

# early years

DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK  
A Good Start for Every Child





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**Republic of Singapore**

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# MESSAGE

In Singapore, the demand for centre-based care for infants and toddlers continues to grow, with parents having greater expectations for these centres to address the well-being and development of our children. Research has also shown that the early years is a crucial period where positive experiences and relationships can shape our children's future learning and development. It is therefore timely to revise the Early Years Development Framework (EYDF) as it sets the direction for quality of care, pedagogy and practices specific to the developmental and early learning needs of children from birth to three years in centre-based settings.

EYDF 2023 has been pivoted to be more child-centric, with a stronger focus on key developmental areas of the child. It spells out the guiding principles for educators to promote the holistic development of children in these areas. It also expounds on the various roles played by educators to plan and facilitate meaningful learning experiences. These include reflecting on their professional practice, working with families and tapping on community resources to strengthen the support for our children's growth and development.

Together with families, you play a critical role in building trusting relationships with our children and nurturing their holistic development. These are essential in laying a strong foundation instilling a love for learning in our children. Let us continue to put our best foot forward to give every child a good start in life so that they can achieve their fullest potential.

**Mr Masagos Zulkifli**

Minister for Social and  
Family Development,  
Second Minister for Health  
& Minister-in-charge  
of Muslim Affairs

**Mr Chan Chun Sing**

Minister for Education

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# FOREWORD

The Early Years Development Framework (EYDF) guides early childhood educators working with children from birth to three years in centre-based childcare settings. It sets a clear direction for educators to support our children's learning and development by adopting key guiding principles and developmentally appropriate practices. EYDF has been revised to be more child-centric, with a continued emphasis on holistic development and positive outcomes for children in the early years.

EYDF 2023 complements the Nurturing Early Learners: A Curriculum Framework for Preschool Education in Singapore (NEL Framework) that was refreshed in 2022 by the Ministry of Education to guide the teaching and learning in preschools for children aged four to six. Together, both frameworks provide continuity in standards and quality in the care, development and learning of children from infancy through to kindergarten years. We have also strengthened the links between the EYDF and NEL Framework by adopting the same beliefs about children and layering on the child developmental outcomes expected over the early years.

Apart from being more child-centric, EYDF 2023 gives greater prominence to four areas of development, namely cognitive, communication and language, physical, and social and emotional. Developmental goals for infants and toddlers are provided to serve as a reference in designing the learning environment and planning developmentally appropriate learning experiences. EYDF 2023 also outlines five principles, encapsulated in the acronym C.H.I.L.D, to guide educators in the implementation of meaningful experiences and influence the way they interact with children.

Early childhood educators play a crucial role in providing quality care and education to children in their early years, as well as a vital part in sustaining a collaborative partnership between preschools, families and the community. Similar to the NEL Framework, EYDF 2023 spells out the different aspects of being early childhood professionals to strengthen their practice and support their professional development.

We strongly encourage all early childhood professionals to leverage the updated EYDF and NEL Framework together with the accompanying Educators' Guides and resources when reviewing your programme and practice to provide our children with a good start in life.

**Mr Tan Chee Wee**  
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Early Childhood  
Development Agency

**Mrs Tan Chen Kee**  
Deputy Director-General of  
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# INTRODUCTION

The Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) was set up in 2013 as an autonomous agency jointly overseen by Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and is hosted under MSF. As the regulatory and developmental agency for the early childhood sector in Singapore, ECDA oversees key aspects of children's development below the age of 7 across both kindergartens and childcare centres.

## OUR VISION



### A Good Start for Every Child

**“We believe that all children in Singapore, regardless of background, deserve a positive early childhood experience through quality care and education, which nurtures holistic development and builds a strong foundation by instilling a love for learning.”**

Quality experiences for children in their early years have profound and lasting impact on their future learning and development (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016; Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015). Positive and enriching experiences in the early years will therefore provide children with a good start in their journey to becoming individuals who are able to engage in positive social interactions and collaborate effectively with others.







The following frameworks have been developed to guide early childhood educators in providing a seamless, high-quality care and education for children in Singapore, from infancy through their kindergarten years:

**1. Early Years Development Framework (EYDF)** developed by ECDA for educators of children from birth to 3 years

In 2011, the then Ministry of Communication, Youth and Sports (MCYS), now known as MSF, first introduced the EYDF to provide educators with guidelines to plan and facilitate developmentally appropriate experiences for children from birth to 3 years. It described the desired outcomes, key principles, and practices for children's learning and holistic development. It has been reviewed and updated in 2023 to keep abreast with new developments and practices for infants' and toddlers' care and education.

**2. Nurturing Early Learners (NEL): A Curriculum Framework for Preschool Education in Singapore** developed by MOE for educators of children from 4 to 6 years

NEL Framework was first launched in 2003. Its aim was to establish core teaching and learning principles to guide early childhood educators in their provision of quality preschool education in kindergartens and childcare centres. It was refreshed in 2012 and further enhanced in 2022 based on new developments in early childhood policy, practice, and research.

Both frameworks take into consideration:



**Our beliefs about children**

**Importance of warm and responsive interactions**

**Benefits of active engagement with families when supporting children's healthy growth and development**

With accompanying resources, these frameworks provide strategies to support educators in promoting children's healthy learning and development, including transitions from home to preschool, level to level within the preschool, and subsequently to primary school, to provide a good start for every child.





## **CHAPTER 1**

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# **OVERVIEW OF EYDF**





## IMPORTANCE OF EARLY YEARS

Learning begins from birth. It takes place in daily routines, and through play and interactions with people, materials, and the physical environment. This has been reiterated in neuroscience research, which continues to emphasise that brain development is most sensitive in the first few years of life. Studies have also found that when parents and educators adapt their own behaviours based on children's cues and engage them in responsive and reciprocal interactions, they help stimulate the children's brain development (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2017).

Research over the past few decades has demonstrated that early experiences and relationships in the first 3 years of life shape future learning and development. This includes the development of executive function, which are essential skills that enable children to regulate their emotions, acquire positive self-concept, and organise their thoughts to complete tasks (Blair, 2016; Moriguchi, 2014).

When educators understand the extent to which infants and toddlers are capable of learning, they will be able to plan meaningful experiences, design safe and enriching environments, and facilitate quality interactions to support children's development.

## KEY CONCEPTS OF EYDF 2023

The EYDF provides guidelines for educators working with infants and toddlers in local settings. For the purpose of the EYDF, infants and toddlers refer to children attending the infant, playgroup, and pre-nursery classes:



### INFANTS

Children from 2 months to below 18 months



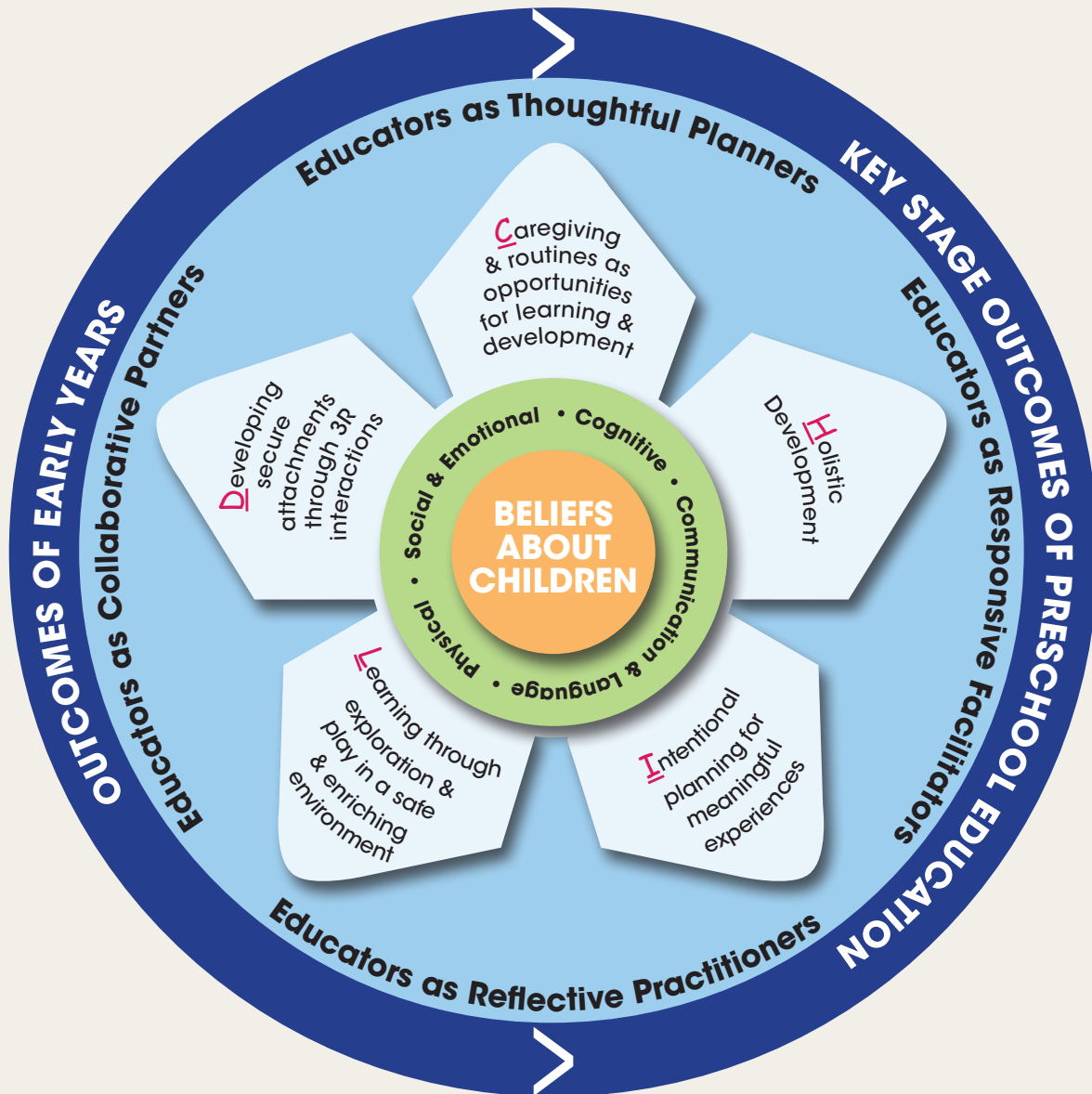
### TODDLERS

Children from 18 months to below 4 years

The key concepts of EYDF 2023 are presented in Figure 1 below.

FIGURE 01

## Key Concepts of EYDF 2023



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Central to the provision of quality care and education is our beliefs about children. The beliefs are what motivate and guide educators to continue to raise the quality of their pedagogy and care for children. With this child-centric focus, educators take on the roles of thoughtful planners, responsive facilitators, reflective practitioners, and collaborative partners to support children's well-being, learning, and development in 4 main areas (Cognitive, Communication and Language, Physical, and Social and Emotional) using the 5 guiding principles (C.H.I.L.D.). These quality early experiences support children in achieving the Outcomes of Early Years, which serve as the building blocks for attaining the Key Stage Outcomes of Preschool Education and subsequent stages of education.





## **BELIEFS ABOUT CHILDREN**

Early years educators play a critical role in ensuring that children under their care develop holistically and to their fullest potential. Their beliefs about children, professional knowledge, cultural background, and personal values and experiences influence the way they care for and interact with children.

Our beliefs about children from birth to 6 years (in both the EYDF and NEL Framework) are:

- Children are joyful, curious, active, and competent learners
- Children play, learn, and grow with others in a diverse and multi-cultural community

### **CHILDREN ARE JOYFUL, CURIOUS, ACTIVE, AND COMPETENT LEARNERS**

Infants and toddlers exhibit a joyful disposition when they are exploring their environment and discovering new things with their senses. Curious by nature, they are intrinsically motivated to learn and often engage in self-initiated play to make sense of who they are and how the world works. Being active learners, they enjoy movement and sensorial experiences that allow them to interact with the space, materials, and people around them.

Infants and toddlers are competent learners. They are capable of making choices, overcoming challenges, and understanding the world around them, given a supportive environment that embodies positive relationships and quality interactions.

### **CHILDREN PLAY, LEARN, AND GROW WITH OTHERS IN A DIVERSE AND MULTI-CULTURAL COMMUNITY**

Children are social beings whose view of the world is shaped through their own social and cultural experiences. Growing and learning in a multi-cultural environment and diverse contexts (within the home with their family members, in infant and childcare settings with their peers and educators, and in the larger social-cultural environment) give children



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a better understanding of the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours of people whom they interact with in their daily life. They also gain different perspectives, and as they mature, they are likely to be more appreciative, empathetic, cooperative, and respectful.

Playing and interacting with people of diverse backgrounds, cultures, and abilities allow them to become more socially aware and embrace values such as care and respect. As educators convey and model respect for diversity, they also nurture children's curiosity and awareness of the different needs, traditions, and cultural practices in Singapore.

In view of the importance of the early years and our beliefs about children, the framework emphasises the need for educators to intentionally plan and involve children in meaningful early learning experiences to build a strong foundation for their later learning, and for life.

## **AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT**

Centred on the common set of beliefs about children, educators intentionally plan and scaffold experiences for children's holistic growth and development in 4 main areas:

- Cognitive
- Communication and Language
- Physical
- Social and Emotional

These areas are aspects of children's holistic development which are especially crucial and rapid from birth to 3 years. It is important for educators to note that children's learning and development in these areas are inter-related, and development in one often affects development in another. Together, children's strong foundation in these areas promote their future learning and development of more complex knowledge and skills.



