experience EARLY LEARNING

Research Foundation

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Experience Early Learning specializes in the development and publication of research-based curriculum, books, music and authentic assessment tools for early childhood teachers and parents around the world. Our mission is to inspire children to experience learning through creative expression, play and open-ended discovery. We believe in educational materials that invite children to engage fully (physically, emotionally and intellectually), support their ongoing development and encourage them to become the authors of their own unique learning stories.

Research Foundation

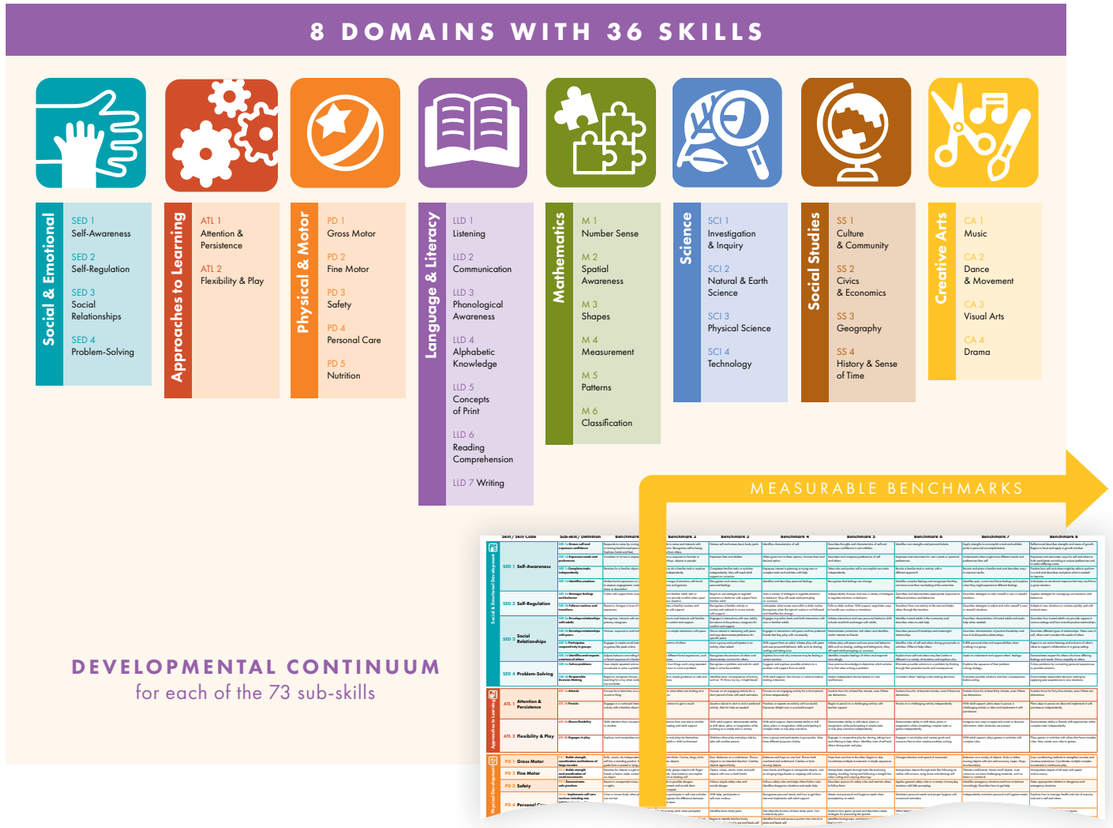
The Experience Early Learning Assessment and Curriculum System is uniquely designed to:

- Serve children from birth through kindergarten.
- Feature 36 skills and 73 sub-skills that research correlates with school success.
- Align with state early learning standards.
- Be inclusive of dual language learners and children with special needs.
- Gather authentic data by observing children in natural play or within a classroom routine.
- Monitor and chart progress over time.
- Offer educators support on how to use the assessment data to scaffold activities, design environments and nurture relationships.

This Research Foundation outlines the latest research and theories in the field of early childhood education and forms the basis of the skills reinforced throughout all Experience Early Learning curricula. Because development is gradual and reflects cumulative influences over time, each child's learning journey is unique. Educators can use this research foundation to better understand the theory and research behind how and why a child's knowledge develops, as well as what skills, concepts and approaches to learning will support the overall growth and development of the child.

This resource includes skills that research has shown to be strong predictors of success in school and later in life. Skills are presented on a developmental continuum to represent the ongoing process of early childhood growth and development. These skills and developmental benchmarks are embedded within all Experience Early Learning curricula and resources, including Experience Preschool, Experience Toddler and Experience Baby Curriculum. The skills are grouped into nine domains of learning:

1. Social & Emotional Development
2. Approaches to Learning
3. Physical Development
4. Language & Literacy Development
5. Mathematics
6. Science
7. Social Studies
8. Creative Arts
9. Second Language Acquisition



Within the first eight domains are 36 skills. Each skill is defined and may be broken down further into 73 sub-skills. Each sub-skill includes a series of observable benchmarks that track ongoing development from birth through primary levels. Development is a dynamic process. The transition between learning and development occurs within the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky 1978). This is the distance between the most difficult task a child can perform without help and the most difficult task they can do with support.

Post-Vygotskian researchers developed the idea of "scaffolding" to represent the support that children receive from their educators and peers in reaching new developmental goals (Wood, Bruner, & Ross 1976). Benchmarks 1–8 within the Experience Early Learning Developmental Continuum of Skills offer educators a framework for understanding how to scaffold and set learning goals aligned within the child's zone of proximal development.

The Experience Early Learning Assessment and Curriculum System offers families, educators and states a comprehensive and multidimensional view of a child's learning journey by mapping the child's learning with the Developmental Continuum of Skills and documenting the progress within the assessment framework. The Experience Early Learning Assessment and Curriculum System can be used as one of many tools to inform parents, directors, educators or states on a child's progress. This system recognizes the importance of inviting educators and families to collaboratively observe children, set learning goals and communicate in ways that acknowledge child developmental theory and value cultural reciprocity. Cultural reciprocity is based on mutual respect, communication, collaboration and negotiation of culturally based beliefs, values and assumptions (Day and Parlakian 2003).

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills offers measurable benchmarks that can be observed during meaningful experiences within a child's natural play or typical school routine. Therefore, it is inclusive of children who are developmentally accelerated, those with developmental delays or disabilities and dual-language learners.

Social & Emotional Development

Social and emotional development refers to a child's growing capacity to recognize themself as an individual, identify and manage feelings, build relationships and navigate social environments. Responsive relationships are foundational in this process, providing children with the support needed to explore and learn.

A child's earliest experiences of warmth and closeness while being held and fed begin this important process of building trust and emotional security. The initial bond of trust with a parent or primary caregiver is what helps a child feel comfortable forming new relationships and exploring the world with curiosity. As children transition into classroom settings, nurturing and safe environments with positive, caring relationships become critical to children's social and emotional growth (Mahoney et al. 2021).

Brain research confirms the relationship between emotional and cognitive development, identifying that brain networks supporting intelligence and memory also support skills like emotion regulation (Immordino-Yang et al. 2018). Children with strong social and emotional skills are more likely to exhibit positive behaviors, form healthy relationships and achieve improved cognitive and academic outcomes (Greenberg 2023).

Proper brain development and subsequent learning rely on factors such as nutrition, sleep, physical activity, social relationships and emotional experiences. While emotional health and positive relationships can positively impact a child's ability to learn, the absence of these factors can increase vulnerability to the opposite (Immordino-Yang et al. 2018).

Educators increasingly recognize that social-emotional development during early childhood lays the foundation for future success. Research indicates that early social and emotional skills directly impact later school readiness and academic success, mental health and other life outcomes, such as productive employment (Hosokawa et al. 2024; Jones et al. 2015).

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes four Social & Emotional Development skills and 12 sub-skills.

SED 1	**Self-Awareness**	**SED 1a** Knows self and expresses confidence
		SED 1b Expresses needs and preferences
		SED 1c Completes tasks independently
		SED 1d Identifies emotions
SED 2	**Self-Regulation**	**SED 2a** Manages feelings and behavior
		SED 2b Follows routines and transitions
SED 3	**Social Relationships**	**SED 3a** Develops relationships with adults
		SED 3b Develops relationships with peers
		SED 3c Participates cooperatively in groups
		SED 3d Identifies and respects emotions of others
SED 4	**Problem-Solving**	**SED 4a** Solves problems
		SED 4b Responsible Decision-Making

SED 1 Self-Awareness

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes 4 Social & Emotional Development skills:

SED 1 Self-Awareness
Recognizes self and expresses confidence, communicating needs and preferences, completing tasks independently and identifying emotions.

SED 2 Self-Regulation
Manages feelings and behavior, as well as following routines and transitions.

SED 3 Social Relationships
Builds social relationships with adults and peers, participates cooperatively in groups and identifies and respects the emotions of others.

SED 4 Problem-Solving
Approaches challenges effectively, solves problems and makes responsible decisions.

Self-awareness refers to a child's ability to recognize themself as a unique individual with thoughts, feelings and preferences that may be different from others. It includes not only identifying and understanding these differences, but also growing confident in what makes them special. That confidence enables children to express their ideas and desires as they learn and grow.

