critical component of children’s development and learning. Through responsive relationships with trusted adults across home, early care and education settings, schools, health systems, and community environments, children develop a sense of belonging, identity, security, confidence, and participation in learning. Strong partnerships also help families access supports, manage transitions, and help keep support consistent across the people and places that shape children’s lives.

Family perspectives, experiences, and partnerships are embedded across the WI ELDGs’ developmental expectations and supportive strategies. The Family and Community Partnerships area also provides a dedicated focus on the relationships, communication, collaboration, shared decision-making, and connections to community resources that strengthen family well-being and support children’s learning, development, and long-term success.

Multilingual Development: Building on Children’s Languages as Assets

Language is central to children’s learning, relationships, and sense of belonging. Many children in Wisconsin grow up using, hearing, or learning more than one language, including home languages, Tribal languages, heritage languages, American Sign Language, English, and other communication systems used within families and communities.

The WI ELDGs recognize multilingualism as an asset and a strength. Research shows that strong development in home and family languages supports communication, literacy, learning, cognitive development, sense of self, and connections to family and community.

Rather than treating multilingual development as a separate area of learning, the WI ELDGs intentionally include it throughout the Language, Communication, and Literacy Development area. Its three strands are 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. These integrated strands highlight how children develop language and literacy across the languages and communication systems they use. This design supports multilingual development by recognizing it as a core component of language and literacy development for all children, while affirming that supporting children's languages strengthens learning, identity, relationships, and overall well-being.

Learning for All Children

Every child brings unique strengths, abilities, interests, experiences, and ways of learning. The WI ELDGs are designed to support all children, including children with disabilities, developmental delays, and special health care needs; multilingual learners; and children with a wide range of strengths and experiences.

Learning environments that welcome children and respond to their needs support how children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. Children benefit when adults build on each child's strengths, partner with families, and design environments, materials, routines, communication, and experiences so every child can participate meaningfully. This may include supports, accommodations, and opportunities that help children participate fully in everyday routines, play, learning experiences, and relationships.

Welcoming early learning environments are built on three key ideas:

- **Access** means every child can engage with the environment, materials, activities, communication, routines, and social opportunities. Spaces, materials, communication, and experiences are designed or adapted so children can explore, play, learn, move, communicate, and participate throughout their day. Access may include physical access, communication supports, adapted materials, sensory supports, translation or interpretation, assistive technology, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), and other supports.
- **Participation** means children with and without disabilities learn, play, communicate, and build relationships together. Adults make thoughtful accommodations and adaptations so every child can participate meaningfully in everyday experiences.
- **Individualized supports** recognize that some children benefit from additional services, specialized instruction, assistive technology, AAC, environmental adaptations, or other supports that help them communicate, learn, and participate alongside their peers.

Throughout the WI ELDGs, welcoming practices are embedded across Learning and Development Areas, developmental expectations, examples of children's observable behaviors, and examples of supportive strategies. This integrated approach reflects a commitment to ensuring that every child experiences belonging, meaningful participation, and opportunities to learn, develop, and thrive.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR DIGITAL MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY USE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Digital media and technology are included in the WI ELDGs as a topic that appears across the guidelines rather than as a separate Learning and Development Area. Current research indicates that young children mainly learn through caring relationships, language-rich interactions, play, movement, hands-on exploration, and meaningful participation in everyday routines.

The WI ELDGs do not treat digital media and technology as required for early learning. Digital media and technology are not needed for healthy early learning and development. Children can learn, grow, and be ready for school without using digital media or technology in the early years. Limiting or delaying digital media and technology use is developmentally appropriate, especially for infants and toddlers.

If digital media and technology are used with preschool-age children, they should be used sparingly, intentionally, and with a clear purpose for how it helps the child. Families, caregivers, and professionals should consider the following:

1. Relationships and real-world experiences always come first. Digital media and technology should serve as tools. They should not be treated as foundational for learning, a replacement for relationships, or a default strategy for behavior management, transitions, or instruction.

2. Ask what technology may be replacing. Before using digital media or technology, consider whether it may replace conversation, sleep, movement, outdoor play, peer interaction, hands-on exploration, caregiving routines, or family practices, all of which are essential.

3. Use technology with children, not as a replacement for interaction with adults. Effective use means choosing evidence-based, high-quality tools for a clear purpose and using them with children through watching, playing, creating, and talking together before, during, and after use.

4. Connect digital experiences to real-world learning. Digital tools are most meaningful when they support children's communication, creativity, documentation, exploration, or connection and are related to hands-on experiences, play, books, nature, relationships, and daily routines.

5. Support access and communication. For some children, including children with disabilities, technology may be an important or even essential tool for communication, accessibility, or participation. Assistive technology, adaptive tools, and augmentative and alternative communication can help children express themselves, connect with others, and participate more fully in learning and daily routines.

6. Expect curiosity and imitation. Children may naturally notice, explore, and imitate technology use in their play. Professionals can support this curiosity in developmentally appropriate ways, such as offering pretend phones, keyboards, cameras, recycled materials such as cardboard boxes, drawing tools, or dramatic play props that encourage imagination, communication, and problem-solving.

7. Adults guide healthy habits. Children should never be expected to use digital media and technology independently or manage "balanced use" on their own. Families model and guide healthy digital habits, with support from professionals.

8. Partner with families. Intentional partnership means talking with families about their values, routines, access, concerns, and goals for technology use. Professionals and families can work together to create consistent expectations that protect children's sleep, movement, relationships, play, communication, and well-being.

Guiding Principles for the Wisconsin Early Learning and Development Guidelines

The WI ELDGs are grounded in eight interconnected Guiding Principles that reflect what research, practice, and lived experience tell us about how young children learn and develop. These principles provide a lens for understanding children's development, interpreting developmental progressions, planning responsive learning experiences, and building strong partnerships with families.

Guiding Principles for Learning and Development



Learning and Development Areas

DRAFT

Social and Emotional Development

Social and emotional development begins in children's earliest relationships. Through warm, responsive caregiving, children develop secure attachments that provide a foundation for exploration, learning, emotional security, and healthy relationships. As children grow, they are learning to:

- Build trusting relationships
- Understand and express emotions
- Develop friendships
- Solve social problems
- Develop a positive sense of identity and belonging

Children develop social and emotional skills at different rates and in different ways. Children may show these skills through:

- Facial expressions
- Movement
- Behavior
- Play
- Home language(s)
- Gestures
- Signs
- Spoken words
- Assistive communication (ACC)
- Other familiar ways of communicating and participating

Children's family, abilities, communities, relationships, experiences, and opportunities all shape how they build relationships, express emotions, interact with others, and develop a sense of who they are.

Inside This Learning and Development Area

This area includes four strands and 14 learning goals. The table below highlights what children are learning in this area and how adults can support that learning through warm relationships, responsive interactions, everyday routines, play, and meaningful experiences.

Strand	Children are learning to...	Adults support learning by...
Relationships With Adults	Build trusting relationships with familiar adults and seek support for comfort, learning, and problem-solving.	Building warm, responsive, predictable relationships and responding consistently to children's cues, needs, and interests.
Relationships With Other Children	Develop friendships, cooperate, share play, and solve social problems with support.	Supporting peer relationships, turn-taking, cooperation, problem-solving, repair, and care for others.
Emotional Functioning	Express feelings, needs, and ideas in many ways and manage emotions with support.	Naming emotions, modeling regulation, offering comfort, and coaching children through big feelings and daily challenges.
Sense of Identity and Belonging	Build confidence, self-awareness, identity, and a sense of belonging.	Honoring each child's family, abilities, communities, experiences, strengths, and contributions.

Play Across Social and Emotional Development

The play continuum shows how children build social and emotional skills through a balance of child-directed, shared, and adult-supported play experiences. Across the continuum, children have opportunities to explore preferences, act out feelings and relationships, play with peers, solve social problems, and practice cooperation, regulation, confidence, and belonging.



Learning and Development Area. Social and Emotional Development (SE)**Strand 1. Relationships with Adults****Goal 1. Child learns to use adults as a resource to meet needs.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Communicates needs to familiar adults using a variety of behaviors.	Seeks help from familiar adults for something wanted or needed.	Asks familiar adults for help in difficult tasks or situations.	As children grow, these earlier foundations of using adults as a resource for support and problem-solving continue to develop. Children move from seeking help in immediate situations to using adults more intentionally for guidance, learning, and support, while also showing growing initiative, participation, and use of familiar strategies to manage tasks and challenges with support as needed.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
- Communicates needs or wants through crying, looking, reaching, smiling, body movements, sounds, gestures, or repeated actions. - Directs attention toward a familiar adult, object, or activity connected to a need. - Changes expression or behavior when a need is met or not yet understood and may repeat communication attempts.	- Looks toward, reaches for, or moves to a familiar adult when help is needed. - Takes an adult’s hand, gestures, or brings an adult to a person, object, or place. - Uses sounds, signs, words, actions, or persistence to request help or more when the first attempt is not understood.	- Uses words, signs, gestures, facial expressions, movement, assistive communication (ACC), or combinations of these to ask for or show a need for help. - Seeks out a familiar adult when something is hard, confusing, or not working, or when help is needed during routines, self-care, play, peer interaction, or problem-solving. - Communicates or shows what kind of help is needed and continues working after receiving adult support.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
- Respond promptly and consistently to children’s cues, communication attempts, and help-seeking through gestures, movement, sounds, signs, words, or actions. - Learn each child’s engagement and disengagement cues, such as turning toward or away, brightening, stilling, reaching, arching, fussing, gaze shifting, or needing a pause. - Name needs, actions, problems, and help in simple language, such as “You want up,” “Help open,” or “You needed help opening that.” - Model simple help-seeking during play, routines, and problem-solving using words, signs, or gestures toward objects or picture cards. - Stay nearby during difficult tasks, offer a short break, or step in with hints, partial help, choices, or support before frustration escalates. - Build trusting relationships and routines where asking for help is viewed as a positive and appropriate strategy.				

Learning and Development Area. Social and Emotional Development (SE)**Strand 1. Relationships with Adults****Goal 2. Child engages in positive relationships and interactions with adults with increasing security and consistency.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Responds positively to familiar adults and becomes calm with adult support during stressful moments.	Looks to familiar adults for emotional support and may show distress when separated from them, especially during unfamiliar routines or settings.	Engages in positive interactions with familiar adults and seeks them for comfort when distressed or tired.	Engages in positive interactions with adults, separates from trusted adults in familiar settings, and uses adults to help solve problems.	Shows connection and engagement in interactions with trusted adults and uses familiar routines and supports during separation in familiar settings.
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors				
• Looks toward, quiets, or relaxes in response to a familiar adult's voice, touch, or presence. • Smiles, vocalizes, moves, or shows recognition of familiar adults during everyday interactions. • Accepts comfort from a familiar adult during distress, tiredness, overstimulation, routines, or stressful moments.	• Looks to, reaches for, moves toward, or stays close to a familiar adult when uncertain, upset, tired, or separated. • Seeks closeness, contact, reassurance, or comfort from a familiar adult during challenging moments. • Returns to familiar adults for comfort and security while exploring and recovers more easily from upset with trusted adult support.	• Initiates or joins positive interactions with familiar adults during play, routines, conversation, or caregiving. • Seeks a familiar adult for comfort, help, or reassurance when upset, tired, overwhelmed, or uncertain. • Returns to interaction, play, routines, or activity after receiving comfort or support from a familiar adult.	• Communicates, shares ideas, or shows connection with trusted adults using words, gestures, facial expressions, movement, signs, assistive communication (ACC), or other familiar communication modes. • Separates from familiar adults in familiar settings, using routines, reassurance, or support as needed. • Seeks adults for help with problems, questions, difficult situations, or reassurance, and then returns to play or activity.	• Initiates conversations or interactions with trusted adults and joins longer two-way exchanges using familiar communication modes. • Shows connection, engagement, or comfort during shared activities, conversations, routines, and problem-solving with adults. • Interacts with trusted and less familiar adults with support that matches the child, relationship, setting, situation, and day.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Respond promptly and consistently to children's cues for comfort, connection, reassurance, and support. • Use warm, predictable caregiving routines and repeated responsive interactions so children experience adults as safe, familiar, and dependable. • Offer comfort in ways that match each child's signals, preferences, family routines, and sensory needs, including voice, touch, proximity, quieter spaces, or familiar objects. • Stay close during uncertainty, frustration, stress, or separation, and provide calm reassurance, predictable goodbye/reunion routines, and reconnection. • Encourage exploration while remaining available as a safe person to return to for comfort, help, and shared interaction.			• Build trusting relationships by using children's names warmly, listening, following through, keeping routines predictable, and following through on what you say you will do. • Support separations with familiar routines, calm reassurance, welcoming environments, family partnerships, and trusted adults. • Engage children in meaningful conversations about their ideas, feelings, experiences, questions, and problem-solving efforts. • Stay available as a supportive resource while allowing children to participate, explore, solve problems, and reconnect as needed. • Offer easy, optional ways to interact with less familiar adults while matching support to the child, relationship, setting, and situation.	

Learning and Development Area. Social and Emotional Development (SE)**Strand 1. Relationships with Adults****Goal 3. Child engages in prosocial and cooperative relationships with adults with growing participation and support.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Recognizes familiar adults and may avoid or withdraw from unfamiliar adults.	Stays close to familiar adults and looks to them for security when unfamiliar adults approach.	Watches or waits for reassurance from a familiar adult before approaching an unfamiliar person and may then interact positively.	Shows emerging understanding of familiar expectations and uses adult support during moments of refusal, frustration, or disagreement.	Responds to adult requests and directions with growing understanding and support as needed, and resolves minor conflicts with adult support.
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors				
• Turns toward, smiles, vocalizes, reaches, calms, or shows recognition in response to a familiar adult's voice, face, touch, or presence. • Shows different responses to familiar and unfamiliar adults. • Uses familiar adults as a source of comfort and security in new situations or when approached by an unfamiliar adult.	• Moves toward, stays near, or reaches for a familiar adult when an unfamiliar adult approaches. • Looks to a familiar adult's face, voice, or body language for reassurance in new social situations. • Observes, pauses, or briefly interacts with an unfamiliar adult while checking back with a familiar adult for security.	• Watches an unfamiliar person from a distance before deciding whether to approach. • Seeks reassurance from a familiar adult through looking, words, gestures, movement, or proximity before interacting. • Participates in simple positive interactions with a visitor or less familiar adult, such as showing a toy or sharing a book, with support as needed.	• Participates in greetings, farewells, or everyday social routines with familiar adults using words, gestures, eye gaze, movement, signs, assistive communication (ACC), or other familiar responses. • Follows adult requests or directions with reminders, choices, or support. • Uses adult support to work through refusal, frustration, or disagreement and rejoin routines or interactions.	• Participates in greetings, interactions, and shared routines with familiar adults with support that matches the child and setting. • Responds to adult requests or directions in most situations with reminders or support as needed. • Resolves small problems or disagreements with adults through words, listening, follow-through, or repair with support as needed.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide consistent, responsive caregiving so children build familiarity and trust with key adults. • Introduce unfamiliar adults gradually while a familiar adult stays close, allows the child to watch first, and offers calm reassurance. • Respect children's cues for closeness, caution, withdrawal, observing, or needing more time during new interactions. • Use familiar adults, family information, warm voice, predictable routines, and easy, optional shared activities to support comfort with unfamiliar adults. • Model friendly greetings and simple ways to interact while honoring each child's pace and avoiding forced interaction.			• Build positive daily routines that include greetings, check-ins, warm conversation, clear expectations, and respectful requests. • Offer brief choices, visual cues, or gentle prompts that help children respond to adult requests and routines with support as needed. • Stay calm during refusal, frustration, disagreement, or limit-testing and help children return to expected behavior. • Model respectful disagreement, problem-solving, and repair, such as apologizing and trying again calmly. • Acknowledge children's cooperation, repair, follow-through, and efforts to resolve conflict with adult support.	

Learning and Development Area. Social and Emotional Development (SE)**Strand 2. Relationships with Other Children****Goal 1. Child engages in and maintains positive relationships and interactions with other children.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Shows interest in other children and recognizes familiar children through actions and sounds.	Participates in simple back-and-forth interactions with other children and shows familiarity with regular playmates.	Seeks out other children and participates in nearby, parallel, pretend, or short shared play with support as needed.	Maintains interactions with other children and shows prosocial behaviors with support such as adult guidance, peer support, reminders, or familiar strategies.	Sustains interactions with peers for longer periods and uses prosocial strategies with support as needed.
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors				
- Looks closely at another child and watches the child's movements, sounds, expressions, voice, or presence. - Reaches toward, touches, smiles at, vocalizes to, or shows recognition of another child during nearby interactions. - Participates in brief shared moments with another child with adult support nearby.	- Engages in simple back-and-forth actions, such as rolling a ball, handing an object, copying a movement, or exchanging sounds. - Shows recognition of familiar peers through smiles, gestures, sounds, movement toward them, or interest in being near them. - Watches, imitates, joins, or responds to another child during play, routines, or a shared activity for a short time.	- Shows interest in starting play, communicating, or joining an activity with other children using familiar communication modes. - Responds to peers' invitations, actions, words, gestures, or communication during play and routines. - Seeks out familiar peers and participates in nearby, parallel, simple cooperative, or pretend play with one or more children.	- Joins and stays engaged in play or conversation with other children for several minutes. - Uses familiar communication modes to enter play, maintain interaction, share, take turns, or solve simple peer problems with support as needed. - Interacts with peers beyond a preferred friend or familiar playmate and continues peer interaction after minor disagreements with adult support.	- Sustains play, conversation, or shared work with peers for longer periods of time. - Shows prosocial behaviors such as sharing, taking turns, helping, including, and cooperating with support, reminders, or familiar strategies as needed. - Participates with preferred and less familiar peers and negotiates roles, materials, ideas, or repairs after conflict with support as needed.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
- Provide safe, closely supervised opportunities for children to see, hear, notice, play near, and interact with familiar peers. - Position children face-to-face or side-by-side when appropriate and arrange materials and spaces in ways that invite shared attention and play. - Narrate children's interest in one another, name peers, and describe actions to support recognition, connection, and communication. - Model and support simple peer interactions such as greeting, giving, rolling, copying, offering a toy, sitting nearby, or joining with gestures, words, signs, or actions. - Stay close to support gentle touch, turn-taking, shared attention, and sustained peer interaction without taking over play.			- Model and coach ways to join play, invite others, respond to peers, offer ideas, or bring related materials. - Provide small-group play, projects, and conversations with familiar peers and peers outside children's usual preferred group. - Prompt children to notice peers' ideas, needs, and participation, such as who wants a turn or how everyone can have a part. - Support a welcoming environment by watching for when children are being left out or only playing with certain children, and helping children welcome peers into play, projects, and routines.	

Learning and Development Area. Social and Emotional Development (SE)**Strand 2. Relationships with Other Children****Goal 2. Child engages in increasingly cooperative play and interactions with other children.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Responds to another child's actions or sounds during play.	Participates in simple imitation games and plays alongside other children with similar toys or materials.	Plays near or alongside other children, imitates or joins simple shared actions, and begins to take turns or participate in short shared activities with adult support.	Often plays cooperatively with other children and works with them to plan and carry out play together.	Plays with other children in increasingly coordinated ways and helps make plans for shared play.
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors				
• Watches another child's movements, sounds, play, voice, actions, or toys with interest. • Turns toward, reaches toward, touches, vocalizes, or shows alertness when another child is active nearby. • Participates in brief shared play moments with adult support nearby.	• Copies another child's sounds, movements, or simple actions during play. • Plays next to other children using similar toys or materials. • Joins simple imitation games, such as running, clapping, banging, making sounds, or trying similar actions with toys.	• Takes turns with another child during simple games, shared activities, or common routines with support as needed. • Joins peers briefly in building, pretend play, movement activities, or shared tasks by imitating, playing alongside, sharing materials, or following a simple shared idea. • Follows a peer's lead or invites another child into play around a common idea, material, or activity.	• Participates with one or more peers in deciding what to play and how to do it using familiar communication modes. • Takes on roles, shares ideas, and helps carry out a shared play plan for short periods. • Adjusts actions, materials, roles, or steps to stay engaged in cooperative play with adult, peer, or familiar support as needed.	• Helps make and carry out plans for shared play with peers. • Sustains coordinated play with other children for longer periods of time. • Negotiates roles, ideas, materials, or changes in the play plan and works through minor disagreements with support as needed.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide safe, closely supervised opportunities for children to observe, respond to, imitate, and play near one another. • Arrange side-by-side play with duplicate, similar, or open-ended materials that invite shared attention, imitation, and simple turn-taking. • Narrate children's interest in one another, name actions, and support gentle touch, comfort, and safety. • Model simple imitation and peer play by joining children's actions, adding one small variation, and waiting for a response. • Stay nearby during early shared play to name roles, offer simple turn-taking language, and help children rejoin or continue play.			• Provide time, space, and materials for small-group dramatic play, building, collaborative games, projects, and peer planning. • Help children talk through roles, materials, plans, and changes before and during shared play. • Model cooperative language such as "What do you think?", "Can we try your idea?", or "How can everyone have a job?" • Support children in negotiating, revising plans, solving small problems, and continuing shared play with support as needed. • Reflect with children about what helped the plan work, how they solved problems, and what they could try next time.	

Learning and Development Area. Social and Emotional Development (SE)

Strand 2. Relationships with Other Children

Goal 3. Child uses basic problem-solving skills to resolve conflicts with other children.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early adult-supported interactions help children notice and respond to social situations. As peer awareness grows, children begin to recognize simple social problems, such as wanting the same toy or needing a turn. With adult support, they start to take part in problem-solving. These early experiences build the foundation for resolving conflicts with peers over time.			Recognizes social problems and suggests solutions to conflicts with adult support.	Recognizes social problems, suggests solutions, and compromises during group play or work using adult support, peer support, or familiar problem-solving strategies as needed.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Notices when a conflict or social problem happens during play or routines. • Communicates or shows awareness of simple problems, such as not getting a turn, wanting the same toy, or feeling left out, using familiar communication modes. • Suggests or tries a possible solution with adult help, such as taking turns, sharing, trading, asking for help, or choosing another idea.	• Identifies, describes, or communicates social problems during group play, conversation, or shared work. • Suggests more than one solution to a peer conflict or shared problem. • Compromises by taking turns, changing plans, sharing roles, agreeing on a new idea, or seeking adult help for harder situations.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Help children name social problems with simple, neutral language, such as “You both want the truck” or “There is one shovel and two children.” • Model solution words and actions, such as asking for a turn, trading, waiting, choosing another idea, or asking for help, using gestures, visuals, or demonstrations as needed. • Stay nearby during peer conflict and coach children to describe or show the problem, think of possible solutions, try a familiar strategy, and keep play going. • Use books, stories, puppets, role play, group activities, and shared decision-making to practice noticing problems, compromise, negotiation, and respectful listening. • After children are calm and reconnected, briefly reflect on what happened, what helped, who may need repair, and what they might try next time.	

Learning and Development Area. Social and Emotional Development (SE)**Strand 3. Emotional Functioning****Goal 1. Child recognizes and interprets emotions of others with the support of familiar adults.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Pays attention to others' emotions shown through facial expressions, voices, or actions.	Responds to others' emotional expressions by sharing an emotional reaction.	Shows understanding of others' emotions by labeling them, asking questions, or responding in appropriate nonverbal ways.	Identifies common emotions in others and begins to connect emotional expressions with familiar situations, actions, or events.	Interprets others' emotions using facial expressions, tone, body language, context, and knowledge of what happened, with adult support as needed.
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors				
• Watches others' faces, voices, actions, or emotional exchanges with interest. • Pauses, turns toward, becomes alert, or looks between an emotional event and a familiar adult. • Changes facial expression, body movement, or vocalization in response to others' emotional expressions.	• Smiles, laughs, or shows excitement when others show happiness or excitement. • Looks concerned, quiets, becomes upset, or mirrors expressions, sounds, or movements when others show distress or fear. • Looks to familiar adults to help interpret emotional tone or expressions during play, routines, or group activity.	• Uses familiar communication modes to identify or show awareness of some feelings in others. • Asks, comments, gestures, or otherwise shows curiosity about why someone may feel happy, sad, mad, hurt, or another emotion. • Responds to others' emotions with facial expressions, gestures, comforting actions, pauses in play, or changes in behavior.	• Identifies common emotions in peers or adults, such as "happy," "sad," "mad," "scared," or "hurt." • Notices facial expressions, tone, body language, actions, or familiar events that give clues about how another person may feel. • Responds to another person's emotion with attention, comfort, space, or adult help.	• Describes others' emotions using more specific feeling words, such as "worried," "frustrated," "excited," "disappointed," "embarrassed," or "proud." • Uses facial expressions, tone, body language, context, or prior events to explain why someone may feel a certain way. • Guesses what emotions are shown in stories, pretend play, peer interactions, or real events, and adjusts words or actions with support as needed.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Use warm, responsive interactions that help children notice facial expressions, tone of voice, actions, and emotional exchanges. • Offer possible feeling words during everyday routines, such as "You might feel happy when I sing" or "Maybe that loud sound felt scary. I'm here." • Watch for children's engagement and disengagement cues, and respond in ways that help them feel safe while noticing others' emotions. • Name what children may be noticing in others and connect emotions with what is happening in the moment. • Use face-to-face play, songs, books, pictures, mirrors, pretend scenarios, and everyday events to help children notice and respond to emotions.			• Use real interactions, photos, books, familiar stories, puppets, and role play to help children notice emotional cues and possible causes. • Offer feeling words as possibilities, such as "It looks like she might feel sad because the tower fell." • Ask simple questions such as "What happened?", "How might he feel?", "How do you know?", or "What might help?" • Help children connect emotions to events, actions, needs, intentions, and perspectives. • Model respectful responses to emotions, including listening, offering comfort, giving space, or getting adult help.	