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## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The 5 guiding principles (**C.H.I.L.D.**) encapsulate what educators need to consider when designing the environment and planning and implementing quality experiences for children. These principles are identified based on findings from both local and international research on effective practices for the early years. They are namely:

- **C**aregiving and routines as opportunities for learning and development
- **H**olistic Development
- **I**ntentional planning for meaningful experiences
- **L**earning through exploration and play in a safe and enriching environment
- **D**eveloping secure attachments through respectful, responsive, and reciprocal (3R) interactions

## ROLE OF EDUCATORS

The 4 key roles that educators need to play when putting the **C.H.I.L.D.** principles into practice are:

- Thoughtful Planners
- Responsive Facilitators
- Reflective Practitioners
- Collaborative Partners

Educators plan and provide meaningful experiences in a safe and enriching environment to promote children's holistic development. They facilitate and modify these experiences according to children's responses, interests, and prior knowledge. Educators also regularly reflect on their professional practice to understand how they can grow professionally to better meet children's and families' interests and needs. To further support children's well-being and development, educators foster a shared and sustained partnership with families and the community.

## OUTCOMES OF EARLY YEARS

The Outcomes of Early Years serve to guide decisions on pedagogical practices, programmes, and environments, as well as partnerships with families and the community. They help define expectations for children's well-being, learning, and development. The outcomes are that children should:

- Feel safe and secure
- Enjoy exploring and discovering
- Be able to communicate their needs and feelings
- Experience positive relationships with others
- Be healthy and happy

These outcomes envisage that children who feel physically and emotionally safe and secure are more likely to enjoy exploring and discovering their environment. They are able to communicate their needs and feelings more effectively, as well as relate better with adults and other children.

As children grow in confidence and develop their love for learning, they are ready to engage in more complex experiences and enjoy a lifelong pursuit of learning.





Figure 2 below identifies the Outcomes of Early Years as foundational in achieving the Key Stage Outcomes of Preschool Education in Singapore.

**FIGURE 02**



The Outcomes of Early Years emphasise the important role of educators in:

- Fostering safe and secure attachments with infants and toddlers (Ainsworth, et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969) to support their further development
- Facilitating meaningful exploration and play (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978) to extend children's learning and development
- Supporting language and communication, in view of its role in the development of children's thinking processes (Vygotsky, 1962)
- Providing healthy and safe environments for learning and development (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019; Health Promotion Board, 2014)
- Engaging in quality interactions with children to build positive relationships (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2017; Degotardi, 2010)

**CHAPTER 2**



# **AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS**



## CHAPTER 2: AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS



The early years is a critical period during which children develop at a rapid pace. Research tells us that more than 1 million neural connections are formed each second in the first few years of life, making this period a key window of opportunity to provide a strong foundation for children to achieve their full potential. The Growing Up in Singapore Towards Healthy Outcomes (GUSTO<sup>1</sup>) study also found that various conditions in early childhood (e.g., maternal mental health, early nutritional behaviour and habits etc.) have long-term impact on children's growth, development, and overall health.

Children's growth and development are shaped by the many contexts and environments in which they operate, and the quality of experiences within these environments plays an important role in fostering their well-being, learning, and development. Although their development progresses at different paces, they rapidly acquire important skills across the following **4 areas of development**:

- Cognitive
- Communication and Language
- Physical
- Social and Emotional



In this chapter, each area of development is accompanied with a set of **developmental goals (DGs)**. These DGs reflect children's "**growing interests and competencies**", which refers to the early stages of developing preferences, curiosities, and emerging skills. Examples that demonstrate evidence of development are also provided to facilitate educators in their observations and documentation of children's learning and development in these areas.

The EYDF recognises that there is a wide developmental variation in children from birth to 3 years. When identifying the DGs and growing interests and competencies for planning or observations, educators should remain sensitive to the varied rate and timing of each child's development.

Understanding children's growing interests and competencies for each area of development is essential to guide educators in making decisions on designing the environment and providing meaningful experiences to support children's holistic development during these formative years.

Figure 3 below summarises the 4 areas of development and the corresponding DGs:

**FIGURE 03**

### **COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**

- DG1:** Show curiosity and interest in the environment
- DG2:** Use perceptual / sensory information to make sense of their environment and guide actions
- DG3:** Develop awareness of relationships and patterns of change in objects, people, and the environment

### **COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

- DG1:** Listen with understanding and for enjoyment
- DG2:** Use different modes to communicate ideas and/or convey meaning
- DG3:** Enjoy books and pre-reading experiences

### **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

- DG1:** Develop basic healthy habits and an awareness of personal safety
- DG2:** Enjoy and participate in a variety of physical activities
- DG3:** Gain increasing coordination and strength in gross motor skills; develop balance and stability
- DG4:** Gain increasing control and coordination when performing a variety of fine motor activities

### **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- DG1:** Develop self-awareness
- DG2:** Develop an awareness of own emotions and the need for self-management
- DG3:** Develop basic social awareness
- DG4:** Build relationships with family, friends, and significant adults
- DG5:** Become more aware of how their actions and decisions affect themselves and others

## COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Children’s cognitive development refers to their ability to think, explore, and problem-solve. As infants move into the toddler years, they begin to understand basic concepts, develop executive functioning skills, and use strategies to solve problems; for example, overcoming an obstacle or retrieving a toy that is out of reach (Baillargeon, 2015).

Children’s cognitive development is also closely linked to other areas of development. For example, as their cognitive abilities improve, they can understand and use more complex language to form stronger social connections, and to engage in more complex play (Baillargeon, 2015).



Educators should encourage children’s growing interests and competencies to explore, discover, and problem-solve through meaningful sensory experiences to achieve the following developmental goals:

<b>DG1</b>	Show curiosity and interest in the environment
<b>DG2</b>	Use perceptual / sensory information to make sense of their environment and guide actions
<b>DG3</b>	Develop awareness of relationships and patterns of change in objects, people, and the environment

Children’s cognitive abilities change and grow as they interact with the environment and people around them. Educators can support children’s cognitive development to achieve the developmental goals by:

- Encouraging children to explore and play in different contexts and environments such as home, school, community, outdoors, and the natural environment
- Providing children with open-ended materials that have a variety of properties such as shape, colour, size, texture, sound, and smell
- Encouraging children to use their 5 senses to explore, observe, and ask questions
- Following individual child’s lead when asking questions about objects, people, and experiences
- Stepping back and allowing children time to work through problems that they encounter during play and routines

## COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Goal 1: Show curiosity and interest in the environment

<b>Growing interests and competencies</b>	<b>Evidence of Development</b> <i>Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...</i>	
	<b>Infants</b> (2 months to below 18 months)	<b>Toddlers</b> (18 months to below 4 years)
<b>1.1</b> Show awareness of and interest in their immediate environment (e.g., objects, people, animals, places, plants)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow objects with eyes and recognise people from a distance</li> <li>• Focus their attention on things that interest them</li> <li>• Point to objects to express curiosity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore or play with objects and a range of materials that interest them for a sustained period of time</li> <li>• Use simple words together with non-verbal cues to find out more about objects / places that they are interested in</li> <li>• Observe and talk about the natural environment (e.g., clouds, wind, trees, sun)</li> <li>• Ask questions using "why", "what", "who", "where", etc.</li> </ul>
<b>1.2</b> Aware that their actions can cause things to happen in their environment (cause and effect)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shake a toy, listen, then shake it again</li> <li>• Press a button, see the toy light up, then push the button again</li> <li>• Drop a ball from cot, see it roll, then drop another ball</li> <li>• Build / stack blocks and knock them down</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manipulate play materials to investigate, take apart, bring together, create, and build (eg., play dough, messy play)</li> <li>• Screw and unscrew jar lids / open door knobs</li> <li>• Push toy cars using different levels of strengths to see how far the cars will move</li> </ul>
<b>1.3</b> Develop the ability to recall and anticipate what will happen based on previous experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for partially hidden objects</li> <li>• Enjoy "Peek-a-Boo" games</li> <li>• Enjoy pop-up books or books with flaps for children to pull or push to show the hidden picture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find objects even when hidden under 2 or 3 covers</li> <li>• Enjoy hide-and-seek games and treasure hunts</li> <li>• Recall the location of previously seen items and retrieve them upon request</li> <li>• Retell familiar stories in their own words</li> </ul>

## COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Goal 2: Use perceptual / sensory information to make sense of their environment and guide actions

Growing interests and competencies	Evidence of Development <i>Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...</i>	
	Infants (2 months to below 18 months)	Toddlers (18 months to below 4 years)
<p><b>2.1</b> Explore the immediate environment with their senses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn head towards direction where sound comes from</li> <li>• Mimic sounds heard in the environment</li> <li>• Imitate the facial expressions and actions of others</li> <li>• Know what familiar objects are used for (e.g., place milk bottle close to mouth)</li> <li>• Pound on objects and malleable materials</li> <li>• Explore objects, including items from the natural environment, using their senses (e.g., look, hit, knock, pull, shake, smell, taste)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in representational play (i.e., use an object to represent something else)</li> <li>• Engage in pretend play</li> <li>• Manipulate toys / objects with moving parts actively</li> <li>• Adjust body movements to accommodate the environment (e.g., bend down to avoid obstacle, tiptoe to walk quietly, walk slowly when holding a cup of water)</li> <li>• Respond differently to a variety of textures, smells, sounds, and images</li> </ul>
<p><b>2.2</b> Play to explore, test out ideas, and solve problems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a variety of vocal sounds and gestures to get different responses or attention from educators</li> <li>• Explore fingers, hands, and feet</li> <li>• Play with rattle in different ways to make different sounds</li> <li>• Roll over towards a favourite toy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempt to match identical shapes when playing with a shape sorter</li> <li>• Repeat actions and behaviours to make sense of how things work (e.g., dropping an object from height repeatedly)</li> <li>• Use same object for different purposes and in different situations (e.g., using large foam block for stacking or to sit on)</li> <li>• Use containers and scoops in multiple ways during water and sand play (e.g., pour, dig, fill, sieve)</li> <li>• Complete 3- to 4-piece puzzles</li> <li>• Take apart and assemble objects</li> </ul>



## COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Goal 3: Develop awareness of relationships and patterns of change in objects, people, and the environment

<b>Growing interests and competencies</b>	<b>Evidence of Development</b>	
	<i>Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...</i>	
	<b>Infants</b> (2 months to below 18 months)	<b>Toddlers</b> (18 months to below 4 years)
<b>3.1</b> Recognise differences and similarities in objects, people, and places in their environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show pleasure / dislike and preference for objects based on their properties (e.g., texture, taste, smell)</li> <li>• Show preference for people / places in the environment during play and interactions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbalise pleasure / dislike and preference for objects, places, and people during interactions</li> <li>• Talk about the properties of different objects during play</li> <li>• Organise objects based on colours, sizes, and shapes</li> <li>• Notice some differences and similarities when talking about objects, places, and people (e.g., size, height, gender)</li> </ul>
<b>3.2</b> Recognise basic relationships and simple patterns (e.g., shape, colour, size)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Match their own facial and body movements with their reflections in the mirror</li> <li>• Show awareness of different attributes (e.g., colour, shape, size)</li> <li>• Show awareness of familiar things that match or are associated (e.g., shoes and socks, spoons for scooping)</li> <li>• Anticipate sequence of events (e.g., bath time after feeding)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk about basic shapes, sizes, and colours observed in the environment</li> <li>• Notice patterns and changes in the environment (e.g., floor / wall tiles, day / night, plant growth)</li> <li>• Match and sort objects based on 1 attribute (e.g., shape, colour, size)</li> <li>• Participate actively in number games and songs</li> <li>• Recite 3 to 4 numbers through memory, but may skip some</li> </ul>



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## COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT (ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND MOTHER TONGUE LANGUAGES)

Children learn language through listening, observing, and interacting with others. The building blocks for language development start with infants reacting to voices around them through gurgles and babbling. As infants progress into toddlerhood, they gradually learn to transform these sounds into more complex forms of communication to better articulate their thoughts and ideas and enable them to have more sustained interactions with others.

Children enjoy looking at pictures and books. Through increasing experiences with books, they begin to understand how books work. As their listening and understanding skills develop, children will begin to make connections between what they hear with people and things that are happening around them (in their immediate environment and in their daily experiences), and between words and pictures.