From birth, babies gather information about themselves through interactions with their environment. By touching their faces and bodies, or by grabbing and kicking at people or objects, they begin to explore their influence on their environments. At around 18 months, children begin to recognize themselves in the mirror, an early sign of self-awareness (Chinn et al. 2024). Social relationships, making social comparisons and evolving cultural values also contribute to a child's developing self-concept (Brummelman and Thomaes 2017).

Self-awareness is foundational to cognitive, emotional and social development. Having a clear sense of self contributes to an array of other skills, as it is a building block for many other social competencies. For example, being able to identify one's own emotions is a precursor to regulating those emotions. Furthermore, a child who understands themself will have an easier time understanding the unique qualities of others. Self-awareness contributes to the development of empathy and the ability to help others (Krol and Bartz 2021). As children grow, self-awareness and emotional knowledge also impact achievement and school adjustment (Blankson et al. 2016).

SED 1 Self-Awareness

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
SED 1a Knows self and expresses confidence	Responds to name by cooing, smiling or turning head toward person talking. Explores hands and feet.	Responds to name and interacts with self in mirror. Recognizes self as being separate from others.	Names self and names basic body parts.	Identifies characteristics of self.
SED 1b Expresses needs and preferences	Vocalizes or moves to express needs.	Seeks out or responds to favorite or preferred toys, objects or people.	Expresses likes and dislikes.	When given two to three options, chooses their most desired option.
SED 1c Completes tasks independently	Reaches for a familiar object or toy.	Attempts to do a familiar task or explore objects independently.	Completes familiar tasks or activities independently. May still need adult support on occasion.	Expresses interest in planning or trying new or complex tasks and activities with help.
SED 1d Identifies emotions	Makes facial expressions or vocalizations to express engagement, contentment, stress or discomfort.	Shows a range of emotions with facial expressions and gestures.	Recognizes and names a few personal feelings.	Identifies and describes personal feelings.

	Primary			
	Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
	Describes thoughts and characteristics of self and expresses confidence in own abilities.	Identifies own strengths and personal talents.	Apply strengths to accomplish a task and exhibits pride in personal accomplishments.	Reflects and describes strengths and areas of growth. Begins to have and apply a growth mindset.
	Describes and compares preferences of self and others.	Expresses and advocates for one's needs or personal preferences.	Understands others might have different needs and preferences than self.	Expresses and advocates ways for self and others to both participate according to unique preferences and to attain differing wants.
	Takes risks and pushes self to accomplish new tasks independently.	Revisits a familiar task or activity with a different approach.	Revisits and plans a familiar task and describes ways to improve results.	Predicts how self and others might be able to perform in a task and describes and plans what is needed to improve.
	Recognizes that feelings can change.	Identifies complex feelings and recognizes that they can have more than one feeling at the same time.	Identifies past, current and future feelings and explains when they might experience different feelings.	Anticipates an emotional response that may result from a given situation.

SED 2 Self-Regulation

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes 4 Social & Emotional Development skills:

SED 1 Self-Awareness
Recognizes self and expresses confidence, communicating needs and preferences, completing tasks independently and identifying emotions.

SED 2 Self-Regulation
Manages feelings and behavior, as well as following routines and transitions.

SED 3 Social Relationships
Builds social relationships with adults and peers, participates cooperatively in groups and identifies and respects the emotions of others.

SED 4 Problem-Solving
Approaches challenges effectively, solves problems and makes responsible decisions.

Self-regulation refers to a child's ability to manage their emotions, behaviors and body when faced with challenges. It includes identifying feelings, calming down after emotional events and controlling reactions, such as frustration or excitement.

Early indications of these skills include an infant self-soothing by sucking their hand or a toddler waiting patiently for their turn. Learning to cope with frustration or discomfort when a need is not immediately met is essential for developing self-regulation. Warm and responsive relationships contribute significantly to a child's ability to self-regulate during these formative years (Rosanbalm and Murray 2017).

Achieving self-regulation is an essential milestone in early childhood development. Children lacking these skills may struggle with friendships, exhibit frequent tantrums and face strained parent-child relationships. Conversely, well-regulated children tend to form positive relationships and demonstrate readiness for learning. They maintain better attention, exhibit problem-solving capabilities and perform well on tasks requiring delayed gratification and perspective-taking (Rosanbalm and Murray 2017).

SED 2 Self-Regulation

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
SED 2a Manages feelings and behavior	Calms with support from caregiver.	Seeks out a familiar adult, item or behavior to provide comfort when upset or in a new situation.	Begins to use strategies to regulate emotions or behavior with support from familiar adult.	Uses a variety of strategies to regulate emotions or behavior. May still need adult prompting on occasion.
SED 2b Follows routines and transitions	Reacts to changes in tone of voice or expression.	Participates in familiar routines and transitions with support.	Recognizes a familiar activity or routine and redirects to a new activity with support.	Anticipates what comes next within a daily routine. Recognizes when the typical routine is not followed and identifies the change.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Independently chooses and uses a variety of strategies to regulate emotions or behavior.	Describes and demonstrates appropriate responses to different emotions and behaviors.	Describes strategies to calm oneself in new or stressful situations.	Applies strategies for managing own emotions and behaviors.
Follows daily routines. With support, negotiates ways to handle new routines or transitions.	Transitions from one activity to the next and helps others through the transition.	Describes strategies to adjust and calm oneself in new or stressful situations.	Adapts to new situations or routines quickly and with minimal stress.

SED 3 Social Relationships

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes 4 Social & Emotional Development skills:

SED 1 Self-Awareness
Recognizes self and expresses confidence, communicating needs and preferences, completing tasks independently and identifying emotions.

SED 2 Self-Regulation
Manages feelings and behavior, as well as following routines and transitions.

SED 3 Social Relationships
Builds social relationships with adults and peers, participates cooperatively in groups and identifies and respects the emotions of others.

SED 4 Problem-Solving
Approaches challenges effectively, solves problems and makes responsible decisions.

Social relationship skills refer to a child's ability to positively interact and bond with other people. These skills are used in one-on-one interactions as well as group settings. Young children demonstrate these social relationship skills by connecting, cooperating, caring and responding to the needs of others.

Social relationship skills are rooted in the trust and security established in a child's first relationships with their primary caregivers. Recognizing and responding to a baby's signals aids in the development of a powerful initial bond, providing necessary regulatory support. Children continue to build social competence through observation and comparing their own beliefs with those of others. Children with positive, responsive early relationships often experience healthier future relationships, improved cognitive development and increased academic achievement (Baker 2024).

As children grow, they seek shared experiences with peers, engaging in activities that highlight their similarities and differences. These interactions facilitate emotional connections and relationship-building. A child's ability to build positive relationships with both adults and peers is important to social-emotional development and success in school (Baker 2024).

SED 3 Attention & Persistence

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
SED 3a Develops relationships with adults	Recognizes, interacts with and responds to primary caregivers.	Stays close to and interacts with familiar adults for comfort and support.	Engages in interactions with new adults, but returns to the primary caregivers for comfort and support.	Engages in positive back-and-forth interactions with new or familiar adults.
SED 3b Develops relationships with peers	Notices, responds to and looks at peers.	Engages in simple interactions with peers.	Shows interest in interacting with peers and may demonstrate preference for specific peers.	Engages in interactions with peers and has preferred friends that they play with consistently.
SED 3c Participates cooperatively in groups	Engages in simple social interactions, such as games like peek-a-boo.	Mimics actions of others.	Joins a group and participates in an activity when asked.	With support from an adult, initiates play with peers and uses prosocial behavior skills such as sharing, waiting and taking turns.
SED 3d Identifies and respects emotions of others	Adjusts behavior according to emotional or facial response of a familiar person.	Explores different facial expressions, such as in pictures.	Recognizes the emotions of others and demonstrates concern for others.	Explains how and why someone may be feeling a certain emotion.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Initiates interactions and uses prosocial behavior skills in back-and-forth exchanges with adults.	Identifies trusted adults in the community and describes when to seek help.	Describes characteristics of trusted adults and seeks help when needed.	Describes how trusted adults can provide support in various settings and how to build positive relationships.
Demonstrates connection with others and identifies similar interests as friends.	Describes personal friendships and meaningful relationships.	Describes characteristics of positive friendships and how to build positive relationships.	Describes different types of relationships. Takes care of self, others and considers the needs of others.
Initiates play with peers and uses prosocial behavior skills such as sharing, waiting and taking turns. May still need adult prompting on occasion.	Identifies roles of self and others during group tasks or activities. Offers to help others.	Fulfills personal roles and responsibilities when working in a group.	Begins to use active listening and inclusion of other's ideas to support collaboration in a group setting.
Identifies complex feelings of others and responds accordingly.	Explains how self and others may feel similar or different in a variety of situations and explains why.	Seeks to understand and support others' feelings.	Demonstrates respect for others who have differing feelings and needs. Shows empathy to others.

SED 4 Social Relationships

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes 4 Social & Emotional Development skills:

SED 1 Self-Awareness
Recognizes self and expresses confidence, communicating needs and preferences, completing tasks independently and identifying emotions.

SED 2 Self-Regulation
Manages feelings and behavior, as well as following routines and transitions.

SED 3 Social Relationships
Builds social relationships with adults and peers, participates cooperatively in groups and identifies and respects the emotions of others.

SED 4 Problem-Solving
Approaches challenges effectively, solves problems and makes responsible decisions.

Problem-solving involves a child's ability to recognize a problem, think of potential solutions and select the most effective option. It is a fundamental part of being socially and emotionally competent. (Hardy et al. 2024).