Learning and Development Area. Social and Emotional Development (SE)**Strand 3. Emotional Functioning****Goal 2. Child expresses a broad range of emotions and increasingly recognizes these emotions in self and others.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Expresses emotions through crying, smiling, laughing, facial expressions, body movements, or gestures.	Expresses emotions in ways shaped by the child’s background and the reactions of familiar adults.	Expresses a range of emotions, including more complex emotions, with growing awareness of how emotions affect others.	Expresses a broad range of emotions and begins to use words to describe strong emotions in self and others.	Expresses a broad range of emotions, notices more complex emotions in self and others, and uses words to describe emotions.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Expresses emotions through crying, smiling, laughing, startling, facial expressions, body movements, sounds, gestures, or posture. • Shows pleasure, discomfort, fear, frustration, or other emotions in response to what is happening around them. • Signals emotions in ways that invite comfort, attention, shared enjoyment, or response from familiar adults.	• Shows a variety of emotions, such as joy, frustration, fear, comfort-seeking, excitement, or protest in familiar situations. • Expresses emotions through words, sounds, gestures, facial expressions, actions, or familiar patterns shaped by home and care experiences. • Looks to familiar adults and adjusts emotional expression in response to adult tone, support, or reactions.	• Expresses many emotions through words, gestures, facial expressions, tone, actions, or familiar communication modes. • Shows more complex emotions such as pride, embarrassment, guilt, surprise, or disappointment in familiar situations. • Begins to notice that their emotions or actions affect others and uses adults to help communicate or manage stronger emotions.	• Expresses different emotions across play, routines, conversations, and social situations. • Uses simple feeling words, signs, gestures, facial expressions, movement, assistive communication (ACC), or other familiar modes to describe or show awareness of emotions in self or others. • Notices when others show strong emotions and responds through words, actions, attention, or adult support.	• Uses familiar communication modes to describe or show awareness of a variety of emotions, including more complex emotions such as worry, embarrassment, disappointment, or pride. • Notices emotional cues in others and connects emotions to causes or situations in everyday experiences. • Communicates about emotions during play, conflict, routines, or reflection with support, prompting, or familiar communication modes as needed.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Respond promptly and sensitively to children’s emotional cues, expressions, and communication throughout routines, play, and care. • Offer possible feeling words in warm language, such as “You might be upset,” “Maybe you want a break,” or “You look excited to see Grandma.” • Partner with families to understand how emotions are expressed, interpreted, comforted, and supported at home. • Name a range of emotions during play, routines, and social situations, and connect emotions with events, actions, and effects on others.			• Use everyday moments, books, stories, photos, visuals, and real experiences to help children notice, name, and discuss emotions in self and others. • Model emotions vocabulary by connecting emotions to events and inviting children to correct or add to adult words. • Encourage children to express emotions through words, gestures, tone, movement, signs, assistive communication (ACC), or other familiar modes.	

Learning and Development Area. Social and Emotional Development (SE)

Strand 3. Emotional Functioning

Goal 2. Child expresses a broad range of emotions and increasingly recognizes these emotions in self and others.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
• Support children in expressing emotions safely through words, gestures, movement, signs, visuals, assistive communication (ACC), or other familiar forms.			• Create a classroom environment where a wide range of emotions can be expressed, discussed, and supported safely.	

Learning and Development Area. Social and Emotional Development (SE)**Strand 3. Emotional Functioning****Goal 3. Child expresses care and concern toward others.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
May mirror another child's emotions, such as crying when another child cries.	Shows concern when another child is upset and may seek adult help or offer comfort.	Shows concern for others who are hurt or upset and tries to comfort them with words or actions.	Pays attention when others are distressed and may seek adult support to help.	Pays attention when others are distressed and responds with care by seeking adult support or offering reassurance.
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors				
• Cries, startles, pauses, looks toward, or becomes alert when another child shows distress or another strong emotion. • Changes facial expression, body movement, or vocalization in response to another child's distress. • Looks to a familiar adult when another child is upset and may show a brief shared emotional response.	• Looks at, moves toward, or pauses play to attend to a crying or upset child. • Moves toward or looks to an adult when another child is upset. • Uses sounds, gestures, facial expressions, simple words, or offers an object to respond to another child's feelings.	• Notices when another child or adult is hurt, crying, or upset. • Uses words, gestures, signs, facial expressions, actions, assistive communication (ACC), or comfort objects to show concern or offer help. • Seeks adult help or pauses own activity when another person is distressed.	• Notices when another person is hurt, sad, upset, or distressed and briefly stops to attend to the person. • Shows concern, asks what happened, comments, gestures, pauses, or otherwise communicates awareness. • Seeks adult support or offers brief reassurance, comfort, help, or space during peer distress.	• Notices when peers or adults are distressed and responds in caring ways. • Offers reassurance, comforting words, help, or space, or gets an adult when more support is needed. • Adjusts words or actions in response to another person's emotional state with support as needed.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Stay close and respond calmly when children notice, mirror, or react to another child's distress. • Comfort and regulate children while using simple, reassuring language to describe what is happening. • Reduce overwhelming stimulation when needed by lowering voice, reducing noise, limiting extra touch or movement, or moving to a quieter space. • Notice and name early signs of concern for others, including looking, pausing, gesturing, moving closer, offering an object, or seeking adult help. • Model caring actions such as getting help, offering a comfort object, giving space, or using gentle touch only when welcomed.			• Encourage children to notice when others are hurt, sad, frustrated, worried, or need support. • Model caring words and actions, such as "Are you okay?", "Do you want help or space?", offering comfort, inviting a peer to rejoin, or getting an adult. • Use books, stories, real events, and classroom routines to discuss what people may feel and what might help. • Coach children to choose respectful, welcomed responses, including listening, offering reassurance, giving space, helping, including, or seeking adult support. • Recognize thoughtful responses to others' distress and help children reflect on how caring actions can support others.	

Learning and Development Area. Social and Emotional Development (SE)**Strand 3. Emotional Functioning****Goal 4. Child manages emotions with growing use of familiar strategies and adult support.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Becomes calm with adult support when held, rocked, or talked to by a familiar adult.	Seeks comfort when distressed, accepts reassurance from a familiar adult, or uses self-comforting behaviors to calm down.	Uses strategies to cope with stress or strong emotions, such as seeking a familiar object or adult.	Uses familiar strategies during less intense emotions and seeks or accepts adult support when emotions are stronger or harder to manage.	Uses a growing range of strategies to manage emotions and seeks adult support for more intense emotions.
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors				
• Quiets, relaxes, or stops crying when a familiar adult holds, rocks, feeds, or speaks softly. • Shows signs of calming, such as slower movement, softer sounds, relaxed posture, or changed breathing when comforted. • Turns toward a familiar voice, touch, or soothing routine and returns to a calmer state with responsive adult support.	• Moves toward, reaches for, stays close to, or looks to a familiar adult when upset, unsure, or stressed. • Accepts comfort through touch, words, proximity, familiar routines, or comfort objects. • Uses self-comforting behaviors, such as sucking fingers, holding a comfort item, or moving close to an adult, and recovers more easily with familiar support.	• Seeks a familiar adult, toy, blanket, quiet space, or familiar routine when upset. • Uses simple strategies such as hugging a comfort item, asking for help, moving away, or taking space during stress or intense emotions. • Communicates emotions or needs during distress using familiar communication modes and accepts adult coaching to return to play or routines.	• Uses simple strategies during mild frustration, such as pausing, trying again, taking a short break, seeking comfort, or using words, with support available as needed. • Expresses emotions or needs in less intense situations using familiar communication modes. • Seeks adult help when emotions become more intense or harder to manage and uses familiar calming strategies with guidance.	• Uses a variety of strategies, such as talking, breathing, taking space, seeking comfort, or trying again, to manage emotions. • Chooses familiar calming strategies in everyday situations with adult support available as needed. • Seeks adult support for more intense emotions, responds to suggested strategies, and re-engages after frustration, disappointment, or conflict.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Respond promptly and consistently when children show distress, using calm, predictable soothing routines and warm, responsive caregiving. • Watch for engagement and disengagement cues, such as turning toward or away, reaching, arching, stiffening, crying, quieting, or changes in gaze, movement, or breathing. • Reduce overwhelming sensory input, such as noise, bright light, extra touch, or too much activity, during stressful moments. • Stay nearby during upsetting or unfamiliar situations and offer reassurance, familiar routines, comfort objects, quiet spaces, or trusted adults. • Teach and model simple calming strategies during calm moments, such as breathing together, asking for help, holding a comfort item, moving to a quiet space, or saying "I need a break."			• Encourage children to try familiar calming strategies during everyday frustrations while adults stay nearby and available to support. • During strong emotions, provide calm presence, coaching, and support; after children are calm, briefly reflect on what helped and what to try next. • Support simple repair after children are calm, such as checking on someone, helping fix materials, drawing a picture, or practicing words for next time. • Create emotionally safe environments where strong emotions can be managed safely and adults are available to help.	

Learning and Development Area. Social and Emotional Development (SE)**Strand 4. Sense of Identity and Belonging****Goal 1. Child understands some characteristics of self and others.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Listens and responds when hearing own name used by a familiar adult.	Responds when called by name and notices when others recognize what the child can do.	Identifies and compares physical similarities and differences between self and others.	Describes visible characteristics, preferences, abilities, and similarities or differences between self and others using respectful language with adult support.	Describes self and others in more specific ways and recognizes that people can share some characteristics while differing in others.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Quiets, smiles, coos, looks, or turns toward a familiar adult when hearing own name. • Shows recognition of own name during play, routines, or conversation. • Responds differently to own name than to other words or voices in familiar situations.	• Looks toward, moves toward, or shifts attention when called by name during play or routines. • Shows awareness when adults notice or respond to a new skill or accomplishment. • Repeats an action or looks to an adult after seeing that another person noticed what the child did.	• Notices and communicates about visible similarities and differences between self and others using familiar communication modes. • Describes characteristics such as hair, size, clothing, body features, or familiar roles using words, signs, gestures, play, or other supports. • Compares self with peers, family members, or adults in simple ways and responds to books, play, or conversations about personal characteristics.	• Describes self and others using concrete characteristics such as hair, skin, size, clothing, abilities, family roles, languages, or interests. • Notices similarities and differences among people during play, books, routines, or conversation. • Uses respectful words, gestures, questions, play, or stories to talk about self, others, preferences, belongings, and roles with adult support.	• Describes characteristics of self and others in more detailed and respectful ways. • Recognizes that people can share some characteristics while differing in others, without ranking people as better or worse. • Uses play, drawing, storytelling, or conversation to communicate and learn about identities, families, communities, languages, and experiences.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Use children’s names often during warm, responsive routines, play, transitions, and interactions. • Pause after saying a child’s name and respond warmly to the child’s attention, movement, sound, or other response. • Partner with families to use children’s names, family names, and familiar identity words in respectful and consistent ways. • Use books, mirrors, photos, dolls, figures, and everyday conversation to help children notice and describe self and others. • Model respectful language for similarities and differences, and provide materials that reflect different appearances, families, abilities, languages, and identities.			• Use books, mirrors, photos, dolls, figures, art materials, stories, and conversations to help children describe characteristics of self and others. • Model respectful language for similarities and differences, such as “People can be the same in some ways and different in other ways.” • Support children’s questions and comments about differences with brief, accurate, respectful responses. • Actively include different people, families, abilities, languages, identities, and experiences in dramatic play, story retelling, art, building, classroom jobs, projects, and displays.	

Learning and Development Area. Social and Emotional Development (SE)**Strand 4. Sense of Identity and Belonging****Goal 2. Child develops a sense of belonging to family, community, and other groups through relationships with others.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Shows awareness of familiar routines through expected behaviors.	Anticipates familiar routines and activities.	Refers to recent personal or family experiences and events.	Communicates a sense of belonging to family and an emerging connection to the larger community through words or other modes of expression.	Shows a sense of belonging to family and community and shares details about those connections when invited or with familiar supports as needed.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Opens mouth, reaches, becomes alert, calms, smiles, or shows excitement when a familiar routine begins. • Lifts arms, leans in, shifts body position, or responds predictably during familiar caregiving routines or transitions. • Shows recognition of familiar people, actions, objects, songs, or materials connected to daily routines.	• Moves toward or gathers familiar items connected to a routine, such as shoes, cup, or blanket. • Goes to a familiar place or position when a routine is about to begin. • Shows awareness of what comes next through actions, gestures, expressions, or participation in repeated routines.	• Communicates about something that happened recently using words, signs, gestures, play, drawing, or other familiar forms. • Talks about or shows familiar people, places, events, or experiences from home, family, care, or the recent past. • Connects a current object, activity, or conversation to a recent personal or family experience.	• Communicates connection to family, home life, classroom, or community through talking, drawing, singing, movement, play, home language, signs, assistive communication (ACC), or other familiar modes. • Shares family experiences, traditions, languages, important people, places, groups, or events through conversation, play, art, or movement. • Expresses comfort, pride, familiarity, or connection when participating in family, classroom, or community experiences.	• Shares stories and details about family, classroom, or community experiences with familiar supports as needed. • Talks about or shows important people, places, roles, traditions, languages, or events connected to family and community life. • Makes connections between personal experiences, group belonging, and the lives of others in the classroom or community.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Keep daily routines predictable, responsive, and connected to familiar people, objects, songs, actions, and family practices when possible. • Narrate routines with simple language, gestures, songs, visuals, or familiar cues so children can anticipate what is happening now and next. • Invite children to participate in routines by reaching, moving, gathering items, helping with a step, or showing recognition in familiar ways. • Use photos, objects, drawings, family materials, books, play, and conversation to support children’s recall and expression of recent experiences. • Partner with families to learn about meaningful routines, people, languages, events, and experiences children may want to share or see reflected.			• Create opportunities for children to share family experiences, traditions, languages, important people, and community connections in many forms. • Include books, music, materials, visuals, dramatic play props, and experiences that reflect children’s families and communities. • Use welcoming language that respectfully names children’s important people, languages, family practices, traditions, and communities. • Encourage respectful listening and classroom connections by helping children learn from similarities and differences in family and community experiences.	

Learning and Development Area. Social and Emotional Development (SE)**Strand 4. Sense of Identity and Belonging****Goal 3. Child expresses confidence in own abilities and positive feelings about self through relationships with others.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Participates in back-and-forth interactions using facial expressions, sounds, gestures, and responses to others.	Expresses desires and preferences and seeks adult attention to objects or new skills of interest.	Contributes own ideas, skills, and abilities to activities with growing initiative, participation, and support as needed.	Shows pride in completing daily routines and learning new skills and may share ideas or positive feelings about self.	Shows pride in accomplishments, shares them with others, and contributes ideas in group discussions when invited or with familiar support as needed.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Smiles, vocalizes, gestures, moves, or responds to an adult’s face, voice, or action. • Pauses, responds, repeats actions, or uses sounds and movements to continue back-and-forth social exchanges. • Shows interest in shared social play, such as peekaboo, imitation, or turn-taking routines.	• Shows preferences by gesturing to, reaching, vocalizing, moving toward, or choosing desired people, objects, or activities. • Brings an object, gestures to, or looks to an adult to share interest or gain attention. • Repeats or shows an action, skill, or accomplishment and watches for an adult’s response.	• Shares ideas, actions, preferences, or new skills during play and routines with support as needed. • Participates in tasks such as dressing, pouring, building, carrying materials, or helping with growing initiative and support as needed. • Shows pride, satisfaction, interest, or connection after participating, trying a skill, helping, or contributing to an activity.	• Shows pleasure or pride after completing a routine, learning a new skill, finishing a task, or contributing to an activity. • Calls attention to accomplishments by showing, telling, demonstrating, or asking an adult to notice. • Shares ideas or positive feelings about self, effort, or contribution using familiar communication modes with support as needed.	• Shares accomplishments, work, new skills, strengths, or opinions with adults and peers when invited or with familiar support. • Shows what was done, how it was done, or why it matters through words, drawing, movement, demonstration, signs, assistive communication (ACC), or other familiar modes. • Contributes ideas, questions, or solutions during group discussions and shared activities.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Engage children in warm, responsive back-and-forth interactions throughout routines, caregiving, play, songs, and games. • Imitate, respond to, and pause for children’s expressions, sounds, gestures, movements, preferences, and attempts to initiate or continue interaction. • Offer meaningful choices and respond consistently when children show interests, preferences, new skills, or accomplishments. • Join children in shared attention around objects, actions, discoveries, and routines that matter to them. • Use positive descriptive feedback that names children’s efforts, ideas, skills, participation, and contributions.			• Notice and describe children’s accomplishments, effort, persistence, ideas, and contributions during routines, play, and learning. • Invite children to share what they did, learned, tried, contributed, or felt proud of using familiar communication modes. • Provide regular opportunities for children to share work, ideas, accomplishments, and questions with individuals, small groups, or the class. • Use prompts that help children reflect on strengths, effort, and progress, such as “What did you try?”, “What helped?”, or “What are you proud of?” • Create routines where every child can contribute, be recognized, listen to others, and build on shared ideas.	

Learning and Development Area. Social and Emotional Development (SE)**Strand 4. Sense of Identity and Belonging****Goal 4. Child recognizes self as a unique individual and shows awareness of self in relation to others.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Learns about self by exploring hands, feet, body, and movement.	Experiments with hands, body, movement, and gestures to discover new abilities and relate to others.	Shows awareness of own thoughts, feelings, and preferences and those of others.	Describes own physical characteristics, behaviors, likes, and dislikes and shows awareness of self as a unique individual.	Describes personal characteristics and interests and explains how self is similar to or different from those of other people.
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors				
• Looks at, touches, mouths, or explores hands, feet, body, or movement during play and routines. • Moves arms, legs, head, or body and notices the effects of those movements. • Repeats body movements, such as kicking, waving, rolling, or reaching to explore what the body can do.	• Uses gestures, body movements, actions, reaching, waving, or showing to communicate or respond to others. • Tries new ways of moving hands and body to see what can happen. • Repeats actions that help connect with adults or other children during play and routines.	• Uses words, signs, gestures, actions, or other familiar communication modes to express wants, feelings, preferences, choices, or opinions. • Shows awareness that self and others may want, feel, or prefer different things. • Notices and responds to others' feelings, reactions, or preferences in simple ways.	• Describes or shows, personal characteristics, such as appearance, abilities, behaviors, preferences, or belongings, using familiar communication modes. • Shares ideas about what makes self special, different from others, or connected to own name, work, roles, or contributions. • Talks about things liked or disliked and describes self in increasingly specific ways with adult support.	• Describes personal interests, traits, experiences, abilities, and identity in more detail. • Compares own characteristics, preferences, ideas, or experiences with those of others without ranking or judgment. • Communicates about their place in groups, relationships, family, community, or shared connections using familiar communication modes.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide safe opportunities for children to explore hands, feet, body, movement, gestures, and sensory experiences throughout the day. • Offer supervised floor time, mirror play, songs, routines, and materials that support body awareness and active exploration. • Notice and describe children's movements, actions, choices, feelings, preferences, and growing abilities in positive, specific ways. • Respond consistently when children use movement, gesture, sound, words, signs, or actions to communicate or relate to others. • Use everyday routines, books, play, and conversations to name self, others, feelings, wants, preferences, and different perspectives.			• Invite children to describe interests, characteristics, preferences, strengths, identities, and experiences in respectful ways. • Provide books, materials, play, art, and conversations that children see themselves and their families reflected in. • Model welcoming language, such as "People can be the same in some ways and different in others" and "We notice and respect differences." • Support perspective-taking by asking what is important to someone, how experiences are alike or different, and what shows respect. • Reinforce that each child belongs and has unique characteristics, shared connections, and meaningful contributions.	

Approaches to Learning

Approaches to Learning describes how children engage with people, materials, ideas, routines, and challenges. From birth through age five, children are developing:

- Curiosity
- Creativity
- Initiative
- Attention
- Persistence
- Flexible thinking
- Memory
- Problem-solving
- The ability to manage emotions and behavior

These skills grow through relationships, play, exploration, everyday routines, problem-solving, and opportunities to make choices, try new strategies, and try again. Children develop approaches to learning at different rates and in different ways. Children may show these skills through:

- Movement
- Play
- Facial expressions
- Gestures
- Home language(s)
- Signs
- Spoken words
- Assistive communication (ACC)
- Sensory exploration
- Quiet observation
- Persistence
- Active participation

Children's temperament, language, abilities, sensory needs, family practices, relationships, communities, lived experiences, and past opportunities all shape how they explore, attend, persist, regulate, solve problems, and express ideas.

Inside This Learning and Development Area

This area includes four strands and 13 learning goals. The table below highlights what children are learning in this area and how adults can support that learning through warm relationships, responsive interactions, everyday routines, play, and meaningful experiences.

Strand	Children are learning to...	Adults support learning by...
Emotional and Behavioral Self-Regulation	Manage emotions, behavior, attention, actions, and participation with support.	Creating predictable routines, offering co-regulation, modeling strategies, and helping children practice safe and flexible responses.
Cognitive Self-Regulation (Executive Functioning)	Focus attention, remember information, be flexible in strategies, control impulses, and use thinking skills to solve problems and reach goals.	Reducing distractions, giving clear cues, using visuals or gestures, repeating information, offering time to process and respond, and supporting children without taking over.
Initiative and Curiosity	Show interest, ask questions, make choices, explore materials and ideas, try new experiences, and stick with challenges.	Noticing children's interests, offering meaningful choices, encouraging effort, providing open-ended materials, and inviting children to wonder, investigate, make plans, and try strategies.
Creativity	Express imagination, flexible thinking, and ideas through movement, materials, pretend play, stories, art, music, and other modes of expression.	Providing time, space, materials, stories, music, movement, pretend play, and opportunities to create, revise, and share ideas.

Play Across Approaches to Learning

The play continuum shows how children build approaches to learning through a balance of child-directed, shared, and adult-supported play experiences. Across the continuum, children have opportunities to explore, focus, persist, imagine, create, solve problems, adapt, make choices, and see themselves as active learners.



In Focus: Understanding Self-Regulation, Cognitive Control, and Executive Function

Self-regulation, cognitive control, and executive function are closely connected, but they are not the same. Understanding the differences can help adults recognize what children are practicing and provide support that matches the situation, setting, and child. These terms are used throughout Approaches to Learning to describe related but different parts of how children manage their thinking, behavior, and emotions across contexts.

Self-regulation is a broad term for the ways children manage their emotions, behavior, attention, and thinking so they can participate in relationships, routines, play, and learning. In early childhood, self-regulation develops through warm relationships, co-regulation with adults, predictable routines, play, and repeated opportunities to practice.

Behavioral self-regulation refers to how children manage actions, words, and behavior in everyday situations. This may include waiting, taking turns, using safe actions, following familiar routines, responding to adult cues, and choosing words or actions that fit the situation.

Emotion regulation refers to how children experience, express, and manage feelings. Young children first rely on adults for comfort and co-regulation. Over time, they begin to use familiar strategies such as seeking help, taking space, breathing, using words, movement, sensory supports, or reconnecting with a trusted adult.

Cognitive control refers to the thinking skills children use to organize their thoughts and actions in line with a goal. These processes help children attend to what matters, shift attention when needed, keep rules or information in mind, resist distractions, stop themselves from a first or automatic response, and choose a response that fits the task. Cognitive control is closely related to executive function and is especially important for learning, problem-solving, and later academic skills.

Executive function refers to a set of attention-regulation skills that help children sustain attention, keep goals and information in mind, pause before responding, resist distraction, tolerate frustration, consider consequences, reflect on past experiences, and plan for what comes next. Executive function includes skills such as working memory, flexible thinking, attention control, and control over their first or automatic responses. These skills support — but are not the same as — emotion regulation and behavioral self-regulation.

Why this difference matters: A child may follow rules, avoid outbursts, or appear “well-behaved” while still needing support with cognitive control skills such as remembering directions, shifting attention, resisting distractions, holding information in mind, or using a new rule. Looking separately at behavioral regulation, emotion regulation, and cognitive control helps adults notice a fuller range of children’s strengths and support needs.

Learning and Development Area. Approaches to Learning (ATL)**Strand 1. Emotional and Behavioral Self-Regulation****Goal 1. Child manages actions, words, and behavior with support as needed.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Calms in response to attentive caregiving when needs are met.	Looks to familiar adults for guidance and assistance in managing actions and behavior.	Begins to manage actions and behavior during peer conflict by using words or simple strategies with adult support.	Manages actions, words, and behavior with frequent adult support.	Manages actions, words, and behavior with occasional adult support.
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors				
• Quiets, relaxes, or settles when a familiar adult holds, rocks, feeds, talks to, or comforts them. • Turns toward a familiar voice, touch, or caregiving routine when upset or distressed. • Shows signs of calming, such as slower movement, softer crying, relaxed posture, or increased comfort when needs are met.	• Looks to, reaches for, or moves toward a familiar adult for reassurance or help when upset, uncertain, frustrated, or in conflict. • Pauses, changes behavior, or accepts comfort or redirection in response to an adult's words, gestures, or tone, or familiar routines. • Uses simple self-calming actions, such as holding a comfort item, sucking fingers, moving close to an adult, or seeking a familiar routine.	• Uses simple words, signs, gestures, or visuals such as "stop," "mine," "help," or "my turn" during conflict or frustration. • Seeks adult help or communicates basic needs, such as hunger, tiredness, wanting space, or needing help to stay engaged. • Begins to pause or use a familiar calming strategy, such as taking space, holding a comfort object, moving to a quiet area, or using a visual support, with adult help.	• Uses reminders, prompts, or cues to choose gentle touches, safe bodies, respectful words, or familiar behavior expectations during play and routines. • Uses simple calming strategies with support, such as taking a breath, asking for help, moving to a quiet space, or using a comfort or sensory support. • Begins to repair interactions after adult support, such as trying again with words, rejoining play, or using simple self-talk like "stop," "wait," "gentle hands," or "ask for help."	• Follows expectations for words, actions, and behavior in familiar settings with occasional reminders or support. • Uses strategies such as waiting, asking for help, taking a breath, taking space, using words, visual cues, or familiar phrases to manage frustration or guide behavior. • Recovers from disappointment, conflict, or frustration and returns to play, routines, or peer interaction with support as needed.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Respond promptly with warm, predictable caregiving, soothing routines, and co-regulation. • Watch for cues of hunger, discomfort, overstimulation, tiredness, frustration, or need for space, and adjust support before children grow more distressed. • Use simple words, gestures, signs, visuals, home-language supports, and routines to help children know what is happening and what they can do. • Stay close during challenging moments, peer conflict, or redirection and offer calm guidance, reassurance, and support. • Model simple ways to ask for help, communicate needs, calm, and participate safely using words, signs, gestures, visuals, comfort objects, quiet spaces, or sensory supports.			• Give clear reminders about expected words, actions, and behavior across play, routines, transitions, meals, group times, cleanup, and outdoor play. • Teach and model strategies during calm moments, such as asking for help, breathing, self-talk, visual cues, or moving to a quiet space. • During intense emotions, first provide safety, calm presence, and co-regulation; later revisit what happened and what to try next. • Support peer conflict with coaching, visual cues, respectful language, accessible options, and practice using safer responses. • Offer limited choices and adapt pacing, routines, and supports to match children's regulation, communication, sensory, background, and relational needs.	