Educators should encourage children’s growing interests and competencies in both English language and their respective Mother Tongue languages through meaningful experiences to achieve the following developmental goals:

<b>DG1</b>	Listen with understanding and for enjoyment
<b>DG2</b>	Use different modes to communicate ideas and/or convey meaning
<b>DG3</b>	Enjoy books and pre-reading experiences



Appropriate language models are necessary when children's speech and language patterns are developing. Educators can support children's communication and language development to achieve the developmental goals by:

- Narrating and describing caregiving routines carried out by adults and/or children
- Being responsive and attentive to children's needs and interests and engaging in back-and-forth interactions to support children's ability to understand and use conversational conventions (Casillas, 2014)
- Providing children with a rich language and literacy environment, both spoken and written
- Offering children ready access to picture books about different cultures and of varying genres
- Inviting families to share special books or songs in their Mother Tongue languages

## COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Goal 1: Listen with understanding and for enjoyment

Growing interests and competencies	Evidence of Development <i>Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...</i>	
	Infants (2 months to below 18 months)	Toddlers (18 months to below 4 years)
<b>1.1</b> Develop an interest in language experiences (e.g., listening to a variety of stories, rhymes, and songs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play with a range of vocal sounds (e.g., coo, gurgle, blow "raspberries", single-syllable sounds)</li> <li>• Smile or signal pleasure (e.g., kick legs, wave arms) when adults speak, sing, or read to them</li> <li>• Play with sounds of different pitches and volumes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imitate sounds they hear (e.g., laughing, coughing, clicking)</li> <li>• Move their body in response to action rhymes and songs</li> <li>• Request for their favourite stories, songs, or rhymes</li> <li>• Recite and repeat catchy phrases of songs and rhymes</li> </ul>
<b>1.2</b> Engage in daily back-and-forth communication using non-verbal cues and simple words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imitate sounds when interacting with educators</li> <li>• Recognise and respond accordingly to different voice intonations (e.g., cooing and smiling when hearing a happy voice, crying when hearing loud sounds)</li> <li>• Make eye contact and wait for their turn to respond</li> <li>• Use sounds or gestures to ask for something, say "no" to something they do not want, insist on something, or greet someone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give voices to toys during play</li> <li>• Initiate conversations with educators and/or peers</li> <li>• Show awareness that they need to take turns when talking to educators or peers</li> <li>• Describe what they are doing using 2- to 3-word sentences</li> <li>• Respond to simple questions (e.g., questions beginning with "who", "what" and "where") about familiar stories or events</li> </ul>
<b>1.3</b> Respond to simple verbal directions and requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to their name by looking, widening their eyes, and/or smiling</li> <li>• Understand names of familiar things and people and respond with simple gestures (e.g., look in the direction where the object is, wave, nod, shake head, point)</li> <li>• Respond to simple requests using gestures and body movements (e.g., wave when asked to bid "goodbye", nod to indicate "yes")</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond when called by their name using body language and/or 1- or 2-word acknowledgement</li> <li>• Follow simple directions through actions (e.g., put on shoes, put away the toy)</li> <li>• Follow 2-step verbal instructions (e.g., pick up the toys and put them in the box)</li> </ul>

## COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Goal 2: Use different modes to communicate ideas and/or convey meaning

Growing interests and competencies	Evidence of Development <i>Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...</i>	
	Infants (2 months to below 18 months)	Toddlers (18 months to below 4 years)
<b>2.1</b> Make known their ideas and needs through non-verbal and verbal cues / simple words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coo and babble while playing on their own or with another adult to get attention</li> <li>• Use hand gestures to express needs (e.g., reach hand out to request to be carried)</li> <li>• Point to express preferences during play</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use sounds and gestures to make known their ideas and needs</li> <li>• Use 1- to 2-word responses to convey meaning (e.g., "no more" to indicate no more water in the cup, "take out" to separate 2 parts of a toy)</li> <li>• Point and use familiar words to make requests (e.g., "more" to request for more of something, "up" to request to be carried)</li> <li>• Name familiar objects and places in their immediate environment</li> <li>• Convey simple messages to their family, educators, and peers using both familiar words and gestures</li> </ul>
<b>2.2</b> Begin to express their ideas, needs, and feelings through simple art forms and music and movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use facial expressions and body movements to indicate preference for pictures and/ or songs when interacting with educators</li> <li>• Move their body when being sung to (e.g., kick their legs, nod, bounce up and down)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move their body in response to music (e.g., clap their hands, stamp their feet)</li> <li>• Sing songs and nursery rhymes, or parts of songs and nursery rhymes to communicate how they feel</li> <li>• Enjoy doodling and scribbling using a range of colours</li> <li>• Use simple words or phrases to talk about their art work</li> </ul>



## COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Goal 3: Enjoy books and pre-reading experiences

Growing interests and competencies	Evidence of Development <i>Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...</i>	
	Infants (2 months to below 18 months)	Toddlers (18 months to below 4 years)
<b>3.1</b> Show interest in books and other printed materials (e.g., signs and labels in the environment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at, point to, or reach out for books</li> <li>• Show focused attention when listening to short stories / descriptions of pictures in the book</li> <li>• Enjoy interacting with soft or board books and lift-the-flap or pop-up books</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at and point to pictures in books as educator reads or tells the story</li> <li>• Listen attentively when a picture book or story is being read</li> <li>• Request for particular books to be read repeatedly</li> <li>• Recognise some letters in environmental signs, songs, and rhymes</li> </ul>
<b>3.2</b> Develop early comprehension skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pause to look at familiar pictures in books</li> <li>• Point to pictures of animals or people in books when being read to</li> <li>• Respond to simple questions about the pictures by babbling and making familiar vocal sounds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Point to pictures and characters in a story and attempt to identify them</li> <li>• Use pictures to recall sequences in stories</li> <li>• Connect characters to familiar people in their lives (e.g., family members, friends in school)</li> <li>• Respond to simple questions about familiar stories</li> <li>• Provide simple responses when asked "What comes next?"</li> </ul>



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## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Physical development, of which health is a crucial component, is an important aspect of children's holistic development. It focuses on encouraging proper nutrition, promoting good hygiene practices, and participating in a variety of gross and fine motor skills activities, both indoors and outdoors.

Motor skills activities in the early years provide opportunities for children to interact with objects in the environment, gain stability and balance in their body movements, and develop coordination abilities. These skills are essential for children to perform everyday tasks such as sitting, standing, playing, and caring for themselves.



There are typically 2 types of motor activities: gross and fine motor activities. Gross motor activities refer to those that strengthen the large muscles that are responsible for children lifting their head, pushing forward, rolling over, sitting up, balancing, crawling, standing, walking, running, climbing, and jumping. Fine motor activities, on the other hand, focus on developing the smaller muscles such as the fingers, toes, and hands. Strengthening these fine motor skills will enable children to point, pick up and put objects down, squeeze, grasp, and shake a sound-producing toy.



Educators should encourage children’s growing interests and competencies to move, control, balance, and coordinate their body through meaningful, everyday experiences to achieve the following developmental goals:

<b>DG1</b>	Develop basic healthy habits and an awareness of personal safety
<b>DG2</b>	Enjoy and participate in a variety of physical activities
<b>DG3</b>	Gain increasing coordination and strength in gross motor skills; develop balance and stability
<b>DG4</b>	Gain increasing control and coordination when performing a variety of fine motor activities

As children mature and explore their world more independently, their coordination improves and they become more capable of doing things for themselves. Educators can support children’s physical development to achieve the developmental goals by:

- Modelling and providing opportunities for children to practise healthy habits and personal safety
- Designing a safe and sensory-rich environment that encourages exploration and movement
- Using music and games such as action songs, peek-a-boo, tickling, or bubble-chasing to encourage spontaneous motor movement, develop balance and stability, and promote coordination
- Providing a variety of indoor and outdoor motor experiences
- Engaging them in tasks that progressively strengthen gross and fine motor skills

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Goal 1: Develop basic healthy habits and an awareness of personal safety

Growing interests and competencies	Evidence of Development <i>Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...</i>	
	Infants (2 months to below 18 months)	Toddlers (18 months to below 4 years)
<b>1.1</b> Gain a sense of independence in caring for self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold milk bottle with hands (not necessarily with the thumbs)</li> <li>• Recognise and signal their bodily needs (e.g., thirst, hunger, rest, comfort) using non-verbal cues</li> <li>• Develop a healthy pattern for eating, activity, rest, and sleep</li> </ul>	<p>Practise emerging self-help skills such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use fingers to feed themselves with finger food</li> <li>• Use forks or spoons to feed themselves</li> <li>• Drink through a straw or from a cup</li> <li>• Imitate and practise removing and putting on socks, shoes, shorts, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>1.2</b> Show an awareness of the importance of healthy habits and personal hygiene and safety	<p><i>Note for educators:</i></p> <p><i>It is the educator who is performing the care while the infant is taking part in the process. The main areas of hygiene and self-care for an infant are sleeping, eating, drinking, dressing, and bathing. To develop awareness in the infants, educators can model, describe, and explain to the infants while performing these caregiving routines.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put their playthings away after play</li> <li>• Attempt to keep their immediate environment clean (e.g., place unwanted materials in bin, return resources after use)</li> <li>• Practise healthy hygiene habits (e.g., wash hands after toileting and before eating, dry hands after washing, wipe mouth after eating, comb their hair, place used tissue in bin)</li> <li>• Show awareness of the need to make healthy food choices</li> <li>• Manoeuvre around obstacles in the environment to keep themselves safe</li> <li>• Follow basic safety rules and/or instructions during play, both indoors and outdoors, to keep themselves and others safe</li> <li>• Make known and/or request for help when they feel hurt or unsafe</li> </ul>





## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Goal 2: Enjoy and participate in a variety of physical activities

Growing interests and competencies	Evidence of Development <i>Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...</i>	
	Infants (2 months to below 18 months)	Toddlers (18 months to below 4 years)
<b>2.1</b> Show interest in a variety of indoor and outdoor sensorimotor and movement activities (e.g., sensory play, outdoor play, push and pull)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus their eyes and track movement of colours, lights, and moving objects</li> <li>• Attempt to climb on play equipment (e.g., pull to stand on play equipment)</li> <li>• Sway, bounce, move hands, or nod head in response to music</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate actively in outdoor learning experiences, sensory play, art, and music and movement activities</li> <li>• Wheel, push, pull, or ride on large toy / play equipment</li> <li>• Enjoy a variety of ball games (e.g., rolling, bouncing, throwing, catching, or kicking a ball)</li> </ul>



## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Goal 3: Gain increasing coordination and strength in gross motor skills; develop balance and stability

Growing interests and competencies	Evidence of Development <i>Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...</i>	
	Infants (2 months to below 18 months)	Toddlers (18 months to below 4 years old)
<p><b>3.1</b> Develop body awareness and skills (include both locomotor and non-locomotor skills) through sensory play and movement activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Respond and move to different types of stimuli (visual, tactile, auditory, body position, smell) in the environment</li> <li>● Move and explore the physical space by attempting to:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Lift head</li> <li>■ Move head side to side</li> <li>■ Roll over</li> <li>■ Reach out for objects</li> <li>■ Wave arms</li> <li>■ Kick legs in the air</li> <li>■ Sit up</li> <li>■ Push body forward</li> <li>■ Crawl</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Rock, sway, or swing arms during motor play and music and movement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Perform a range of locomotor skills with little support from educator (e.g., walk, climb on play equipment, run, jump)</li> <li>● Perform a range of non-locomotor skills with little support from educator (e.g., balance, bend, stretch, throw, catch, kick, roll a ball)</li> <li>● Maintain control while moving and stop without losing balance</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.2</b> Develop awareness of space (aware of the space around them and the relationship between their body and objects in the environment)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Adjust body to grasp an object</li> <li>● Crawl to reach an object</li> <li>● Crawl around objects to prevent self from getting hurt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Throw and catch a ball or soft object (e.g., soft toy, scarf) with some degree of accuracy</li> <li>● Follow instructions to move in different directions or at different levels during play and music and movement time</li> <li>● Walk along a non-linear pathway, line, or balance beam with little / without support</li> <li>● Jump from a low platform and maintain balance</li> <li>● Navigate through space using different strengths (heavy or light movements) or speed (fast or slow)</li> </ul>



## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Goal 4: Gain increasing control and coordination when performing a variety of fine motor activities

Growing interests and competencies	Evidence of Development <i>Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...</i>	
	Infants (2 months to below 18 months)	Toddlers (18 months to below 4 years)
<b>4.1</b> Manipulate objects with increasing degree of control	<p>Use hands and fingers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Grasp objects</li> <li>● Hold and play with hand-held toys of different sizes and shapes</li> <li>● Push and pinch small objects</li> <li>● Explore toys of different textures</li> </ul>	<p>Use hands and fingers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pick up food or objects</li> <li>● Paint and/or print</li> <li>● Hold a crayon to scribble / draw</li> <li>● Fasten / unfasten buttons or pull zippers</li> <li>● Screw and turn bottle lids</li> <li>● Squeeze and roll playdough</li> <li>● Put together and/or pull apart interlocking blocks and manipulatives</li> <li>● Stack blocks</li> </ul>
<b>4.2</b> Develop eye-hand coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stretch to grasp objects within their reach</li> <li>● Move things from one hand to the other</li> <li>● Display pincer grasp when picking up smaller objects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Roll a ball to knock down objects with some degree of accuracy</li> <li>● Throw and catch soft objects</li> <li>● Pick up blocks to stack</li> <li>● Hold a spoon to feed themselves</li> <li>● Hold an implement to scribble or draw</li> <li>● Complete simple jigsaw puzzles</li> <li>● Fit things together and take them apart</li> </ul>



## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Social and emotional development refers to the way in which children’s social interactions, emotions, and self-awareness change as they grow and learn from their daily experiences. During infancy, children communicate their needs and wants through gestures, facial cues, and body movements. As they develop a sense of self, they begin to understand their needs and wants better, and learn to express them in more appropriate ways.

As infants progress into toddlerhood, they begin to recognise, label, and manage and communicate their emotions more effectively and in socially acceptable ways. They become more competent in understanding the emotions of others and negotiating social interactions to participate in group activities and build relationships. At this stage, they also begin to understand and follow simple social rules such as taking turns and sharing (Shaffer, 2017), occasionally with support from educators.