Children develop problem-solving abilities through natural play and social interactions, as well as planned problem-solving or open-ended tasks. Safe and supportive environments encourage children to make and learn from mistakes, further advancing their ability to solve problems. As children grow, these skills evolve from simple trial-and-error approaches to more advanced reasoning that considers the feelings and perspectives of others.

Developing social problem-solving skills in early childhood contributes to social functioning, but also prepares children to handle academic challenges throughout their years of learning (Walker et al. 2013). As problem-solving is linked to executive function, it also contributes to resilience later in life (Rungsattatharm et al. 2025). When problem-solving is done in a social setting, such as collaborating with peers to solve a problem, children learn perspective-taking, negotiation and how to create mutually beneficial solutions.

SED 4 Social Relationships

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
SED 4a Solves problems	Uses simple repeated actions or movements to solve a problem.	Explores how things work using repeated trial and error to solve a problem.	Recognizes a problem and asks for adult help to solve the problem.	Suggests and explores possible solutions to a problem with support from an adult.
SED 4b Responsible Decision-Making	Begins to recognize choices, such as reaching for a toy when multiple options are available.	Responds to simple guidance on safe and kind choices.	Identifies basic consequences of actions, such as "If I throw my toy, it might break".	With adult support, lists choices or solutions before making a decision.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Uses previous knowledge to determine which solution to try first when solving a problem.	Eliminates possible solutions to a problem by thinking through their potential results and consequences.	Explains the sequence of their problem solving strategy.	Solves problems by connecting personal experiences to possible solutions.
Makes independent choices based on rules and fairness.	Considers others' feelings when making decisions.	Evaluates possible solutions and their consequences before acting.	Demonstrates responsible decision-making by applying past experiences to new situations.

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Approaches to Learning

Approaches to learning refers to young children's traits and behaviors as they engage with new experiences and manage learning tasks. Key facets include curiosity, initiative, persistence, cognitive flexibility and sustained attention. These domain-general learning behaviors support all areas of development and are strong predictors of school readiness and later academic success (Shah et al. 2018; Leonard et al. 2017). For example, greater early curiosity has been linked with higher kindergarten reading and math achievement (Shah et al. 2018), and persistence in goal-oriented tasks—independent of IQ—is associated with better long-term academic outcomes (Leonard et al. 2017). Young children who show eagerness to learn, initiate activities, stay focused and adapt to challenges tend to acquire knowledge and skills more quickly and efficiently.

The period from birth to age 8 is characterized by dramatic growth in how children approach learning. Infants and toddlers begin by exploring the world with intense curiosity but fleeting attention, relying on caregivers to scaffold their efforts. By the preschool years, children show increased self-directed initiative, longer attention spans, greater persistence in the face of mild frustration and begin to demonstrate flexible thinking, in the context of play and guided discovery. These capacities lay the groundwork for the formal learning of early elementary school, where children's curiosity becomes more focused and inquiry-based, their persistence and attention more self-regulated and their cognitive flexibility more pronounced.

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes two Approaches to Learning skills with four sub-skills.

ATL 1 Attention & Persistence	**ATL 1a** Attends
	ATL 1b Persists
ATL 2 Flexibility & Play	**ATL 2a** Shows flexibility
	ATL 2b Engages in play

ATL 1 Attention and Persistence

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes 2 Approaches to Learning skills:

ATL 1 Attention & Persistence
Develops the ability to focus, manage distractions and persists through challenges.

ATL 2 Flexibility and Play
Demonstrates adaptability, creative thinking and problem-solving through varied and imaginative play.

From infancy through early childhood, attention and persistence are foundational for learning. Infants begin to sustain attention during shared play with caregivers, and this joint engagement helps lengthen focus over time (Yu and Smith 2016). As toddlers develop, they begin to stick with tasks longer, especially when modeled by adults. In one study, infants who observed an adult persist at a task were more likely to keep trying on their own (Leonard et al. 2017). By preschool, children can remain engaged in an activity for extended periods and show growing ability to manage distractions and frustrations. Preschoolers who demonstrate high persistence and attention are more likely to achieve gains in literacy and math (Shah et al. 2018). These traits—staying focused, working through difficulties and returning to unfinished tasks—are crucial indicators of school readiness.

ATL 1 Attention & Persistence

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
ATL 1a Attends	Focuses for a short time on a person, sound or thing.	Attends to what others are looking at or pointing to.	Focuses on an engaging activity for a short period of time with adult reminders.	Focuses on an engaging activity for a short period of time independently.
ATL 1b Persists	Engages in a continued interaction or activity with a familiar object or adult.	Repeats actions to gain a result.	Asserts a desire to start or end a preferred activity. Asks for help as needed.	Practices or repeats an activity until successful. Expresses delight over a successful project.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Sustains focus for at least five minutes, even if there are distractions.	Sustains focus for at least ten minutes, even if there are distractions.	Sustains focus for at least thirty minutes, even if there are distractions.	Sustains focus for forty-five minutes, even if there are distractions.
Begins to persist on a challenging activity with teacher support.	Persists on a challenging activity independently.	With adult support, plans steps to pursue a challenging activity or idea and implements it with persistence.	Plans steps to pursue an idea and implements it with persistence independently.

ATL 2 Flexibility & Play

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes 2 Approaches to Learning skills:

ATL 1 Attention & Persistence
Develops the ability to focus, manage distractions and persists through challenges.

ATL 2 Flexibility and Play
Demonstrates adaptability, creative thinking and problem-solving through varied and imaginative play.

Flexibility and play reflect a child's ability to adapt, try new approaches and explore creatively. During early childhood, cognitive flexibility grows rapidly. Toddlers begin to switch focus between activities and, by preschool, children can adjust to changes in rules and tasks (Blakey et al. 2016). This flexibility enables problem-solving and collaboration, especially during pretend play where children negotiate roles, change storylines and experiment with materials. Play itself fosters flexible thinking and creative exploration. Children who engage in varied, open-ended play experiences often show stronger executive function and are more capable of adapting their strategies when initial efforts don't work (Zelazo 2015). These flexible learning behaviors help children navigate both social and academic challenges, making play an essential context for developing adaptive thinking skills.

ATL 1 Attention & Persistence

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
ATL 2a Shows flexibility	Shifts attention from one person or thing to another.	Shifts attention from one task to another with prompting and adult support.	With adult support, demonstrates ability to shift ideas, plans or imagination while working on a simple task or activity.	With adult support, demonstrates ability to shift ideas, plans or imagination while participating in complex tasks or role-play scenarios.
ATL 2b Engages in play	Explores and manipulates materials.	Entertains and plays by themselves without adult or child involvement.	Watches others play and plays side by side with another person.	Joins a group and participates in group play. May have different purposes of play.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Demonstrates ability to shift ideas, plans or imagination while participating in simple tasks or role-play scenarios independently.	Demonstrates ability to shift ideas, plans or imagination while completing complex tasks or games independently.	Imagines new ways to approach a task or discover information when obstacles are present.	Demonstrates ability to fluently shift approaches within complex tasks independently.
Engages in cooperative play by sharing, taking turns and offering to help others. Identifies roles of self and others during tasks and play.	Engages in social play and creates goals and scenarios that involve creative problem-solving.	With adult support, plays games or activities with complex rules.	Plays games or activities with others that have complex rules. May create own rules to games.

Physical Development

Physical development is fundamental to children's general well-being, impacting both their physical and emotional health. It includes the development of both gross motor skills, such as walking and jumping, and fine motor skills, such as drawing and grasping. Healthy motor development requires appropriate nutrition, routine physical activity and proper personal care.

Children naturally engage with the world through movement and play, which are essential for their learning and development. Regular physical activity supports not only physical growth but also contributes significantly to emotional, cognitive and social development. Early childhood is especially important, as it is a key time for the rapid development of both physical fitness and cognitive abilities (Westfall et al. 2018; Wick et al. 2021). It produces lifelong health and self-esteem, strengthens attachment with caregivers and prevents many health issues.

Early movement experiences, along with foundational nutrition and personal care, have a direct impact on a child's brain development. Through children's participation in activities like crawling, walking and playing, their brains make connections, or neural pathways, that enhance sensory integration, attention and executive function. These experiences foster emotional and social development by building confidence and encouraging interactions. Studies show that regular movement in early childhood builds brain plasticity, memory and continued learning (Pascual-Leone et al. 2005; Lenroot et al. 2009; Chaddock et al. 2012).

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes five physical development skills with six sub-skills.

PD 1 Gross Motor	**PD 1** Builds strength, coordination and balance of large muscles
PD 2 Fine Motor	**PD 2** Builds strength and coordination of small movements
PD 3 Safety	**PD 3** Demonstrates safe practices
PD 4 Personal Care	**PD 4a** Implements self-care routines including rest, toileting, handwashing, exercise and dressing
	PD 4b Understands bodily functions
PD 5 Nutrition	**PD5** Follows healthy nutrition routines

PD1 Gross Motor

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes 5 Physical Development skills:

PD 1 Gross Motor
Builds strength, coordination and balance of large muscles.

PD 2 Fine Motor
Builds strength and coordination of small movements.

PD 3 Safety
Understands and demonstrates safe practices.

PD 4 Personal Care
Implements self-care routines, such as rest, toileting, handwashing, exercise, and dressing, as well as understanding bodily functions.

PD 5 Nutrition
Understands and follows healthy nutrition routines.