Learning and Development Area. Approaches to Learning (ATL)**Strand 1. Emotional and Behavioral Self-Regulation****Goal 2. Child manages feelings and emotions with support as needed.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Seeks comfort, focus, and shared joy with familiar adults and shows trust during separation.	Seeks closeness, makes contact with, or looks to familiar adults for help with strong emotions.	Uses strategies to manage strong emotions with adult support.	Uses familiar strategies for less intense emotions and seeks adult support for stronger emotions.	Uses an expanding range of strategies to manage emotions with support as needed.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Turns toward, reaches for, or settles with a familiar adult for comfort, reassurance, or shared attention. • Engages in back-and-forth interactions with familiar adults through cues such as facial expression, movement, vocalization, calming, stilling, or turning toward the adult. • Calms more easily with a familiar adult’s touch, voice, presence, or familiar comforting routine.	• Moves toward, reaches for, or stays close to a familiar adult when upset, tired, overwhelmed, or uncertain. • Accepts comfort through holding, touch, voice, proximity, a comfort item, or a familiar routine. • Recovers more easily from distress with help from a familiar adult.	• Seeks a familiar adult, comfort item, quiet space, sensory support, or familiar routine when upset or overwhelmed. • Uses simple strategies such as covering ears, taking space, hugging a familiar object, asking for help, or using words, signs, or gestures to show feelings or needs. • Calms with adult coaching and returns to play, routines, or shared activity after distress.	• Uses simple strategies during mild frustration, such as pausing, trying again, taking a breath, taking space, moving, or using words, with support available as needed. • Expresses feelings or needs in less intense situations and seeks adult support when emotions become stronger or harder to manage. • Accepts adult coaching and uses familiar calming strategies during more intense moments, including when group participation becomes difficult.	• Uses a variety of strategies such as talking, taking a break, breathing, movement, seeking comfort, or trying again to manage emotions. • Chooses familiar strategies in everyday situations with support that matches the child, context, and intensity of the emotion. • Seeks adult support for more intense emotions and re-engages after frustration, disappointment, or conflict with support as needed.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide warm, responsive caregiving throughout routines, play, transitions, and separations so children experience comfort, trust, and connection. • Stay emotionally available and respond calmly to children’s cues for comfort, connection, shared attention, distress, tiredness, or overwhelm. • Offer comfort through touch, voice, presence, familiar routines, comfort objects, quiet spaces, or sensory supports based on the child’s cues and family practices. • Create repeated opportunities for joyful back-and-forth interactions, such as songs, facial play, gentle games, book sharing, and familiar routines. • Offer simple feeling words as possibilities, rather than telling children how they feel, and support children in asking for help, space, or comfort using words, signs, gestures, visuals, AAC, or other communication supports. • Stay close during distress, offer co-regulation, and guide children back to play, routines, or shared activity when they are ready.			• Teach and practice calming and coping strategies during everyday routines, play, problem-solving, and calm moments before children are likely to need them. • Encourage children to use familiar strategies such as breathing, taking space, movement, sensory tools, asking for help, or using words while staying available to support as needed. • During strong emotions, provide safety, calm presence, and co-regulation before asking questions, correcting behavior, or problem-solving. • Use stories, read-alouds, role play, and discussion to explore feelings, behaviors, and strategies for re-engaging safely. • Create environments and relationships that support emotional safety, responsive calming routines, sensory needs, and accessible participation.	

Learning and Development Area. Approaches to Learning (ATL)**Strand 1. Emotional and Behavioral Self-Regulation****Goal 3. Child appropriately handles and takes care of available materials.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early exploration and adult guidance help children learn how to use and care for materials. Children begin by exploring objects with their senses and using materials in simple, repeated ways. Over time, they use materials with more purpose and adult support. These skills help children participate in routines, handle materials safely, and care for shared materials in ways that match the child and setting.			Begins to practice handling and caring for toys and materials appropriately with adult support.	Usually handles and cares for toys and materials appropriately with adult support.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Uses toys and materials for their intended purpose with reminders and adult support. • Carries, uses, cleans up, or returns toys, tools, and supplies to familiar places with prompts or visual cues. • Responds to adult guidance about how to handle, share, clean up, or care for materials.	• Uses and cares for toys and materials appropriately in most situations during play, work, routines, and cleanup. • Returns materials to the correct place and adjusts use of materials after brief reminders or cues. • Helps care for shared materials and spaces, and may remind peers how to use, share, return, or care for materials respectfully.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Model how to use, carry, clean up, store, share, and care for materials during play, routines, and cleanup. • Use clear reminders, consistent language, visual labels, and predictable storage systems so children know where materials belong and how to care for them. • Organize materials so children can access, use, return, and help care for them with support as needed. • Prompt children to notice when materials or shared spaces need cleanup, repair, organizing, or careful handling. • Acknowledge children’s efforts to use and care for materials responsibly, including when they help peers remember routines in respectful and welcoming ways.	

Learning and Development Area. Approaches to Learning (ATL)**Strand 1. Emotional and Behavioral Self-Regulation****Goal 4. Child follows rules and routines and develops responsibility with support as needed.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Consistent routines and responsive caregiving help children begin to know what comes next and take part in daily activities. At first, adults guide children through simple expectations and routines. Over time, children begin to follow familiar routines with support. These skills build the foundation for self-regulation, shared responsibility, and participation in group settings in preschool.			Follows simple rules and routines with adult support.	Usually follows rules and routines with occasional reminders from adults.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Follows simple rules when reminded by an adult. • Participates in familiar routines, such as cleanup, lining up, or washing hands, with support. • Responds to adult prompts or familiar cues about what to do next.	• Follows familiar rules and routines in most situations with reminders as needed. • Moves through multi-step routines, such as cleanup, handwashing, or lining up, using familiar cues, visuals, peer support, or adult support as needed. • Adjusts behavior to fit different expectations and begins preparing for what comes next in familiar routines.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Teach rules, routines, and responsibility through modeling, repetition, practice, visual schedules, songs, gestures, and cues. • Break routines into simple steps and guide children through them with consistent, warm reminders. • Maintain predictable rules, routines, and expectations across the day. • Use visual supports and routine cues to help children participate, remember what comes next, complete routines, and show responsibility with support as needed. • Acknowledge children’s participation, follow-through, responsibility, and efforts to follow rules and routines.	

Learning and Development Area. Approaches to Learning (ATL)**Strand 2. Cognitive Self-Regulation (Executive Functioning)****Goal 1. Child maintains focus and sustains attention with support as needed.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Focuses on important people, objects, or tasks with adult support and begins to ignore distractions.	Shows growing ability to focus on people, objects, and activities, including movement, music, and visual cues, to continue or complete an activity or join others in common focus.	Participates in activities and experiences for longer periods of time, especially those that require attention and common focus.	Focuses attention on tasks and experiences for short periods of time with adult support, even with interruptions or distractions.	Focuses attention on tasks and experiences for longer periods of time with growing self-regulation and support as needed, even with interruptions or distractions.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Notices or turns toward a change in sight, sound, movement, voice, or touch. • Looks toward a familiar person, voice, object, toy, face, or movement during interaction. • Briefly attends to a song, book, simple activity, or shared focus with adult support.	• Attends to a song, movement activity, simple game, book, toy, or object for short periods. • Follows an adult’s gestures, words, or visual cues to maintain attention during shared activities. • Returns attention to an activity after a brief distraction with adult guidance.	• Engages in play with materials such as blocks and puzzles, pretend play, or repeated exploration for several minutes. • Participates in familiar routines or shared activities such as songs, story time, cooking, movement activities, or group routines. • Returns to an activity or continues a task after attention shifts, with reminders or adult guidance.	• Stays engaged in activities such as drawing, building, dramatic play, story time, or group discussion for short periods. • Follows multi-step directions during familiar routines or activities with adult support. • Returns attention to a task after distraction and persists in completing simple tasks or activities with reminders.	• Sustains attention on activities such as drawing, building, problem-solving, group discussions, or shared projects for longer periods. • Follows multi-step directions and completes tasks with support, cues, or reminders as needed. • Returns to unfinished activities and persists when challenges arise using familiar cues, visual reminders, or brief adult support.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide warm, responsive caregiving and predictable routines that help children feel regulated, connected, and ready to attend. • Offer engaging materials, songs, books, movement activities, and simple games that invite shared attention, exploration, and repeated use. • Follow children’s interests, narrate their actions, and use gestures, words, signs, visuals, or cues to guide and extend focus. • Reduce distractions and organize spaces so children can see, hear, move, and attend to people, objects, and activities. • Use gentle reminders, familiar routines, and adult support to help children return attention after distraction or continue an activity.			• Provide clear expectations, visual or verbal reminders, and manageable steps to help children begin, continue, and return to activities. • Adjust activity length, pacing, materials, and expectations based on children’s attention, participation, sensory needs, and regulation. • Offer a balance of active, quiet, social, individual, teacher-guided, and child-initiated experiences across the day. • Support sustained play, projects, and task completion by modeling persistence, acknowledging effort, and helping children use available supports such as visuals, peers, routines, or adults. • Use different ways for children to take part, such as movement, hands-on exploration, drawing, partner talk, outdoor activity, or quiet reflection, to support attention and participation.	

Learning and Development Area. Approaches to Learning (ATL)**Strand 2. Cognitive Self-Regulation (Executive Functioning)****Goal 2. Child shows flexibility in actions, thinking, and behavior.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Uses trial and error and sometimes tries different approaches to solve problems or interact with others.	Changes focus in order to attend to something else, participate in a new activity, or try a new approach to solving a problem.	Adjusts actions and behavior in social situations, problem-solving, and daily routines when asked.	Changes thinking or behavior with adult support by trying a new way when the first approach does not work.	Shows flexibility in thinking and behavior and responds to adult suggestions by trying new ways to approach tasks or solve problems.

Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors

• Repeats actions, such as kicking, shaking, banging, or reaching, to see what happens. • Tries more than one way to reach, grasp, activate, or interact with a toy, object, or adult. • Watches the result of an action and tries again in a similar or slightly different way.	• Shifts attention from one toy, person, or activity to another with adult support. • Stops one approach and tries a different action when a first attempt does not work. • Joins a new song, game, routine, or activity after watching others or following adult cues.	• Uses adult support to pause and try another approach in social situations, problem-solving, and daily routines. • Tries a different way to solve a simple problem after a suggestion, such as using different materials, roles, movements, or tools. • Follows cues to stop one activity, begin another, or move through a routine or transition with support as needed.	• Tries a different strategy after adult prompting when a first attempt does not work. • Changes plans in play, routines, or problem-solving with support, such as using different materials, roles, movements, or spaces. • Uses adult cues to adjust behavior, rethink an approach, or move to a new activity so participation can continue.	• Tries a different strategy after noticing a problem, using an adult suggestion, or tries a familiar approach. • Adjusts behavior for the needs of a group, such as waiting, taking turns, changing roles, or sharing materials during play or collaborative work. • Moves between activities, expectations, or preferred tasks with familiar cues, support for frustration as needed, and growing flexibility.
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Examples of Supportive Strategies

• Provide safe, interesting materials that respond to children’s actions in different ways and invite repeated exploration, trial and error, and more than one approach. • Notice and narrate children’s attempts, changes in action, and results, such as “You tried again” or “That worked differently.” • Use gestures, pictures, songs, home language cues, brief words, and predictable routines to help children shift attention, try something new, or move through transitions. • Model trying another way when a child becomes stuck, and offer simple choices or materials that can be used in more than one way. • Stay close during changes in routines, peer interactions, and problem-solving moments, offering reassurance, adaptations, and support so children can participate successfully.	• Encourage children to pause, consider another way, and try a new strategy when they get stuck. • Ask guiding questions such as “What else could you try?” or “What could work better here?” while offering support as needed. • Model calm problem-solving and flexible thinking using varied materials, outdoor experiences, familiar play themes, and open-ended tasks with more than one approach. • Prepare children for transitions and changes using visual cues, first-then language, timers, songs, choices, brief warnings, or plans for returning to preferred activities. • Support flexible behavior in group settings by modeling turn-taking, compromise, shared problem-solving, and respectful ways to revise plans or roles.
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Learning and Development Area. Approaches to Learning (ATL)

Strand 2. Cognitive Self-Regulation (Executive Functioning)

Goal 2. Child shows flexibility in actions, thinking, and behavior.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
			• Acknowledge the effort children use when they revise a plan, try another strategy, adapt behavior, or stay with a challenge.	

Learning and Development Area. Approaches to Learning (ATL)**Strand 2. Cognitive Self-Regulation (Executive Functioning)****Goal 3. Child shows persistence in actions and tasks.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Shows interest in people and objects and stays engaged with familiar adults or toys for longer periods.	Repeats actions or communication attempts to solve problems even when experiencing challenges.	Stays engaged while solving problems, practicing skills, and trying different strategies to reach a goal.	Persists on preferred tasks when facing small challenges with support as needed.	Persists on preferred tasks and sometimes continues less preferred activities with support as needed.
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors				
- Looks at, reaches for, or explores a familiar toy, object, or person for more than a brief moment. - Stays engaged in back-and-forth interaction with a familiar adult through looking, smiling, vocalizing, or moving. - Repeats actions with a toy, object, or familiar adult to continue an enjoyable interaction or experience.	- Repeats sounds, gestures, or actions to get help, attention, or a desired object. - Tries again when a first attempt to reach, open, fit, or use something does not work. - Persists in trying to communicate a need or want when not understood right away.	- Continues working on a task or problem for several minutes with support as needed. - Tries more than one strategy when an initial attempt does not work. - Returns to a task after a brief pause or interruption and keeps working toward a goal, such as building, fitting, opening, or completing something.	- Keeps working on a preferred activity when a small problem or setback occurs. - Accepts support and tries again when materials fall, shift, spill, or do not work as expected. - Stays with a preferred task long enough to make adjustments, corrections, or progress toward their goal.	- Stays with preferred activities until a goal is reached or the task feels complete. - Continues less preferred tasks, such as cleanup or routine responsibilities, with support, reminders, or familiar strategies as needed. - Returns to finish a task after a pause, cue, or interruption and shows growing ability to complete tasks chosen by an adult.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
- Follow children's interests and stay engaged in back-and-forth interactions that invite repeated exploration, communication, and problem-solving. - Provide familiar toys, objects, routines, and manageable challenges that encourage trial and error, repeated attempts, and more than one approach. - Give children time to try again while staying available to offer a hint, model another strategy, or provide support before frustration escalates. - Narrate effort, practice, and persistence, such as "You're trying again," while acknowledging attempts rather than only success. - Break challenging tasks into smaller steps, keep the overall goal clear, and stay nearby to coach children through frustration without taking over.			- Provide preferred and less preferred activities with small, manageable challenges and enough time for children to continue, adjust, and finish. - Offer prompts, brief support, or self-talk models that help children keep going without removing the challenge. - Use clear expectations, routines, and visual cues to help children follow through on responsibilities and return to unfinished tasks. - Encourage children to use simple strategies such as trying another way, breaking a task into steps, checking what comes next, or asking for help. - Offer specific feedback that names effort, practice, strategy use, persistence, and completion, especially during challenging or less preferred activities.	

Learning and Development Area. Approaches to Learning (ATL)

Strand 2. Cognitive Self-Regulation (Executive Functioning)

Goal 4. Child shows an increasing ability to control impulses to meet goals.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early co-regulation, shared attention, and simple rule-based play help children begin to pause before acting and respond to cues. Over time, children learn to keep a goal or rule in mind. They begin to stop and think before responding and focus on the information they need for the task.			Pauses and uses adult cues or simple rules to choose a response that fits a goal.	Uses familiar rules, cues, and strategies to control impulses needed for a goal, with support as needed.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Pauses before responding during a game, routine, or task when an adult gives a cue. • Uses adult cues to wait for a signal, take a turn, follow a simple rule, or choose safer actions. • Tries again after a cue when an automatic response does not fit the task, rule, or goal.	• Waits for a cue, rule, or turn before responding in games, routines, or learning activities. • Uses familiar strategies, such as pausing, checking a visual cue, repeating the rule, or using self-talk, to choose a response that fits the goal. • Changes an initial response when it does not fit the rule, goal, or new information.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Use simple games, routines, and tasks that help children practice stopping, waiting, turn-taking, remembering a rule, or changing a response based on a cue. • Prepare children for expectations before transitions, routines such as bedtime, group times, high-interest activities, and games using brief reminders, visual cues, gestures, or modeled self-talk. • Stay close during situations that may be challenging and offer calm, immediate support, prompts, or choices that help children pause and choose a response that fits the goal. • Teach and model simple strategies such as waiting, stopping, breathing, asking for help, checking the rule, or using self-talk such as “Stop, check, then choose.” • Acknowledge effort and strategy use when children pause, wait, check the rule, change a first response, or choose a response that fits the goal. • Affirm children’s appropriate reminders to peers about rules and turn-taking while helping them use kind, respectful, and welcoming language.	

Learning and Development Area. Approaches to Learning (ATL)**Strand 2. Cognitive Self-Regulation (Executive Functioning)****Goal 5. Child holds information in mind and uses it to perform tasks.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early memory, attention, and repeated routines help children begin to hold information in mind for a short time. At first, children rely on immediate cues and adult support. Over time, they remember and follow simple steps. These skills build the foundation for holding information in mind and completing more complex, multi-step tasks in preschool.			Holds small amounts of information in mind to follow simple two-step directions and complete tasks.	Holds increasing amounts of information in mind to complete tasks.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Follows simple two-step directions with support. • Remembers what to do next during a familiar routine, task, or short sequence. • Holds one or two pieces of information in mind long enough to complete a simple activity, with reminders as needed.	• Follows directions with more than one step in familiar situations. • Remembers and completes longer sequences during routines, games, stories, or tasks. • Uses remembered information, materials, steps, or expectations to finish a task after a brief delay, with supports as needed.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Give short, clear directions using simple language, consistent wording, gestures, pictures, demonstrations, or other communication supports when helpful. • Break tasks into manageable steps while encouraging children to remember or check what comes next. • Provide practice with short sequences during routines, games, songs, repeated readings, and everyday tasks. • Encourage children to repeat directions, talk through steps, use visual supports, or organize materials before beginning a task. • Invite children to recall, retell, or act out familiar sequences, such as what happened first, next, and last, using words, actions, props, pictures, movement, or drawings.	

Learning and Development Area. Approaches to Learning (ATL)**Strand 3. Initiative and Curiosity****Goal 1. Child shows initiative in interactions, experiences, and explorations with support as needed.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Initiates interactions with familiar adults using gestures, actions, or expressions.	Uses gestures or actions to communicate needs, preferences, or requests.	Begins activities and makes choices with growing initiative and support as needed.	Initiates interactions with familiar adults and persists in activities for brief periods with support as needed.	Shows initiative in activities and attempts new skills in different settings, staying engaged for increasing amounts of time with support as needed.
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors				
• Looks toward a familiar adult and smiles, vocalizes, reaches, moves, or uses facial expressions to begin interaction. • Repeats an action, such as kicking, patting, moving, or vocalizing, to continue a back-and-forth exchange. • Turns toward a familiar adult during routines, play, or caregiving to seek connection, comfort, or shared interaction.	• Gestures to, reaches for, brings, shows, or moves toward people, objects, or places to communicate a want or interest. • Uses gestures, sounds, actions, or simple communication to request help, more, another turn, or a preferred activity. • Shows preferences by accepting, refusing, pushing away, choosing, or initiating familiar routines, games, or shared activities with an adult.	• Chooses materials, toys, activities, or actions within familiar routines, with adult support as needed. • Begins familiar play, activities, or routines using cues, accessible materials, or support as needed. • Approaches others, gathers materials, or uses familiar actions to begin play, a routine, or a shared activity.	• Begins conversations or interactions with familiar adults to share ideas, ask questions, or seek support. • Starts familiar tasks or play activities when a routine, interest, cue, or support helps them get started. • Makes choices about materials, roles, or actions and stays with a preferred or familiar activity for several minutes with support as needed.	• Begins activities in familiar and new settings with support as needed, cues, or encouragement. • Chooses to try a new skill, material, role, or activity during play, routines, or learning experiences. • Seeks needed materials, information, encouragement, or support to continue an activity, try something new, or stay engaged.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Notice and respond promptly to children's gestures, expressions, sounds, movements, requests, refusals, and preferences. • Use warm, predictable back-and-forth interactions during routines, play, songs, social games, and shared book experiences. • Model and name gestures, actions, simple words, signs, visuals, or other communication supports children can use to express interests, needs, choices, or refusals. • Offer meaningful choices throughout the day and honor children's selections when possible, including choices about materials, actions, routines, and participation. • Organize materials and routines so children can see, reach, choose, begin, and use them with support available as needed. • Stay emotionally available as children explore, make choices, take small risks, and return for reassurance, connection, or help.			• Provide time, space, and accessible materials for children to begin tasks, play, conversations, and explorations in ways that fit their preferences and support needs. • Encourage children to share ideas, ask questions, make choices, try new roles or materials, and begin activities across routines and settings. • Offer a small number of meaningful options, usually two and no more than three, so children can make choices without becoming overwhelmed. • Support focused participation with clear expectations, predictable routines, visual cues, peer or adult support, and encouragement as needed. • Notice and name children's initiative, effort, persistence, and willingness to try new things without stepping in unnecessarily or removing needed support.	

Learning and Development Area. Approaches to Learning (ATL)**Strand 3. Initiative and Curiosity****Goal 2. Child shows interest in and curiosity about the world around them.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Shows interest or engagement when exploring people, objects, and experiences.	Approaches new experiences, people, and materials with curiosity and interest.	Participates in new experiences and experiments with materials in different ways.	Seeks out new information and explores new activities with adult support.	Seeks out new information and explores new activities with growing initiative and support as needed.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Shows interest during exploration through individual cues such as looking, listening, reaching, moving, vocalizing, calming, stilling, or turning toward people or objects. • Repeats actions such as kicking, reaching, batting, shaking, or looking to continue an interesting effect. • Turns toward or explores familiar or new sights, sounds, objects, textures, movements, or materials with adult support.	• Moves toward or reaches for new people and explores new objects, toys, or materials with interest. • Explores materials by touching, looking, mouthing, shaking, moving, or using them in different ways. • Shows curiosity by watching, listening, gesturing, exploring interesting objects, or joining routines and activities with adult support.	• Joins new activities, routines, or experiences with interest and support as needed. • Uses materials in more than one way, such as stacking, filling, dumping, sorting, combining, testing, or comparing. • Shows curiosity by asking questions, gesturing to things, seeking more information, or returning to materials and activities to keep exploring.	• Asks questions about how things work, why something happens, or other things the child notices. • Tries new play ideas, materials, tasks, or investigations with adult encouragement and support. • Observes, compares, investigates, or seeks information from adults while exploring materials, events, or experiences.	• Asks questions and seeks information during play, conversation, routines, and learning experiences. • Begins new activities or investigations and tries unfamiliar materials, roles, or tasks with curiosity and support as needed. • Uses observations, prior experiences, adult input, or hands-on exploration to guide continued investigation and learn more.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Notice and respond to children’s individual cues of interest, including quiet looking, stilling, reaching, turning toward, moving, vocalizing, calming, or returning to an object or experience. • Provide safe and interesting materials, sensory experiences, and routines that invite repeated exploration, trial and error, and use in different ways. • Follow children’s interests and cues for continuing, pausing, or ending exploration, and introduce new sights, sounds, textures, people, and experiences gradually with reassurance. • Name what children notice and do, and build on their curiosity with new materials, simple words, gestures, signs, visuals, books, routines, or experiences. • Offer time, space, and open-ended materials for children to try, test, combine, compare, and revisit ideas without rushing to direct or correct.			• Encourage children’s questions with meaningful information, wondering aloud, and prompts that extend thinking. • Provide open-ended materials, varied experiences, and time to investigate questions and pursue interests. • Introduce experiences that build on children’s interests, prior knowledge, experiences, families, routines, and surroundings. • Scaffold exploration by helping children notice, compare, predict, test ideas, gather information, and try again. • Acknowledge curiosity, learning risks, persistence, and efforts to try something new or learn more.	