Educators should encourage children’s growing interests and competencies in social and emotional development through meaningful experiences to achieve the following developmental goals:

<b>DG1</b>	Develop self-awareness
<b>DG2</b>	Develop an awareness of own emotions and the need for self-management
<b>DG3</b>	Develop basic social awareness
<b>DG4</b>	Build relationships with family, friends, and significant adults
<b>DG5</b>	Become more aware of how their actions and decisions affect themselves and others

As children learn to recognise their own emotions and the emotions of others, they build the foundation for demonstrating empathy and compassion and acquire skills to cope with challenges. Educators can support children’s social and emotional development to achieve the developmental goals by:

- Building trusting relationships with each child
- Being consistent in showing warmth and affection
- Modelling socially appropriate language and behaviour
- Providing a safe space for children to talk about and attempt to manage their emotions both by themselves and in relation to others

## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Goal 1: Develop self-awareness

Growing interests and competencies	Evidence of Development	
	Infants (2 months to below 18 months)	Toddlers (18 months to below 4 years)
<p><b>1.1</b> Show awareness of personal identity (own abilities and personal qualities)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Play with their own hands and feet (e.g., touching, moving, and looking at them)</li> <li>● Smile, make sounds, and/or move their limbs in excitement when they see their reflection in the mirror during tummy time</li> <li>● Touch facial features and some parts of the body when looking at self in the mirror</li> <li>● Respond when called by their name</li> <li>● Make a variety of sounds when playing with educator (vocalisation)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify their facial features and limbs during mirror play</li> <li>● Communicate what they can do with different parts of their body</li> <li>● Recognise that they are unique (e.g., their name, family, how they are the same or different from their friends)</li> <li>● Communicate with educators and friends about their likes and dislikes, interests, favourite things, what they like to play</li> </ul>
<p><b>1.2</b> Develop confidence to explore (with caregiver as a secure base)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recognise their personal accomplishments (e.g., by smiling, clapping hands)</li> <li>● Keep caregiver in sight when venturing off to explore new objects in the environment</li> <li>● Return to caregiver for support or reassurance when needed or after exploring</li> <li>● Move beyond usual play area to explore new and unfamiliar physical environment with increasing confidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Explore and interact with the surrounding social and physical environments confidently through play</li> <li>● Persevere and remain positive towards new challenges and discoveries (e.g., find new ways to go around an obstacle)</li> <li>● Repeat more complex tasks to gain mastery and confidence</li> </ul>
<p><b>1.3</b> Develop a sense of autonomy to make choices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Smile when presented with an object they like</li> <li>● Show excitement (e.g., widening eyes, move limbs) when approached by a familiar adult (e.g., educator or family member)</li> <li>● Turn head away when offered food / toy that they dislike</li> <li>● Gesture or use vocal sounds or single word or sound to ask for more after tasting something they like or after participating in an activity that they enjoy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Choose their own toys or clothes</li> <li>● Communicate and identify their personal belongings (point or pick)</li> <li>● Look or request for objects and activities that they like</li> <li>● Assert their abilities and independence (e.g., insist on doing something without assistance)</li> </ul>

## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Goal 2: Develop an awareness of own emotions and the need for self-management

Growing interests and competencies	Evidence of Development <i>Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...</i>	
	Infants (2 months to below 18 months)	Toddlers (18 months to below 4 years)
<b>2.1</b> Identify / Know their own emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display facial expressions of different emotions when interacting with educators or during pretend play</li> <li>• Express their needs and interests through non-verbal and simple verbal cues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use simple words to label their own feelings (e.g., sad, angry, happy)</li> <li>• Express their feelings, needs, and interests to others (e.g., educators, family members, peers) verbally and non-verbally</li> </ul>
<b>2.2</b> Communicate about their emotions	<p><i>Note for educators:</i> Educators label emotions by identifying and talking about how children are feeling while they are at play and when performing caregiving routines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use simple words to say how they feel (e.g., happy, sad, angry)</li> <li>• Express their emotions during play (e.g., puppet play, imaginative play with dolls, dough play, music, art activities)</li> <li>• Identify and talk about emotions of characters in story books (e.g., point and match with facial expressions, label with simple words)</li> <li>• Communicate about their emotions through art and/or music and movement</li> </ul>
<b>2.3</b> Self-regulate and manage their emotions	<p><i>Note for educators:</i> During infancy, children require support from a responsive educator to regulate their emotions or behaviours in response to situations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cease fussing when their needs are met</li> <li>• Calm down when they are being comforted</li> <li>• Engage in self-soothing behaviours (e.g., suck finger / thumb, cuddle a favourite blanket or toy)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alert educators of their need for assistance or to be comforted</li> <li>• Begin to express emotions in appropriate ways (e.g., calming oneself down when upset, talk to educators)</li> <li>• Attempt to use "coping strategies" such as self-distraction (e.g., shifting attention to another activity or toy) and approaching the 'quiet area' in the environment to stay calm</li> </ul>



## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Goal 3: Develop basic social awareness

Growing interests and competencies	Evidence of Development <i>Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...</i>	
	Infants (2 months to below 18 months)	Toddlers (18 months to below 4 years)
<b>3.1</b> Develop a sense of belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display positive feelings when they arrive at the centre</li> <li>• Accept invitations by educators to play at the centre</li> <li>• Express joy in having items from home (e.g., family photos) in the classroom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play alongside peers</li> <li>• Show eagerness to participate in classroom routines (e.g., help to put away materials after play, clean up after an activity)</li> <li>• Develop a sense of ownership, identify people and objects by saying "my"</li> <li>• Recognise some aspects of themselves and how they are the same or different from their friends (e.g., language spoken at home)</li> </ul>
<b>3.2</b> Show awareness of the emotions of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look intently and attempt to respond to facial expressions</li> <li>• Respond to and/or imitate educators' expressions during caregiving and play</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show concern or offer to help when others are in distress (e.g., give a hug or pat)</li> <li>• Communicate about how their peers feel with educator's support</li> </ul>
<b>3.3</b> Show an awareness of rules and taking turns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wait for short periods without fussing (e.g., stop crying after being spoken to, wait to be changed or fed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit and listen to short stories</li> <li>• Wait for their turn during meal and toileting times</li> <li>• Participate in play activities with another child</li> <li>• Move together as a group during transitions</li> <li>• Make requests instead of demands</li> <li>• Respond to questions</li> </ul>



## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Goal 4: Build relationships with family, friends, and significant adults

Growing interests and competencies	Evidence of Development <i>Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...</i>	
	Infants (2 months to below 18 months)	Toddlers (18 months to below 4 years)
<b>4.1</b> Develop emotional connection with educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make eye contact and smile when looking at or hearing familiar educators</li> <li>• Move and make sounds to get or keep familiar educators' attention</li> <li>• Show preference for familiar educator(s)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overcome fear of new experiences and/or meeting new people, with support from familiar educators</li> <li>• Actively seek out preferred educator(s)</li> </ul>
<b>4.2</b> Develop positive relationships with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display pleasure (e.g., smile, laugh) when interacting with educators and peers</li> <li>• Participate in simple games (e.g., pat-a-cake) with educators and peers</li> <li>• Show emerging awareness of how educators and peers feel (e.g., cry when a nearby child cries, giggle when listening to happy voices)"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate interactions and conversations with others</li> <li>• Respond positively when others initiate an activity with them</li> <li>• Participate actively and with focused attention when playing with others</li> <li>• Cooperate and share play materials when engaged in collaborative play with peers</li> </ul>





## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Developmental Goal 5: Become more aware of how their actions and decisions affect themselves and others

Growing interests and competencies	Evidence of Development <i>Children's learning and development could be observed, for example, when they...</i>	
	Infants (2 months to below 18 months)	Toddlers (18 months to below 4 years)
<p><b>5.1</b> Make simple choices to meet their immediate needs, with or without support from educator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display preference when given 2 options (e.g., 2 different types of toys or snacks)</li> <li>• Make choices by moving towards people, a space, or toys that make them feel happy or secure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make choices when given 2 options (e.g., 2 different types of actions or activities)</li> <li>• Make decisions daily and on familiar situations (e.g., choosing between milk and water, where they would like to sit during mealtime, which book they would like to read)</li> </ul>
<p><b>5.2</b> Show a sense of responsibility in performing simple tasks (e.g., picking up toys, putting personal belongings in their bags, cleaning up spills)</p>	<p><i>Note for educators:</i> <i>Educators role-model (display responsible behaviour), talk about feelings and how the way the child is behaving affects others in the environment, and encourage positive behaviours.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in transition activities (e.g., cleaning up, getting ready for the next activity) willingly</li> <li>• Show care for their own well-being and the environment with increasing independence (e.g., put away their used clothes in their bags, use tissue to clean food spills on the table during mealtime)</li> </ul>
<p><b>5.3</b> Show an awareness that their behaviours affect others</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice when peers and/or educators seem happy, sad, or angry and may attempt to offer help or comfort (e.g., take turns with toys so that a peer can play with them too, express empathy by hugging someone who is sad)</li> <li>• Follow rules and adhere to boundaries set with increasing readiness and independence to ensure safety of others</li> <li>• Show understanding about how their behaviour make them or others feel and what they can do to make amends (e.g., by apologising or comforting someone they have upset)</li> </ul>

**CHAPTER 3**



**THE C.H.I.L.D.  
PRINCIPLES**





Upholding our vision of “*A Good Start for Every Child*” and centred on our beliefs about children, the guiding principles, **C.H.I.L.D.**, serve to enhance the quality of early years provision for children’s well-being, learning, and development. These 5 principles guide educators in planning and facilitating appropriate and meaningful experiences for children.

The **C.H.I.L.D.** principles are:

- **C**aregiving and routines as opportunities for learning and development
- **H**olistic Development
- **I**ntentional planning for meaningful experiences
- **L**earning through exploration and play in a safe and enriching environment
- **D**eveloping secure attachments through respectful, responsive, and reciprocal (3R) interactions

## **C**CAREGIVING AND ROUTINES AS OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Caregiving forms an integral part of a child’s day. It is also an important aspect of an educator’s professional practice. Physical care such as diapering, toileting, bathing, napping, and mealtimes are meaningful contexts for deepening relationships and building trust with children (Gonzalez-Mena & Eyer, 2012).



Caregiving also offers opportunities for educators to foster cognitive, communication and language, physical, as well as social and emotional development. For example, when children are given opportunities to participate actively during diapering and mealtimes, they develop a positive sense of self and learn about hygiene, self-care, and cooperation. During diapering, educators can also support communication and language and social and emotional development by smiling and making one-to-one eye contact, talking about what is happening and pointing to objects that are of interest to the child. While infants are dependent on adults to take care of tasks during caregiving, toddlers gradually develop skills that enable them to participate in these routines more independently and collaboratively.

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Routines are repeated, predictable events that provide children with a schedule for the day from the time they arrive at to the time they depart from the centre. This includes napping, eating, dressing, diapering, play time, and transitions from one activity to the next. Routines inform children's sense of time and space, long before children develop an understanding of these concepts, and present themselves as ideal situations for promoting children's involvement in learning, well-being, and self-regulation (Laurin, 2018).

How routines are organised can be a strong contributor to children's learning and behaviour. Challenges can emerge when there are inconsistent expectations, poor educator engagement or support, or a lack of responsiveness to children's diverse needs.

Developmentally appropriate daily routines that foster a safe, respectful, and responsive learning environment often have the following characteristics:

### **1 ARE CONSISTENT AND PREDICTABLE, AND ENSURE SMOOTH TRANSITIONS**

Consistent daily routines provide a sense of security and communicate clear expectations to children (Gonzalez-Mena & Eyer, 2012). Providing consistency helps children know what to expect and when to expect it. Routines that are thoughtfully planned reduce uncertainty and confusion; they allow children to be prepared for what comes next and set expectations for behaviour. It can also help children develop independence and responsibility.

Educators can modify resources or the environment so that children are able to participate as independently as possible. For example, resources can be arranged in ways which allow children to reach for them easily without educators' assistance; schedules and spaces can include visual cues such as photographs and pictures to prepare children for transitions from one activity to another and allocate where things belong (including children's belongings).

While consistent routines are important, educators need to exercise flexibility to follow children's lead and extend upon their individual interests and needs.





## **2 MEET CHILDREN'S INDIVIDUAL NEEDS AND CONSIDER THEIR PREFERENCES AND INTERESTS**

Educators can plan a predictable routine for group settings; but, where necessary, individualise routines to match children's individual preferences, developmental readiness, and cultural needs (Gillespie & Peterson, 2012). For example, children who are struggling during arrival time could be allowed to hold on to a favourite toy or choose a favourite activity. For children experiencing trouble putting away materials, they could be presented with a choice to decide what materials to put away. When educators provide choices, children experience a sense of control and are more willing to follow through with the transitions.

Routines that are responsive to the needs of children often allow them to explore and play with minimal interruption, as long as the play is developmentally appropriate and safe. Educators take time to observe and be attentive to opportunities for transition to the next part of the routine. These opportunities may happen earlier or later than originally scheduled.

As children transit from infancy to toddlerhood and begin to socialise and participate in group experiences, they will be more able to accommodate the needs of others and participate in group routines.

## **3 ENCOURAGE INTERACTIONS THAT FOSTER WELL-BEING, LEARNING, AND DEVELOPMENT**

Thoughtfully planned routines and transitions provide children with a safe context for deeper levels of interactions. Educators can incorporate activities such as singing / playing simple guessing games during transitions or getting children to participate in simple tasks to encourage children to interact with educators and their peers. For example, involving toddlers in setting the table for a meal provides opportunities for them to:

- Experience and talk about one-to-one correspondence as they give one spoon to each of their friends
- Name cutlery and utensils such as fork, spoon, bowl, plate, and cup, while placing them neatly on the table
- Request for and express their preference for how they would like their utensils to be arranged (e.g., inside the bowl, beside the plate)



## **H**OLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

All areas of children’s development are inter-related. Holistic development considers the whole child, emphasising the importance of all aspects of development. Educators plan and provide opportunities for children to grow in the following **4 areas of development** to facilitate holistic development and maximise children’s potential:

- Cognitive
- Communication and Language
- Physical
- Social and Emotional

While nurturing these areas of development, educators need to also consider fostering dispositions for learning, values, and executive functioning skills, in view of the constantly changing world. Providing infants and toddlers with opportunities to develop these attitudes and skills enables them to adapt better when they encounter new expectations and challenges beyond the early years.

“It seems appropriate during the early years to be especially intentional and deliberate about strengthening worthwhile dispositions (e.g., the disposition to learn, to form friendships, to be open, to hypothesize, conjecture, etc.) and engendering positive feelings (e.g., feelings of belonging, of competence, self-confidence, etc.)”

(Katz, 1996, p. 139)

Children develop **dispositions for learning** when they are given time and space to freely explore and play. In addition, when they are provided with a variety of resources to manipulate and investigate, their sense of wonder is heightened, and they are more willing to take risks and try doing things in different ways. As they learn to play with others, they become more socially aware and are better able to appreciate and accommodate the needs and views of others.

Educators can encourage the development of dispositions for learning by modelling, acknowledging, and encouraging children's efforts. When providing opportunities for children to develop these dispositions, educators also ensure that sufficient resources are furnished, and children have ample space and time for exploration. For example, when toddlers stack and knock down blocks, they not only develop important fine motor skills such as grasping and releasing, but also develop patience and perseverance, and quickly learn that they need to try again and again to succeed.