Gross motor skills involve the control of large body muscles for activities like sitting, crawling, walking and running. These abilities are crucial for a child's development and independence. Gross motor skills typically develop in a predictable sequence from infancy to preschool, but the rate of development differs between children. "Children all develop at their own pace. However, most children pass through specific changes at roughly the same time as they get older" (Cleveland Clinic 2023). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates that infants usually start lifting their heads at two months, rolling over by six months and sitting without support at approximately nine months (CDC 2024). These initial milestones pave the way for more complex motions, like crawling and walking.

Toddlers between the ages of one and three experience significant advancements in their gross motor skills. They walk independently, climb stairs, kick a ball and run with greater coordination and confidence. Research indicates that such motor development is not an entirely biological process but is also affected by environmental factors, such as opportunities for practice and exploration (Hospodar et. al. 2021). For instance, toddlers exposed to active play environments tend to develop better balance and strength compared to those with minimal opportunities
for movement.

During the preschool years, children continue to build their gross motor skills, which enhance their balance, agility and strength. Skills like hopping, skipping, throwing and catching become integral to their daily play. Regular physical activity at this age not only promotes physical well-being, but also significantly supports brain development, correlating with improved attention and learning abilities in preschoolers (American Academy of Pediatrics 2021). These emerging motor skills are also essential for social and cognitive development, facilitating participation in group activities and organized games.

Environmental factors, such as access to safe play spaces and caregiver interaction, significantly influence gross motor development. Structured activities, outdoor play and movement-based learning opportunities enhance motor skills. Early motor skills may be a precursor to levels of physical activity and overall health in later childhood (Jones et. al. 2020). Supporting gross motor development through purposeful, active engagement during early childhood is critical to a lifetime

PD 1 Gross Motor

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
PD 1 Builds strength, coordination and balance of large muscles	Rolls, crawls, sits independently and pulls self into a standing position. Kicks or grabs from a seated or lying position.	Walks and climbs. Carries, drags, kicks and tosses objects.	Runs. Balances on a wide beam. Throws objects in an intended direction. Catches objects against body.	Balances and hops on one foot. Throws both overhand and underhand. Catches or kicks moving objects.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Hops from one foot to the other. Begins to skip. Coordinates multiple movements in simple sequences.	Changes direction and speed of movement.	Balances on a variety of objects. Kicks or strikes moving objects with aim and accuracy. Leaps. Stops at a boundary.	Uses conditioning methods to strengthen muscles and increase endurance. Coordinates multiple complex movements in continuous play.

PD 2 Fine Motor

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes 5 Physical Development skills:

PD 1 Gross Motor
Builds strength, coordination and balance of large muscles.

PD 2 Fine Motor
Builds strength and coordination of small movements.

PD 3 Safety
Understands and demonstrates safe practices.

PD 4 Personal Care
Implements self-care routines, such as rest, toileting, handwashing, exercise, and dressing, as well as understanding bodily functions.

PD 5 Nutrition
Understands and follows healthy nutrition routines.

Fine motor skills involve the small muscles in the hands and fingers that help children perform tasks like grasping toys, feeding themselves, drawing and eventually writing. These skills begin developing in infancy and become increasingly refined through the preschool years. Early fine motor development sets the stage for everyday independence and academic readiness. Infants as young as two to four months begin developing fine motor control by reaching for objects and bringing their hands to their mouth (CDC 2024a).

As they approach toddlerhood, children begin to refine their fine motor skills with practice and experience. Children develop a pincer-grasp around the age of one, holding small objects between the thumb and index finger. This skill is essential to independent feeding, such as picking up small snacks or spoons. According to Developmental Foundations of School Readiness for Infants and Toddlers, daily activities like block building, turning pages in a book and drawing with crayons are foundational fine motor skills (Horm et al. 2016). The more practice toddlers get in discovering objects with their hands, the better their fine motor coordination.

In the preschool years, fine motor skills become more defined and purposeful. Children start using scissors, drawing shapes, stringing beads and eventually writing letters. These are critical to school readiness and self-sufficiency, with activities like dressing up and personal hygiene. Play-based learning, as stated by the American Academy of Pediatrics (2021), is vital at this stage since physical interaction enables hand muscle strengthening and coordination. Play activities like engaging with small blocks or playdough are not only good for fine motor development, they also enhance creativity and problem-solving skills.

Both home and early childhood environments can significantly influence the way fine motor skills develop. Providing access to a variety of materials suitable for each child's age and development, like crayons, blunt scissors, puzzles and manipulative toys, can make a big difference. Preschool children with well-developed fine motor skills are better prepared for kindergarten academic activities, especially writing and mathematics (Cameron et al. 2012). Supporting fine motor skills early will build children's confidence and ability in everyday tasks and learning experiences.

PD 2 Fine Motor

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
PD 2 Builds strength and coordination of small movements	Reaches for objects in sight and uses hands or feet to make contact with an object.	Purposefully grasps objects with finger and thumb. Uses hands to accomplish tasks, such as feeding self.	Opens, closes, stacks, twists and pulls objects with one or both hands.	Uses hands and fingers to manipulate objects, such as stringing large beads or snipping with scissors.

	Primary			
	Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
	Manipulates objects through tasks like buttoning, zipping, buckling, lacing and following a straight line when cutting and copying drawings.	Manipulates objects through tasks like following an outline with scissors, tying shoes and dressing self.	Threads small beads. Stacks small objects. Uses scissors to cut more challenging materials, such as fabric or cardstock.	Manipulates objects of all sizes with speed and accuracy.

PD 3 Safety

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes 5 Physical Development skills:

PD 1 Gross Motor
Builds strength, coordination and balance of large muscles.

PD 2 Fine Motor
Builds strength and coordination of small movements.

PD 3 Safety
Understands and demonstrates safe practices.

PD 4 Personal Care
Implements self-care routines, such as rest, toileting, handwashing, exercise, and dressing, as well as understanding bodily functions.

PD 5 Nutrition
Understands and follows healthy nutrition routines.

As young children grow and become more mobile, learning safety skills becomes an important part of their physical development. From rolling over to running across the playground, each new movement opens up more opportunities and more risks. For example, infants begin to explore their environment by reaching, crawling and eventually walking. While these milestones are exciting, they also mean that parents and caregivers need to be more aware of potential hazards. Injuries during early development are a significant part of preventative care, especially with greater mobility (American Academy of Pediatrics 2021).

In toddlerhood, children begin climbing, running and exploring independently, increasing the inevitable risk for falls, bumps and other minor injuries. At this age, children are able to learn and follow basic safety instructions. Research shows that toddlers who learned basic safety rules, such as not touching hot surfaces or waiting to be helped, were less likely to engage in hazardous activities (Morrongiello and Dawber 2004). However, supervision is still essential, as young children are developing impulse control and the ability to recognize danger.

By preschool age, children are not only stronger physically, they are also more socialized and adventurous. This is a good time to introduce more structured safety habits, such as looking both ways before crossing the street or wearing a helmet during bike rides. Modeling and practicing safety habits with children can reduce the risk of injury (CDC 2023). Children at this age are better able to follow rules and understand cause and effect, especially when caregivers explain the "why" behind the safety practices.

Creating a safe environment also supports healthy risk-taking, which is essential to physical growth. Children need space to climb, jump and explore, but in an area that can be supervised and is well suited for their age. Providing children with clear expectations, routine and concrete instructions allows them to feel secure while building coordination, muscle and confidence. Research shows that providing children with some independence to engage in risk-taking activities builds their ability to assess and manage dangers over time (Brussoni et al. 2012).

PD 3 Safety

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
PD 3 Demonstrates safe practices	Reacts to unexpected noises, lights or sights.	Responds to possible dangers in environment and avoids them when prompted.	Follows simple safety rules and avoids danger.	Follows safety rules and helps others follow rules. Identifies dangerous situations and seeks help.

	Primary		
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Describes reasons for safety rules and reminds others to follow them.	Applies general safety rules to a variety of everyday situations with little prompting.	Identifies emergency situations and how to behave accordingly. Describes how to get help.	Takes appropriate initiative in dangerous and emergency situations.

PD 4 Personal Care

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes 5 Physical Development skills:

PD 1 Gross Motor
Builds strength, coordination and balance of large muscles.

PD 2 Fine Motor
Builds strength and coordination of small movements.

PD 3 Safety
Understands and demonstrates safe practices.

PD 4 Personal Care
Implements self-care routines, such as rest, toileting, handwashing, exercise, and dressing, as well as understanding bodily functions.

PD 5 Nutrition
Understands and follows healthy nutrition routines.

Personal care or self-help skills are an important part of a child's physical development, helping them become more independent as they grow. These skills include activities like feeding, dressing, brushing teeth and toilet training. Infants begin to develop a foundation of self-care skills early in life through activities like holding a bottle, reaching for a spoon or bringing their hands to their mouth. Although still reliant on the caregiver, these early movements assist in building muscles and coordination in preparation for eventual independence. These small actions play a big role in the development of motor skills during the first years of life (CDC 2024b).

Toddlers become more interested in doing things on their own. They start feeding themselves with a spoon, take off their shoes or hats and attempt to help with dressing. This is also when toilet training typically begins. Most children show a readiness for toilet training around 18 months of age (Schum et al. 2002). Encouraging self-help opportunities at this point not only supports physical coordination, but also confidence and independence.