Learning and Development Area. Approaches to Learning (ATL)**Strand 4. Creativity****Goal 1. Child uses creativity in thinking and communication to support understanding and learning.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Interacts with others in different ways and adjusts actions or expressions based on others' responses.	Uses familiar objects in new ways during play and imaginative activities.	Combines objects or materials in new ways during creative and pretend play.	Expresses creative ideas in words, actions, or artistic activities when prompted by adults.	Expresses creative ideas and actions using words, movement, or artistic materials both with and without prompting from adults.
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors				
• Uses movement, gestures, sounds, facial expressions, objects, sensory exploration, or repeated actions in new ways during play and interaction. • Changes vocalizations, movements, or expressions in response to an adult's voice, face, or actions. • Pauses, watches, responds, or repeats actions to keep a back-and-forth interaction going with a familiar adult.	• Uses familiar objects in unexpected ways during play, such as pretending, banging, stacking, carrying, or moving them differently. • Tries more than one way to use a common object or familiar material. • Imitates, repeats, or shows interest in playful or imaginative uses of objects seen in others.	• Combines materials, objects, or props in new ways during play. • Uses one object to represent another or creates simple structures, arrangements, or pretend scenarios with available materials. • Changes how materials are used as ideas develop during creative or pretend play.	• Shares an idea, story, pretend plan, or creative response when invited by an adult. • Uses movement, dramatic play, drawing, building, music, materials, or words to express or respond to an idea. • Adds original details to art, play, storytelling, or personally meaningful creations with support.	• Initiates original ideas during art, movement, storytelling, music, building, design, or pretend play. • Uses words, actions, materials, roles, sounds, or movements to show ideas, experiences, or imagination. • Explains, revises, combines, or shares creative ideas with others with support as needed.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Engage children in warm, back-and-forth interactions during routines, play, songs, and caregiving. • Notice, respond to, mirror, and imitate children's changing expressions, sounds, movements, actions, and ideas. • Provide safe, familiar, open-ended objects and materials that can be explored, combined, moved, and used in different ways. • Join children's play by following their ideas, describing what they do, and extending with simple comments, actions, questions, or added materials. • Allow time and space for children to initiate, pause, respond, repeat, experiment, combine materials, and change plans during play.			• Use open-ended prompts that invite children to imagine, create, explain, revise, and extend their ideas. • Offer varied materials and experiences for art, movement, music, storytelling, dramatic play, building, design, and open-ended creative expression. • Encourage multiple ways for children to respond, such as talking, acting, drawing, moving, building, making music, or using materials. • Ask questions and offer support that help children expand ideas without taking over. • Create a supportive environment where originality, experimentation, collaboration, and expression are welcomed and valued.	

Learning and Development Area. Approaches to Learning (ATL)**Strand 4. Creativity****Goal 2. Child uses imagination in play and interactions with others.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Responds to songs, rhymes, playful routines, people, objects, and sounds through attention, movement, facial expressions, sounds, or repeated actions.	Uses sounds, gestures, signs, or words playfully during songs, games, and creative activities.	Uses imagination in pretend play with others and begins to use objects to represent other things.	Uses imagination in play and begins to share creative ideas with others.	Engages in more elaborate imaginative play and stories with others.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Responds to songs, rhymes, playful routines, people, objects, or sounds through attention, movement, facial expressions, sounds, or repeated actions. • Participates in simple back-and-forth games such as peekaboo, imitation play, songs, or playful caregiving routines. • Shows engagement during shared playful experiences, which may include enjoyment, quiet attention, movement, sounds, stilling, or turn-taking.	• Joins in songs, finger plays, movement games, or repetitive routines using sounds, gestures, signs, words, or actions. • Imitates or repeats playful sounds, motions, rhythms, expressions, or simple words during familiar games and routines. • Uses gestures, sounds, movement, or simple communication to continue a favorite game, song, or shared creative routine.	• Uses one object to represent another during pretend play, such as a block for a phone or a cup for a hat. • Acts out familiar experiences with others, such as cooking, caring for babies, driving, or using familiar materials. • Joins other children in simple make-believe play and adds sounds, words, actions, or unexpected uses of materials.	• Creates pretend scenarios and shares ideas about roles, actions, events, or what is being made or imagined. • Uses drawing, building, movement, music, dramatic play, or storytelling to express imaginative ideas. • Adds original details to play, stories, artwork, constructions, or shared imaginative experiences.	• Develops extended pretend play scenarios with roles, materials, settings, actions, or events. • Creates and tells stories with a sequence of ideas, actions, characters, or imagined events. • Works with others to plan, revise, continue, and show imaginative ideas through play, art, movement, music, building, or storytelling.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide warm, playful interactions during routines, care, exploration, songs, finger plays, imitation games, and simple turn-taking activities. • Notice and respond to children’s sounds, movements, expressions, attention, gestures, signs, words, and actions as meaningful participation. • Repeat favorite games, songs, and playful routines so children can anticipate, join, and participate more fully. • Offer safe materials, sensory experiences, props, loose parts, and open-ended objects that invite exploration, repeated action, and pretend play. • Join children’s play by following their ideas, modeling simple pretend actions or language, and extending play without taking over.			• Invite children to share ideas during play, art, storytelling, movement, music, building, and dramatic play. • Offer varied materials, time, and space for extended imaginative play, storytelling, construction, and creative expression. • Ask open-ended questions and support children in planning, revising, expanding, and building on one another’s ideas. • Value children’s original ideas and processes more than finished products, and document or revisit stories and play ideas to extend them over time.	

Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development

Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development describes how children use their senses, bodies, and movement to explore the world, participate in daily routines, care for themselves, and stay safe. From birth through age five, children are learning to:

- Notice and respond to sensory information
- Understand how their bodies move through space
- Build strength, balance, coordination, and control
- Use their hands and fingers with increasing skill
- Participate in health, safety, nutrition, and self-care routines

These skills grow through responsive caregiving, active play, movement, sensory exploration, daily routines, and safe opportunities to practice using the body in meaningful ways.

Children develop perceptual, motor, and physical skills at different rates and in different ways. Children may show growth through:

- Looking
- Listening
- Reaching
- Grasping
- Moving
- Climbing
- Balancing
- Feeding
- Dressing
- Using tools
- Exploring textures
- Responding to routines
- Active play
- Using adapted materials and supports

Inside This Learning and Development Area

This area includes four strands and 12 learning goals. The table below highlights what children are learning in this area and how adults can support that learning through warm relationships, responsive interactions, everyday routines, play, movement, and meaningful experiences.

Strand	Children are learning to...	Adults support learning by...
Sensory and Perception Organization	Notice, respond to, and make sense of sensory information, body position, movement, people, materials, and the environment.	Offering sensory-rich experiences, observing children's cues, adapting materials and environments, and helping children feel safe, regulated, and ready to participate.
Gross Motor	Move their bodies with increasing strength, balance, coordination, body control, and confidence during play, exploration, and routines.	Providing safe spaces, varied surfaces, outdoor play, movement games, and repeated opportunities to crawl, walk, run, climb, jump, balance, dance, and try safe physical challenges.
Fine Motor	Use hands, fingers, eyes, and tools with increasing coordination and control to explore, play, communicate, create, and participate in routines.	Offering materials such as blocks, utensils, writing tools, art materials, fasteners, loose parts, sensory materials, and adapted tools that support grasp, coordination, and control.
Health, Safety, and Nutrition	Participate in health, safety, nutrition, self-care, and personal safety routines with growing responsibility and support as needed.	Modeling and practicing routines such as handwashing, dressing, feeding, rest, safe movement, asking for help, and caring for the body with calm, consistent support.

Play Across Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development

The play continuum shows how children build perceptual, motor, and physical skills through a balance of child-directed, shared, and adult-supported play experiences. Across the continuum, children have opportunities to move, climb, balance, carry, build, dig, dance, use tools, explore textures, practice self-care, try safe challenges, and build confidence using their senses and bodies.



In Focus: Outdoor Play Supports Physical Development

Outdoor play gives children important opportunities to move their bodies, practice motor skills, and build healthy movement habits. When children walk, run, climb, balance, jump, dig, carry, throw, and explore open spaces, they use large muscles, coordinate movement, and practice body control in meaningful ways.

Outdoor play can support physical activity, reduce time spent sitting still, and provide repeated opportunities for balance, coordination, fine motor control, sensory exploration, and confidence. Adults support physical development outdoors by providing regular opportunities for active play, offering safe and varied spaces to move, and adapting materials and environments so all children can participate.

Outdoor spaces can include open areas for running, stable and varied surfaces for balancing, loose parts for carrying and building, and natural materials such as sticks, leaves, rocks, sand, mud, or snow for hands-on exploration. These experiences help children practice gross motor skills, fine motor skills, body awareness, sensory processing, and safe participation in real and meaningful ways.

Learning and Development Area. Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development (PMP)**Strand 1. Sensory and Perception Organization**

Goal 1. Child uses sensory information to understand the body, interact with the environment, and adjust actions with increasing coordination and support as needed.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Uses sensory information, such as sight, sound, touch, and movement, to respond to people and objects with adult support.	Uses sensory experiences to explore and interact with people, objects, and the environment with adult support.	Uses sensory information to guide movement and explore materials and environments with increasing coordination.	Uses information from multiple senses to adjust movements and actions during play and daily activities, with occasional adult support.	Integrates sensory information across senses to plan, adjust, and carry out movements and actions in a variety of environments, with supports or adaptations as needed.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Looks toward lights, faces, moving objects, or other visual information. • Responds to sounds, voices, touch, movement, or routines by turning, quieting, moving, or changing body position. • Explores objects, materials, or body movements using hands, mouth, eyes, body, or other senses.	• Explores objects or materials by touching, shaking, banging, mouthing, looking, listening, or moving them. • Responds to sensory cues during routines, transitions, play, or caregiving. • Moves toward, away from, or adjusts actions in response to sensory input such as sound, texture, movement, or visual information.	• Uses sensory feedback to guide actions, such as adjusting grip, force, movement, or body position. • Explores materials in different ways, such as squeezing, pouring, stacking, climbing, pushing, pulling, or carrying. • Shows awareness of body in space during active play, movement, routines, or exploration.	• Adjusts movements based on sensory feedback, such as walking carefully on uneven surfaces or changing pressure when using materials. • Uses information from multiple senses to complete tasks, participate in play, or move through routines. • Participates in activities that require balance, coordination, body awareness, and adjustment of actions.	• Uses sensory information across senses to plan, adjust, and carry out movements in varied environments with supports or adaptations as needed. • Uses sensory feedback to refine actions, such as changing speed, pressure, force, balance, or direction. • Coordinates body position, movement, and senses during complex play, routines, problem-solving, or physical activities.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide safe sensory experiences with varied textures, sounds, sights, movement, positions, and materials. • Use consistent sensory cues, such as voice, touch, gestures, songs, visuals, objects, and routines, to support participation and transitions. • Position materials and arrange spaces so children can reach, notice, explore, move toward, move away, and try different actions with support as needed. • Narrate sensory experiences with simple language, such as what children see, hear, touch, feel, move, or notice. • Offer hands-on, active, multi-sensory play with materials that invite repeated exploration, varied force, coordination, and different ways of interacting.			• Provide varied environments, surfaces, materials, and movement opportunities that invite balance, coordination, planning, and adjustment. • Offer activities that require children to coordinate information across senses, such as building, obstacle courses, art, music, outdoor play, and movement games. • Support children in adjusting actions when challenges arise by modeling, prompting, adapting materials, or offering choices. • Provide movement and problem-solving experiences that support persistence, body awareness, and safe participation with supports or adaptations as needed.	

Learning and Development Area. Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development (PMP)**Strand 1. Sensory and Perception Organization****Goal 2. Child uses sensory information and body awareness to understand how the body relates to the environment.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Responds to sounds and sights by turning or moving the body to take in information.	Shows awareness of new challenges or dangers in the environment while moving.	Shows awareness of body size and how the body fits through openings and spaces.	Children continue to build sensory awareness and body awareness as they grow. They begin by noticing how their bodies fit in familiar spaces. Over time, they adjust their movement, position, and actions in different spaces and situations. These skills support spatial awareness, coordination, and safe movement across activities and settings.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Turns head, eyes, or body toward a voice, sound, movement, person, object, or visual event. • Repositions the body to better see, hear, or respond to people, objects, or what is happening nearby. • Shows alertness to changes in the environment through looking, pausing, shifting attention, or moving toward familiar sensory cues.	• Pauses, slows down, changes direction, or looks to an adult when approaching a drop-off, obstacle, unfamiliar surface, or new space. • Tests a surface, pathway, or challenge with body position, balance, or movement before continuing. • Moves carefully around challenges in the environment with support as needed.	• Moves through openings, around furniture, or into spaces with growing awareness of body size. • Adjusts body position by turning, bending, ducking, squeezing, climbing, crawling, or moving around spaces. • Uses trial and adjustment to figure out how the body fits in play spaces, openings, and around objects.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide calm, responsive interactions and meaningful sensory cues that invite children to notice, turn, reorient, and adjust their bodies. • Position interesting people, objects, and materials within view and reach, and allow time for children to notice, respond, and move before changing the activity. • Offer safe opportunities to explore varied surfaces, ramps, pathways, openings, tunnels, boxes, and movement spaces with close supervision. • Use simple spatial and movement words during play and routines, such as “stop,” “careful,” “edge,” “up,” “down,” “around,” “fit,” “through,” “under,” “between,” “too big,” and “too small.” • Stay nearby during movement exploration, observe safety, and offer calm guidance, modeling, support, or adaptations as needed.				

Learning and Development Area. Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development (PMP)**Strand 1. Sensory and Perception Organization****Goal 3. Child uses perceptual information to direct actions, experiences, and interactions with objects and people.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Adjusts balance and movement as the body grows and moves with increasing intention and purpose.	Uses perceptual information to plan movement, avoid obstacles, and move with increasing intention and purpose.	Coordinates information and motor actions to take part in play and daily routines.	Shows emerging awareness of body, space, and objects and may need adult support to coordinate movements and interactions.	Shows increasing awareness of body, space, and objects to support more coordinated movement and interaction.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Adjusts body position to reach, roll, sit, or move toward people, objects, or interesting materials. • Shifts weight, balance, or movement as body control increases. • Moves with growing purpose toward a desired toy, person, place, sound, or visual cue.	• Pauses, looks, changes direction, or adjusts path to move around objects, people, furniture, or changes in level. • Adjusts speed, balance, or movement when moving across different spaces, surfaces, or simple obstacles. • Uses vision and body control together when climbing, walking, crawling, reaching, or moving toward a desired object or place.	• Joins songs, finger plays, movement games, or action routines with movements that match words, rhythm, or familiar cues. • Uses vision, touch, and movement together during self-care routines, play, and simple tasks. • Adjusts body and hand movements to carry, place, pour, climb, fit, use, or move objects during activities.	• Moves with growing awareness of personal space during play, routines, and group activities. • Adjusts body position to avoid bumping into people, furniture, or materials with reminders or support as needed. • Participates in games or tasks that require moving in relation to objects, tools, peers, or shared space.	• Moves with greater control and awareness around people, objects, materials, boundaries, and shared spaces. • Adjusts body movements to fit the space, activity, group setting, or changing environment. • Coordinates actions with others during games, movement activities, routines, and shared tasks.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide safe, open spaces with varied positions, surfaces, pathways, and simple obstacles for movement, reaching, rolling, crawling, climbing, and balance practice. • Place interesting objects and materials nearby to encourage purposeful movement, balance adjustments, and coordination. • Allow children time to look, plan, move, repeat, and adjust actions without rushing them. • Use songs, movement games, action routines, and self-care tasks that combine looking, listening, touching, and moving. • Stay nearby to support safe exploration while helping children notice options, make movement choices, and use support or adaptations as needed.			• Use clear language, gestures, visual cues, and demonstrations about body position, direction, distance, space, and movement during routines and play. • Provide games, group activities, movement experiences, and daily routines that support awareness of self, others, objects, and shared space. • Arrange environments to reduce crowding and allow children to move, carry, place, build, dance, climb, and use materials with greater success. • Model how to move safely and respectfully around people, materials, tools, and shared spaces. • Support children in problem-solving where to move, how to fit, and how to coordinate actions in space with guidance, modeling, or adaptations as needed.	

Learning and Development Area. Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development (PMP)**Strand 1. Sensory and Perception Organization****Goal 4. Child uses perceptual information to understand objects, experiences, and interactions.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Uses perceptual information to understand objects and recognize differences in texture and how things feel.	Uses perceptual information to match and associate objects by their properties during play.	Uses perceptual information to observe actions and outcomes to understand cause-and-effect relationships in daily routines.	Children continue to use perceptual information to explore and make sense of objects and experiences as they grow. They begin by noticing properties, relationships, and cause and effect in familiar routines. Over time, they use this understanding to make sense of new situations, predict what might happen, and connect ideas across experiences. These skills build the foundation for reasoning, problem-solving, and learning across domains.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Looks at, touches, mouths, holds, turns, pats, squeezes, or rubs objects to learn what they are like. • Responds differently to objects with different textures, shapes, sizes, weights, sounds, or visual qualities. • Uses sight, touch, mouth, movement, or repeated exploration to gather information about familiar objects and materials.	• Matches, pairs, selects, or uses objects that go together during play or routines. • Uses objects in ways that show awareness of their properties or familiar purpose, such as feeding a doll with a bottle. • Groups or associates materials by look, feel, shape, size, sound, weight, function, or how they are used together.	• Watches what others do and connects actions with what happens next. • Anticipates familiar outcomes in routines, such as getting shoes before going outside or bringing a dish before snack time. • Repeats or changes actions based on what happened before and notices the result.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide safe objects and materials with varied textures, shapes, sizes, weights, sounds, visual qualities, and familiar uses. • Give children repeated opportunities to look at, touch, hold, mouth, move, compare, sort, match, pair, and use objects safely. • Narrate sensory qualities, relationships, actions, and outcomes using simple words, such as “soft,” “rough,” “smooth,” “light,” “bumpy,” “same,” “different,” “together,” “next,” and “again.” • Provide predictable routines and meaningful object sets, such as cups and spoons, dolls and bottles, lids and containers, or shoes and coats, so children can notice the relationships between them and anticipate what comes next. • Join children’s play by modeling simple associations, making cause-and-effect visible, and encouraging children to repeat actions, test ideas, and notice what happened.				

Learning and Development Area. Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development (PMP)**Strand 2. Gross Motor****Goal 1. Child shows effective and efficient use of large muscles to explore the environment.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Uses each new posture to explore the environment in new ways.	Uses body position, balance, and movement to explore and examine materials, activities, and spaces.	Uses a variety of increasingly complex movements, body positions, and postures in indoor and outdoor play.	Children continue to use body position, balance, and movement to explore their environment as they grow. They begin by using different movements in familiar play. Over time, they choose, combine, and adjust movements to fit different activities, spaces, and challenges. These skills build the foundation for coordinated movement and participation in more complex physical, play, and daily experiences.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Uses new positions, such as lifting head, rolling, sitting, or reaching, to see, explore, and interact with people, objects, and space. • Changes body position to get a better view of materials, people, or activity nearby. • Repeats movements in new positions to learn what the body can do and to explore the environment in new ways.	• Moves through spaces to get closer to people, materials, or activities of interest. • Uses body position, balance, and movement, such as walking, crawling, squatting, kneeling, climbing, or reaching, to explore materials and surroundings. • Adjusts movement to examine objects, equipment, natural features, or play spaces from different angles indoors and outdoors.	• Uses running, climbing, squatting, kneeling, stretching, sitting, pushing, pulling, carrying, dancing, or floor play during indoor and outdoor activities. • Changes body position and movement to take part in active play, quiet play, routines, pretend play, and exploration. • Chooses body positions and movements that help complete a task, use materials, or join an activity.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide safe floor time, open spaces, varied surfaces, and supervised opportunities for children to explore different positions and movements. • Place interesting objects and materials nearby, at different heights, and in different locations so children are motivated to look, reach, roll, sit, crawl, climb, walk, and explore. • Allow time for children to practice new postures and movements without over-positioning, rushing, or taking over. • Stay nearby to support safe exploration and risk-taking while children make movement choices and use support or adaptations as needed. • Offer daily indoor and outdoor experiences that encourage climbing, carrying, pushing, pulling, building, dancing, floor play, quiet play, and active movement in ways that support accessible participation.				

Learning and Development Area. Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development (PMP)**Strand 2. Gross Motor****Goal 2. Child shows control, strength, and coordination in the use of large muscles for movement and position.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Explores new body positions and movements, including rolling, sitting, crawling, and kicking or hitting objects to reach goals.	Moves from crawling to cruising to walking and develops new coordination to manage changing surfaces.	Gains control of different postures and movements, including stooping, standing, running, and jumping.	Balances for short periods with adult support and performs some jumping, hopping, and other physical skills.	Balances for longer periods while still or moving and shows coordinated movement in more complex physical activities.
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors				
• Rolls, scoots, sits, reaches, kicks, swipes, bats, or moves into new positions during play and routines. • Uses growing control of head, trunk, arms, and legs to explore people, space, objects, and materials. • Repeats movements to reach a goal, such as getting closer to an object or making a toy move.	• Crawls, cruises, stands, or walks with growing control and support as needed. • Moves across different surfaces, such as rugs, grass, mats, low steps, or outdoor areas, with supervision and support as needed. • Changes speed, body position, balance, or movement when practicing new mobility skills.	• Moves between positions such as sitting, standing, squatting, stooping, climbing, or stepping over objects. • Runs, climbs, kicks, jumps, pushes, pulls, or carries objects with growing control. • Participates in active play that builds strength, balance, coordination, and movement variety.	• Balances briefly while standing still or moving with support as needed. • Jumps, hops, climbs, pedals, or participates in other movement activities with emerging coordination. • Uses increasing body control during games, movement activities, outdoor play, and short periods of active play.	• Balances for longer periods while standing still, moving, or crossing a line, beam, uneven surface, or pathway. • Shows growing coordination in running, hopping, jumping, climbing, pedaling, and moving between actions. • Participates in more complex and sustained movement activities with strength, stamina, coordination, and support or adaptations as needed.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide safe floor time, open spaces, varied surfaces, and supervised opportunities for children to roll, reach, sit, pivot, crawl, cruise, stand, walk, climb, jump, and balance. • Place interesting people, toys, and materials nearby to encourage purposeful movement and repeated practice. • Offer sturdy furniture, push toys, stable surfaces, paths, ramps, steps, and open areas that support emerging mobility and movement variety. • Stay close, encourage effort, and offer support while allowing children time and space to practice emerging movement skills without over-positioning or rushing. • Build movement into daily routines, songs, games, obstacle courses, indoor play, and outdoor play so children can practice strength, balance, and coordination often.			• Provide regular opportunities for children to practice balancing, jumping, hopping, climbing, pedaling, running, and coordinated movement in safe ways. • Offer varied indoor and outdoor environments with equipment, lines, beams, stepping stones, open spaces, and movement games that support gross motor challenges. • Encourage children to try new physical challenges while allowing for uneven or developing performance. • Model and reinforce safe body control, awareness of space, persistence, and care for others during physical play. • Adapt activities so children can build coordination, confidence, strength, and stamina at their own pace.	

Learning and Development Area. Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development (PMP)**Strand 3. Fine Motor****Goal 1. Child adjusts reach and grasp to use tools.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Uses increasingly refined grasps that match the task.	Uses simple tools to pull distant objects closer.	Adjusts grasp to use different tools for different purposes.	Children continue to build on early grasp and hand-control skills as they grow. They begin by using tools with emerging control. Over time, they choose, adjust, and coordinate tools for different purposes and tasks. These skills support precision, efficiency, and participation in writing, creating, building, and self-care.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Picks up, holds, releases, stacks, places, or explores objects with growing control. • Uses a whole-hand grasp, finger grasp, or different hand movements depending on the material, object, or task. • Adjusts grasp when exploring toys, food, materials, or simple objects during play and routines.	• Uses a stick, string, scoop, branch, or other simple tool to move, reach, pull, or retrieve an object. • Tries different hand movements to make a tool work during play, sensory exploration, outdoor play, or problem-solving. • Chooses or uses a simple tool to solve a problem with support as needed.	• Holds and uses tools such as spoons, markers, paintbrushes, scissors, tongs, scoops, or self-care tools in ways that fit the task. • Adjusts hand position, grip, force, or movement when switching between tools and materials. • Chooses and uses tools during play, art, meals, building, sensory play, or routines with growing control and purpose.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide safe materials of different sizes, shapes, textures, weights, and purposes to encourage varied grasps and hand movements. • Offer daily opportunities to pick up, hold, release, stack, place, scoop, pull, carry, and use objects during play and routines. • Provide simple tools such as scoops, pull toys, sticks, rakes, tongs, strings, spoons, markers, paintbrushes, and self-care tools. • Model how tools can be held and used to reach, pull, move, retrieve, create, eat, build, or care for self. • Give children time to experiment with tools while staying nearby to offer modeling, safety support, encouragement, or adaptations as needed.				

Learning and Development Area. Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development (PMP)**Strand 3. Fine Motor****Goal 2. Child uses hands for exploration, play, and daily routines.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Uses single actions to explore the shape, size, texture, or weight of objects.	Explores properties of objects and materials using different hand actions.	Plans how to use hands for different activities and self-care routines.	Children continue to build on early hand-use skills as they grow. They begin by exploring objects and materials through actions such as reaching, grasping, releasing, turning, stacking, or pulling. Over time, they plan, coordinate, and refine hand movements across activities and routines. These skills build the foundation for participation, problem-solving, building, creating, and self-care.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Turns, pats, shakes, drops, pushes, mouths, or handles objects to explore what they are like. • Looks at, feels, holds, or moves objects of different shapes, sizes, textures, or weights. • Repeats hand actions with objects to notice how they move, feel, sound, or change.	• Pulls, pokes, twists, turns, lifts, opens, presses, or moves objects to find out what they do. • Uses more than one hand action to examine, compare, or change materials. • Gestures to, shows, turns pages, moves parts, or explores simple objects using hands and eyes together.	• Chooses hand actions that fit a task, such as stacking, connecting, scooping, drawing, opening, buttoning, or feeding. • Uses hands purposefully during building, art, sensory play, meals, self-care routines, and everyday tasks. • Tries a sequence of hand actions to carry out a plan, such as building something, using materials, or getting dressed.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide safe objects and materials that vary in shape, size, texture, weight, movement, and purpose for children to explore with their hands. • Place objects within reach and allow time for children to repeat actions such as turning, dropping, patting, shaking, pulling, pressing, opening, and twisting. • Offer books, containers, knobs, sensory materials, blocks, puzzles, crayons, brushes, spoons, dressing items, and everyday objects that invite varied hand use. • Name actions and properties as children explore, such as “open,” “twist,” “soft,” “heavy,” “round,” “rough,” “smooth,” and “bumpy.” • Break routines and activities into manageable steps, model hand actions when helpful, and give children time to try with support or adaptations as needed.				