“ Children who are guided by a strong set of core values grow up to be citizens of good character who can contribute positively to their family, community and Singapore. ”

(NEL Framework, 2022, p. 28)

**Values** nurtured in the early years influence how children behave and live with others, respond to changes, and overcome challenges as they grow and mature. In the early years settings, values are inculcated through educators' role-modelling and interactions with children. They can also be fostered through teachable moments during routines and transitions. For example, when children feel loved, secure, and cared for through educators' responsiveness to their emotional and physical needs, they will learn how to respect and show care and concern for others.

The set of core values<sup>2</sup> — **Respect, Responsibility, Care and Honesty** — is identified in the NEL Framework, taking into account the family values identified by MSF, namely, Love, Commitment, Care and Concern, and Respect.



Scan the QR code to access NEL Framework (2022)



<sup>2</sup> Centres may include other values that are appropriate for their setting and community.



“ Although we aren't born with executive function skills, we are born with the potential to develop them. The process is a slow one that begins in infancy, continues into early adulthood, and is shaped by our experiences. ”

(Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2014, p. 1)

**Executive function** includes children's ability to control impulses, take turns, focus attention despite distractions, remember and follow multiple-step directions, make decisions, plan, and organise information to achieve a specific goal. These skills also enable children to learn positive behaviours and attitudes such as being motivated, exhibiting perseverance, and having the ability to manage frustration and follow rules.

Executive functioning skills are associated with working memory, inhibitory control, and cognitive flexibility (Blair, 2016; Diamond, 2013; Miyake et al., 2000). These 3 domains are also highlighted in the NEL Framework. While many of these skills and behaviours do not fully develop until children reach the preschool and school years, the rich learning and positive interactions prioritised in the EYDF are foundational to the emergence of executive function and self-regulation.

Positive relationships and responsive interactions form the basis for children to develop executive functioning skills (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2011). This is evident when infants begin to distinguish between familiar and unfamiliar faces and respond to familiar voices. As they become more independent, executive functioning skills can be acquired through exploration and play and meaningful social interactions. As such, educators play a vital role in promoting the development of these skills.



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Educators can also use teachable moments during routines and transitions to develop these skills. For example, when educators respond to children's cries by comforting them, children learn and remember that their actions impact their environment and that they can have their needs met through purposeful actions. This draws on their working memory and helps to develop their cognitive flexibility.

Besides scaffolding children's exploration and play experiences to engage them in more challenging tasks, educators can also support the emergence of executive functioning skills by allowing children to manage tasks more independently and learn from trial and error. These capabilities are important in helping children self-regulate, manage their emotions, and make responsible choices for themselves and others, now and in the future.

The following are some examples of children's early development of executive functioning skills:

- Able to self-soothe (e.g., sucking thumb or biting on a teether) and seek comfort from familiar adults (early indicators of emotional self-regulation)
- Look for familiar objects that are hidden and anticipate where objects may be or expect a specific reaction from people based on previous experiences (working memory)
- Switch attention between different stimuli (e.g., familiar / unfamiliar faces or voices, colours) and adapt their behaviour based on changes in the environment (cognitive flexibility)
- Refrain from impulsive actions by responding to an adult and/or following simple instructions (early indicators of inhibitory control)



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## **I**NTENTIONAL PLANNING FOR MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES

Intentional planning involves being deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in designing experiences, interactions, and environments that meet the growing needs, interests, and competencies of children. When educators are intentional in planning, every experience and interaction with children is designed and implemented with a clear purpose and intent in mind.

While exploration and play provide children with the freedom to make decisions on how and where they want to explore an object or experiment with an idea, intentional planning considers educators' roles and their level of participation in children's play. Educators assume different roles and adopt different strategies as children's play contexts change; sometimes they play the role of observers, at other times they play the role of facilitators.

Meaningful experiences should be enjoyable for the children and have the following elements:

- Build on children's interest and prior knowledge
- Engaging
- Developmentally appropriate
- Interactive
- Allow children to learn about the world around them

These experiences often happen in the contexts of play, caregiving, routines, transitions, and social interactions. Educators' intentionality is evident when they:

- Set up the physical environment with a clear purpose in mind; for example, providing a range of developmentally appropriate toys, objects, and equipment to stimulate curiosity, promote active engagement and sensory exploration, and encourage problem-solving.
- Provide children with opportunities to make choices.
- Plan experiences that support turn-taking and shared opportunities for child- and educator-led play; for example, placing infant on the lap facing a mirror and talking to the infant, while giving time to respond. Depending on the infant's response, educator sings a song about what the infant is excited about.
- Engage children in conversations, labelling objects, and singing simple songs during daily routines and transitions to foster cognitive and language development.
- Involve children in simple tasks such as feeding themselves, getting dressed, and cleaning up. These experiences help children develop problem-solving skills, self-help skills, independence, and a sense of competence. They also provide opportunities for cognitive, physical, and social and emotional development.
- Draw on observations and assessments of children to create rich and differentiated experiences that respond to and cater for children's developmental capacities and interests.

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## **L**EARNING THROUGH EXPLORATION AND PLAY IN A SAFE AND ENRICHING ENVIRONMENT

As agents in their own learning, children can construct their own knowledge and make sense of the world they live in. This often happens when they are actively involved in exploration and play. For infants and toddlers, exploration and play take place in contexts that are familiar to them. They observe, share experiences, communicate, and think with other children and adults who join in their exploration and play.

Exploration and play are important because they offer safe contexts for children to:

- Make choices and decisions
- Take risks and try out new ideas, behaviour, and skills; practise what they have previously learned
- Understand how things work in their environment by making connections between prior and new experiences
- Expand their thinking and enhance their desire to know and to learn
- Develop motor skills and body coordination
- Develop self-confidence, social awareness, and skills; acquire positive dispositions
- Express their fears and anxieties
- Learn about values
- Develop an understanding that others have views and ideas that are different from their own



## CONTINUUM OF PLAY

Infants and toddlers' involvement in play is influenced by their cognitive abilities, communication and language skills, physical development, and social and emotional well-being. Depending on the context of children's exploration and interests, educators can provide play experiences that range from child-led to educator-led. The levels of child-educator involvement in these play experiences can be illustrated in the figure below.

FIGURE 04

## Continuum of Play

### Child-led



- Children engage in spontaneous exploration and play.
- Children make choices about what they do, and where and how they want to play.
- Educators provide safe environment and time for children to play.

### Child-led and Educator-led



- Children engage actively in exploration and play.
- Educators guide and extend children's exploration and play through respectful, responsive, and reciprocal (3R) interactions.
- Educators enrich the environment with play materials that promote children's exploration and ensure that experiences continue to be playful and enjoyable for children.
- Educators may comment on children's discoveries by playing with them and raise their awareness of the various uses of the play materials.

### Educator-led



- Educators initiate and plan for children's play to achieve specific developmental goals by:
  - Designing the environment and facilitating play experiences for children's participation
  - Selecting and providing play materials to enhance learning and development
- Children participate actively in the play experiences.

Levels of child-educator involvement

While educators provide time, environment, and resources for spontaneous exploration and play, they need to understand the importance of their role as facilitators in promoting children's agency (i.e., ability to take initiative and make choices) and autonomy (i.e., independence in deciding what and how they want to play / learn). Rich and extended play experiences are created when educators support children's play through modelling, scaffolding, and the use of open-ended questions.

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## CREATING A SAFE AND ENRICHING ENVIRONMENT

Children's physical and emotional safety are crucial. Discovery and learning become joyful experiences when children are presented with a safe and enriching environment to actively explore play materials that appeal to their senses. A high-quality learning environment will encourage children to participate in more complex explorations and allow them the freedom and space to actively discover and learn without fear of harm.

When organising the environment, educators need to consider the following 3 aspects:

- The physical environment
- The interactional environment
- The temporal environment

### THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The physical environment includes both indoor and outdoor spaces. Physical structures and learning resources in both indoor and outdoor spaces should be developmentally appropriate, safe, and accessible to encourage children to explore freely.

The outdoors offers rich sensorial experiences to support children's growth and development. Children should be given ample time to play, explore, and learn in natural environments or urban outdoor spaces regularly; for example, playground, neighbourhood park, any open space in the immediate vicinity of the early childhood development centre.

The physical environment should also take into consideration children's emotional needs. Educators need to support children emotionally by engaging them in quality interactions and building positive relationships with them to encourage them to explore and play with materials and equipment more freely. In addition, children often benefit from a moment of pause or 'sensory break' when they feel overstimulated, unhappy, or insecure. Educators can support them by introducing quiet areas or spaces within the room for them to regain a sense of calm.



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## THE INTERACTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Infants and toddlers experience their world as an environment of relationships that are responsive to their growing needs, interests, and competencies. Such relationships provide a secure base for them to explore and play more independently and for increasingly longer periods.

When children have opportunities to experience respectful, responsive, and reciprocal (3R) interactions in the environment with educators and peers, they are more likely to demonstrate increasing confidence and autonomy, be more eager to explore their surroundings, and learn through new experiences.

## THE TEMPORAL ENVIRONMENT

The temporal environment refers to the planning and management of a daily schedule of routines, activities, and transitions. Predictable schedules and established routines create a sense of security and help children to learn about their world and better adjust to new situations.

When designing a temporal environment that supports children's need to explore and play, educators could consider the following:

- Children's preferred activities, both at home and in the centre. Integrating children's preferences into the daily schedule and transitions provide children with a sense of familiarity and help them settle into the environment more easily.
- Diversity within the group of children. Educators need to adopt a range of strategies when planning routines and transitions to meet the diverse needs of children. For example, some children might need visual reminders for what comes next or more time to get ready for change of activity.
- Flexibility of schedule to allow children to set the pace for change of routines. For example, when children are still involved in play, the schedule could be flexible enough to allow them to continue without interruption. Educators should also give children advance notice before moving on to the next activity so that children would not have to end their play abruptly.





## **D** EVELOPING SECURE ATTACHMENTS THROUGH RESPECTFUL, RESPONSIVE, AND RECIPROCAL (3R) INTERACTIONS

Attachment is a vital aspect of children’s development. It plays a critical role in shaping the way children view themselves and the world around them and influences all other areas of development. Children who form secure attachments are better at regulating their emotions, engaging in social interactions, and coping with stress.

Research shows that quality interactions affect attachment behaviours, brain development, communication skills, and social and emotional well-being (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969; Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2017; Main & Cassidy, 1988). Studies have also consistently found that infants who experience sensitive and responsive caregiving are more likely to develop secure attachments. It is therefore important for educators and families to work collectively in providing an environment that values positive relationships and emphasises respectful, responsive, and reciprocal (3R) interactions to strengthen children’s secure attachment.

When educators apply the 3Rs to meet children’s needs, they learn and understand children’s communication cues (e.g., cries, coos, smiles, body gestures) and do the following:

<b>RESPECTFUL</b>	Educators talk about what they are doing during play, let children know what is going on during caregiving and routines, use eye contact, take time to observe, watch for non-verbal cues, and/or listen attentively.
<b>RESPONSIVE</b>	Educators respond appropriately and readily to the non-verbal and/or verbal cues to meet the needs of children.
<b>RECIPROCAL</b>	When a child initiates an interaction to indicate a particular need and the educator acknowledges and responds to it consistently, a reciprocal pattern of interaction is created.

When engaging children in conversations, educators take turns with children to initiate and respond:

<b>RESPECTFUL</b>	Educators observe for signalling behaviours (e.g., child points at something, makes a facial expression), listen attentively, and acknowledge the child's focus of attention and/or interests.
<b>RESPONSIVE</b>	Educators show interest in what the child is indicating or saying, ask questions to clarify (when needed), and respond by referring to the child's focus or interests; for example, when the child points to an object, educator smiles or nods and brings the object closer to the child, or names the object.
<b>RECIPROCAL</b>	Educators exercise patience and give the child time to respond, before making another response. During these back-and-forth exchanges, both educators and children take turns to communicate their thoughts and feelings about a common interest or topic of discussion. Maintaining a back-and-forth social interaction with infants includes responding to their non-verbal cues such as varied facial expressions, babbling, hand gestures, or leaning in.





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## SECURE ATTACHMENTS, 3R INTERACTIONS, AND TRANSITIONS

Establishing secure attachments through 3R interactions also helps to ease transitions from home to centre and from one setting to another within the centre. Respectful and responsive interactions with families and other educators convey to children that adults who are important to them can be trusted.

Gathering more information about children before they are enrolled at the centre enables educators to plan the environment, routines, and caregiving approach in response to families' expectation and children's prior experiences. Handovers between educators and change of settings must also be intentionally planned in response to children's needs to establish a greater sense of security and ensure that attachments are strengthened throughout the process.



Together, the **C.H.I.L.D.** principles serve to guide educators in making decisions when planning and scaffolding children's experiences for their holistic growth and development. The **C.H.I.L.D.** principles help to prioritise the "must-haves" in practices and applying them will enhance the quality of children's experiences in centre-based care and positively impact their learning and development.

## CHAPTER 4



# ROLE OF EDUCATORS



## CHAPTER 4: ROLE OF EDUCATORS



Educators are important adults in the lives of children. Their professional knowledge and beliefs, past experiences, and values shape the way they respond and relate to children. These factors also have significant influence on how they plan and provide experiences to promote holistic development and extend children's learning.

As educators consider the **C.H.I.L.D.** principles in planning and providing experiences for children, they take on the following roles:

- Thoughtful Planners
- Responsive Facilitators
- Reflective Practitioners
- Collaborative Partners

These roles have also been identified in the NEL Framework for educators of children from 4 to 6 years as key to stimulating and deepening children's learning.