By preschool age, children can do more personal care activities with minimal help. They can dress, wash their hands and brush their teeth with supervision, and they understand basic hygiene habits. These habits require fine motor skills, balance and body awareness, which are rapidly developing during this time. Promoting habits of self-care not only supports physical development but also prepares children for kindergarten and social situations where independence is expected (American Academy of Pediatrics. 2021a).

Helping children master personal care skills means creating opportunities for them to try things on their own, even if it's messy and takes a little longer. Offering them praise and encouragement, step-by-step instructions and child-size tools can make a big difference. Children who are offered consistent opportunities to practice self-care become more independent and perform more effectively in school environments (La Paro, Karen M., Angela C. Williamson, and Bridget Hatfield. 2014.). Supporting personal care development is not merely teaching routines, but helping children develop the physical and emotional tools they will need for independence.

PD 4 Personal Care

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
PD 4a **Implements self-care routines including rest, toileting, handwashing, exercise and dressing**	Cries or moves body when physical needs are not met.	Begins to participate in self-care activities and recognizes the difference between dirty and clean.	With help, participates in self-care routines.	Recognizes personal needs and how to get them met and implements with adult support.
PD 4b **Understands bodily functions**	Explores body parts, such as hands and feet.	Points to body parts when prompted.	Identifies basic body parts.	Describes the function of basic body parts. Can locate body pain.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Meets most personal and hygiene needs when prompted by an adult.	Maintains personal needs and proper hygiene with occasional reminders.	Independently maintains personal and hygiene needs.	Explains how to manage health and role of exercise and rest in self and others.
Explains how germs spread and describes simple strategies for preventing the spread.	When feeling sick, describes symptoms. Describes some contagious diseases.	Identifies basic organs.	Describes the functions of basic organs.

PD 5 Nutrition

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes 5 Physical Development skills:

PD 1 Gross Motor
Builds strength, coordination and balance of large muscles.

PD 2 Fine Motor
Builds strength and coordination of small movements.

PD 3 Safety
Understands and demonstrates safe practices.

PD 4 Personal Care
Implements self-care routines, such as rest, toileting, handwashing, exercise, and dressing, as well as understanding bodily functions.

PD 5 Nutrition
Understands and follows healthy nutrition routines.

Providing children with proper nutrition is essential for their physical development, building strong bones and supporting a healthy weight. It significantly influences brain development, impacting cognitive skills like learning, memory and concentration. Establishing healthy eating habits from infancy through the preschool years has significant long-term advantages. These early patterns are key to reducing the risk of future health problems, such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. By prioritizing nutritious foods early in life, we contribute to children's overall well-being and a higher quality of life (Koziol-Kozakowska 2023).

Providing children with daily access to healthy foods like fruits and vegetables is important for their development. These foods are packed with essential vitamins, minerals and fiber that support healthy growth, development and a strong immune system. Recognizing that early food experiences significantly influence lifelong dietary preferences, it is important to introduce young children to a diverse range of healthy foods, especially the varied colors and textures of fruits and vegetables (CDC, 2025). Exposure to a broad range of nutritional foods establishes a palate that welcomes healthy choices as the child grows. These early introductions are an investment in their lasting health and well-being, building a positive relationship with nutritious foods.

PD 5 Nutrition

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
PD 5 Follows healthy nutrition routines	Cries when hungry.	Communicates the need to eat and feeds self some finger foods.	Begins to identify familiar foods, anticipates the need to eat and feeds self with spoon or other utensil.	Identifies food and serves a portion into a bowl or plate and feeds self.

	Primary		
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Identifies food groups, sorts food and identifies food that is nutritious	Describes how nutritious food helps the body grow and develop and helps to prepare food.	Describes what happens after the consumption of food.	Prepares simple food for self.

Language & Literacy

Language and literacy development refers to a child's capacity to communicate and connect with others through listening, speaking, reading and writing. These foundational competencies are central to cognitive, social and academic development.

Language development is a process that begins even before a child is born and proceeds with rapid growth in the first few years of life. Infants experience a rapid progression in their ability to process and produce language, with major milestones occurring in the first two years of life. During this time, the brain exhibits remarkable plasticity, and early experiences with language-rich environments strongly influence linguistic and cognitive outcomes (Kuhl 2011; Werker and Hensch 2015).

The impact of language and literacy skills upon a child is significant and multi-layered. Research demonstrates that oral language skills developed in early childhood—such as vocabulary, syntax and narrative abilities—are among the most reliable predictors of later academic achievement, particularly in areas like reading fluency, reading comprehension and written expression (Hjetland et al. 2020; Rohloff et al. 2024). These findings highlight the critical importance of fostering language development during the early years to support long-term educational success.

The Science of Reading provides a comprehensive, interdisciplinary body of evidence on how children acquire reading skills. This research underscores that reading is not a naturally acquired process, but one that must be explicitly and systematically taught over time. Foundational reading competencies include phonological awareness, phonics, alphabet knowledge, vocabulary, reading comprehension, fluency, oral language comprehension, writing and concepts of print (Wright et al. 2022). Effective instruction in these areas is most successful when delivered through structured, intentional strategies (Wolff and Gustafsson 2022; Roberts 2021), while also incorporating developmentally appropriate practices, such as play-based learning (Morrow and Rand 2021).

Children acquire language and communication skills through consistent interaction with caregivers during daily routines and social experiences. From early infancy, infants engage in intentional communicative behaviors—such as gestures and vocalizations—which are precursors to verbal language. These behaviors reflect a foundational desire to communicate and play a critical role in the emergence of expressive and receptive language skills (Donnellan et al. 2019).

Two primary domains of early language development are widely recognized: receptive language, encompassing the ability to listen and understand spoken language, and expressive language, referring to the ability to articulate thoughts, feelings and ideas. The transition from infancy to toddlerhood is marked by the rapid advancement of both domains, driven in part by the quality and frequency of caregiver-child interactions (Yang et al. 2021). This developmental progression reflects the evolving relationship between language and cognition. As Vygotsky (1962, 125) described, the interplay between thought and speech "is not a thing, but a process, a continual movement back and forth from thought to word and from word to thought." Language, therefore, becomes a vital tool through which young children construct meaning, express internal states and engage with the world around them.

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes seven skills and 15 sub-skills.

LLD 1	**Listening**	**LLD 1a** Understands and interprets language
		LLD 1b Follows directions
LLD 2	**Communication**	**LLD 2a** Uses language to express information and ask/answer questions
		LLD 2b Uses conversational skills
		LLD 2c Uses sentence structure
		LLD 2d Uses and expands vocabulary
LLD 3	**Phonological Awareness**	**LLD 3a** Rhyme
		LLD 3b Hears Large Units of Sound
		LLD 3c Hears Small Units of Sound
LLD 4	**Alphabetic Knowledge**	**LLD 4** Identifies letters, makes letter-sound connections and decodes words
LLD 5	**Concepts of Print**	**LLD 5** Uses print concepts and explores books and other text
LLD 6	**Reading Comprehension**	**LLD 6a** Responds to text
		LLD 6b Retells, asks and answers questions about a text or story
LLD 7	**Writing**	**LLD 7a** Emergent Writing
		LLD 7b Uses writing to represent meaning

LLD 1 Listening

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 7 Language & Literacy Development skills:

LLD 1 Listening
Understands and interprets language (both words and gestures). Acts in response to language and verbal cues.

LLD 2 Communication
Uses verbal and nonverbal communication to express ideas with increasingly complex vocabulary and sentences.

LLD 3 Phonological Awareness
Recognizes rhymes, hears large units of sound like syllables and discerns smaller units of sound, such as phonemes.

LLD 4 Alphabetic Knowledge
Identifies letters and symbols in print and understands that letters represent sounds.

LLD 5 Concepts of Print
Uses print concepts and explores books and other text.

LLD 6 Reading Comprehension
Responds to stories and narratives, as well as retelling, asking and answering questions about the content.

LLD 7 Writing
Demonstrates emergent writing to represent meaning.

Listening comprehension refers to a child's ability to hear, understand and act on spoken language. It plays a key role in language development and is strongly linked to later reading comprehension (Hogan et al. 2014; Lervåg et al. 2018). Unlike hearing, which is passive, listening requires children to attend to and process spoken language (Liu 2020).

Listening is the first language skill children develop and forms the foundation for later language and cognitive growth. Children learn to speak by hearing language in their environment, so ensuring they can hear well is essential. When hearing loss goes undetected, children miss crucial language input and may experience delays in communication (Tomblin et al. 2015).

Listening comprehension includes children's receptive language skills, which can be described as their ability to listen and understand spoken language. Receptive language skills include such things as understanding the names of common objects, knowing the names of family members and the ability to follow a direction, such as "come here" or "give the toy to Mommy." By understanding verbal directions, children can respond to, recall and follow instructions given verbally. Teachers continuously give directions in classrooms (Goodson and Layzer, 2009) and kindergarten teachers often report that the greatest difficulty in transitioning into kindergarten is with following directions (Curby et al. 2010).

LLD 1 Listening

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
LLD 1a **Understands and interprets language**	Turns head toward the person speaking.	Shows understanding of a variety of single familiar words, such as by pointing at named objects, people or body parts.	Shows understanding of a wide variety of phrases and sentences.	Listens, then responds appropriately.
LLD 1b **Follows directions**	Responds to speaking in the environment and imitates actions.	With prompts and gestures, follows a one-step direction.	Follows related two-step directions given verbally.	Follows unrelated two-step directions given verbally.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Listens and understands inferred requests.	Shows understanding of a series of complex statements that explain how or why.	Shows understanding about key details from information or stories shared verbally.	Listens to gather new information and demonstrates understanding.
With prompting, follows multi-step directions given verbally.	Follows multi-step directions given verbally.	Remembers and follows previous rules or directions given verbally.	Responds to verbal statements that have implied directions or requests.