Learning and Development Area. Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development (PMP)**Strand 3. Fine Motor****Goal 3. Child coordinates hand and eye movements with increasing control, strength, and coordination of small muscles.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Coordinates hands and eyes when reaching for and holding stable or moving objects.	Uses hand-eye coordination for more complex actions such as releasing, stacking, and picking up small objects.	Uses hand-eye coordination during routines, play, and activities.	Performs simple hand-eye tasks such as drawing shapes and cutting paper and is still developing precision in more complex tasks.	Performs more complex hand-eye tasks with growing precision and control.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Reaches toward a nearby toy, face, object, or moving material with increasing accuracy. • Tracks an object with eyes and reaches, swipes, pats, or bats toward it during play. • Grasps, holds, or brings hands or objects toward the mouth while visually attending to them.	• Releases objects into a container, onto a surface, or into a space with purpose. • Stacks blocks, cups, rings, or other objects with growing control. • Uses hands and eyes together to pick up, place, fill, dump, match, or move materials.	• Uses hands-eye coordination during self-help routines such as dressing, feeding, washing, or cleanup. • Completes simple puzzles, places pieces, matches shapes, or uses tools with growing accuracy. • Paints, scribbles, stacks, pours, scoops, moves, or uses materials to complete familiar play and routine tasks.	• Draws simple shapes, lines, marks, or pictures with growing control. • Uses scissors, beads, puzzles, construction materials, or classroom tools with support as needed. • Shows growing control in tasks that require aiming, placing, cutting, tracing, aligning, or coordinating materials.	• Cuts along lines or around simple shapes with growing accuracy, or uses adapted tools or materials to participate in cutting or similar fine-motor tasks. • Draws letter-like forms, detailed pictures, shapes, or designs with increasing control. • Adjusts hand movements to improve accuracy during writing, drawing, building, cutting, tool use, or careful placement tasks.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide safe objects and materials of different sizes, textures, shapes, weights, and purposes within easy reach. • Position toys and materials so children can see, track, reach, grasp, hold, release, place, stack, fill, dump, and match with growing success. • Offer daily opportunities to use hand-eye coordination during play, routines, meals, self-help tasks, and sensory exploration. • Model simple actions such as putting in, taking out, stacking, matching, scooping, pouring, scribbling, and using tools or materials. • Break tasks into manageable parts and support children’s repeated practice without taking over, adapting materials as needed.			• Provide regular opportunities for drawing, cutting, building, tracing, lacing, puzzles, tool use, and careful placement across routines and activities. • Offer materials that support increasing precision, such as crayons, markers, scissors, beads, puzzles, manipulatives, varied drawing tools, and adapted tools. • Model how to hold, position, and use materials safely and effectively, then allow time for practice. • Encourage children to slow down, adjust movements, try again, and notice what helps when accuracy matters. • Support developing control through meaningful tasks, projects, play, self-care, and classroom routines rather than isolated drills.	

Learning and Development Area. Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development (PMP)**Strand 4. Health, Safety, and Nutrition****Goal 1. Child shows healthy behaviors, personal hygiene, and self-care skills with growing responsibility and support as needed.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Responds to familiar caregiving routines such as feeding, diapering, washing, and dressing with growing awareness and adult support.	Participates in healthy care routines with adult guidance, familiar cues, and support as needed.	Participates in healthy care routines with growing responsibility and support that matches the child, routine, and setting.	Shows awareness of personal hygiene and self-care routines and needs adult guidance to do them regularly.	Takes increasing responsibility for personal hygiene and self-care skills in familiar routines with support, reminders, or adult guidance as needed.
Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors				
• Responds to familiar caregiving routines such as diapering, feeding, washing, dressing, or comforting with growing awareness. • Anticipates parts of daily care routines through body movements, attention, expressions, or repeated responses. • Participates in simple ways during caregiving, such as lifting arms, opening mouth, calming, looking toward materials, or responding to adult support.	• Shows awareness that a self-care routine is about to happen and begins to participate with adult support. • Cooperates during handwashing, wiping, brushing teeth, dressing, eating, or drinking with familiar cues and help as needed. • Holds or uses self-care items, such as a toothbrush, washcloth, spoon, cup, clothing, or towel, with support.	• Participates in routines such as handwashing, drinking from a cup, brushing teeth, wiping face, toileting, dressing, cleanup, or getting ready to go outside with adult guidance and support as needed. • Uses familiar self-care tools with increasing control during routines, pretend play, transitions, and daily care. • Follows parts of familiar care routines with support that matches the child, routine, family expectations, and setting.	• Tells about, shows, or participates in routines that support health and hygiene, such as washing hands before eating, after toileting, or after outdoor play. • Uses familiar self-care tools and routines with adult reminders, guidance, supervision, or support as needed. • Begins to notice when self-care is needed, such as wiping nose, washing hands, adjusting clothing, or getting ready for outdoor exploration.	• Completes some hygiene and self-care tasks in familiar routines with support that matches the child, family expectations, and setting. • Recognizes when self-care is needed and takes action or seeks help. • Participates more consistently in routines such as handwashing, toileting, dressing, using utensils, brushing teeth, or wiping nose with support as needed.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Use warm, predictable caregiving routines that support trust, comfort, participation, and connection. • Narrate daily care routines with simple words, gestures, songs, visuals, home-language cues, or familiar objects so children can anticipate what happens next. • Watch for and respond to children's cues during feeding, diapering, washing, dressing, toileting, and other care routines. • Invite children to participate in simple ways, such as reaching, lifting arms, holding materials, washing, wiping, drinking, using utensils, or helping with a step.			• Talk about why self-care and hygiene routines are important, using everyday language and honoring family practices. • Use visual schedules, reminders, songs, home-language cues, accessible materials, and consistent expectations to support regular participation. • Encourage children to notice self-care needs, take next steps, seek help, and build healthy habits.	

Learning and Development Area. Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development (PMP)**Strand 4. Health, Safety, and Nutrition****Goal 2. Child shows increasing interest in and develops healthy eating habits and nutritious food choices.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Responds to feeding routines with growing awareness, comfort, and engagement with adult support.	Explores familiar and new foods during responsive feeding routines with adult support.	Explores familiar and new foods during responsive feeding routines with adult support, family input, and respect food practices.	Shows basic understanding that food supports healthy growth and makes healthy eating choices with adult support.	Shows increasing understanding of how food and water help the body grow, move, and stay healthy and makes nutritious choices with adult support, modeling, familiar routines, and opportunities for participation.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Responds to feeding routines with growing awareness, comfort, and engagement. • Shows interest in feeding by looking toward food, bottle, breast, spoon, cup, or caregiver during meals. • Opens mouth, reaches, leans, shifts attention, or shows preferences during familiar feeding interactions.	• Looks at, touches, smells, tastes, reaches for, or accepts a new food when it is offered. • Watches others eat familiar or new foods and shows curiosity about them. • Tries small amounts of a new food or returns to a food after first exploring or refusing it.	• Explores familiar and new nutritious foods through looking, touching, smelling, tasting, or eating during responsive mealtime routines. • Tries nutritious foods when offered more than once and eats a greater variety of foods over time. • Participates in simple mealtime choices, such as choosing between available nutritious foods, with adult guidance and family input.	• Talks about food and water as helping the body grow, stay strong, move, or have energy. • Identifies or chooses some nutritious foods during meals, snacks, pretend play, or other food experiences with adult support. • Participates in conversations, routines, or choices about why the body needs food and water.	• Explains in simple ways how food and water help the body grow, move, and stay healthy. • Makes nutritious food choices in familiar routines with adult support, modeling, family input, and opportunities to choose among available options. • Talks about eating different kinds of foods, including familiar family foods, during meals, snacks, gardening, pretend cooking, or food-related experiences.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Use calm, responsive feeding routines that support trust, comfort, engagement, and participation. • Watch for and respond to children’s hunger, fullness, interest, refusal, sensory responses, and feeding cues. • Offer new nutritious foods alongside familiar foods in relaxed, predictable mealtime routines without pressure, forcing, or bribing. • Encourage food exploration through looking, touching, smelling, tasting, and repeated exposure while respecting children’s cues. • Coordinate with families around feeding practices, preferences, routines, foods, and messages about eating.			• Talk about how food and water help the body grow, move, have energy, and stay healthy using simple, everyday language. • Offer nutritious choices during meals and snacks and guide children’s choices without labeling foods as “good” or “bad.” • Involve children in food-related routines such as choosing, serving, noticing, talking about, growing, preparing, or pretend cooking with foods. • Partner with families to support responsive nutrition messages, familiar foods and food practices, and accessible participation in food routines.	

Learning and Development Area. Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development (PMP)**Strand 4. Health, Safety, and Nutrition****Goal 3. Child uses safe behaviors and shows knowledge of personal safety practices and routines with growing responsibility and support as needed.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Responds to adult actions, routines, and environments that provide safety, comfort, and protection.	Begins to respond to familiar safety words, gestures, routines, and adult redirection in simple situations.	Accepts adult guidance in unsafe situations and shows growing awareness of safe and unsafe behaviors.	Shows awareness of growing personal safety practices and routines and looks to adults for support in following them.	Follows familiar personal safety practices with growing consistency and seeks or accepts adult guidance for more complex, unfamiliar, or higher-risk situations.
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Responds to adult actions that provide safety, comfort, and protection during routines and play. • Calms, pauses, or shifts attention when a familiar adult picks up, redirects, holds securely, or moves them away from danger. • Shows growing awareness of familiar safety routines, such as being buckled, held securely, moved carefully, or comforted in unfamiliar situations.	• Pauses, looks toward, or moves closer to an adult when hearing a warning word, tone, gesture, or familiar safety cue. • Accepts redirection away from unsafe objects, places, or actions with adult support. • Participates in simple safety routines, such as holding a hand, waiting, staying near an adult, or using gentle touch.	• Stops, pauses, or changes behavior when an adult gives a safety reminder. • Accepts adult help in situations that may be unsafe, unfamiliar, or uncomfortable. • Shows awareness of simple safety practices, such as keeping small objects out of the mouth, staying near adults, using materials carefully, or choosing a safer action when redirected.	• Talks about, recognizes, or follows some personal safety rules and routines in classroom, outdoor, community, and nature-based settings with adult support. • Uses reminders to follow safety expectations during play, routines, transitions, group activities, and outdoor exploration. • Notices when a situation may require caution or adult assistance and looks to adults for help.	• Follows familiar personal safety practices in many situations using reminders, routines, or adult support as needed. • Adjusts behavior to match safety expectations in different settings, including group play, community spaces, transitions, outdoor exploration, and nature-based experiences. • Identifies when adult help is needed for more complex, unfamiliar, or higher-risk situations.
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide close supervision, safe spaces, consistent protection, and warm, responsive caregiving during routines, play, movement, and exploration. • Use simple, consistent safety words, gestures, signs, visuals, and routines, such as “stop,” “wait,” “gentle,” “hot,” “help,” or “stay close.” • Narrate safety actions briefly, such as “I’m moving this to keep you safe” or “Feet stay on the floor.” • Redirect children to safe alternatives while staying calm, nearby, and ready to offer support as needed. • Build simple safety routines into transitions, outdoor time, movement play, care routines, and exploration, and acknowledge children’s responses to safety guidance.			• Discuss and practice safety expectations during real routines such as lining up, cleanup, playground use, walks, water play, outdoor exploration, and community experiences. • Use visuals, modeling, gestures, role play, books, conversations, and reminders to support children in understanding and following safety practices. • Encourage children to ask for help or seek an adult when they are unsure what is safe. • Adapt safety routines, materials, expectations, and supports so all children can participate safely across settings.	

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				
• 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.

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
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 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 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. • 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. • 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.	- Notifies 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, mix-ed 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	• 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	• 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,

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
family members or familiar adults.		contributing words in a familiar language.		working out play with others, or sharing ideas with different conversation partners.
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.	

Cognition and General Knowledge

Cognition and General Knowledge describes how children think, explore, remember, solve problems, make connections, and build understanding about themselves, their families, communities, and the world. From birth through age five, children are learning to:

- Observe people, objects, materials, and events
- Notice what happens when they act
- Remember familiar people and routines
- Use reasoning and persistence to solve problems
- Explore quantity, number, patterns, measurement, shapes, and space
- Wonder about the natural and physical world
- Understand family, community, time, place, roles, responsibilities, wants, needs, choices, and resources

To show what they know and make meaning, children also use:

- Imitation
- Symbols
- Movement
- Language
- Drawing
- Building
- Pretend play

All children are capable thinkers and knowledge-builders, and they develop in this area at different rates and in different ways. Children's background, language, family routines, community experiences, abilities, temperament, interests, lived experiences, and opportunities for exploration all shape how they investigate, remember, reason, show ideas, and build knowledge.

Adults support Cognition and General Knowledge by creating responsive, welcoming environments where children can safely explore, wonder, test ideas, solve problems, and make connections to their real lives.

Inside This Learning and Development Area

This area includes 15 strands and 33 learning goals. To make the area easier to use, the table below groups related strands into four connected parts and shows how children build knowledge through relationships, play, exploration, routines, and meaningful experiences.

Strands cover...	Children are learning to...	Adults support learning by...
Cognition: Exploration, memory, reasoning, problem-solving, imitation, symbolic representation, and play	Explore, remember, solve problems, imitate, pretend, and show ideas through movement, language, drawing, materials, and play.	Offering open-ended materials, familiar routines, repeated experiences, time to revisit ideas, and support for problem-solving without taking over.
Mathematics Development: Quantity, counting, operations, patterns, measurement, shapes, and spatial sense	Count, compare, sort, measure, notice patterns, explore number relationships, and use shapes and space in meaningful ways.	Providing real objects, blocks, loose parts, outdoor materials, math language, adapted tools, and everyday opportunities to count, compare, build, sort, and measure.
Scientific Reasoning: Inquiry, investigation, prediction, observation, comparison, and explanation	Observe, wonder, ask questions, compare, test ideas, notice patterns, use tools, and share discoveries.	Providing hands-on investigations, outdoor and nature-based experiences, accessible tools, time for close observation, and opportunities to talk about or show what children notice.

Strands cover...	Children are learning to...	Adults support learning by...
Social Systems: Identity, family, community, time, place, roles, responsibilities, wants, needs, choices, and resources	Build understanding of themselves as part of families and communities and learn how people live, work, care for one another, make choices, and use resources.	Connecting learning to children's real lives through family stories, photos, books, maps, pretend play, classroom roles, shared responsibilities, community experiences, and respectful conversations.

Play Across Cognition and General Knowledge

The play continuum shows how children build cognitive and general knowledge through a balance of child-directed, shared, and adult-supported play experiences. Across the continuum, children have opportunities to:

- Explore
- Remember
- Investigate
- Count
- Compare
- Build
- Sort
- Measure
- Notice patterns
- Ask questions
- Solve problems
- Pretend
- Show ideas
- Make choices
- Collaborate
- Learn about themselves, their families, communities, and the world

Play Across Cognition and General Knowledge

Children build cognition and general knowledge through many kinds of play that invite exploration, memory, reasoning, early math, scientific inquiry, symbolic play, and understanding of families, communities, and the world.



Children benefit from a balance of child-directed, shared, and adult-supported play experiences that help them explore, remember, reason, investigate, solve problems, and build understanding of math, science, and social life.



Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)**Strand 1. Exploration and Discovery****Goal 1. Child actively explores and observes people, objects, materials, and events to build understanding of self, others, and the world.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Uses senses and actions to explore and investigate people, objects, and materials.	Acts intentionally to solve a problem and reach a goal, including using objects to obtain another object.	Observes, asks questions, and experiments to learn how things work.	Children continue to build on early sensory exploration, intentional action, and problem-solving as they grow. They begin by exploring through repeated actions and simple problem-solving. Over time, they observe more closely, ask questions, and try out ideas. These skills support more purposeful investigation and a growing understanding of how the world works.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Uses hands, mouth, eyes, movement, or other senses to explore people, objects, and materials. • Looks at, reaches for, touches, mouths, shakes, bangs, or moves objects during play and routines. • Repeats actions, such as dropping, shaking, or banging objects, to see what happens.	• Uses objects or actions to reach a goal, such as pulling a cloth to get a toy or using a spoon to scoop. • Tries different actions with objects, such as stacking, filling, dumping, opening, closing, or pushing buttons. • Explores how objects work during play, routines, outdoor experiences, and familiar activities.	• Explores how things work through play, such as building, water play, pretend cooking, sensory play, or outdoor exploration. • Seeks information using simple questions, gestures, signs, facial expressions, movement, AAC, or other familiar communication modes. • Engages in longer exploration activities across settings with support as needed.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Follow children’s focus, describe what they are doing, and add one new idea, word, action, or material when they are ready. • Provide safe, varied materials, such as textured toys, household items, containers, blocks, water, sand, natural objects, and familiar materials. • Model and narrate actions, questions, and cause-and-effect, such as “You are shaking the bell — it makes a sound” or “What do you think will happen?” • Position materials within reach and arrange spaces so children can explore, move, try ideas, solve simple problems, and use support as needed. • Use play, everyday routines, outdoor experiences, and open-ended materials to encourage exploration, persistence, and problem-solving with gentle guidance.				

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)**Strand 1. Exploration and Discovery****Goal 2. Child uses understanding of cause and effect to ask questions, gather information, make predictions, and try ideas during play, routines, and interactions.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Repeats actions to see what happens and to get others to respond.	Uses actions to make things happen and begins to notice cause and effect in the environment.	Identifies why events happen and predicts outcomes based on observations and experiences.	Children continue to build cause-and-effect thinking as they grow. They begin by repeating actions to see what happens. Over time, they predict outcomes, ask questions, and use what they have experienced before to explain or influence events in their environment.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Repeats actions such as kicking, shaking, banging, dropping, vocalizing, or moving to see what happens or get a response. • Watches, stills, smiles, vocalizes, moves, or changes expression when an adult responds to the child’s action. • Uses movement, gaze, facial expression, sound, or repeated action to continue an interesting effect or interaction.	• Uses actions to make things happen, such as pushing a button, dumping a container, pulling a string, splashing water, or making a toy move. • Repeats or changes an action to see whether the same thing happens again. • Looks to an adult, gestures, vocalizes, signs, moves, or otherwise communicates interest in what happened.	• Uses words, gestures, signs, movement, AAC, actions, or other familiar communication modes to show what might happen next. • Tries an action, notices the result, and tries something different based on what happened. • Uses simple cause-and-effect words, actions, or communication, such as “fall,” “again,” “too big,” “more,” or showing what happened.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide materials and routines that let children make things happen, such as rattles, containers, ramps, water, sand, pull toys, light switches, doors, lids, and cause-and-effect toys. • Use cause-and-effect language during routines and play, such as “When you push the button, the light turns on” or “The cup tipped, so the water spilled.” • Follow children’s actions and add simple comments, gestures, signs, or questions that help them notice what happened. • Give children time to repeat actions, change their approach, try again, and use support as needed.				

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)**Strand 2. Memory****Goal 1. Child recognizes familiar people, objects, actions, routines, and events and distinguishes them from unfamiliar ones.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Recognizes familiar people, voices, routines, and caregiving actions and may respond differently to unfamiliar people or experiences.	Anticipates familiar routines, recognizes familiar people and places, and begins to show awareness that familiar people continue to exist when out of sight.	Recalls familiar people, routines, locations, and recent events and uses those memories to participate in play, routines, and simple problem-solving.	Children continue to build memory through familiar people, objects, and routines. They begin by recognizing what is familiar. Over time, they remember past experiences and describe what happened. Children use what they remember to guide behavior, solve problems, and participate in new situations.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Responds differently to familiar and unfamiliar people, voices, faces, routines, or caregiving actions. • Looks toward, quiets, smiles, moves, or shows comfort in response to familiar voices, faces, songs, objects, or routines. • Shows recognition of familiar routines through repeated responses, body movements, attention, or expressions.	• Anticipates familiar routines, such as moving toward the table at mealtime or reaching for an expected object. • Recognizes familiar people, objects, places, songs, and settings during play and routines. • Uses objects based on prior experience and shows awareness that familiar people or objects may continue to exist when out of sight.	• Recalls familiar people, places, routines, and recent events during play, conversation, or daily activities. • Anticipates familiar steps in routines, such as bringing a dish before snack time or moving toward the door before going outside. • Uses memories of familiar experiences to participate in routines, solve simple problems, or connect past events to what is happening now.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Use consistent routines, familiar songs, photos, objects, names, voices, gestures, and repeated cues to help children recognize people, places, objects, and events. • Maintain predictable caregiving routines, consistent object locations, and familiar interactions so children can anticipate what comes next. • Name people, actions, objects, routines, and places during everyday care, play, transitions, and family-connected experiences. • Encourage children to participate in familiar activities and routines by offering cues, choices, objects, or roles they recognize. • Talk about past, current, and upcoming events, and connect familiar experiences to new situations with support as needed.				

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)**Strand 2. Memory****Goal 2. Child recognizes that familiar people and objects continue to exist when they are out of sight.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Shows emerging awareness that familiar people and objects may continue to exist when partly hidden or briefly out of sight.	Searches for familiar people or objects that are hidden, covered, or out of sight in familiar places.	Uses memory of routines and locations to look for hidden or missing people, objects, or materials and tries more than one search strategy with adult support.	Children continue to build on early object permanence and searching skills as they grow. They begin by looking for hidden people or objects in familiar places. Over time, they use memory and simple strategies to find what is missing and solve more complex problems.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Looks for, reaches toward, or shifts attention to a familiar person or object that is partly hidden or briefly out of sight. • Looks toward or reaches for a familiar adult who moves out of view. • Shows interest when objects disappear, reappear, are covered, or are uncovered during play and routines.	• Searches for familiar people, objects, or materials that are hidden, covered, or out of sight in familiar places. • Looks toward the door, calls, gestures, moves, or otherwise communicates when a familiar adult has left the room. • Engages in simple search games, such as peekaboo, hiding games, or finding covered objects.	• Searches in more than one place for missing objects, materials, or familiar people. • Looks in places where an object was last used or stored, such as checking a cubby for a coat or a shelf for a favorite toy. • Uses adult support, memory of routines, or familiar search strategies to solve simple problems when something is missing.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Play peekaboo, hiding games, and “find it” routines that help children notice that people and objects continue to exist when covered, hidden, or out of sight. • Partially hide objects during play and encourage children to look, reach, search, uncover, or ask for help. • Use familiar routines and consistent locations for important objects so children can remember where things belong and look for them. • Encourage children to search for missing items by using cues, questions, gestures, signs, visuals, or prompts such as “Where did you last see it?” • Support persistence by giving children time to look in more than one place and offering help, modeling, or reassurance as needed.				

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)**Strand 2. Memory****Goal 3. Child recalls past experiences and uses memory to guide actions, play, routines, and problem-solving.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Shows recognition of familiar people, objects, actions, or events from recent experiences.	Uses memory of familiar actions and routines to repeat actions, anticipate next steps, or participate in similar situations.	Talks about past experiences, repeats actions observed earlier, and uses what happened before to guide play, routines, or problem-solving.	Children continue to build memory through people, objects, and routines. They begin by recognizing and anticipating familiar experiences. Over time, they recall past experiences, describe what happened, and use what they remember to plan actions and solve problems.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Shows recognition of familiar people, objects, actions, songs, routines, or events from recent experiences. • Anticipates familiar actions, such as feeding, caregiving, play routines, or repeated interactions. • Reacts to familiar experiences through attention, movement, facial expression, calming, excitement, or repeated responses.	• Uses objects based on past experience during play, routines, or familiar activities. • Anticipates routines through actions, gestures, movement, attention, or familiar responses. • Applies previous learning by repeating actions, using familiar materials, or trying a strategy that worked before.	• Uses words, gestures, signs, actions, play, or other familiar communication modes to recall something that happened earlier and connect it to what is happening now. • Recalls and repeats familiar sequences of actions during routines, play, stories, songs, or problem-solving. • Uses a remembered action to solve a new problem, such as trying a latch seen earlier or repeating a building strategy that worked before.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Use photos, familiar objects, songs, names, gestures, and repeated routines to help children recall what happened before and anticipate what will happen next. • Connect past experiences to current routines and play, such as “Yesterday you used the big scoop for sand. What could you use today?” • Provide consistent experiences and familiar materials while also allowing children to apply what they remember in new situations. • Encourage children to recall and repeat sequences through songs, stories, caregiving routines, pretend play, cleanup, meals, and outdoor experiences. • Ask simple questions, offer cues, and give children time to show, tell, act out, or use remembered actions to solve problems with support as needed.				

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)**Strand 3. Reasoning and Problem-Solving****Goal 1. Child uses reasoning, planning, and investigation to understand problems and possible solutions.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Uses actions, movements, or objects to explore simple problems and notice what happens with adult support nearby.	Tries different actions during play and routines to solve simple problems and notices which actions work.	Uses observation, questions, trial-and-error, and adult or peer support to investigate problems, make simple plans, and try solutions.	Children continue to build on early cause-and-effect exploration and problem-solving as they grow. They begin by trying different actions to see what happens. Over time, they use reasoning, planning, and collaboration to investigate problems, test ideas, and explain outcomes.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Uses actions, movement, or objects to explore simple problems, such as rolling, reaching, shifting position, or moving toward a toy. • Repeats actions, such as dropping, banging, moving, or reaching, to see what happens. • Watches, pauses, or changes actions in response to what happens.	• Tries different actions, such as pulling, pushing, stacking, dumping, filling, splashing, or knocking objects down, to solve simple problems. • Repeats or changes actions to see whether the same thing happens again. • Explores cause and effect during play, routines, sensory exploration, and everyday problem-solving.	• Makes a simple plan before acting, such as choosing materials, deciding what to try first, or asking for help. • Explains or shows why something happened using words, gestures, signs, actions, AAC, or other familiar communication modes. • Shows or communicates a simple prediction about what may happen next using familiar communication modes.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide safe spaces, open-ended materials, and cause-and-effect experiences, such as water, balls, ramps, containers, blocks, loose parts, and movement play. • Respond to children’s repeated actions and use simple cause-and-effect language, such as “The ball rolled down” or “The cup tipped, so the water spilled.” • Encourage children to try different approaches, repeat actions, change strategies, ask for help, and use support as needed. • Think aloud during problem-solving, such as “The tower keeps falling. I wonder what would happen if we put the big blocks on the bottom.” • Ask simple planning, prediction, and reasoning questions, such as “What could we try first?,” “What do we need?,” “What do you think will happen?,” or “How could we find out?”				