Educators who are aware of the different developmental milestones and have a good understanding of how children learn and develop are more attuned and responsive to children's needs and interests. They are also able to plan and facilitate meaningful experiences for children more effectively.

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## UNDERSTANDING HOW CHILDREN LEARN AND DEVELOP

### 1 Children learn and develop through observation

They watch and imitate the behaviours and attitudes of people around them. Educators can facilitate learning and development through positive role-modelling and active communication. For example, when educators model positive values and professional ethics, they foster a learning environment that promotes respect, responsibility, care, and honesty. As educators “value and respect each child within the diversity of their family, culture, community and society” (AECES, 2015, p. 4), they serve as role models for children to act responsibly and build trusting relationships that last a lifetime.

### 2 Children learn through their senses

They explore objects and the environment using their sense of touch, taste, sight, sound, and smell. These sensory experiences help to promote cognitive, communication and language, physical, and social and emotional development. For example, cuddling and soft, gentle voices can help children feel safe and secure, and pleasant taste and smell experiences can foster positive attitudes towards food.

### 3 Children learn and develop through social interactions

As children interact with their family members, educators, and peers, they learn about social cues and emotions. They also develop an understanding of words and phrases and how these are used to communicate their needs, feelings, and ideas. Experiences that encourage children to communicate their needs, feelings, and ideas and talk about their daily experiences promote the development of skills such as communication and language, self-regulation, as well as executive functioning.





#### **4 Children develop at their own unique pace**

Developmental milestones serve as a general guide for what most children know and can do at a particular age, but some children may reach certain milestones earlier or later than others. When educators understand that every child is different and are sensitive to children's diverse needs, they role-model respect and support the development of secure attachments.

#### **5 Children learn and develop best holistically**

Their learning and development are not compartmentalised but integrated and interconnected, and are influenced by different aspects of their environment, experiences, and interactions. Research suggests that children learn best when their learning experiences are connected and relevant to their daily experiences, and take into consideration their different family, social, and cultural backgrounds.

#### **6 Children learn and develop best when they feel secure and respected**

Children who feel physically and emotionally secure are more likely to enjoy exploring their environment with focused attention and be able to relate with adults and other children better. When children feel safe, secure, and respected, they are more confident and willing to try new things and participate in activities that will further their development. A safe and healthy environment that provides children with a sense of security will give them a good start towards being comfortable and happy with themselves and ready to enjoy more complex experiences.

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## EDUCATORS AS THOUGHTFUL PLANNERS

As thoughtful planners, educators seek to support children's growing interests and competencies by:

- Planning and providing meaningful experiences that promote quality interactions and holistic development
- Designing a safe and enriching environment that encourages learning through exploration and play
- Planning daily routines and transitions to promote learning and development

### PLANNING AND PROVIDING MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES THAT PROMOTE QUALITY INTERACTIONS AND HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Taking into consideration the different ways that children learn and develop, educators can thoughtfully plan and provide children with a range of experiences and contexts for them to:

- Experience quality interactions and positive relationships with people around them
- Broaden their interest of the immediate environment and extend their exploration and play
- Make connections between their prior knowledge and their new discoveries

Some examples of these experiences and contexts include tummy time, sensory play, role play, outdoor play, art, music and movement, and storytelling.



Figure 5 illustrates a possible approach that educators can consider when planning meaningful experiences for children’s holistic development:

**FIGURE 05**



## DESIGNING A SAFE AND ENRICHING ENVIRONMENT THAT ENCOURAGES LEARNING THROUGH EXPLORATION AND PLAY

Given a safe and enriching environment, children will have opportunities to observe and actively explore. In doing so, they discover why things happen and how things work to make sense of the world they live in. This engagement enables them to stay focused and enjoy learning.

When designing the environment, educators need to consider the following 3 aspects described on pages 53 – 54 of this framework:

- The physical environment
- The interactional environment
- The temporal environment

### Characteristics of a Purposeful Physical Environment

A purposeful physical environment recognises the diverse needs, interests, preferences, and abilities of all children. When planning learning spaces, educators need to consider the placement, choice, and organisation of equipment and resources to ensure these are accessible to promote children's participation.





Indoor spaces:

- Are safe for children to explore and make choices in their play
- Have a variety of furnishings, equipment, and sufficient space to cater for the different abilities and needs of children
- Provide a variety of open-ended materials and resources to support and engage children of different needs, interests, and cultures
- Include quiet areas which are away from traffic flow, furnished with sensory mats, squishy balls, and soft music for children to regain a sense of calm
- Have sufficient print materials and resources in English, as well as Mother Tongue languages, to encourage language emergence



Outdoor spaces:

- Have open spaces, resources, and stimuli that educators can tap on for children to learn
- Offer opportunities for children to explore freely, take risks, and exercise their imagination and creativity
- Allow children to move and engage with the natural world (e.g., water play, sand play, observing falling leaves, identifying different colours of leaves and flowers)
- Incorporate children's ideas in the use of outdoor spaces (e.g., involve children in decorating the outdoor garden)
- Provide quiet and hidden spaces for privacy to allow children to rest and reflect

Refer to the *Outdoor Learning: A National Guide for Early Childhood Educators* for more details on the purpose, guiding principles, key ideas, and practical suggestions to enrich and enhance children's learning and development in the outdoors.



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## 2 Characteristics of a Positive Interactional Environment

A positive interactional environment welcomes children to form warm and trusting relationships with their educators and peers, promoting their sense of safety, security, and confidence to explore and take risks (Mistrett, 2017). When planning and designing a positive interactional environment, educators need to consider the following:

- Be sensitive and responsive to children's growing interests and competencies and make them feel valued and respected
- Celebrate children's diversity and model dispositions and values such as care and respect to foster children's sense of belonging
- Promote interactions and extend learning through play
- Provide opportunities for small group play activities where children can be more involved in communicating with one another
- Provide opportunities for children to be exposed to both English and Mother Tongue languages
- Engage in 3R interactions with children during routines, transitions, and activity time





### 3 Characteristics of a Predictable Temporal Environment

An environment that is predictable allows children to understand what is about to occur and provides them with a sense of security and control. Transitions from one activity to the next can present challenges for educators and children, especially when children's preferences for activities differ within the group or when they have difficulty adapting to changes. A predictable temporal environment that can alleviate these challenges reflect the following:

- Is flexible to support the growing interests and competencies of children; for example, allow for uninterrupted exploration and free play. Educators observe children's cues and plan transitions that do not interrupt or disrupt valuable play experiences.
- Alternates between high-energy activities and quiet ones; for example, after a quiet sit-down reading activity, educators may follow up with a movement activity.
- Incorporates music and movement activities or simple games to make transitions fun; for example, play a soothing or playful song to engage infants during diaper changing and make the process more enjoyable for them, sing a song to get children to clean up and get ready for the next activity, or play a short rhythm on a drum and have children tiptoe to the area where the next activity is going to be held.



### **PLANNING DAILY ROUTINES AND TRANSITIONS TO PROMOTE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Carefully planned routines and transitions present numerous opportunities for educators to promote holistic development. Common transitions that children experience include transiting from home to centre and centre to home, stopping one activity to begin another, and moving from their current level to the next. Routines and transitions that are responsive to children's needs may include the following:

- Arrival routines that give children time to adjust mentally and emotionally as they transit from home to centre
- Departure routines that allow time for children to gather their personal belongings and bid goodbye to their friends and educators
- Use of music, songs and rhymes, visual cues, and games to prepare children for transition from one activity to another
- Sharing of a child's observation records and documentation with the relevant educators when the child is moving from one level to another to facilitate the new educators' understanding of the child
- Visits to the new environment and participation in activities to familiarise children with new educators and peers, as well as changes in routines and caregiving processes, in preparation for transition from one level to another

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## EDUCATORS AS RESPONSIVE FACILITATORS

“The teacher must adopt the role of facilitator not content provider.”

— Vygotsky, 1896 - 1934

As responsive facilitators, educators allow children to play an active role in their own learning while providing the necessary support and resources to facilitate children’s learning and development. Educators plan experiences that complement children’s growing interests and competencies and modify activities according to their responses.

While children are engaged in an activity, educators facilitate by building on children’s interests and prior knowledge. For example, when reading a picture book, an educator notices a child showing interest in a particular character or sound of a word. The educator extends on this engagement by planning the next experience based on that character or the sound of that word to help the child progress to the next level of learning and development.

Some specific actions that educators may take when playing the role of facilitators include:

- Observing, documenting, and assessing children to understand their growing interests and competencies
- Scaffolding children’s play to assist them to progress to more complex levels of learning and development
- Using a wide range of learning strategies and resources to engage children in quality interactions and experiences
- Supporting children with developmental needs to ensure they play and learn alongside their peers

## OBSERVING, DOCUMENTING, AND ASSESSING CHILDREN

“The more we do, the busier we are, the less we really pay attention.”

— Gerber, 1910 - 2007

Observing children is an important aspect in the provision of quality care and education for children. Educators need to step back, observe, and allow children to have freedom and space to learn on their own. By observing children, information can be gathered about their development and growing interests and competencies so that educators can continue to plan for and provide meaningful learning experiences. Assessment, on the other hand, involves using a variety of tools and techniques to find out about children’s progress in learning and development.



Figure 6 proposes the steps for observing, documenting, and assessing children's learning and development:

FIGURE 06

## Steps for Observing, Documenting, and Assessing Children's Learning and Development



Observation and assessment of learning is an ongoing cycle. It requires educators to be attentive to children's responses (both verbal and non-verbal), communicate respectfully to find out more about their thoughts, and respond appropriately to their growing interests and competencies through both planned and unplanned interactions and daily experiences. When educators plan and provide experiences based on what they have observed and assessed, children are more likely to be more engaged and responsive.

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## SCAFFOLDING CHILDREN'S PLAY

Vygotsky (1978) believed that scaffolding provided by educators or more competent peers will help children acquire a skill that was previously out of their ability range, but within the zone of proximal development (ZPD). ZPD refers to:

“...the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers”

— Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86

As responsive facilitators, educators scaffold children's play to deepen learning and assist them to progress to more complex levels of development. Some strategies that educators can adopt when scaffolding children's play include:

- Asking open-ended questions to encourage children to think more deeply about the materials that they are playing with; for example, “How can we make a different sound with this rattle?” or “What do you think will happen if I use a smaller block at the bottom of the tower?”
- Modelling and demonstrating how to use a tool, cutlery or implement; for example, the way to hold a rattle or giant crayon or how to scoop using a spoon.
- Providing options; for example, if a child is trying to build a tower with blocks and keeps knocking it over, educator could suggest building a different kind of structure or using bigger blocks at the bottom and smaller ones at the top.
- Planning according to children's needs to engage them more actively in the learning process and to meet specific goals; for example, if a child is observed to be struggling with pushing himself forward, educator can intentionally plan an interactive activity by putting a favourite toy slightly out of reach and, through responsive and reciprocal interactions, encourage the child to try and get it. This can nurture the child's perseverance and strengthen gross motor skills while enjoying the activity.
- Presenting a new experience based on children's prior experience and knowledge; for example, if a child is able to roll a ball, the educator may extend this by modelling how to roll, then bounce the ball, and encourage the child to do likewise.



## USING A WIDE RANGE OF LEARNING STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

As responsive facilitators, educators select a variety of learning strategies and resources based on children's growing needs, interests, and competencies. Educators consider the following criteria when making decisions on the most appropriate learning strategies and resources that they can use to engage children in quality interactions and experiences:

Criteria	Suggested guiding questions to consider when selecting learning strategies and resources
Enjoyable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are children excited and happy to participate in the experience?</li><li>• Will children have opportunities to initiate conversations with educators and/or peers?</li></ul>
Active and engaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Will children be actively involved in exploration, play, and discovery?</li><li>• Do the strategy and resources allow for hands-on experiences?</li><li>• Are children able to explore new ideas and talk about them with educators and/or peers?</li><li>• Will children have opportunities to engage in decision-making and problem-solving?</li><li>• Will children from diverse backgrounds and/or with differentiated needs be able to participate fully?</li></ul>
Multisensory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Will there be opportunities for children to use their senses for discovery?</li><li>• Do the provided resources stimulate children's tactile, visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic experiences?</li></ul>
Meaningful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Will children's interests and interactions be sustained in meaningful ways?</li><li>• Will children be able to make connections with their prior knowledge and personal daily experiences?</li><li>• Are resources culturally appropriate to help children link their home experiences to what they are learning?</li><li>• Are there opportunities to raise new awareness and explore new experiences?</li></ul>
Promote positive relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are there opportunities for educators and children to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Engage in sustained conversations and play?</li><li>■ Play and work together to complete a task?</li></ul></li></ul>







### **SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS<sup>3</sup>**

It is important for educators to support all children, regardless of their level of abilities, and ensure that their needs are met. As such, educators need to be aware of the developmental variation among children and that some may not follow the trajectory of typical development or behaviours.

As every child is unique and develops at his/her own pace, educators should seek to provide children with a wide range of learning opportunities and resources that accommodate and respond to individual differences to promote learning and development and a sense of belonging. The rate of development in children from birth to 3 years is at its fastest in comparison to the later years. As such, a child who exhibits developmental variations in the early years may catch up and be on track with their peers later on.