LLD 2 Communication

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 7 Language & Literacy Development skills:

LLD 1 Listening
Understands and interprets language (both words and gestures). Acts in response to language and verbal cues.

LLD 2 Communication
Uses verbal and nonverbal communication to express ideas with increasingly complex vocabulary and sentences.

LLD 3 Phonological Awareness
Recognizes rhymes, hears large units of sound like syllables and discerns smaller units of sound, such as phonemes.

LLD 4 Alphabetic Knowledge
Identifies letters and symbols in print and understands that letters represent sounds.

LLD 5 Concepts of Print
Uses print concepts and explores books and other text.

LLD 6 Reading Comprehension
Responds to stories and narratives, as well as retelling, asking and answering questions about the content.

LLD 7 Writing
Demonstrates emergent writing to represent meaning.

Communication is a child's ability to use spoken or signed language to share thoughts, ideas and emotions. Early exposure to rich caregiver speech strongly predicts later language development (Swanson et al. 2019). Strong communication skills also support self-regulation and independence, helping children express needs and reduce frustration. Children with more advanced language tend to show better emotional control, while those with smaller vocabularies may experience more tantrums and behavioral challenges (Morgan et al. 2015; Manning et al. 2019).

Language development is closely linked to school readiness and later academic achievement. Early communication skills—such as producing sounds, understanding grammar and building vocabulary—form the foundation for literacy and learning (Morgan et al. 2015). Vocabulary includes both receptive language (words a child understands) and expressive language (words a child uses), and expands through meaningful interaction and exposure to language-rich environments.

Expressive language encompasses both verbal and pre-verbal skills, such as crying to signal hunger, waving "bye-bye" or pointing while vocalizing. These early gestures evolve into words and sentences that allow children to convey increasingly complex ideas. Strong expressive language fosters confidence and social connection, laying the groundwork for long-term academic and interpersonal success.

LLD 2 Communication

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
LLD 2a **Uses language to express information and ask/answer questions**	Uses vocalizations and gestures to communicate.	Uses a few words, signs or word-like sounds to communicate.	Communicates needs, desires and ideas or asks simple questions.	Uses descriptions and observations to communicate information and answer questions, or asks more complex questions.
LLD 2b **Uses conversational skills**	Responds with babbles or sounds with prompting.	Responds to one exchange, but is not on topic.	Responds on topic for one exchange.	Stays on topic for two to three exchanges.
LLD 2c **Uses sentence structure**	Mimics single sounds.	Communicates using one- to two-word sentences.	Communicates using two- to four-word sentences.	Communicates in sentences. May not always follow grammatical rules.
LLD 2d **Uses and expands vocabulary**	Uses sounds and gestures to communicate.	Repeats words heard frequently in environment.	Identifies familiar people, places and objects. Asks what a specific person or object is called.	Describes familiar people, places and objects. Seeks additional words for new ways to describe.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Talks about activities or tells stories. Answers "who," "what," "when," "why" and "how" questions.	Explains personal thoughts about familiar people, places and events.	Discusses ideas and feelings about a wide range of age-appropriate topics.	Uses expression, tone and pacing to reinforce the meaning of what they are communicating.
Engages in conversations through multiple exchanges.	Initiates conversation with adults and peers.	Demonstrate understanding of conversation norms, such as listening, taking turns talking, distance between talkers and body orientation.	Asks for clarification about information or topics that occur during a conversation.
Communicates in simple, complete sentences.	Uses question words in speech. Speaks audibly. Makes nouns plural by adding /s/. Uses common prepositions.	Uses many types of sentences, including simple and compound. Uses verb tense to express past, present and future.	Uses common irregular plural nouns and conjugated verbs.
Includes new and technical words in everyday conversations. Asks what unfamiliar words mean.	Uses new or technical words learned in conversations or through reading. Compares words and their meanings.	Identifies words whose meaning are similar. Determines the meaning of unknown words from context or root word.	Explains the difference between closely related words. Uses multiple strategies to determine and learn the meaning of unfamiliar words.

LLD 3 Phonological Awareness

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 7 Language & Literacy Development skills:

LLD 1 Listening
Understands and interprets language (both words and gestures). Acts in response to language and verbal cues.

LLD 2 Communication
Uses verbal and nonverbal communication to express ideas with increasingly complex vocabulary and sentences.

LLD 3 Phonological Awareness
Recognizes rhymes, hears large units of sound like syllables and discerns smaller units of sound, such as phonemes.

LLD 4 Alphabetic Knowledge
Identifies letters and symbols in print and understands that letters represent sounds.

LLD 5 Concepts of Print
Uses print concepts and explores books and other text.

LLD 6 Reading Comprehension
Responds to stories and narratives, as well as retelling, asking and answering questions about the content.

LLD 7 Writing
Demonstrates emergent writing to represent meaning.

Phonological awareness is a child's understanding of the sound structures of speech and the ability to manipulate those structures. It involves the ability to recognize and play with the sounds in spoken words, from larger units like syllables and rhyming parts of words down to the individual sounds or phonemes (International Literacy Association, 2020). Phonological awareness encompasses a broad range of sound skills, such as rhyming, syllable clapping and alliteration.

Phonemic awareness, a subset of phonological awareness, refers specifically to recognizing and manipulating the smallest sound units, phonemes, in words. Phonemic awareness is the most advanced level of phonological awareness because it requires detecting and working with individual phonemes (for example, identifying the /b/ sound at the beginning of "ball" or blending the sounds /c/–/a/–/t/ to make "cat").

Phonological awareness in the preschool years lays a critical foundation for learning to read. Decades of research have shown that a child's skill at detecting and manipulating sounds is one of the strongest predictors of their later reading and spelling success (Snowling et al. 2021; Landerl et al. 2022). Providing purposeful, developmentally appropriate instruction in phonological awareness, such as through games and activities, during preschool and kindergarten has been shown to boost children's reading-related skills and make learning to decode and spell much easier (Porta and Ramirez, 2019; Rice et al. 2022).

Young children typically develop phonological awareness gradually through exposure and practice. Before they can isolate individual phonemes, many 3- to 5-year-olds first tune into larger sound patterns, like rhymes (e.g., knowing "cat" and "bat" sound alike) and alliteration (noticing when words start with the same sound, like tongue twisters). With guidance, they learn to break words into syllables, blend syllables or sounds together and later segment words into their component phonemes. This progression relies on auditory discrimination skills – the child's ability to hear and differentiate sounds – and it accelerates with playful, intentional practice. Early childhood educators often use music and playful language to nurture these skills. Oral language activities like nursery rhymes, songs, chants and storybooks with repetitive sound patterns get children clapping to syllables and giggling at rhymes, which helps them "tune in" to the sound structure of words. For example, singing rhyming songs, playing "I spy" games with beginning sounds or engaging in interactive fingerplays (rhythmic rhymes with hand motions) encourages children to listen for and manipulate sounds in words. Such experiences can target multiple levels of phonological awareness at once, from hearing whole rhymes down to picking out initial or ending sounds–all while keeping learning fun.

Explicit yet playful practice with sound manipulation (for instance, asking a child to change the /m/ in "mat" to /c/ to make "cat") can significantly strengthen phonemic awareness. In fact, research in the past decade has demonstrated that young children make notable gains in phonological and phonemic awareness when adults deliberately incorporate these kinds of activities into daily routines (International Literacy Association, 2020).

LLD 3 Phonological Awareness

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
LLD 3a Rhyme	Listens to and moves to rhyming songs.	Repeats the last word in familiar rhymes when prompted.	Suggests a missing rhyming word within a poem or song.	Identifies when two words rhyme.
LLD 3b Hears Large Units of Sound	Babbles and vocalizes using sound, volume and inflection.	Repeats words or short sentences.	Shows awareness of separate words in spoken language.	Blends large units of sound, such as compound words, syllables or onset-rime.
LLD 3c Hears Small Units of Sound	Coos and makes sounds such as "oo" and "ah."	Imitates or repeats sounds and tones.	Engages in word and sound play through songs and games.	Identifies and produces words that have the same beginning sound.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Produces rhyming words when given a word.	Rhymes with real and nonsensical words.	Independently identifies and repeats rhyming word pairs from a poem or song.	Creates an original rhyming song or poem.
Segments large units of sound, such as compound words, syllables or onset-rime.	Deletes large units of sound.	Substitutes large units of sound.	Manipulates, blends, substitutes and deletes large units of sound.
Identifies the end sound of a word and blends two-phoneme words.	Identifies medial sound of a word and blends CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words.	Segments phonemes in words.	Substitutes and deletes phonemes in words.

LLD 4 Alphabetic Knowledge

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 7 Language & Literacy Development skills:

LLD 1 Listening
Understands and interprets language (both words and gestures). Acts in response to language and verbal cues.

LLD 2 Communication
Uses verbal and nonverbal communication to express ideas with increasingly complex vocabulary and sentences.

LLD 3 Phonological Awareness
Recognizes rhymes, hears large units of sound like syllables and discerns smaller units of sound, such as phonemes.

LLD 4 Alphabetic Knowledge
Identifies letters and symbols in print and understands that letters represent sounds.