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)**Strand 3. Reasoning and Problem-Solving****Goal 2. Child uses a variety of strategies and persistence to solve problems.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Repeats simple actions during play or routines to reach a goal, explore cause and effect, or continue an interesting result.	Uses trial-and-error during play and routines, repeating or changing actions to see what helps.	Persists in solving problems by trying again, changing strategies, using tools or materials, imitating others, or accepting adult scaffolding.	Children continue to build on early repetition, exploration, and problem-solving as they grow. They begin by repeating actions to see how things work. Over time, they try multiple strategies, adjust their approach, and keep working through more complex problems.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Repeats actions, such as reaching, grasping, kicking, banging, moving, or vocalizing, to reach a goal or continue an interesting result. • Tries again when an action does not work right away. • Explores cause and effect through repeated actions during play, routines, and interactions.	• Tries a slightly different action when the first attempt does not work, such as pushing, pulling, turning, reaching, or moving another way. • Explores how things work through repeated play, trial-and-error, and everyday routines. • Tries again after unsuccessful attempts with support as needed.	• Stays with a challenging activity for a short period, tries again, or uses help to continue after frustration. • Uses more than one strategy to solve a problem, such as asking for help, trying another material, changing the plan, or watching how another person does it. • Persists after challenges during play, routines, problem-solving, or social interaction with adult support as needed.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide materials and experiences that invite repeated attempts, trial-and-error, flexible strategy use, and problem-solving during play and routines. • Allow time for children to try before offering help; then provide a hint, model a strategy, reduce the challenge, or support the next step while keeping the child engaged. • Stay nearby, acknowledge effort, and prompt another strategy, such as “That didn’t work yet. What else could you try?” • Invite children to watch and imitate a peer or adult strategy, then try it in their own way. • Model persistence and flexible problem-solving by trying another material, changing the plan, asking for help, or watching how someone else solves a similar problem.				

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)**Strand 4. Imitation, Symbolic Representation, and Play****Goal 1. Child observes and imitates sounds, words, gestures, actions, and behaviors.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Imitates sounds and movements in back-and-forth interactions with others.	Imitates actions observed earlier.	Imitates actions, words, or signs later to communicate or complete an activity.	Children continue to build imitation skills through interactions and routines. They begin by copying actions, words, and behaviors right away. Over time, they remember and repeat what they have seen or heard to communicate, learn, and participate in activities.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Imitates or responds to familiar sounds, facial expressions, body movements, or gestures during back-and-forth interactions. • Repeats a sound, movement, smile, or action after an adult models it. • Participates in simple imitation games, such as copying sounds, facial expressions, clapping, waving, or peekaboo actions with adult support.	• Imitates actions observed earlier, such as stirring, wiping, feeding a doll, stacking, opening, closing, or using a familiar object. • Copies gestures, movements, sounds, or simple actions during play, routines, songs, or social games. • Uses imitation to participate in familiar routines or play with adults and other children.	• Imitates actions, words, signs, gestures, or behaviors later to communicate, join play, or complete an activity. • Repeats familiar words, signs, movements, pretend actions, or routines observed from adults, peers, family members, or stories. • Uses imitation during pretend play, self-care routines, songs, movement games, caregiving play, or problem-solving with support as needed.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Engage children in warm back-and-forth interactions that invite imitation, such as copying sounds, facial expressions, gestures, movements, and actions. • Use songs, finger plays, movement games, caregiving routines, pretend play, and social games that include repeated actions and familiar words. • Model actions slowly and clearly, then pause so children have time to watch, respond, imitate, or participate in their own way. • Provide realistic and familiar materials, such as kitchen items, caregiving props, household objects, dolls, tools, clothing, or outdoor materials, that invite imitation and pretend actions. • Notice and describe children’s imitation, and extend it by adding one new word, action, gesture, sign, or material when they are ready.				

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)**Strand 4. Imitation, Symbolic Representation, and Play****Goal 2. Child uses objects or symbols to represent something else.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Uses senses and actions to explore objects and materials in the environment.	Uses familiar objects in ways that reflect their real-life purpose or function.	Uses objects, actions, sounds, or gestures to represent other objects, ideas, or experiences during play.	Children continue to build symbolic thinking as they grow. They begin by using objects in familiar ways. Over time, they use objects, pictures, drawings, gestures, or pretend actions to stand for other objects, ideas, and experiences during play.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Explores objects and materials using senses and actions, such as looking, touching, mouthing, shaking, patting, or moving them. • Engages with materials during sensory play, routines, indoor play, outdoor play, or exploration of natural objects. • Repeats actions with objects to explore how they feel, sound, move, or respond.	• Uses familiar objects in ways that reflect their real-life purpose, such as holding a toy phone to ear, stirring with a spoon, or brushing hair. • Imitates everyday actions during play, such as feeding a doll, wiping a table, cooking, carrying a bag, or using familiar household items. • Uses familiar objects during pretend, routine-based, or social play with adults or other children.	• Uses objects, actions, sounds, gestures, or movements to represent other objects, ideas, roles, or experiences during pretend play. • Uses one object to stand for another, such as using a block as a phone, a stick as a spoon, or a box as a vehicle. • Combines objects, actions, and simple roles during pretend play scenarios, such as cooking, shopping, caregiving, building, or going somewhere.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide safe, varied materials such as sensory toys, household items, natural objects, fabrics, containers, blocks, recycled materials, and familiar objects. • Offer opportunities for sensory, functional, and pretend play across settings, including indoor play, outdoor play, routines, water play, nature play, and dramatic play. • Model exploration and object use by touching, shaking, describing, stirring, feeding, carrying, pretending, or showing how familiar materials can be used. • Include realistic and open-ended props that reflect children’s home experiences and community life. • Join children’s play by following their ideas, modeling symbolic use of objects, and adding one simple action, role, word, gesture, or material when they are ready.				

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)**Strand 4. Imitation, Symbolic Representation, and Play****Goal 3. Child uses pretend play to increase understanding of communities, environments, and experiences.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Uses senses and social interaction to explore people, routines, and experiences.	Imitates familiar actions, routines, and behaviors during play.	Acts out familiar routines, roles, relationships, stories, or experiences during pretend play with increasing detail and sequence.	Children continue to build imitation and pretend play skills as they grow. They begin by acting out familiar routines. Over time, they use pretend play about family, background, community, and environmental experiences. They build shared stories and explore the roles, relationships, and experiences of themselves and others.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Imitates simple sounds, facial expressions, gestures, or movements during back-and-forth interactions. • Engages in simple social play, such as clapping, vocalizing, patting, handing objects, or responding to familiar actions. • Responds to familiar people, routines, songs, caregiving actions, or repeated play experiences.	• Imitates familiar actions, routines, or behaviors seen earlier, such as wiping, stirring, closing a door, feeding a doll, or carrying a bag. • Uses imitation during pretend or routine-based play with familiar objects and people. • Repeats observed actions during play, caregiving routines, family routines, songs, or daily activities.	• Acts out familiar routines, roles, relationships, stories, or experiences during pretend play. • Uses props, actions, sounds, gestures, words, signs, movement, or other familiar communication modes to show play ideas. • Engages in pretend or role play with adults or peers, such as cooking, caregiving, shopping, building, visiting, celebrating, or going somewhere.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide pretend play materials connected to children’s home routines, languages, families, caregiving experiences, and community life. • Engage in imitation games, songs, gestures, sounds, movement, and back-and-forth play that invite children to copy and participate. • Model familiar routines and actions during play, such as feeding, cooking, cleaning, caring for a baby, shopping, building, dressing, or going somewhere. • Offer realistic and open-ended props, such as kitchen items, fabric, dolls, containers, dress-up materials, background items, family photos, outdoor materials, and community-related objects. • Join children’s pretend play by following their ideas, supporting social interaction, and adding one simple role, action, word, sign, story detail, or material when they are ready.				

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)**Strand 5. Emergent Mathematical Thinking****Goal 1. Child compares, sorts, and measures objects and people by their attributes.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Explores and notices differences between people, objects, and features of the environment.	Matches or pairs objects that are the same or go together during play and routines.	Sorts or categorizes objects into two or more groups based on one characteristic, such as color, size, type, shape, texture, or function.	Children continue to build sorting and comparing skills as they grow. They begin by noticing differences and grouping objects in simple ways. Over time, they sort, compare, and describe objects by attributes such as size, shape, color, texture, or use. These skills build the foundation for classification, patterning, and measurement.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Looks at, reaches for, touches, mouths, or explores objects with different attributes, such as soft, hard, big, small, smooth, rough, heavy, or light. • Shows interest in different people, objects, materials, or features of the environment. • Explores differences through touch, sight, sound, movement, or repeated sensory exploration.	• Matches or pairs objects during play or routines, such as putting a lid on a container or placing similar toys together. • Pairs familiar objects that go together, such as a spoon with a bowl or a bottle with a doll. • Uses familiar objects in ways that show awareness of how they are alike, different, or used together.	• Sorts objects into two or more groups based on one characteristic, such as color, size, type, shape, texture, or function. • Uses gestures, actions, signs, simple words, or other familiar communication modes to show how objects are alike or different. • Sorts or groups materials during play, cleanup, pretend play, outdoor exploration, or routines.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Offer contrasting materials and objects with varied attributes, such as textures, sizes, shapes, colors, weights, sounds, functions, natural materials, and familiar objects. • Narrate similarities and differences during play and routines, such as “This one is soft, and this one is hard” or “These both go in the basket.” • Provide matching, pairing, grouping, and simple sorting experiences using everyday objects, toys, blocks, shells, utensils, containers, dramatic play materials, and cleanup routines. • Model matching, grouping, and sorting one attribute at a time, such as by color, size, type, shape, texture, or function. • Encourage children to show, gesture, point, use words, or otherwise communicate how objects are alike, different, or grouped.				

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)**Strand 5. Emergent Mathematical Thinking****Goal 2. Child develops a sense of number and quantity and understands the relationship between numbers and quantities.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Notifies and explores quantity in play and daily routines.	Uses gestures, words, or signs such as “more,” “less,” or “all gone” to communicate about amounts during play and routines.	Uses informal quantity words such as “more,” “less,” “many,” “few,” “a little,” “a lot,” or “too much,” and begins to use number words in meaningful routines and play.	Children continue to build early number sense as they grow. They begin by noticing amounts and using simple quantity words, such as “more,” “all gone,” “big,” or “little.” Over time, they use number words, compare quantities, and begin to understand number relationships. These skills build the foundation for counting and cardinality.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Looks at, reaches for, or explores more than one object during play and routines. • Shows interest in amounts, such as noticing several toys, more food, or that a familiar item is gone. • Engages with quantity through looking, reaching, vocalizing, movement, or repeated actions during caregiving, meals, and play.	• Uses gestures, words, signs, sounds, or actions such as “more,” “less,” “all gone,” or reaching to communicate about amounts. • Requests or responds to additional food, toys, materials, or actions during play and routines. • Responds to quantity-related language during meals, cleanup, caregiving, songs, and play.	• Uses gestures, words, signs, or other familiar communication modes such as “more,” “less,” “all gone,” “many,” “a little,” “a lot,” or “too much” during everyday routines. • Talks about or shows awareness of amounts during meals, play, cleanup, caregiving, block play, songs, or pretend play. • Uses or responds to number words in meaningful situations, such as taking one more cracker, giving two blocks, or noticing three cups on the table.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Use quantity language during snack, meals, cleanup, block play, caregiving routines, songs, and play, such as “one more,” “all gone,” “many blocks,” or “a little water.” • Provide opportunities to explore, gather, fill, dump, separate, share, and compare amounts using everyday objects and materials. • Model gestures, signs, words, and number words that children can use to communicate about amounts. • Encourage children to show, gesture, sign, say, point, or otherwise communicate when they want more, are all done, notice less, or see many. • Talk about quantities in meaningful contexts rather than isolated drills, including food, blocks, toys, cups, outdoor materials, family routines, and cleanup.				

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)**Strand 5. Emergent Mathematical Thinking****Goal 3. Child uses spatial awareness to explore and understand the positions and movement of objects in space.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Watches and tracks objects as they move.	Explores how objects fit together and move through space.	Predicts how objects move through space or fit inside other objects.	Children continue to build spatial reasoning skills as they grow. They begin by tracking movement and exploring how objects fit together. Over time, they predict how objects will move, change how objects fit or connect, and reason about where objects are in space. These skills build the foundation for geometry, spatial reasoning, and problem-solving.	
Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors				
• Watches people or objects move, such as a rolling ball, moving toy, mobile, or caregiver movement. • Tracks moving objects with eyes, head, body, or attention. • Reaches, swipes, or moves toward objects that move or change position.	• Explores how objects fit together, such as stacking, nesting, placing, filling, dumping, or putting objects in and out. • Moves objects through space by pushing, rolling, sliding, carrying, dropping, or pulling. • Engages in physical play that supports awareness of where objects, people, and the body are in space.	• Predicts or tries how objects move, fit, or go together, such as choosing a container, opening, puzzle space, or building piece. • Uses trial and adjustment to fit objects together, move them through space, or solve spatial problems. • Engages in constructive play with materials such as blocks, containers, puzzles, loose parts, ramps, or pretend play props.		
Examples of Supportive Strategies				
• Provide moving objects and materials, such as balls, mobiles, scarves, rolling toys, ramps, containers, puzzles, blocks, nesting cups, and stacking materials. • Encourage children to watch, reach, track, move, push, roll, slide, carry, drop, fit, stack, nest, fill, dump, and build with objects. • Model spatial language during play and routines, such as “in,” “out,” “on,” “off,” “under,” “over,” “beside,” “between,” “through,” “around,” “near,” “far,” “up,” “down,” “roll,” “fit,” and “stuck.” • Offer opportunities to predict, test, and adjust how objects move, fit, or relate in space. • Use movement play, constructive play, outdoor exploration, and everyday routines to support spatial problem-solving with support as needed.				

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)

Strand 6. Counting and Cardinality

Goal 1. Child can show understanding of quantities with objects, drawings, marks, and numerals in meaningful contexts.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early experiences with objects and amounts help children begin to notice quantity and communicate what they see. Children begin by exploring objects and noticing amounts in simple ways. Over time, they connect quantities with marks, symbols, and number words. These skills build the foundation for understanding numbers.			Shows small counted quantities using objects, drawings, marks, gestures, or emerging symbols and begins to connect them to number words or written numerals in meaningful contexts.	Connects counted quantities to objects, drawings, marks, tallies, labels, or written numerals during play, and problem-solving contexts.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Shows small quantities using objects, drawings, marks, fingers, gestures, or other child-generated symbols. • Begins to connect a counted quantity to a written numeral or label in meaningful contexts, such as a sign, list, game, or pretend-play record. • Uses drawings, marks, objects, or number language to label quantities during play, routines, or problem-solving.	• Matches written numerals to counted quantities during play, recording, labeling, organizing materials, or problem-solving. • Uses drawings, marks, tallies, labels, or numerals to label quantities in meaningful contexts. • Writes, traces, copies, selects, or uses numerals when helping to label a quantity, making a list, recording information, or supporting pretend play.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Provide number-rich environments and materials, such as labels, charts, lists, signs, recipes, calendars, games, and pretend-play props. • Model showing counted quantities with objects, drawings, marks, tallies, labels, and numerals, explaining that they show how many were counted. • Invite children to draw, mark, tally, select, trace, copy, or write numerals to label quantities during play, routines, projects, and problem-solving. • Connect numerals to real quantities and purposes, such as counting children, labeling collections, making signs, recording scores, or creating menus and lists. • Include print, symbols, groups of objects, and everyday number uses from children’s homes, families, and communities.	

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)

Strand 6. Counting and Cardinality

Goal 2. Child compares quantities.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early experiences with objects and amounts help children begin to notice differences in quantity. Children begin by comparing groups in simple ways, such as noticing more, less, or the same. Over time, they use actions and early counting to compare groups. These skills build the foundation for comparing numbers and understanding number relationships.			With adult support, compares small quantities in meaningful contexts using noticing, matching, subitizing, counting, and informal comparison language.	Compares quantities in meaningful contexts using subitizing, matching, counting, equalizing, and comparison language, including when objects differ in size, spacing, or arrangement.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Compares clearly different small groups by noticing which has more, fewer, the same, enough, or not enough. • Uses noticing, matching, subitizing, or counting with adult support to compare quantities in meaningful contexts. • Uses comparison words such as “more,” “fewer,” “same,” “different,” “enough,” or “not enough” during play, routines, or problem-solving.	• Compares quantities by matching, subitizing, counting, or equalizing groups, including when objects differ in size, spacing, or arrangement. • Determines which group has more, fewer, the same, enough, not enough, extras, or leftovers during play, routines, or problem-solving. • Explains how they know which group has more, fewer, or the same using actions, words, counting, matching, or objects.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Provide small groups of meaningful objects for children to compare during play, routines, outdoor exploration, and problem-solving. • Model comparison language such as “more,” “fewer,” “less,” “same,” “enough,” “not enough,” “extra,” and “left over” in real contexts. • Invite children to compare by looking, subitizing small sets, matching one-to-one, moving objects, counting, or equalizing groups. • Use varied materials, including natural items, classroom objects, pretend-play materials, and familiar objects, so children compare quantities in different contexts. • Ask children to explain how they know which group has more, fewer, the same, enough, or not enough using words, gestures, objects, drawings, or counting.	

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)

Strand 6. Counting and Cardinality

Goal 3. Child develops a sense of number and quantity and understands the relationship between numbers and quantities.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early experiences with objects, routines, and amounts help children begin to notice quantity. Children begin by showing general awareness of amount concepts, such as “more,” “less,” or “all gone.” Over time, they match number words with objects as they count and begin to understand that the last number tells how many. These skills build the foundation for one-to-one correspondence and cardinality.			Counts small collections of about five objects using emerging one-to-one correspondence and begins to understand that the last number said tells how many are in the set.	Counts collections of about 10 or more objects, and up to about 31 when appropriate for the child and context, using one-to-one correspondence and understanding that the last number spoken is the total quantity.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Counts small collections of about five objects using emerging one-to-one correspondence, with support as needed. • Says number words while gesturing to, touching, moving, or organizing objects during play, routines, or counting activities. • Begins to tell or show “how many” after counting a small collection within their working range.	• Counts collections of about 10 or more objects using one-to-one correspondence during play, routines, or problem-solving. • Counts larger collections, up to about 31 when appropriate for the child and context, with support as needed. • Answers “how many” after counting and shows understanding that the last number said is the total quantity.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Model counting by touching, moving, or gesturing to one object at a time and emphasizing that the last number said tells the total. • Use counting collections as a repeatable routine with collections that are meaningful and within each child’s working range. • Provide counting opportunities during play, routines, outdoor exploration, building, dramatic play, snack, cleanup, and small-group activities. • Invite children to make, show, count, organize, re-count, or draw sets using objects, fingers, movements, marks, or math sketches. • Use familiar objects and meaningful materials so children can connect counting to real experiences, family practices, and everyday problem-solving.	

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)

Strand 6. Counting and Cardinality

Goal 4. Child knows number names and the count sequence.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early experiences with number words in songs, routines, and interactions help children notice patterns in counting language. Children begin by listening, moving, or joining in during counting. Over time, they use number words in sequence. These skills build the foundation for stable counting and understanding the count sequence.			Says number words in order up to 10 and understands that each number word is said separately when counting.	Uses number words or signs in sequence during play, routines, songs, and counting situations, building understanding that each number word has a stable order and each next number means one more.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Says or signs number words in order during songs, routines, movement, and play, sometimes skipping or repeating numbers while understanding of the sequence is developing. • Joins in counting songs, finger plays, chants, or routines that use number words in order. • Uses counting words during play or attempts to count objects with support as needed.	• Says or signs number words in sequence during play, routines, songs, and counting situations. • Continues a counting sequence after an adult starts it or notices what number comes next in familiar counting routines. • Uses the next number when one more object is added, building understanding that each next number means one more.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Use counting songs, finger plays, chants, movement, and routines that invite children to hear and join in number sequences. • Model number words in stable order during play, routines, counting collections, games, and everyday problem-solving. • Invite children to count along, continue a counting sequence, or use number words while counting objects, actions, movements, or people. • Connect number names to quantities and one-more relationships, such as “Five is one more than four” or “We had four cups and added one more; now we have five.” • Gently scaffold counting sequences by repeating, extending, pausing, or modeling without interrupting participation.	

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)

Strand 6. Counting and Cardinality

Goal 5. Child recognizes the number of objects in a small set.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early experiences with small groups of objects help children begin to notice quantity without counting. Children begin by recognizing one object or one item at a time. Over time, they identify small groups of objects. These skills build the foundation for quickly recognizing quantities and building number sense.			Begins to understand whole numbers and recognizes the number of objects in small groups without counting (referred to as “subitizing”).	Quickly recognizes the number of objects in a small set without counting.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Recognizes small quantities, usually 1–3 objects, without counting. • Identifies “how many” quickly in small groups during play, routines, games, or outdoor exploration. • Notices, matches, or shows small quantities using objects, fingers, gestures, or familiar materials.	• Quickly recognizes the number of objects in a small set without counting. • Recognizes that the same quantity can be shown in different arrangements, such as dots, fingers, game pieces, or small collections. • Tells or shows “how many” after a brief look at a small set and may explain how they saw the quantity, such as “I saw two and two.”
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Provide frequent opportunities to recognize small groups of objects during play, routines, games, snack, outdoor exploration, and classroom jobs. • Use brief-look experiences with dot patterns, fingers, dice, game pieces, natural items, or small collections and ask, “How many do you see?” and “How do you see them?” • Show the same quantity in multiple arrangements using objects, dots, fingers, drawings, or game materials. • Encourage children to show small amounts using fingers, gestures, objects, drawings, or other familiar ways. • When children recognize a small quantity without counting, invite them to describe how they saw the amount rather than asking them to count by ones.	

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)

Strand 7. Operations and Algebraic Thinking

Goal 1. Child understands addition as adding to and understands subtraction as taking away from.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early experiences with combining, separating, and changing small groups of objects help children notice how quantities change. Children begin by acting on objects in simple ways, such as putting objects together or taking them apart. Over time, they begin to understand that adding makes more and taking away makes fewer. These skills build the foundation for addition and subtraction.			With adult support, adds to or takes away from very small groups of objects and determines the new total.	Solves simple addition by joining groups and subtraction by separating groups using objects or fingers.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Acts out simple joining or separating stories with concrete objects, such as one more animal joining a group or one object leaving a group. • Counts or shows how many objects there are after adding to or taking away from a small group, with support as needed. • Uses objects, fingers, drawings, gestures, or actions to show simple quantity changes during play, routines, or problem-solving.	• Uses manipulatives, fingers, drawings, or actions to solve simple addition problems by joining groups. • Uses manipulatives, fingers, drawings, or actions to solve simple subtraction problems by separating groups. • Describes quantity changes using action-based language such as “more,” “joined,” “came,” “left,” “fell off,” “gave away,” “lost,” or “How many are left?”
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Pose simple stories about joining and separating groups and help children act them out with concrete materials that match the story context when possible. • Use everyday situations, such as snack, play, cleanup, building, sharing, and serving food, to explore adding to and taking away. • Model language that describes quantity changes, such as “add,” “take away,” “more,” “fewer,” “joined,” “left,” and “How many are left?” • Invite children to show their thinking using objects, fingers, drawings, gestures, movement, or math sketches. • Focus first on acting out and explaining the story situation, using symbols such as +, -, and = only when children use them meaningfully in play or documentation.	

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)

Strand 7. Operations and Algebraic Thinking

Goal 2. Child understands simple patterns.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early experiences with repeated actions, sounds, and movements help children notice regularity and repetition. Children begin by joining repeated sequences in songs, routines, movement, and play. Over time, they recognize, expect, and continue simple patterns. These skills build the foundation for creating, extending, and describing patterns.			With adult support, identifies a repeating pattern and fills in missing elements or extends the pattern.	Creates, identifies, duplicates, and extends simple repeating patterns using objects, numbers, sounds, or movements.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Notices repeating parts of simple patterns in objects, sounds, movements, stories, routines, or nature, with adult support. • Copies or extends simple patterns using objects, sounds, movements, or actions. • Fills in a missing part of a familiar pattern with support during play, music, movement, or routines.	• Creates and extends repeating patterns by repeating the whole core unit, such as “red-blue-blue, red-blue-blue.” • Duplicates patterns using different materials, movements, sounds, numbers, or locations. • Describes what part repeats in a pattern using words, sounds, gestures, actions, or materials.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Provide patterning opportunities across music, movement, art, block play, dramatic play, outdoor exploration, routines, and games. • Model creating, copying, and extending patterns using objects, sounds, movements, rhythms, nature materials, and familiar materials. • Use core-unit language such as “This part repeats” and “I see red-blue-blue, then it happens again.” • Invite children to notice, describe, copy, extend, and create patterns in play, stories, songs, nature, classroom routines, and the environment. • Support children in creating patterns with objects, drawings, movement, sounds, gestures, or other familiar communication modes.	