**3** Developmental Needs (DN) is a term used for children from birth to 6 years old who:  
A. Display a level of developmental functioning that is below typically developing peers of the same age; and  
B. Require low, medium or high levels of Early Intervention support entailing different and/or additional resources beyond (Referenced from: *The Professional Practice Guidelines: Developmental and Psycho-Educational Assessments and Provisions for Preschool-Aged Children*)

As responsive facilitators, educators need to be sensitive and respond appropriately to children who are facing challenges in their learning and development and assist them to play and learn alongside their peers. Educators are guided by the 4'A's in their efforts to support children with developmental needs:

<b>AWARENESS</b>	<p>Being aware of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developmental milestones that define the skills or abilities that children typically acquire within a specific age range and variations from the norm</li> <li>• A child's needs as an individual and as part of a group</li> </ul>
<b>ALERTNESS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise the strengths, developmental trajectories, challenges, and needs of each child based on observations and interactions with children</li> <li>• Observe, document, and assess to ascertain children's developmental variations, challenges, and need for support</li> </ul>
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify appropriate strategies to include children with developmental needs and encourage them to play and learn alongside their peers</li> <li>• Adjust routines and transitions to be responsive to differentiated needs</li> <li>• Vary interactions (e.g., change tone and pace of speech, offer choices, use prompts, and affirmations more frequently)</li> <li>• Plan open-ended experiences to engage children at different developmental levels</li> <li>• Adapt environment by changing the layout and furnishing it with open-ended resources to encourage children to participate more actively in exploration and play</li> </ul>
<b>ADVOCACY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide and share information with families on the relevant experts and professionals to approach for further advice</li> <li>• Be respectful of diversity and implement engagement strategies that empower families, educators, and other stakeholders involved to advocate for the child; empathise with families and be patient in explaining information to facilitate their understanding and decision-making</li> <li>• Work closely with families, learning support educators, medical professionals, allied health professionals, social workers, and early intervention professionals for more targeted strategies to individualise support plans for children with developmental needs</li> </ul>



Educators can partner with other professionals in supporting families of children with developmental needs by connecting these families to the relevant services and community resources for additional support and assistance.

*The Professional Practice Guidelines: Developmental and Psycho-Educational Assessments and Provisions for Preschool-Aged Children* focuses on psycho-educational assessments and early interventions (EI) for children with developmental needs (DN), aged 6 years and below. The Guidelines are intended for use by professionals in the EI sector. This includes medical and allied health professionals (AHPs); for example, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, and psychologists, and other professionals who are involved in advising parents about interventions and provisions for children with DN.



Scan the QR code to access the Professional Practice Guidelines

*Supporting Your Child: A parent's guide for young children who need early intervention* has been developed by a multi-agency workgroup that includes MOE, and led by MSF and ECDA to support parents of children who may have developmental needs. Educators can refer parents to this guide for information on child development, childhood developmental screening, and ways to access early intervention services and support.



Scan the QR code to access the Parent's Guide



Figure 7 outlines a possible approach that educators can consider when supporting families of children with developmental needs:

**FIGURE 07**

### Engage in open communication

- Share observation with families based on educator's assessment
- Listen to their concerns
- Be sensitive and empathetic
- Suggest how and where they could seek a second opinion of concern(s) raised
- Involve them in decision-making on follow-up actions (e.g., choosing a government-funded early intervention service)

### Collaborate with other professionals

- Discuss and co-plan with colleagues, early intervention professionals, social workers, and/or allied health professionals (where applicable) on appropriate strategies to support child
- Follow-through with the child's development support or learning support programmes
- Implement differentiated practices to suit child's diverse abilities and embed individualised strategies in daily routines and caregiving

### Provide emotional support

- Communicate regularly to update families on how the child is coping at the centre
- Exchange information with families regularly to be informed on how the child is coping at home
- Offer a listening ear and provide guidance and resources, as and when necessary, to help them cope with the challenges



## EDUCATORS AS REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONERS

Positive and meaningful experiences in the early years are foundational to children's future learning and development. As such, it is important that educators:

- Engage in reflective practice to examine their own professional practices and gain insights about children's growing interests and competencies
- Engage in professional learning to acquire new knowledge and skills



### ENGAGE IN REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Educators have the responsibility to uphold high professional standards of excellence and integrity when supporting and promoting children's well-being, learning, and development. It is essential for them to have knowledge of their core values and professional responsibilities and obligations, as outlined in the Code of Ethics, and above all, ensure children's psychological, intellectual, and physical health and safety. Educators also act in the best interest of children and their families to contribute to an environment that fosters mutual respect, trust, cooperation, and well-being.

Reflective practice is about taking the time to examine one's beliefs, values, goals, assumptions, and practice. It can be motivated by concerns that arise from daily encounters and interactions with fellow educators, families, and children. It is thinking about what happened, why, and how to do better. It also helps educators gain a better understanding of themselves as practitioners and how they can grow professionally to better meet children's and families' interests and needs.



Scan the QR code to access the Code of Ethics Handbook

When educators engage in reflective practices daily, they:

- Become more aware of how their values and beliefs are aligned with their centre's goals, philosophy, and curriculum
- Critically think and challenge their own understanding of current practices to improve themselves professionally and develop their own competencies
- Deepen their knowledge and skills in applying appropriate strategies to enhance children's well-being, learning, and development
- Become more adept at making adjustment in their beliefs and practices according to how children learn and develop
- Develop an aptitude for lifelong learning

### ENGAGE IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Educators participate in professional learning to collaborate with one another to learn, develop new strategies, and improve their practices. Professional learning extends beyond attending courses and workshops and may include opportunities for educators to form a community of learners, where independent experiences are shared and contextualised and effective strategies are identified.

With professional learning, educators acquire new knowledge and skills to improve their practices to optimise children's learning and development. It enables educators to raise their level of expertise and contribute to the realisation of the Outcomes of Early Years for children. Educators who are committed to ongoing professional learning are more intentional in their practice and more confident in enhancing the overall quality of children's learning and development.

To facilitate educators' planning for their professional learning, they can use the *Skills Framework for Early Childhood*, which informs educators on trends and workforce profiles in the sector and occupations and job roles within the industry, including critical work functions, key tasks, and required skills and competencies. Educators can also use it to identify relevant training programmes available for them to upgrade and deepen their skills.



Scan the QR code to access the Skills Framework for Early Childhood





Educators can also tap on the Individual Professional Development Map (IPDM) in the *Early Childhood Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Roadmap* to:

- Set goals for professional learning and development
- Identify learning needs in the areas of Technical Skills and Competencies (TSCs)
- Chart out the resources, duration, and cost required to fulfil the learning needs
- Tap into various modes of learning (e.g., mentoring, coaching, professional learning communities, school visits, learning journeys, reading, peer sharing, attending courses / workshops / conferences, work attachment)
- Reflect and apply learning to daily practices



Scan the QR code to access the CPD Roadmap

When educators engage in continual professional learning, they:

- Observe, review, and reflect on practices and learning strategies
- Learn from actual practice rather than descriptions of practices
- Understand the evidence behind different practices and strategies
- Are able to apply what they have learnt into daily practices
- Gather group support and collaboration to affirm and refine their practices and skills
- Have opportunities to be involved in deliberate evaluation and feedback by more skilful educators or individuals with specific expertise
- Contribute to the centre curriculum and developmental goals to achieve the Outcomes of Early Years



## **EDUCATORS AS COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS**

Research has shown that an “environment of relationships” and the collaborative effort of educators, families, and the larger community are crucial for the development of children, especially in the early years (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Kim & Riley, 2021; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004, 2023). Each collaborator plays a unique role and together, they provide an environment that is conducive to give children a good start in life.

It is important for educators to take an active role in initiating collaborative partnerships and fostering effective partnerships with families and the community. Some possible ways to do so include:

- Establishing positive and respectful relationships with families
- Maintaining regular and effective communication with families
- Fostering strong partnerships with families
- Establishing a collaborative partnership with the community

## **ESTABLISHING POSITIVE AND RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES**

Families have direct influence over children’s learning and development and will continue to play a crucial role in their children’s lives as they grow and mature. While educators may have the professional knowledge, skills, and expertise in child development, families have invaluable insights into their children’s interests, temperaments, and dispositions outside of the centre setting. Positive relationships between families and educators will hence enable both parties to focus on specific and effective strategies to help children achieve their potential.



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Positive relationships with families help children to:

- Feel secure and confident when they see their family members and educators trusting and cooperating with each other
- Develop positive attitudes towards others outside of their family unit
- Be more motivated to participate in new experiences
- Develop social skills and greater ability to adapt to situations and get along with others
- Observe and learn how to build positive and respectful relationships with others

Open, yet sensitive, exchanges of information between families and educators can create a climate of respect and establish reciprocal understanding and mutual trust. Families feel assured that educators value their child and are committed to giving their best in maximising their child's potential. Families also feel respected when educators are prompt in addressing concerns raised during informal conversations.

Positive relationships will motivate families to:

- Support and/or participate in activities and events organised by the centre more willingly
- Be more involved in extending children's learning at home

### **MAINTAINING REGULAR AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES**

Educators' words can influence children's motivation, self-worth, and engagement. They can be used to support, encourage, and advocate for children's learning and development. How educators describe children in documentation or in conversations with families can either open opportunities for further discussion and support or inadvertently create a barrier to effective communication.

Research has shown that when there is regular and timely 2-way communication between families and educators, children's accomplishments are acknowledged, concerns are recognised, and solutions are achieved (Aronson, 1995; Berger, 1991; Cohen & Anders, 2020). Regular communication with families that keeps them informed on children's development and progress at the centre enables families to better support their children's development at home.



Likewise, when families inform educators about what their children are interested in or experiencing at home, educators can provide more responsive and individualised opportunities to extend the child’s learning and development. For example, if educators are aware that the family has just had a newborn baby, they can help the child adjust to changes at home by giving the child more one-to-one attention at the centre.

Communications can take place through multiple modes. Educators can discuss with families what is the best way to communicate with them. Besides regular conversations with families during arrival and departure time, educators can establish communication via the following:

**FIGURE 08**

## 8 Ways to Communicate with Families



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When communicating with families, educators need to consider the following:

- Be respectful, diplomatic, and clear, focusing on what is best for the child
- Show interest in family members and the information they are sharing by listening attentively, acknowledging their concerns, and celebrating their joys
- Keep parents informed by sharing the highlights of the child's day in the centre during pick-up time
- Encourage parents to update information of any event that may affect the child (e.g., arrival of a new baby, loss of a pet, illness)
- When addressing concerns and issues relating to children's learning and development, educators should:
  - Exercise empathy
  - Seek better understanding by asking questions or paraphrasing what was shared
  - Maintain professionalism by providing evidence-based information or information gained through consultation from professional sources
  - Appreciate diversity among families and be sensitive to variations in families' cultural background, values, needs, and expectations



## FOSTERING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES

“Upon reflection, early childhood educators may see—and embrace—families as children’s first, most important, and only long-term teachers. That shifts the educator’s role, making engaging with the family as important as teaching the child.”

— Hansel, 2018, para. 10

Regular and effective communication with families enhance the efforts to foster strong partnerships with them. When families and educators understand each other’s perspectives, they are able to work more effectively to support children’s learning and development. This creates a secure environment for children and facilitates continuity of learning and development between centre and home.

The stronger the connections between the educational and home contexts, the better this is for children’s well-being, learning, and development. Strong partnership with families can be fostered when educators do the following:

- Create a warm and welcoming environment for families when they visit the centre. When families feel welcome, they know that their roles and views are respected and valued. They will be more open to sharing information and participate in centre’s activities.
- Support families in children’s learning and development. With support from educators, families can feel understood and will be more willing to cooperate when addressing children’s challenges. They will also feel comfortable in approaching educators when they have concerns.
- Involve and engage families in a shared vision of the partnership to support children’s well-being, learning, and development. By doing so, educators show that they value parents’ knowledge, talents, time, and perspectives. Educators can tap into their strengths and together, co-develop more meaningful learning experiences for children.
- Engaging families to support children’s transitions from home to early years settings. For infants and toddlers, it is most likely their first time moving from the familiar home environment to a new centre environment. Besides adapting to a new environment, they will also need to learn to build new relationships with other adults and peers. By engaging families in everyday activities at the centre, educators can make reasonable adaptations to their caregiving practices and establish trust with the children’s families.



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## **ESTABLISHING A COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY**

Educators should take initiative in engaging the community for support in curating various resources for children’s learning and development. Readily available ideas and resources provided by various community partners can be used to plan meaningful and authentic experiences for children<sup>4</sup>.

By connecting and collaborating with the community, educators help children gain a sense of awareness that, besides families and educators, there are others in the community who care about them. Not only will children have opportunities to learn about different types of community helpers, but they can also gain a sense of belonging and identity.

Involving the community and participating in community events will also:

- Raise awareness of children’s own culture and those of others
- Provide opportunities for children to play and interact with adults and peers from diverse cultural backgrounds and with different abilities and needs



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<sup>4</sup> Educators can refer to Annex B for a list of community partners with such resources.



# CONCLUSION



The early years is a unique period of rapid brain growth and neural connections. Responsive interactions and relationships with educators within a safe and enriching environment that supports exploration and play help stimulate brain development. These positive experiences form the building blocks for children to become lifelong learners.

As every child develops and learns at different pace, it is crucial that educators are equipped with the understanding of child development in the early years in order for their interactions with children to be respectful, responsive, and reciprocal (3R) to meet children's individual needs and interests. When educators understand how children learn, they will plan for meaningful experiences and make full use of available opportunities that support the holistic development of children. They will engage children in exploration and play, both planned and unplanned.

It is also important for educators to establish positive relationships and maintain open communication with parents or other caregivers of the children. Educators can share professional knowledge as well as observations of children to foster closer partnership and collaboration between the centre and home to support children's well-being and development.

In providing safe and enriching environments that meet children's diverse needs and interests and through 3R interactions, educators will help children build secure attachments, grow their confidence, and develop positive dispositions for learning. This would provide the foundation and put them in good stead for the future.