LLD 5 Concepts of Print
Uses print concepts and explores books and other text.

LLD 6 Reading Comprehension
Responds to stories and narratives, as well as retelling, asking and answering questions about the content.

LLD 7 Writing
Demonstrates emergent writing to represent meaning.

Alphabetic knowledge, the understanding of letter names and the sounds they represent, is a foundational skill in early literacy and a strong predictor of future reading success (Roberts et al. 2018; Castles et al. 2018). This knowledge includes both letter-name recognition and letter-sound correspondence, which are related but distinct skills. Studies confirm that learning letter names supports learning letter sounds, especially when the name contains the corresponding sound, for example, the name of B "bee" starts with /b/ (Treiman et al. 2020).

Effective literacy instruction targets both of these skills simultaneously. Teaching letter names and sounds together has been shown to yield better outcomes than teaching either in isolation (Roberts et al. 2019). Children benefit from explicit, systematic phonics instruction, particularly when it is presented in decontextualized formats that isolate individual letters and sounds. Research shows that direct teaching strategies, such as paired-associate learning, which links visual letter forms to their corresponding names and sounds, are especially effective. Research has found that activities like using letter cards, interactive games and targeted practice significantly improve children's letter recognition. When these lessons are delivered in short, playful sessions, they remain highly engaging and motivating for preschoolers (Roberts 2021).

Understanding letters as symbols for sounds is also key to symbolic thinking. Preschoolers who recognize that written words consistently represent spoken language are taking important cognitive steps toward reading (Treiman et al. 2016). Letter-sound knowledge supports phonemic awareness and both are central to decoding, spelling and reading fluency. Strong letter-name and letter-sound knowledge gives children the tools to sound out words, or decode, and to spell phonetically, both of which are foundational to reading and writing. As Castles, Rastle and Nation (2018) observe in their comprehensive review, achieving this alphabetic insight is a critical phase in becoming a skilled reader, and it requires both phonemic awareness (recognizing individual sounds in words) and grapheme-phoneme knowledge (knowing which letters correspond to which sounds).

LLD 4 Alphabetic Knowledge

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
LLD 4 **Identifies letters, makes letter-sound connections and decodes words**	Explores books and toys with letters and related images.	Participates in letter songs and activities.	Recognizes the first letter and letter sound in their name.	Identifies five to ten upper- and lowercase letters and letter sounds.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Identifies eleven to twenty upper- and lowercase letters and letter sounds.	Identifies all upper- and lowercase letters and letter sounds.	Decodes words with long and short vowel sounds, digraphs and blends with increasing automaticity.	Applies phonics strategies and word analysis skills to decode words, such as irregular high-frequency and unfamiliar words with increasing automaticity.

LLD 5 Concepts of Print

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 7 Language & Literacy Development skills:

LLD 1 Listening
Understands and interprets language (both words and gestures). Acts in response to language and verbal cues.

LLD 2 Communication
Uses verbal and nonverbal communication to express ideas with increasingly complex vocabulary and sentences.

LLD 3 Phonological Awareness
Recognizes rhymes, hears large units of sound like syllables and discerns smaller units of sound, such as phonemes.

LLD 4 Alphabetic Knowledge
Identifies letters and symbols in print and understands that letters represent sounds.

LLD 5 Concepts of Print
Uses print concepts and explores books and other text.

LLD 6 Reading Comprehension
Responds to stories and narratives, as well as retelling, asking and answering questions about the content.

LLD 7 Writing
Demonstrates emergent writing to represent meaning.

Concepts of print refer to a child's understanding of how written language works. This includes knowing how to handle books, recognize letters and words, understand the direction of text (left to right, top to bottom) and realize that print conveys meaning. Children typically develop knowledge of print through everyday literacy experiences and shared reading with caregivers or teachers. These interactions help children learn to identify parts of a book, track text as it is read and connect spoken and written language (Han and Neuharth-Pritchett 2015).

During shared reading, children benefit when adults point out print features—such as the title, cover and individual words—and model reading behaviors like tracking text with a finger or discussing story elements. These print-referencing practices are simple but powerful ways to help children gain early literacy knowledge (Han and Neuharth-Pritchett 2015). As children's print awareness grows, they begin to understand that writing represents spoken language and carries meaning (Snowling and Hulme 2005). This understanding lays the groundwork for future reading and writing development.

LLD 5 Concepts of Print

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
LLD 5 **Uses print concepts and explores books and other text**	Opens and closes books, looks at them and points to pictures.	Recognizes if pictures are right-side up. Turns pages from the front to the back of the book.	Distinguishes between pictures and words. Identifies the front and back cover.	Distinguishes between letters and words. Indicates where to start reading on a page.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Identifies some punctuation and recognizes spaces between words.	Recognizes common types of text, such as poems, storybooks or fact books. Names author and illustrator. Identifies punctuation.	Explains the difference between books that tell stories and those that give information.	Identifies and uses text features to find information in texts.

LLD 6 Reading Comprehension

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 7 Language & Literacy Development skills:

LLD 1 Listening
Understands and interprets language (both words and gestures). Acts in response to language and verbal cues.

LLD 2 Communication
Uses verbal and nonverbal communication to express ideas with increasingly complex vocabulary and sentences.

LLD 3 Phonological Awareness
Recognizes rhymes, hears large units of sound like syllables and discerns smaller units of sound, such as phonemes.

LLD 4 Alphabetic Knowledge
Identifies letters and symbols in print and understands that letters represent sounds.

LLD 5 Concepts of Print
Uses print concepts and explores books and other text.

LLD 6 Reading Comprehension
Responds to stories and narratives, as well as retelling, asking and answering questions about the content.

LLD 7 Writing
Demonstrates emergent writing to represent meaning.

Reading comprehension is the ability to make meaning from text and begins developing well before children can read independently. In early childhood, especially from birth through preschool, comprehension emerges through listening to stories, engaging in conversation and participating in shared reading (Petscher et al. 2018). Foundational skills include retelling stories, asking and answering questions and making personal connections to texts (Cartwright and Guajardo 2015; Cao and Kim 2021).

Retelling is a powerful indicator of early comprehension. When children recount stories in their own words, they demonstrate understanding of narrative structure and key details (Cao and Kim 2021). Asking and answering questions, especially during shared reading, encourages children to process information, make predictions and clarify ideas. Dialogic reading, where adults prompt children to engage with the story, improves both language and comprehension outcomes (Pillinger and Vardy 2022).

Oral language forms the foundation of comprehension. Receptive and expressive vocabulary, grammatical skills and listening comprehension all contribute to a child's ability to understand stories (Jago et al. 2025). Children with stronger vocabulary and syntax are better able to follow plots, interpret character motivations and answer inferential questions (Tompkins et al. 2013). These skills begin developing in infancy and are shaped by language-rich environments, including regular conversations and read-alouds.

Shared reading is a key strategy for building comprehension. It exposes children to new vocabulary and more complex language structures. When adults ask open-ended or inferential questions during reading, children engage more deeply with the content (Blewitt and Langan 2016). Interactive approaches like dialogic reading are especially effective in promoting vocabulary, narrative understanding and engagement (Noble et al. 2019; Pillinger and Vardy 2022).

Connecting stories to personal experiences also supports comprehension. When children relate a story to their own lives, they are better able to understand and remember it. Activating prior knowledge during reading helps children build meaning and fosters engagement (Cartwright and Guajardo 2015). Teachers can prompt these connections by asking questions like, "Have you ever felt like this character?"

Comprehension is also supported by cognitive factors like attention and working memory. Children who can understand others' thoughts and feelings tend to be better at inferring character motivations and story outcomes (DeBruin-Parecki and Cartwright 2023). These cognitive skills can be nurtured through storytelling, pretend play and rich social interactions.

LLD 6 Reading Comprehension

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
LLD 6a Responds to text	Interacts by reaching for or patting when a book is read.	Chooses and holds a book and looks intently at each page.	Talks about pictures and ideas in familiar stories.	Anticipates what comes next in familiar stories. Expresses likes or dislikes within the story.
LLD 6b Retells, asks and answers questions about a text or story	Looks at and listens to books read aloud by an adult.	With prompting, answers "where" questions by pointing to pictures and repeating words from familiar stories.	Identifies the characters and setting in a story.	Retells portions of a story using pictures, gestures or props.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Relates to the characters or events of the story and shares a similar experience or object from their own life.	With support, compares similarities between two texts.	Makes many text-to-text, text-to-self and text-to-real-world connections. Compares similarities and differences between texts.	Evaluates texts based on content, personal experiences and knowledge of the world. Compares the main points of two texts.
With prompting, answers simple questions about the characters, setting and events in a story and retells a story.	Asks and answers questions about the characters, setting and events in a story and retells the events of a story in sequence.	Makes inferences about character goals or causal connections in a story, and retells stories in sequence using more details.	Summarizes texts and their messages. Describes the points of view of various characters.

LLD 7 Writing

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 7 Language & Literacy Development skills:

LLD 1 Listening
Understands and interprets language (both words and gestures). Acts in response to language and verbal cues.

LLD 2 Communication
Uses verbal and nonverbal communication to express ideas with increasingly complex vocabulary and sentences.

LLD 3 Phonological Awareness
Recognizes rhymes, hears large units of sound like syllables and discerns smaller units of sound, such as phonemes.

LLD 4 Alphabetic Knowledge
Identifies letters and symbols in print and understands that letters represent sounds.