Strand 8. Measurement

Goal 1. Child compares, sorts, and measures objects and people by their attributes.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early sensory exploration helps children notice differences in size, shape, and other attributes. Children begin by exploring objects through looking, touching, mouthing, moving, or listening. Over time, they group and compare objects by shared characteristics. These skills build the foundation for measurement, classification, and comparison.			With adult support, recognizes that attributes such as height or size can be compared.	With adult support, compares objects using measurable attributes, such as “longer,” “shorter,” “taller,” “shorter,” “heavier,” “lighter,” “bigger,” “smaller,” “holds more,” “holds less,” “the same,” or “different” in a named attribute.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Notices and compares attributes of objects or people, such as “bigger,” “smaller,” “taller,” “shorter,” “heavier,” “lighter,” “longer,” “shorter,” “holds more,” or “holds less.” • Gestures to, selects, or groups objects by size, shape, type, or another visible attribute during play, routines, or outdoor exploration. • Uses informal words, gestures, or actions to compare objects in meaningful contexts, such as building, pretend play, cooking, or nature exploration.	• Compares objects using measurable attributes, such as “longer,” “shorter,” “taller,” “heavier,” “lighter,” “bigger,” “smaller,” “holds more,” “holds less,” “same length,” or “same size.” • Sorts or groups objects by named attributes, such as size, shape, type, length, weight, capacity, or other shared characteristics. • Explains comparisons during play, routines, building, cooking, outdoor exploration, or shared activities using words, gestures, objects, or drawings.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Provide varied materials for comparison and sorting, such as blocks, cooking tools, pretend-play materials, natural items, classroom objects, and familiar materials. • Start with children’s own comparison language and bridge toward more precise attribute language, such as “You said this tower is big. It is taller than the other tower.” • Invite children to compare, sort, and describe objects during building, cooking, pretend play, outdoor exploration, routines, and collaborative activities. • Model attribute language across contexts, such as longer, shorter, taller, heavier, lighter, holds more, holds less, same size, and different shape. • Clarify whether children are comparing how many objects are in a set or comparing an attribute of objects or people.	

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)

Strand 9. Geometry and Spatial Sense

Goal 1. Child identifies, describes, compares, and composes shapes.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early experiences with objects help children begin to notice shapes, forms, and outlines. Children begin by handling objects, turning them, stacking them, and exploring how they fit together. Over time, they recognize and match shapes. These skills build the foundation for identifying, comparing, and describing geometric properties.			Recognizes and names basic shapes such as “circle” and “square” and, with adult support, matches shapes of different sizes or orientations.	Recognizes and compares shapes of different sizes and orientations and begins to identify sides and angles as parts of shapes.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			- Names, matches, or sorts common shapes, such as circles, squares, and other familiar shapes, with support as needed. - Identifies shapes in the environment, including classroom objects, outdoor spaces, buildings, signs, art, or nature designs. - Explores shapes through building, drawing, tracing, matching, sorting, and play with shape materials.	- Recognizes, compares, and composes two-dimensional shapes of different sizes and orientations during play, building, art, or design activities. - Describes shapes using informal or formal attribute language, such as “pointy,” “boxy,” “straight,” “flat,” “curvy,” “sides,” “corners,” or “angles.” - Builds, composes, or decomposes shapes using pattern blocks, sticks, tiles, paper shapes, blocks, recycled items, drawings, or other materials.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			- Provide shape materials in varied sizes and orientations, including shapes found in children’s homes, communities, art, buildings, and nature designs. - Invite children to name, match, sort, build, trace, compare, compose, and describe shapes during construction, art, dramatic play, games, and outdoor exploration. - Connect shapes to real-world objects by asking what shapes children notice on doors, books, clocks, windows, signs, baskets, buildings, patterns, or natural materials. - Encourage children to trace sides, count corners, compare straight and curved edges, and describe shapes in their own words before introducing formal names. - Support children to build, compose, and decompose shapes using pattern blocks, sticks, tiles, paper shapes, blocks, recycled items, drawings, or other meaningful materials.	

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)

Strand 9. Geometry and Spatial Sense

Goal 2. Child uses spatial awareness to explore and understand the positions and movement of objects in space.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early movement and exploration help children begin to understand position and direction. Children begin by responding to simple location words and movement cues. Over time, they use actions and emerging language to describe where things are, where they are going, and how objects move in space. These skills build the foundation for spatial reasoning and understanding how objects relate in space.			With adult support, uses movement and simple spatial words to explore where the body or objects are in relation to other people, objects, and spaces.	Uses spatial language and actions to describe, follow, give, build, arrange, move, and fit objects in relation to self, other objects, and spaces.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Uses simple spatial words, gestures, or actions to describe where their body or an object is, such as “up,” “down,” “in,” “out,” “on,” “under,” or “next to.” • Moves their body or objects in response to spatial directions during play, routines, obstacle courses, building, or movement activities. • Explores position, direction, and fit by building, moving, arranging, sliding, turning, stacking, or placing objects.	• Follows or gives directions using positional language such as “over,” “under,” “beside,” “between,” “next to,” “behind,” “in front of,” “around,” “through,” “above,” or “below.” • Uses spatial words, gestures, drawings, or actions to describe where they are, where objects are, or how objects move. • Arranges, builds, turns, slides, fits, or moves objects with attention to position, orientation, direction, and fit during block play, puzzles, maps, pathways, or construction.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Model spatial language while children build, move, draw, map, solve puzzles, try obstacle courses, and arrange objects. • Pair spatial words with gestures, movement, visuals, objects, and repeated modeling so children can understand and use positional language. • Ask questions such as “Where does this go?,” “Will it fit?,” “What if we turn it?,” and “How can we get from here to there?” • Provide blocks, puzzles, loose parts, obstacle courses, drawing materials, and mapping experiences that support reasoning about position, direction, distance, orientation, and fit. • Invite children to follow, give, and describe spatial directions during games, movement, routines, building, outdoor exploration, and pretend play.	

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)

Strand 10. Scientific Inquiry

Goal 1. Child actively explores and observes people, objects, materials, and events to build understanding of self, others, and the world.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early experiences with people, objects, materials, and events help children notice and respond to the world around them. Children begin by using their senses and actions to explore. Over time, they observe more intentionally, ask questions, and describe what they notice. These skills build the foundation for scientific inquiry and investigation.			Uses senses and simple tools to notice, explore, describe, and ask questions through words, gestures, actions, signs, AAC, or other familiar communication modes about objects, materials, living things, and events with adult support.	Uses senses and simple tools to investigate, describe details, and ask questions through words, gestures, actions, signs, AAC, or other familiar communication modes about objects, materials, living things, and events with adult support.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Uses senses during play to explore objects, materials, living things, or events, such as touching sand, smelling herbs, watching insects, or listening to sounds. • Describes or asks simple questions about what they notice using words, gestures, signs, movement, AAC, or other familiar communication modes. • Shows what they notice through words, gestures, drawings, marks, movement, pretend play, or other familiar ways.	• Notices details during play or investigation, such as changes in plants, materials, mixtures, weather, light, shadows, or living things. • Asks questions to find out more about objects, materials, living things, events, or changes. • Describes or shares observations with more detail through drawings, models, photos, charts, gestures, signs, AAC, words, movement, or play.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Provide sensory-rich environments and experiences with safe, accessible materials, such as water, sand, natural objects, cooking materials, light, shadows, or outdoor spaces. • Model observation language during play and routines, such as “You noticed it is wet,” “This leaf feels smooth,” or “That sound is loud.” • Wonder aloud with children by asking questions such as “What do you notice?”, “I wonder why that happened?”, or “What question could we ask?” • Encourage children to show observations in multiple ways, such as drawing, building, gesturing, sorting, photographing, using AAC, acting out, or talking about what they notice. • Provide opportunities for extended observation over time, such as watching plants grow, observing insects, exploring weather, mixing materials, building structures, or revisiting a science center.	

Strand 10. Scientific Inquiry

Goal 2. Child uses words, gestures, signs, or other communication modes to talk about what they notice and wonder.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early exploration gives children opportunities to communicate about what they notice. Adults support this by responding to and modeling simple words, sounds, and gestures. Over time, children move from labeling and repeating words to using more specific vocabulary to describe observations and ideas. These skills build the foundation for scientific communication.			Uses simple words, gestures, signs, or other communication modes to name or describe things noticed, with adult support.	Uses more specific words, gestures, signs, or other communication modes to describe observations, ask questions, and share ideas with support as needed.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Uses simple science-related words, gestures, signs, AAC, movement, drawings, or home language(s) to name or describe what they notice. • Repeats or uses new words, signs, gestures, or communication modeled by adults during meaningful play, routines, or exploration. • Communicates observations while exploring materials, such as water, sand, food, plants, blocks, ramps, light, shadows, or natural objects.	• Uses more specific science-related words, gestures, signs, AAC, drawings, movement, or home language(s) to describe objects, materials, living things, events, tools, patterns, or changes. • Asks about or uses new vocabulary related to what they notice, wonder, compare, or investigate during play and routines. • Shares observations or questions using familiar communication modes during investigations, book sharing, outdoor experiences, and group discussion.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Model science-related words, signs, gestures, and descriptive language during play, routines, investigations, book sharing, and outdoor experiences. • Repeat and reinforce new vocabulary in meaningful contexts, such as cooking, water play, building, outdoor exploration, noticing patterns, or caring for plants. • Encourage children to communicate what they notice and wonder using words, gestures, signs, AAC, movement, drawings, home languages, or other familiar communication modes. • Provide broad-based, meaningful, and accessible materials that invite children to describe, compare, ask, and wonder. • Use real-world examples, stories, songs, movement, and conversations that connect scientific language to children’s home, community, and classroom experiences.	

Strand 10. Scientific Inquiry

Goal 3. Child compares, sorts, and notices patterns in objects, materials, living things, and events.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early adult-supported exploration helps children notice similarities and differences. Children begin by handling and exploring objects. Over time, they sort, group, and compare objects by attributes. They also begin to use tools to compare size, length, weight, or other features. These skills build the foundation for classification and measurement.			Sorts and compares objects, materials, or living things by simple features, notices simple patterns, and uses tools or materials to compare with adult support.	Sorts and compares objects, materials, living things, or events by more than one feature, notices and describes simple patterns, and uses tools with support as needed to compare observable characteristics.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Sorts objects, materials, or living things by simple features, such as color, size, shape, texture, sound, type, or use. • Compares objects, materials, or living things using words, gestures, signs, AAC, or other communication modes to indicate they are “the same,” “different,” “bigger,” “smaller,” “rough,” “smooth,” “loud,” or “quiet.” • Notices simple patterns in objects, sounds, movements, routines, or nature, such as stripes, repeating colors, repeated sounds, or daily changes.	• Sorts objects, materials, living things, or events by more specific or multiple features, such as texture, weight, sound, size, shape, material, movement, or change. • Explains or shows how objects are grouped using words, signs, gestures, AAC, drawings, models, or other communication modes. • Describes or extends simple patterns noticed in materials, nature, movement, sounds, weather, routines, or investigations.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Provide varied materials for sorting, comparing, and noticing patterns, such as natural objects, classroom objects, fabric, blocks, beads, shells, leaves, rocks, containers, or recycled materials. • Invite children to notice similarities, differences, and repeated features by asking, “What is the same?”, “What is different?”, “What keeps happening?”, or “What do you see again?” • Model comparison and pattern language in natural contexts, such as “same,” “different,” “again,” “next,” “repeats,” “bigger,” “smaller,” “heavy,” “light,” “rough,” “smooth,” “before,” and “after.” • Encourage children to describe or show why they grouped objects in a certain way and to try grouping the same objects in a different way. • Support children in using tools and materials, such as charts, drawings, photos, models, graphs, balance scales, magnifiers, measuring tapes, or nonstandard measurement objects, to compare and share what they notice.	

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)

Strand 11. Reasoning and Problem-Solving

Goal 1. Child notices what happens during investigations and shares discoveries.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early adult-supported experiences help children notice what happens during actions and interactions. Children begin by recognizing simple outcomes, such as what changed or what happened next. Over time, they describe what happened and share simple ideas about why it happened. These skills build the foundation for analyzing results and communicating findings.			With adult support, notices what happened during play or simple investigations and shares discoveries through words, gestures, drawings, marks, movement, models, or play.	Notifies and talks about what happened during investigations, compares what happened with an earlier prediction, and asks new questions with adult support as needed.
			Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors	
			• Helps gather information during play or investigations by watching, counting, sorting, comparing, drawing, or noticing changes. • Describes what happened using words, gestures, signs, movement, AAC, home languages, or other familiar communication modes. • Shows what happened through drawings, marks, models, movement, pretend play, photos, gestures, or other familiar ways with support as needed.	• Shares what happened during an investigation using words, signs, gestures, drawings, models, photos, charts, movement, AAC, home languages, or play. • Compares what happened to what they thought might happen and talks about what changed, what stayed the same, or what they might try next. • Asks new questions based on what they noticed, found out, or did not expect.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Guide children in gathering simple information during play, routines, and investigations by watching, counting, sorting, comparing, testing, or drawing what they notice. • Use simple language to help children describe what happened, such as “The block fell,” “The water spilled,” “The ice melted,” or “The seed grew.” • Ask open-ended questions that help children reflect, such as “What happened?”, “What changed?”, “What did you notice?”, or “What could we try again?” • Support children in comparing guesses and results using language such as “You thought it would sink, and it floated. What do you think made that happen?” • Provide multiple ways for children to share findings, such as drawings, models, simple charts, photos, storytelling, gestures, signs, AAC, home languages, or group discussions.	

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)

Strand 11. Reasoning and Problem-Solving

Goal 2. Child uses reasoning and planning to investigate and solve problems.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early play and exploration help children understand cause and effect. Children begin by using trial and error to see how their actions change what happens. Over time, they try different approaches and begin to plan their actions. These skills build the foundation for investigation and problem-solving.			With adult support, tries simple investigations, notices cause and effect, and shows what happened through words, gestures, drawings, marks, movement, models, or play.	Takes part in longer or multi-step investigations with adult support as needed, describes steps taken, and gathers or shows information in different ways.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Participates in simple investigations during play, such as building, water play, cooking, mixing, sorting, ramp play, or testing materials. • Notices cause and effect, such as “It fell,” “It broke,” “It melted,” “It sank,” “It rolled,” or “It made a sound.” • Tries more than one way to explore materials or solve a simple problem with support as needed.	• Takes part in investigations with more than one step, such as building structures, mixing materials, observing nature, exploring shadows, testing ramps, or cooking. • Describes or shows the steps they tried during an activity or investigation. • Uses tools, materials, drawings, photos, marks, models, simple charts, movement, gestures, signs, AAC, words, or play to gather or show information.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Provide open-ended materials for investigation and problem-solving, such as blocks, ramps, water, sand, tubes, containers, natural objects, light, shadows, fabric, magnets, or recycled materials. • Model cause-and-effect language during play, such as “When you pushed it, it rolled,” “The tower fell when it got too tall,” or “The water moved through the tube.” • Encourage children to try different approaches when something does not work the first time. • Scaffold planning by asking, “What could we try first?”, “What happened?”, “What could we try next?”, or “What do you need?” • Help children explain what they tried, what worked, what did not work, and what they might do differently next time using words, gestures, drawings, photos, AAC, home languages, or other familiar communication modes.	

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)

Strand 11. Reasoning and Problem-Solving

Goal 3. Child asks questions, gathers information, makes predictions, and tests ideas through play and exploration.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early cause-and-effect experiences help children begin to form ideas about what might happen. Adults support this learning by answering questions, modeling curiosity, and helping children notice what happens. Over time, children move from simple reactions and questions to making predictions and testing ideas through play and interaction. These skills build the foundation for scientific reasoning and inquiry.			Asks simple questions, seeks information from adults or familiar materials, and makes simple predictions with adult support.	Asks more detailed questions, gathers information from people, books, tools, observations, or peers, and uses current knowledge to make predictions and try ideas.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Asks simple questions during play or routines, such as “What is that?”, “Why?”, “What happened?”, “Where did it go?”, or “What will happen?” • Makes simple predictions with adult support, such as “It will fall,” “This one will roll,” “It will melt,” or “This one is bigger.” • Tests ideas through pretend play, building, sensory play, outdoor exploration, movement, or hands-on materials.	• Asks more detailed questions during investigations, play, routines, book sharing, or outdoor experiences. • Uses people, books, pictures, tools, observations, peers, or prior experiences to gather information and make predictions. • Tests ideas during play and exploration, such as building, cooking, gardening, observing nature, mixing, measuring, or exploring materials.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Encourage children to ask questions during play, routines, outdoor exploration, book sharing, cooking, building, sensory play, and problem-solving. • Respond to children’s questions with interest and curiosity, and help them explore possible answers rather than giving answers too quickly. • Model prediction and investigation language, such as “What do you think will happen?”, “How could we find out?”, “What happened last time?”, or “What should we try?” • Provide access to people, books, pictures, tools, natural materials, classroom materials, and outdoor spaces that help children investigate questions. • Support children in explaining and testing ideas using words, signs, gestures, drawings, models, movement, AAC, home languages, or play.	

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)**Strand 12. Self-Identity, Family, and Community**

Goal 1. Child identifies self as part of a family and community and describes roles, relationships, and ways people live and work together, with adult support as needed.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early relationships and daily routines help children understand themselves as part of a family, community, and larger story of belonging. Children begin by recognizing familiar people, forming relationships, and participating in routines. Over time, they identify relationships, notice similarities and differences, and take part in family, classroom, background, and community experiences. These skills build the foundation for understanding roles, relationships, shared responsibilities, and ways people help, care for one another, represent their families and communities, and stay connected across generations.			With adult support, identifies self as part of a family and community and describes familiar roles and relationships, and ways people help and care for one another.	Describes roles, relationships, shared responsibilities, and ways people help, care for one another, work together, represent their families and communities, and participate in family, classroom, and community life, with support as needed.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Identifies self and shares simple information about family, home, classroom, or community experiences. • Names familiar people and describes basic relationships, such as family members, caregivers, friends, neighbors, or classroom adults. • Participates in group routines, activities, or classroom roles with support as needed.	• Describes roles of familiar people in family, classroom, or community settings. • Communicates how people help, care for one another, work together, share responsibilities, or contribute to a group. • Recognizes similarities and differences among people, families, roles, traditions, communities, and experiences, and may describe connections to relatives, ancestors, language, land, or community practices when these are part of the child’s life.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Provide opportunities for children to share about family, home, classroom, community, traditions, languages, and meaningful experiences in ways that feel comfortable to them. • Use books, photos, stories, dramatic play materials, classroom displays, maps, music, objects, and family- or community-shared materials that reflect Wisconsin families, Tribal Nations, communities, home language(s), roles, and ways of living. • Model language that describes relationships, roles, responsibilities, helping, caring, working together, belonging, and contributing to family, classroom, and community life. • Invite children to participate in group routines, classroom jobs, collaborative projects, caring for materials, helping others, and community-based play with support matched to the child, setting, and role. • Support respectful conversations about similarities and differences among people, families, communities, roles, traditions, languages, and experiences, including the idea that families and communities may be connecting or reconnecting with practices, languages, stories, relationships, and responsibilities over time.	

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Strand 13. Concept of Time

Goal 1. Child shows understanding of time by describing familiar events in sequence and recognizing differences between past and present, with adult support.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Predictable routines and repeated events help children begin to understand order and sequence. Children begin by knowing what comes next in familiar routines. Over time, they recall and describe events in order and notice how things change. These skills build the foundation for understanding sequence, past and present, and how time is organized.			With adult support, describes familiar events in sequence and identifies simple differences between past and present.	Describes events in sequence and explains differences between past and present experiences with support as needed.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Describes familiar routines or events using simple sequence words, such as “first,” “next,” “then,” and “after.” • Talks about recent events, familiar experiences, or changes in routines with adult support. • Participates in daily routines, transitions, and classroom activities that help build understanding of order and sequence.	• Describes familiar events or experiences in order using multiple sequence words, such as “first,” “next,” “then,” “after,” “before,” and “last.” • Talks about past, present, or upcoming events using time-related language, such as “yesterday,” “today,” “tomorrow,” “before,” or “later.” • Participates in planning, anticipating, recalling, or comparing events across routines, stories, classroom projects, or personal experiences.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Provide consistent routines, visual schedules, photos, objects, songs, and other familiar cues that help children anticipate what happens now and next. • Use sequence and time-related words during daily routines, transitions, stories, play, and conversations. • Invite children to recall recent events, describe what happened first or next, and notice changes in familiar routines or experiences. • Provide opportunities for children to plan, anticipate, and discuss upcoming activities, classroom events, family experiences, or community events. • Use books, photos, stories, calendars, timelines, drawings, and conversations to support understanding of sequence, past, present, and future.	

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)

Strand 14. Environment, Geography, and Our Role in Society

Goal 1. Child describes features of familiar environments and explains how people use, care for, and move within their community, with adult support.

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early experiences with familiar spaces help children begin to understand places and how they are used. Children begin by exploring, moving through, and recognizing familiar environments. Over time, they describe features of places and take part in caring for shared spaces. These skills build the foundation for understanding how people use, move within, and take responsibility for their environment and community.			With adult support, identifies features of familiar environments and describes how people use and move within them.	Describes features of familiar environments and explains how people use, care for, and move within their community with support as needed.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Identifies familiar places, such as home, classroom, playground, neighborhood, or community spaces. • Describes how people use familiar spaces, such as places to play, eat, learn, rest, gather, work, or care for one another. • Participates in caring for classroom, outdoor, or shared spaces with support as needed.	• Describes features of familiar environments, such as buildings, roads, paths, signs, natural areas, gathering places, or shared community spaces. • Explains how people use different spaces for different purposes, such as learning, playing, walking, gathering, or helping care for the community. • Uses positional or directional language, maps, drawings, models, or movement to describe familiar places and how people get from one place to another.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Create opportunities and environments where children can explore, observe, draw, build, map, and talk about familiar places, including home, classroom, outdoor, neighborhood, and community spaces. • Model language related to place, direction, movement, features, and use of space during play, routines, walks, stories, and investigations. • Use maps, drawings, photos, block structures, dramatic play, signs, and models to represent familiar places and routes. • Invite children to discuss how people use, share, care for, and move within familiar spaces and community places. • Support children in caring for shared materials, classroom spaces, outdoor areas, and community environments through meaningful routines and responsibilities.	

Learning and Development Area. Cognition and General Knowledge (C)**Strand 15. Economics: Wants, Needs, and Choices****Goal 1. Child identifies wants and needs and makes choices about resources to solve problems and participate in everyday activities, with adult support as needed.**

Birth to 9 months	8 to 18 months	16 to 36 months	3–4 years	4–5 years
Early experiences with needs, choices, and materials help children begin to understand how people meet needs and use resources. Children begin by expressing wants and needs, making simple choices, and using objects during play. Over time, they participate in sharing materials, making decisions, and using tools to complete tasks. These skills build the foundation for understanding resources, decision-making, and the use of tools in everyday life.			Identifies wants and needs, makes simple choices about resources, and uses familiar resources or strategies to solve problems and complete tasks with support as needed.	Distinguishes between wants and needs, explains choices about how to use available resources, and considers what may be gained or given up when making a choice, with support as needed.
			Examples of Children’s Observable Behaviors	
			• Identifies wants and needs and communicates simple reasons for choices during play, routines, or problem-solving. • Makes choices about materials, activities, tools, or roles based on preference, purpose, or available resources. • Engages in play involving sharing, exchanging materials, community roles, jobs, or everyday decision-making.	• Identifies wants and needs and explains simple reasons for choices about resources, materials, tools, or activities. • Describes how people use resources, tools, roles, or strategies to meet needs and solve everyday problems. • Uses available materials, tools, media, or technology as one option to complete tasks, solve problems, or participate in play and routines.
			Examples of Supportive Strategies	
			• Provide opportunities for children to make meaningful choices during routines, play, projects, and problem-solving. • Model language related to wants, needs, choices, resources, tools, sharing, and decision-making. • Support play that involves sharing, exchanging materials, jobs, community roles, caregiving, making, building, buying, selling, or solving everyday problems. • Invite children to explain choices, consider available resources, and think about what they need to complete a task or solve a problem. • Guide appropriate use of tools, media, and technology as optional resources that support participation, communication, creation, or problem-solving.	

Family and Community Partnerships

Family and Community Partnerships describes how families, early childhood professionals, programs, services, and community partners work together to support children's learning, development, relationships, and well-being. Families are central to children's lives and are children's first and most important teachers. Strong partnerships are built through trust, respect, shared communication, and recognition of each family's strengths, goals, and experiences.

This area focuses on the relationships and practices that help families feel welcomed, informed, connected, and supported. Families and professionals share information about children's strengths, interests, needs, routines, and learning across home, early learning, service, and community settings. These partnerships help adults better understand each child and create more consistent, meaningful, and responsive support for children's development.

Families may experience partnership in different ways depending on their family structure, community, priorities, resources, past experiences, and current circumstances. Meaningful partnership includes clear and accessible communication, opportunities for family voice and choice, support during transitions, connections to other families, respect for family goals, and help accessing resources without stigma. Families should be able to participate in ways that are useful, realistic, and meaningful to them.

Early childhood professionals support partnerships by creating welcoming environments, listening to families, sharing information in accessible ways, inviting family input, coordinating with other professionals and systems, and following up with care. When families, professionals, and community partners work together, children benefit from stronger relationships, greater continuity across settings, and learning experiences that reflect who they are, where they come from, and what they need to thrive.

Inside This Learning and Development Area

Family and Community Partnerships is organized into seven family partnership outcomes. Unlike the child Learning and Development Areas, this area focuses on the relationships, communication, practices, and supports that help families and early childhood professionals work together to support children's learning, development, relationships, and well-being.

Family Partnership Outcome (FCP)	Focus
FCP1. Families experience affirming, reciprocal relationships.	Families and professionals build relationships grounded in trust, respect, shared communication, and recognition of family strengths, language, identities, and experiences.
FCP2. Families have support and information to encourage children's learning.	Families and professionals share information about child development, individual children's strengths and needs, and learning opportunities across home, program, service, and community settings.
FCP3. Families have support from other families.	Families have opportunities to connect with, learn from, and support other families in ways that build community and reduce isolation.
FCP4. Families have goals and benefit from supportive partners.	Families are supported in identifying and working toward goals related to children's development, learning, participation, and family well-being.
FCP5. Families grow in leadership.	Families have opportunities to share perspectives, influence decisions, advocate for their children, and participate in leadership in ways that are meaningful and accessible to them.