# ANNEX A

## Summary of Theoretical and Research Bases of the C.H.I.L.D. Principles

C.H.I.L.D. Principle	Theorists / Researchers	Key Ideas
<p><b>C</b>aregiving and routines as opportunities for learning and development</p>	<p>Laurin (2018) Laurin, Guss &amp; Horn (2021)</p>	<p>Caregivers' interactions and responsiveness to children's cues during caregiving are important in supporting infants' and toddlers' involvement, relationship-building, and well-being.</p>
	<p>Gillespie &amp; Peterson (2012)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educators need to create consistent and predictable routines for infants and toddlers.</li> <li>• Individualised routines with varying time and actions can also be planned to match the needs of individual children to support the development of self-regulation. Individualised routines communicate respect for each child and genuine interest in what the child is experiencing.</li> </ul>
	<p>Gonzalez-Mena &amp; Eyer (2012)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitive and responsive caregiving are opportunities for educators to deepen relationships with infants and toddlers and promote their learning and development.</li> <li>• A consistent approach to caregiving and routines helps children to cope with transitions and trust their educators to care for them and meet their needs.</li> <li>• Children who have this sense of trust and security generally feel good about themselves and are better able to play, explore, and learn freely.</li> </ul>
<p><b>H</b>olistic Development</p>	<p>Dewey (1959)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning should be approached more holistically, focusing on experiential and social learning. For effective learning to take place, children should have opportunities to use their previous experiences to create new knowledge and understanding.</li> <li>• Young children learn and develop in an environment where they are allowed to experience and interact with people and resources. Educators play the role of facilitators.</li> </ul>

C.H.I.L.D. Principle	Theorists / Researchers	Key Ideas
	Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2011, 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although children are not born with executive functioning skills, these skills can be developed. It is a progressive process from infancy to early adulthood where children learn positive behaviours and attitudes such as being motivated, exhibiting perseverance, and having the ability to manage frustration and follow rules.</li> <li>• Adults play a vital role in promoting the development of these skills through supportive environment and relationships, modelling of social behaviour, and routines and activities that present opportunities to practise these skills.</li> </ul>
	Katz (1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dispositions and learning experiences are equally important. Educators can support the acquisition of desirable dispositions through modelling and by providing opportunities for children to express or display them frequently.</li> <li>• Educators need to be intentional in designing environments that create the right conditions to enable the development of positive dispositions.</li> </ul>
	Skolverket (2010)	Early Childhood education lays the foundation for lifelong learning and must be based on a holistic approach to children and their needs. Care, development, and learning should engage the whole child, and in cooperation with their families and their communities.





C.H.I.L.D. Principle	Theorists / Researchers	Key Ideas
<b>I</b> ntentional planning for meaningful experiences	Epstein (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Intentional planning requires educators to be thoughtful about their decisions and actions in setting goals and designing experiences to achieve desired goals. Educators who are intentional assess children’s progress and adjust their strategies based on observations of children.</li> <li>● Although planning is important, educators need to balance both child-led and educator-led learning experiences that respond to children’s inquiries and needs.</li> <li>● Intentional planning enables educators to make the learning process meaningful for children.</li> </ul>
	McLaughlin & Cherrington (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Intentional teaching requires educators to think ahead and be purposeful in using their professional knowledge and what they understand about their children when planning both play and routine experiences.</li> <li>● Educators’ engagement in intentional teaching is an important aspect in enhancing children’s learning and development.</li> </ul>
<b>L</b> earning through exploration and play in a safe and enriching environment	Weisberg, Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Kittredge, & Klahr (2016)	<p>Learning experiences that combine children’s free play and adult’s guidance promote children’s autonomy within a prepared environment to achieve desired outcomes. These experiences take advantage of children’s natural abilities to learn through play and involve the educators in extending children’s learning.</p>
	Zosh et al. (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Play builds on children’s natural potential to learn. It has a key role in learning and preparing infants and toddlers for challenges in later childhood and through adulthood.</li> <li>● Meaningful play experiences can be facilitated by educators to promote children’s enjoyment, build positive relationships, and help them to express and expand their understanding of the world around them.</li> <li>● Play can be supported by the environment. A safe environment is one where children are confident and free to make connections through active engagement, developmentally appropriate experiences, and interactions without fear of harm.</li> </ul>

C.H.I.L.D. Principle	Theorists / Researchers	Key Ideas
<p><b>D</b>eveloping secure attachments through respectful, responsive, and reciprocal (3R) interactions</p>	<p>Ainsworth et al. (1978)</p> <p>Bowlby (1969)</p> <p>Main &amp; Cassidy (1988)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality interactions with children through sensitive and responsive caregiving contribute to development of positive attachment behaviours, brain development, communication skills, and social and emotional well-being.</li> <li>• Children who form secure attachments are better at regulating their emotions, engaging in social interactions, and acquiring cognitive functions.</li> </ul>
	<p>Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2017)</p>	<p>Responsive and quality child-adult interactions support a child’s brain growth and development. These back-and-forth exchanges foster positive relationships and have impact on children’s growth, development, and well-being.</p>
	<p>Siegel, D. (1999)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neural processes are shaped by interpersonal relationships throughout life.</li> <li>• For infants and toddlers, all learning happens in the context of their relationships with the important adults in their lives.</li> </ul>



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# ANNEX B

## List of Community Partners

### **Association for Early Childhood Educators (Singapore)**

[www.aeces.org](http://www.aeces.org)

The association is a professional body committed to working with educators, other professionals, and stakeholders to build partnerships, initiate dialogues and advocate the development of children and their families. Its website provides information on upcoming local and regional events, community projects, the code of ethics as well as invaluable resources for educators via its online journals and library catalogue.

### **Breastfeeding Mothers' Support Group**

<https://breastfeeding.org.sg>

A support group to facilitate support for breastfeeding mothers; education for pregnant/breastfeeding mothers and families; and public awareness and advocacy in the community.

### **Bilingualism.sg**

<https://www.bilingualism.sg/>

The establishment of the Lee Kuan Yew Fund for Bilingualism has a mission to facilitate a steady pipeline of contextualised and age-appropriate resources and programmes to foster bilingualism in children and subsequently, to encourage bilingualism as a lifelong endeavour. The establishment works closely with like-minded community stakeholders to make Mother Tongue Languages (MTL) fun and relevant to everyday life. Educators can refer to the website for relevant MTL programmes, resources, and grant applications.

### **Centre for Fathering**

<https://fathers.com.sg/>

A non-profit organisation founded in 2000 to promote active and involved fathering and address issues caused by fatherlessness in Singapore. The organisation aims to turn the hearts of fathers and children towards each other by inspiring fathers to be better role models and strengthen families.

### **Centre for Holistic Initiatives for Learning & Development (CHILD)**

<https://thechild.sg/>

The organisation aims to help every family give their children the best start to life. CHILD works closely with a network of hospitals, polyclinics, and research organisations to support children and families in ways that are informed by evidence and data that are relevant to the Singapore context. Educators can refer to the webpage for resources, publications, events, and programmes that are related to child development.

### **Families for Life (FFL) Movement**

<https://ffl.familiesforlife.sg/pages/homepage>

The Families for Life (FFL) Movement aims to build strong and resilient families through rallying like-minded individuals, families, and organisations to strengthen family bonds through large-scale events, national celebrations, and online digital campaigns. In terms of education, FFL has developed the 'Family and Me' Preschool Packages, with support from the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), the Ministry of Education Preschool Education Branch (MOE PEB) and the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA).

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### **Gardens by the Bay**

<https://www.gardensbythebay.com.sg/>

Gardens by the Bay is a national garden that showcases the plant kingdom in creative and innovative ways. Visitors can learn about plants ranging from species in cool, temperate climates to tropical forests and habitats. Educators can refer to the webpage for more information regarding the programmes and events to plan for field trips.

### **Health Promotion Board**

[www.hpb.gov.sg](http://www.hpb.gov.sg)

As a statutory board, the Health Promotion Board promotes national health and disease prevention programmes. This website contains various downloadable HPB publications that provide information on home safety, health, and nutrition of young children. Various online resources such as guidelines and recipes are provided to help centres plan more nutritious meals for children.

### **Help Every Lone Parent (HELP)**

<https://helpfsc.org.sg/about-help/>

HELP Family Service Centre (HELPFSC in short) is a voluntary welfare organization and Divorce Support Specialist Agency (DSSA) that provides support to parents and children from divorcing and divorced families.

### **Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA)**

<https://www.imda.gov.sg/students-and-professionals>

Centres may access information about developments in the local information communications sector here. There are also updates on the various information communications infrastructure established in Singapore which centres can tap on. Centres with the intention to grow their digital capabilities to support their centre's operations or implement E-learning may find the website useful.

### **KidSTART**

<https://kidstart.sg/>

KidSTART Singapore Limited is a non-profit organization that aims to support and empower families to give every child (including the children from families with less resources) a good start in life. Educators can refer families to KidSTART for information, services, supports, programmes, and resources for families.

### **Mandai Wildlife Reserve**

<https://www.mandai.com/en/mandai.html>

Mandai Wildlife Reserve is a unique wildlife and nature destination in Singapore that is home to 4 wildlife parks – Bird Paradise, Night Safari, River Wonders, and the Singapore Zoo. Educators can refer to the webpage for more information on the education programmes, activities, and publications.

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### **Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF)**

<https://www.msf.gov.sg/>

The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) aims to nurture resilient individuals, strong families, and a caring society for Singapore through policies, community infrastructure, programmes and services. Supporting families and parents are at the core of what the MSF do and below are a list of information and services that the ministry provide which educators can share with families:

- Financial Assistance for families in need
- Overview of preschools and the services they offer
- Marital support for couples and families with early signs of stress at Families Programme@Family Service Centre (FAM@FSC)
- Parenting programmes
- Family Service Centres
- Social Service Offices
- Social Service Agencies

For updates on all the Ministry's latest initiatives, centres may wish to refer to the website directly.

### **Ministry of Health**

[www.moh.gov.sg](http://www.moh.gov.sg)

The Ministry of Health aims to encourage a healthy nation and does this by providing information to keep users updated on recent healthcare and disease issues in Singapore. Updates in this website can help centres take necessary precautions upon knowledge of any disease outbreaks. Centres can also get information about all healthcare services available in Singapore.

### **National Arts Council, Singapore**

[www.nac.gov.sg](http://www.nac.gov.sg)

Centres can visit this website to get performance details on upcoming concerts, theatre, and exhibitions suitable for young children. There is also a link to NAC-Arts Education Programmes (NAC-AEP) specifically designed for preschoolers (N1 - K2) that centres can sign up for.

### **National Council of Social Services**

<https://www.ncss.gov.sg/>

Information on various social service programmes is available at the NCSS website. NCSS works with Social Service Agencies to improve on existing social service programmes, pilot new initiatives and lay down service standards. Centres may wish to find out more about the available services for children and families.

### **National Environment Agency**

[www.nea.gov.sg](http://www.nea.gov.sg)

In its attempt to promote a clean and green environment in Singapore, NEA's website contains education resources to raise young children's awareness of environmental issues in Singapore and around the world. There are also downloadable posters and guidebooks to help young children to be environmentally pro-active. Updates on local and international environmental issues are also available.

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### **National Heritage Board, Singapore**

[www.nhb.gov.sg](http://www.nhb.gov.sg)

Centres can visit this website to learn about the latest exhibits available in the various museums around Singapore. They can also learn more about the activities planned by NHB and access links to browse past museum exhibitions.

### **National Library Board**

[www.nlb.gov.sg](http://www.nlb.gov.sg)

NLB has many online resources to help centres promote early literacy in young children. Available on the website are links to an eBooks database, updates on upcoming NLB events and preschool resources (e.g., reviews and recommendations on age-appropriate book titles, examples of early literacy activities and activity sheets).

### **National Parks Board**

[www.nparks.gov.sg](http://www.nparks.gov.sg)

The NParks website has several online resources to educate preschoolers on horticulture, conservation, and biodiversity. Information about the various local nature parks and guided tours is also available. The website provides regular updates on workshops and talks suitable for young children. Worksheets and factsheets may also be downloaded to assist centres in planning related activities.

### **ParentWise**

<https://parentwise.sg/about-us/>

ParentWise is a community movement which aims to provide support for parents through the journey of parenthood. Educators can refer parents to the website for parenting tips, research findings and community support.

### **People's Association**

[www.pa.gov.sg](http://www.pa.gov.sg)

Child Care centres can obtain the addresses and contact numbers of their nearest Community Centres to facilitate the planning of any external activities. Centres can also find out about upcoming community events organised by PA and learn how they can be involved.

### **PUB, Singapore's National Water Agency**

[www.pub.gov.sg](http://www.pub.gov.sg)

Information on talks, events and activities organised by PUB to raise children's awareness on the importance of conserving water resources is available in this website.

### **Singapore Children's Society**

<https://www.childrensociety.org.sg/>

The mission of the Singapore Children's Society is to bring relief and happiness to children in need. With more than 10 service centres island wide, the organisation seeks to offer services in the 4 categories of: Vulnerable Children and Youth, Children and Youth Services, Family Services, and Research and Advocacy. Educators can refer to the webpage to better understand the services and research resources that the society provides and direct parents/families which may require social support and services to the society.

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### **Singapore Kindness Movement (SKM)**

<https://www.kindness.sg/>

The Singapore Kindness Movement (SKM) is a registered charity and Institution of Public Character. SKM aims to encourage every person to start, show and share kindness. Educators can visit the website to learn more about the educational programmes, workshops, activities, parenting talks, and other resources available.

### **Sport Singapore (SportSG)**

<https://www.sportsingapore.gov.sg/>

<https://www.activesgcircle.gov.sg/preschool>

Through a portfolio of initiatives and programmes, Sport SG seeks to enable and empower parents and educators to provide the platforms for children to discover the joy of learning, acquiring crucial fundamental movement skills and leading an active, healthy lifestyle. Educators can visit the ActiveSG – Preschool Engagement webpage to look for existing programmes and resources to enrich children’s physical learning experiences and engage parents in extending children’s learning at home.

### **SG Enable**

<https://www.enablingguide.sg/>

Parents of children who may have developmental needs may require childhood developmental screening or early intervention services. Educators can refer parents to the Enabling Guide created by SG Enable for information and advice on schemes, services, supports, and resources related to the early intervention for children.



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