Family Partnership Outcome (FCP)	Focus
FCP6. Families are supported in times of transition.	Families receive clear communication, coordination, and support as children and families move across routines, settings, services, systems, and developmental stages.
FCP7. Families are connected to supports and resources.	Families are supported in accessing community resources and services in ways that are respectful, responsive, non-stigmatizing, and aligned with family strengths, needs, and preferences.

FCP1. Families experience affirming, reciprocal relationships.

Big Ideas	Essential Questions
- Families are central to children’s development and learning. - Relationships between families and early childhood professionals are built on trust, respect, and shared responsibility. - Professionals create welcoming environments where all families feel a sense of belonging.	- How do early childhood professionals create welcoming environments where all families and family members feel valued and included? - How do professionals build two-way relationships that reflect families’ strengths, values, and identities? - How do early childhood professionals recognize and communicate their own strengths, values, identities, and roles in ways that support respectful, two-way relationships with families? - How do professionals support strong communication and collaboration with families?
Outcome: Families experience affirming, two-way relationships with early childhood professionals that are built on trust, respect, shared communication, and recognition of family strengths and identities.	
Supportive Practices of Programs/Professionals	Family Experience
- Create welcoming environments that reflect and affirm families’ identities and experiences. - Engage families through their preferred methods of communication and ensure communication is ongoing and two-way. - Engage families in conversations about their strengths, interests, and goals for their children. - Provide opportunities for families to share input and influence decisions. - Listen to family voices and use their knowledge and experiences to inform practices and interactions with children. - Engage in two-way ongoing learning and reflection to strengthen relationship-building skills. - Recognize challenges and promote opportunities for relationship-building. - Connect families to additional supports when needs extend beyond the professional’s role.	- Families and family members feel welcomed, respected, and included in the program, service, or learning community in ways that reflect their family’s experiences. - Families and family members experience ongoing relationships with professionals that are built on trust, mutual respect, and open two-way communication. - Families and family members have meaningful opportunities and choice to share perspectives about their child, family priorities, and the program or service context, and to contribute to decisions that affect their child’s learning, development, and participation. - Families and family members see themselves reflected in interactions, communication, materials, routines, and environments.

FCP2. Families have support and information to encourage children’s learning.

Big Ideas	Essential Questions
- Families are children’s first and most important teachers. - Learning is strengthened through shared understanding and collaboration between families and early childhood professionals. - Families benefit from access to clear, relevant information about children’s development and learning. - Families and professionals bring together information about child development, the individual child’s strengths and needs, family experiences, and the program or service approach to support learning.	- How do early childhood professionals share information about children’s development and learning in ways that are meaningful and accessible? - How do professionals connect general information about child development, what families share about their child, and the learning opportunities available in the program, service, home, and community? - How do professionals and families engage in two-way communication to support children’s learning?
Outcome: Families and early childhood professionals share information and work together to support children’s learning and development by connecting general child-development knowledge, family knowledge of the individual child, and learning opportunities across programs, services, homes, and communities.	
Supportive Practices of Programs/Professionals	Family Experience
- Share information about child development in ways that are accessible, relevant, and useful for families as they understand and support their child’s learning and development. - Communicate how everyday routines and interactions support learning. - Explain how learning experiences support children’s development. - Connect information about child development to the individual child’s interests, strengths, needs, experiences, language, routines, and learning opportunities across settings. - Engage in ongoing, two-way communication about children’s growth and progress. - Invite families to share information about children’s strengths, interests, needs, routines, experiences, and learning at home and in the community. - Collaborate with families to identify meaningful, practical strategies and experiences that support children’s development in the settings and environments they use every day. - Provide information about additional supports and services when needed. - Coordinate with other professionals and systems, as appropriate.	- Families feel included as partners in their children’s learning. - Families have opportunities to understand and support their children’s development. - Families understand how their child’s experiences at home, in the community, and in programs or services connect to learning and development. - Families feel comfortable sharing information about their children’s strengths, interests, needs, routines, learning, and family experiences. - Families have access to information and resources that support their understanding of child development and their child’s learning, development, and participation.

FCP3. Families have support from other families.

Big Ideas	Essential Questions
- Families benefit from connections with other families. - Relationships with other families support a sense of belonging and reduce isolation. - Both informal and formal networks contribute to family well-being.	- How do early childhood professionals support opportunities for families to connect with one another? - How do professionals recognize and support both informal and formal family networks?
Outcome: Families have opportunities to connect with and learn from other families, building relationships that foster belonging, mutual support, and shared knowledge.	
Supportive Practices of Programs/Professionals	Family Experience
- Create or support opportunities for families to connect and build relationships, as appropriate to the setting. - Share information about formal and informal family support networks. - Help families with shared interests or experiences connect with each other, while respecting privacy and preferences. - Encourage families and community members to share knowledge, experiences, and resources with one another. - Recognize that professionals support family connections in different ways depending on their role and setting.	- Families have opportunities to connect with other families. - Families feel a sense of belonging within their community. - Families share and receive support from other families. - Families receive support from extended family members and their community.

FCP4. Families have goals and benefit from supportive partners.

Big Ideas	Essential Questions
- Families have goals related to their children’s development and family well-being. - Early childhood professionals support families in identifying and working toward their goals. - Strong partnerships help families access resources and supports.	- How do early childhood professionals support families in identifying and working toward goals related to their children and family well-being? - How do professionals partner with other systems to support family goals?
Outcome: Families are supported in identifying and working toward goals related to their children’s development and family well-being through partnerships that provide encouragement, connection, and access to resources.	
Supportive Practices of Programs/Professionals	Family Experience
- Create opportunities for families to share goals related to their children and family well-being. - Support families in identifying next steps and finding resources that fit their needs, providing warm handoffs whenever possible. - Recognize that families may be at different stages in setting and pursuing goals. - Coordinate with other professionals and systems that support family goals. - Provide practical support and information to help families take action. - Acknowledge the role of family strengths, traditions, and experiences in shaping goals.	- Families feel comfortable sharing goals for their children’s development, learning, participation, and family well-being. - Families have opportunities to identify next steps and access information, resources, and supports that align with their goals. - Families experience encouragement, respect, and practical support as they pursue goals at their own pace and in ways that fit their family strengths, experiences, and circumstances. - Families experience coordinated support when professionals and community partners work together, as appropriate, to support family goals. - Families build confidence, knowledge, and connection as they make progress toward goals that matter to them.

FCP5. Families grow in leadership.

Big Ideas	Essential Questions
- Families have valuable knowledge and experiences that support children and communities. - Leadership can take many forms and reflect different family roles and perspectives. - Early childhood professionals create opportunities for families to share what they think and help make decisions.	- How do early childhood professionals create opportunities for families to share their perspectives and influence decisions? - How do professionals support families to lead in ways that are meaningful to them? - How do early childhood professionals support families in growing participation, leadership, responsibility, and follow-through with individual support as needed?
Outcome: Families have opportunities to share their perspectives, influence decisions, and engage in leadership in ways that reflect their strengths, experiences, and backgrounds.	
Supportive Practices of Programs/Professionals	Family Experience
- Provide multiple ways for families to share input and feedback. - Invite families to participate in planning and decision-making. - Recognize and support different forms of family leadership. - Encourage families to advocate for their children and share their perspectives. - Offer opportunities for families to engage in leadership within programs, services, and communities. - Offer leadership opportunities that are realistic, flexible, and accessible for families across different roles, settings, schedules, and comfort levels.	- Families have opportunities to share their perspectives and are informed about the results of their input. - Families feel their voices are valued. - Families participate in ways that are meaningful to them. - Families build confidence in supporting their children and engaging with professionals.

FCP6. Families are supported in times of transition.

Big Ideas	Essential Questions
• Transitions are a normal part of children’s and families’ experiences. • Strong partnerships support families during transitions across settings, services, and systems. • Early childhood professionals invite families to prepare for and manage changes.	• How do early childhood professionals support families through different types of transitions? • How do professionals coordinate with partners to support transitions across settings and systems?
Outcome: Families are supported in preparing for and handling transitions across settings, services, and developmental stages through clear communication, collaboration, and connection to supports.	
Supportive Practices of Programs/Professionals	Family Experience
• Share information with families about upcoming transitions and what to expect. • Invite families to share information about transitions happening in the child’s and family’s life, such as changes in routines, caregiving arrangements, services, family circumstances, or community supports, while respecting family privacy and preferences. • Support children and families in preparing for changes in routines, settings, and services. • Use communication and cross-sector collaboration between sending and receiving professionals or settings. • Recognize and support the emotional aspects of transitions for children and families. • Provide information about available services and supports during transitions. • Coordinate with community partners to support transitions across systems.	• Families feel informed and prepared for transitions. • Families have opportunities to ask questions, seek support, and share information about transitions that may affect their child or family. • Families feel supported during changes in services or settings. • Families experience continuity and connection across transitions.

FCP7. Families are connected to supports and resources.

Big Ideas	Essential Questions
- Families have strengths and changing needs over time. - Early childhood professionals build trusting relationships that support families in identifying needs and accessing resources. - Professionals partner with families to connect them to supports in respectful and responsive ways that protect privacy and avoid stigma.	- How do early childhood professionals create environments where families feel comfortable sharing needs and seeking support? - How do professionals connect families to community resources in ways that are clear, respectful, and accessible?
Outcome: Families are supported in accessing community resources and services in ways that are responsive to their strengths, needs, and preferences, and that promote dignity, trust, and ongoing connection.	
Supportive Practices of Programs/Professionals	Family Experience
- Build ongoing, trusting relationships so families feel comfortable sharing needs. - Maintain knowledge of community resources and services relevant to families. - Share information about resources regularly in accessible formats. - Support families in identifying needs and exploring options based on their preferences. - Provide clear, specific information to help families connect with services (such as who to contact and what to expect) or help provide a warm handoff whenever possible. - Collaborate with other professionals and systems, as appropriate, to support children and families. - Follow up with families after referrals and help address barriers when needed. - Respect family decisions and timelines when accessing services. - Use language and approaches that show families it is okay to ask for help. - Respect family privacy by explaining how information will be used and sharing information only with family permission, unless the law requires sharing it.	- Families feel safe, respected, and supported when sharing needs. - Families receive clear and helpful information about available supports. - Families have opportunities to connect with trusted individuals and community resources. - Families feel supported in making decisions about accessing services. - Families experience support without stigma. - Families understand how their information will be used and feel confident that their privacy is respected.

Glossary

AAC — Augmentative and Alternative Communication

Tools and strategies that support communication for children who use ways other than, or in addition to, spoken language. AAC may include gestures, signs, picture cards, communication boards, speech-generating devices, or other supports.

Accessibility / Accessible

The design of environments, materials, routines, communication, and experiences so children and families can participate meaningfully. Accessibility may include physical access, communication supports, adapted materials, sensory supports, translation or interpretation, and other individualized supports. Accessible practices support every child's full participation, learning, and relationships across routines, play, and learning experiences. Accessible practice includes access, participation, supports, adaptations, and high expectations for children with varied abilities.

Accommodations

Changes to materials, environments, routines, communication, or teaching practices that help a child access, participate in, and show learning. Accommodations do not change the learning goal. They provide the support a child needs to participate meaningfully, such as using visuals, AAC, adapted materials, flexible seating, extra processing time, sensory supports, or changes to how information is shared or how a child responds.

Alliteration

The repetition of the same beginning sound in nearby words, such as “silly snake” or “big blue ball.” In early childhood, alliteration is usually explored through playful songs, chants, books, names, and word games.

Approaches to Learning

The ways children engage with learning, including curiosity, initiative, attention, persistence, flexibility, creativity, problem-solving, and self-regulation. Approaches to learning describe how children learn across all learning areas, not a separate set of isolated skills.

Assessment

A process for gathering and using information about children's learning, development, strengths, interests, and needs. In the WI ELDGs, assessment should be developmentally appropriate and should support planning, communication with families, and responsive practice.

Assistive Communication (ACC)

Tools, supports, and strategies that help children understand or express meaning when they use ways other than, or in addition to, spoken language. Assistive communication may include AAC, signs, gestures, picture cards, object cues, tangible symbols, communication boards, speech-generating devices, adapted materials, or support from familiar communication partners. In the WI ELDGs,

assistive communication is one of many valid ways children communicate, participate, and show what they know.

Attachment

The close emotional relationship young children form with familiar caregivers who provide comfort, safety, and responsive care. Secure relationships support children's exploration, learning, confidence, and social and emotional development.

Beginning Sounds

The first sounds heard in spoken words. For example, children may notice that "ball" and "baby" start with the same sound.

Belonging

A child's experience of being accepted, included, valued, and connected within a family, group, classroom, program, or community. Belonging is supported when children's experiences, abilities, relationships, and contributions are recognized and respected.

Cardinality

Understanding that the last number counted tells how many objects are in a group.

Caregiver

An adult who provides care, support, and responsive relationships for a child. In the WI ELDGs, caregiver may include parents, family members, foster parents, early childhood professionals, home visitors, and other trusted adults in a child's life.

Children with Disabilities

Children who have identified or suspected disabilities, developmental delays, health conditions, or support needs that may affect participation, learning, communication, movement, behavior, or daily routines. The WI ELDGs are intended to support full participation and meaningful learning for children with disabilities across settings.

Classification

Grouping or sorting objects, people, places, or ideas based on shared characteristics, such as size, shape, color, texture, use, or category.

Communication Modes

The different ways children understand and express meaning. Communication modes may include facial expressions, gestures, sounds, signs, spoken words, home language(s), English, visuals, drawings, AAC, movement, or mixed-language communication.

Continuum

A connected sequence of learning and development over time. In the WI ELDGs, a continuum helps adults see how earlier development supports later development while recognizing that children grow at different rates and in different ways.

Co-Regulation

The supportive process adults use to help children manage emotions, behavior, attention, and participation. Co-regulation includes warm relationships, predictable routines, calm presence, modeling, language, comfort, and support matched to the child and situation.

Cross-Sector Collaboration

Shared work among people, programs, agencies, and systems that support young children and families. Cross-sector collaboration may involve early care and education, schools, home visiting, early intervention, health, mental health, family support, community organizations, and state, Tribal, county, or local partners.

Decoding

The process of using knowledge of letters and sounds to read written words. In early childhood, decoding grows from playful and meaningful experiences with sounds, letters, print, books, and language.

Developmental Expectation

A broad description of what children may be learning or demonstrating within an age period. Developmental expectations are intended to guide observation, reflection, and planning, not to serve as a checklist or requirement for individual children.

Developmental Pathway

The individual pattern of how a child grows and learns over time. A child's developmental pathway may be shaped by the child's strengths, experiences, relationships, family goals, context, language exposure, communication modes, health, disability, opportunities to participate, and the settings in which the child learns.

Documentation

The process of recording and organizing information about children's learning, development, interests, questions, interactions, and experiences. Documentation may include notes, photos, work samples, audio, video, family input, and other records used to reflect and plan.

Early Childhood System

The connected programs, services, policies, funding streams, workforce supports, and community resources that support young children and families. This may include early care and education, Head Start, family child care, schools, early intervention, home visiting, health, mental health, child welfare, and family support systems.

Emergent Literacy

The early skills, knowledge, and behaviors that support later reading and writing. Emergent literacy includes interest in books, stories, sounds, print, pictures, symbols, mark-making, drawing, storytelling, environmental print, and communication.

Emergent Multilingualism

The developing ability to understand, communicate, participate, and build knowledge using more than one language and multiple communication modes. Emergent multilingualism includes continued growth in the child's home language(s) and increasing access to English.

Environmental Print

Print that appears in children's everyday environments, such as signs, labels, logos, menus, lists, maps, packages, schedules, and classroom messages. Environmental print helps children connect print with meaning and real purposes.

Equalizing

Changing two groups so they have the same amount. For example, a child may add one more block to one group so both groups have the same number.

Examples of Children's Observable Behaviors

Some of children's observable behaviors showing their learning and development. In the WI ELDGs, these are examples only, not checklists, requirements, or expectations of behaviors that every child will show in the same way or at the same time.

Executive Function

A set of thinking skills that help children manage attention, remember information, shift flexibly, control impulses, and work toward goals. Executive function develops over time through relationships, routines, play, co-regulation, and practice.

Family Engagement

Meaningful, ongoing ways families and programs share information and work together to support children's learning, development, and well-being. Family engagement includes communication, participation, trust, shared decision-making, and respect for family knowledge.

Family Language(s)

The ways families use language, gestures, stories, songs, routines, names, and communication patterns at home and in the community. These practices are important sources of information for understanding and supporting a child's development.

Family Partnership

A two-way relationship in which families and professionals share information, build trust, make decisions, and support children's learning and development together. Family partnership recognizes families as children's first and most important teachers.

Fine Motor Skills

Skills that use the small muscles of the hands, fingers, and wrists for grasping, manipulating, drawing, writing, feeding, dressing, and using tools.

Free Exploration

Child-directed play or investigation in which children choose materials, actions, ideas, or questions to explore. Adults support free exploration by providing safe, rich materials, observing children's ideas, and joining or extending play when appropriate.

Goal

A broad statement describing an important area of learning or development within a strand. Goals help organize the developmental expectations, examples of children's observable behaviors, and examples of supportive strategies.

Gross Motor Skills

Skills that use the large muscles of the body for movement, balance, coordination, and strength. Examples include rolling, crawling, walking, running, jumping, climbing, throwing, and dancing.

Guided Exploration

Adult-supported play or investigation that builds on children's interests while gently extending learning. Adults may ask questions, offer materials, model language, support problem-solving, or help children notice new ideas without taking over.

Heritage Language

A language connected to a child's family, community, or ancestry. A heritage language may or may not be the language the child currently uses most often.

Holistic Development

Development that occurs across interconnected areas, including social, emotional, physical, language, communication, cognitive, and approaches to learning. Growth in one area influences and is influenced by growth in other areas.

Home Language(s)

The language(s) a child hears, understands, or uses at home, with family members, or in the community. Home language development is an asset and an important part of children's overall language, literacy, identity, and learning development.

Inferential Questions

Questions that ask children to think beyond what is directly stated or shown, such as why something happened, how a character feels, what might happen next, or how ideas are connected. Children may answer inferential questions through speech, sign, AAC, drawing, movement, or other communication modes.

Integrated Learning

Learning that happens across more than one developmental area or content area at the same time. For example, a child may use language, movement, problem-solving, and social skills during play.

Invented Spelling

Children's early attempts to write words by using what they know about sounds, letters, and meaning. Invented spelling is a meaningful step in writing development and should be supported without overcorrecting early writing.

Investigations

Purposeful explorations that help children ask questions, test ideas, notice patterns, solve problems, and learn how things work.

Joint Attention

Shared focus between a child and another person on the same object, person, event, or idea. Joint attention may be shown through looking, gesturing, reaching, showing, signs, vocalizations, movement, AAC, or other familiar communication modes.

Language Exposure

The amount, type, and context of language a child has opportunities to hear and use. Language exposure may vary across home, early learning settings, community settings, routines, content areas, and communication partners.

Language Mixing

The use of words, phrases, grammar, or communication patterns from more than one language in the same interaction. Language mixing is a common and meaningful part of multilingual development and should not be treated as confusion or an error.

Language Supports

Tools, strategies, and services that help children and families understand information, communicate, and participate meaningfully. Examples include interpretation, translation, visuals, gestures, signs, AAC, multilingual materials, home-language connections, and plain language.

Learning and Development Area

A broad area of learning and development in the WI ELDGs, such as Social and Emotional Development, Approaches to Learning, or Language, Communication, and Literacy. Learning and Development Areas organize related strands and goals while recognizing that development is interconnected.

Linguistic Repertoire

All of the communication modes and tools a child uses to communicate and make meaning, including home language(s), English, words from multiple languages, gestures, signs, visuals, sounds, AAC, and other communication modes.

Manipulatives

Objects children can handle, move, arrange, count, sort, build with, or use to explore ideas. Examples include blocks, counters, beads, puzzles, measuring tools, natural materials, and loose parts.

Mixed-Delivery Early Childhood System

The full range of early childhood settings and services that support children and families, including family child care, center-based child care, Head Start and Early Head Start, public school 4K, private preschool, home visiting, early intervention, and community-based supports.

Multilingual Development

Children's growth in understanding, communication, participation, early literacy, and knowledge-building across two or more languages and other communication modes. Multilingual development may look different depending on each child's language exposure and opportunities to use each language.

Multilingual Learner

A child who is developing, hearing, understanding, or using more than one language. This includes children who use one language at home and are learning a different language, children who are exposed to multiple home languages, children who use Tribal or heritage languages, and children who communicate across languages and modes.

Multimodal

Using more than one way to understand or express meaning. See **Communication Modes**.

Observation

The intentional process of watching, listening, and noticing what children do, say, show, communicate, and create during everyday routines, play, and interactions. Observation helps adults understand children's strengths, interests, needs, and next steps.

One-to-One Correspondence

Understanding that each object being counted gets one number word, one at a time. For example, a child points to or moves each block while saying one number word for each block.

Orientation

Understanding where the body, objects, or people are in relation to space, direction, or position.

Perceptual Information

Information children receive through the senses and use to understand their bodies, other people, objects, spaces, and events.

Perceptual Skills

Skills children use to gather and make sense of information through the senses, including sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell, movement, and body awareness.

Persistence

A child's effort to continue with an activity, problem, interaction, or goal, especially when it takes time, practice, or support. Persistence develops through encouragement, meaningful challenges, predictable support, and opportunities to try again.

Phonological Awareness

Awareness of the sounds and sound patterns in spoken language. In early childhood, this may include noticing rhymes, rhythm, syllables, beginning sounds, and playful changes in words.

Play

A meaningful way children explore, communicate, imagine, build relationships, solve problems, and learn about the world. Play may be child-directed, shared with peers, guided by adults, imaginative, constructive, physical, sensory, or game-based.

Print Conventions

Common ways print is organized and used, such as holding a book right side up, turning pages in order, knowing where print begins, following print direction, and understanding that print carries meaning.

Progression

The way learning and development build over time from earlier foundations toward later skills and understandings. A progression shows a general path while recognizing that each child's development may vary.

Prosocial

Actions that support positive relationships and group participation, such as helping, sharing, taking turns, comforting others, cooperating, or showing care.

Reciprocal relationships:

Relationships characterized by ongoing back-and-forth interactions in which each person responds to and influences the other through gestures, expressions, words, actions, and shared experiences.

Repair

An action used to reconnect, clarify, or fix a misunderstanding during communication or interaction. For example, a child or adult may repeat, rephrase, gesture, apologize, comfort, or try again after a communication breakdown or conflict.

Resilience

The capacity to adapt, recover, and continue developing in the face of stress, challenge, or adversity. Resilience is strengthened by safe, stable, caring relationships, supportive environments, and community resources.

Responsive

Noticing and responding to a child's cues, communication, interests, strengths, needs, and experiences in supportive and respectful ways.

Routine Phrases

Words or phrases used often during daily routines, such as arrival, greetings, eating, toileting, rest, transitions, cleanup, safety, comfort, and play. Learning and using family-provided routine phrases can help children feel secure, understand expectations, and participate more fully.

Scaffolding

Temporary support adults provide to help children do or understand something they could not yet do alone. Scaffolding may include modeling, prompts, questions, visuals, gestures, materials, wait time, or breaking a task into smaller steps, and is reduced as children gain skill.

Self-Regulation

The developing ability to manage emotions, behavior, attention, and thinking in order to participate in relationships, routines, play, and learning. In early childhood, self-regulation grows through co-regulation, warm relationships, predictable routines, and repeated practice.

Signed Communication

Communication that uses signs, including American Sign Language, home signs, key word signs, or other signed systems. Signed communication may be a child's primary language, part of multilingual development, or one of several communication modes.

Social and Emotional Development

Children's developing ability to form relationships, experience and express emotions, develop identity and belonging, and participate in social interactions. Social and emotional development is supported through responsive relationships, co-regulation, play, routines, and welcoming environments.

Strand

A smaller organizing category within a Learning and Development Area. Strands group related goals and help readers see the main parts of a Learning and Development Area.

Subitizing

Recognizing how many objects are in a small group without counting each one.

Supportive Strategies

Adult practices, materials, environments, routines, and interactions that can support children's learning and development. In the WI ELDGs, supportive strategies are not a required checklist; they are examples adults can adapt for children, families, languages, settings, and contexts.

Syllables

Parts of spoken words that include a vowel sound. Children may notice syllables by clapping, tapping, marching, or saying parts of familiar names and words.

Symbolic Representation

Using one thing to stand for something else. Young children may use objects, gestures, drawings, marks, pretend actions, pictures, words, signs, or numerals to represent ideas, people, events, quantities, or messages.

Taking Initiative

Beginning an action, interaction, idea, or task without waiting for someone else to start it. Taking

initiative may include making a choice, asking a question, trying a strategy, joining an activity, or offering an idea.

Temperament

A child's typical way of responding to people, routines, environments, sensory experiences, and change. Temperament may influence activity level, adaptability, intensity, attention, persistence, and reactions to new experiences.

Text Structure

The way a story or informational text is organized. In early childhood, text structure may include beginning, middle, and end; sequence; repeated phrases; question-and-answer patterns; or features such as headings, diagrams, labels, or charts.

Transitions

Changes from one routine, setting, program, service, or developmental period to another. Transitions may include daily transitions, moving between programs, starting school, entering or exiting early intervention or special education, or changes in family or community circumstances.

Warm Handoff

A planned and supportive connection from one person, setting, or service to another. A warm handoff may include introducing the child and family to a new provider, sharing helpful information with family permission, staying involved during the transition, and making sure the family knows what to expect next. Warm handoffs help children and families feel supported when moving between programs, services, classrooms, or community resources.

Whole-Child Approach

An approach that recognizes children's learning, development, relationships, health and well-being, experiences, family, and community as interconnected. Supporting the whole child means attending to all areas of development and the contexts that shape children's growth.