LLD 5 Concepts of Print
Uses print concepts and explores books and other text.

LLD 6 Reading Comprehension
Responds to stories and narratives, as well as retelling, asking and answering questions about the content.

LLD 7 Writing
Demonstrates emergent writing to represent meaning.

Emergent writing refers to children's earliest attempts to express ideas through marks, scribbles, drawings and letter-like forms. This process begins in infancy and continues through preschool and early elementary years as children develop an understanding that writing represents language (Rowe 2018). Children progress through typical stages: starting with scribbles and drawings and moving to letter-like forms, then to name writing and invented spelling. These stages reflect three key domains: conceptual knowledge (understanding that print carries meaning), procedural knowledge (how to form letters and words) and generative knowledge (creating original messages) (Puranik and Lonigan 2014).

Name writing is often the first word children learn to write and is strongly associated with early literacy skills, like phonological awareness and letter knowledge (Puranik and Lonigan 2012). Another key milestone is invented spelling, where children use letters to represent the sounds in words. For example, writing "KAK" for "cake" reflects early phonological and alphabetic knowledge. Invented spelling is not only a sign of development, it also strengthens reading and spelling (Sénéchal et al. 2023).

Educators play a critical role in fostering early writing. Research shows that children engage more in writing when classrooms offer varied materials, daily opportunities and positive reinforcement for all forms of writing, including scribbles and invented spelling (Gerde et al. 2012).

LLD 7 Writing

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
LLD 7a Emergent Writing	With adult support, makes a mark with a writing tool or other material.	Makes random marks or draws with writing tools.	Marks or scribbles. Begins to make letter-like forms.	Writes letter-like forms or mock letters and letter strings from left to right.
LLD 7b Uses writing to represent meaning	Explores various tools used to write.	Makes handprints or fingerprints with adults.	Scribbles or draws marks as a representation of an object or person.	Uses a combination of drawing, dictating and writing to explain who or what something represents.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Writes first name and some letters. Begins to use inventive spelling. Letters may be out of order or backward.	Writes first and last name and upper- and lowercase letters appropriately. Writes short phrases with more accuracy.	Writes simple sentences. Begins to use conventional spelling.	Writes simple and compound sentences. Uses punctuation. Checks and corrects spelling.
Uses a combination of drawing, dictating and writing to record an event or idea.	Draws and writes to express ideas or share an opinion.	Writes to give information about a topic, including some facts. Provides a concluding statement.	Writes ideas or groups information in logical order. Uses descriptive words in writing.

Mathematics

Mathematics is a foundational domain in early childhood that supports the development of skills essential for long-term academic success. These skills include counting, number sense, spatial awareness, pattern recognition, sorting, comparing and measuring. Research shows that early mathematical reasoning is linked to later achievement, not only in math but across subjects (Onoshakpokaiye 2023; Baroody et al. 2009).

From birth to age six, children develop core mathematical concepts through exploration and interaction. These early experiences form the basis for problem-solving and critical thinking abilities (Björklund et al. 2020; Bowman et al. 2001). Children are naturally curious and begin to notice differences in quantity, shape and size through play and everyday activities (Gopnik et al. 2001). Play provides a powerful context for learning math. Through block building, sorting and shape manipulation, children develop spatial and reasoning skills (Sarama and Clements 2009). However, adults play a vital role in introducing math vocabulary and guiding deeper understanding during these activities (Bowman et al. 2001).

Math and literacy development are interconnected. Studies show that when math is taught alongside reading, children often gain more than when taught in isolation (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council 2015; National Research Council 2009). Shared reading, storytelling and "math talk" enrich both language and number sense.

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes six math skills with twelve sub-skills.

M 1 Number Sense	**M 1a** Verbally counts numbers
	M 1b Identifies and writes numerals
	M 1c Counting one-to-one, and composing and decomposing numbers
	M 1d Number Quantities and Comparison
	M 1e Addition and Subtraction
M 2 Spatial Awareness	**M 2a** Understands how objects move in space
	M 2b Determines object location
M 3 Shapes	**M 3** Identifies shapes and their characteristics
M 4 Measurement	**M 4a** Measures and Estimates
	M 4b Compares and Orders
M 5 Patterns	**M 5** Copies, Creates, and Extends Patterns
M 6 Classification	**M 6** Sorts and graphs

M 1 Number Sense

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 6 Mathematics skills:

M 1 Number Sense
Develops number sense by understanding concepts of number and quantity through counting, one-to-one correspondence, quantities and comparisons.

M 2 Spatial Awareness
Explores spatial awareness by understanding how objects move in space and determining their location.

M 3 Shapes
Identifies shapes and their characteristics

M 4 Measurement
Measures and estimates quantities, and compares and orders objects based on various attributes.

M 5 Patterns
Copies, Creates, and Extends Patterns

M 6 Classification
Organizes data through classification by sorting objects and graphing for visual representation and analysis.

Number sense encompasses children's ability to identify, understand and manipulate numbers and quantities, including skills like numeral recognition, one-to-one correspondence, counting and simple operations (Clements and Sarama 2009). It emerges in stages—from rote verbal counting and recognizing numerals in toddlers, to understanding quantity, cardinality and using numbers to solve problems in preschool and early primary years.

Research suggests that the benefits of strong early number sense endure for many years and that the learning gains that children make in early mathematics are especially predictive of their later math success (Watts et al. 2014). Specific skills, like counting and understanding cardinality in preschool, are especially predictive of fifth-grade outcomes (Nguyen et al. 2016).

Gaps in number sense at kindergarten entry, particularly among children from disadvantaged backgrounds, can persist without early intervention (Jordan et al. 2022). For educators, recognizing number sense in everyday classroom activities—such as when children count snacks, compare who has "more" or solve problems during play—provides opportunities to extend learning. Research encourages using intentional, playful instruction to build number sense, as early gains lead to stronger arithmetic and reasoning abilities (Raghubar and Barnes 2017).

M 1 Number Sense

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
M 1a Verbally counts numbers	Listens to counting songs and chants.	Says or sings random numbers, may be out of order.	Verbally counts to five.	Verbally counts to ten.
M 1b Identifies and writes numerals	Sees numbers in everyday context.	Begins to identify numbers. Identifies the numeral 1.	Identifies numerals up to five.	Identifies numerals up to ten and understands the numeral reflects the quantity of objects. Writes numerals up to five.
M 1c Counting one-to-one, and composing and decomposing numbers	Points to objects.	Uses one-to-one correspondence to match objects or pictures.	Points to one object at a time while counting up to five.	Counts up to ten objects and indicates that the last number counted tells how many objects were counted.
M 1d Number Quantities and Comparison	Looks for an object that is taken out of sight.	Recognizes amounts up to two without counting.	Recognizes amounts up to three without counting.	Recognizes amounts up to five without counting. Creates and counts groups of up to five objects and identifies which group has more, less or if they are equal.
M 1e Addition and Subtraction	Watches an adult add or take away toys.	Adds to and removes objects from a group as prompted.	Adds and subtracts by adding or removing objects and demonstrating understanding of the total up to three.	Adds and subtracts by adding to or removing objects and recounting to find the total up to five.

	Primary		
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Verbally counts to twenty.	Verbally counts to 100 by ones and tens. Counts forward from a given number.	Verbally counts in sequence to 120 from a given number.	Verbally counts by fives, tens and hundreds to 1000.
Identifies numerals up to twenty and understands the numeral reflects the quantity of objects. Writes numerals up to ten.	Identifies numerals up to fifty. Writes numerals up to twenty.	Identifies numerals to 100 and understands place value for two- to three-digit numbers.	Identifies and writes numerals to 1000. Understands place value for three- to four-digit numbers.
Count up to twenty objects and indicates that the last number counted tells how many objects were counted.	Understands that a whole number is greater than its parts and can identify the number combinations that add up to five with prompting.	Identifies the number combinations that add up to five.	Decomposes numbers less than or equal to ten in more than one way.
Creates and counts groups of up to five objects and recognizes which group has more, even if the objects in the larger group are smaller.	Creates and counts groups of up to ten objects and identifies which group has more, less or if they are equal.	Uses the concept of a number line to compare which numbers are closer to each other.	Uses place value to compare numbers.
Adds and subtracts by adding to or removing objects and recounting to find the total up to ten.	Adds and subtracts by counting on or counting up to for totals up to ten.	Uses addition and subtraction strategies to solve problems with totals up to twenty.	Solves for the unknown in one- and two-step addition or subtraction word problems. Explains problem-solving strategies.

M 2 Spatial Awareness

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 6 Mathematics skills:

M 1 Number Sense
Develops number sense by understanding concepts of number and quantity through counting, one-to-one correspondence, quantities and comparisons.

M 2 Spatial Awareness
Explores spatial awareness by understanding how objects move in space and determining their location.

M 3 Shapes
Identifies shapes and their characteristics

M 4 Measurement
Measures and estimates quantities, and compares and orders objects based on various attributes.

M 5 Patterns
Copies, Creates, and Extends Patterns

M 6 Classification
Organizes data through classification by sorting objects and graphing for visual representation and analysis.

Spatial awareness refers to a child developing understanding of space, dimension and the relative position of objects, including their own body, in relation to other objects and people. This foundational cognitive ability enables children to locate objects, navigate their environments and comprehend spatial relationships. It encompasses skills such as flipping, rotating and mentally transforming objects, abilities that are crucial for problem-solving and later academic success (Seefeldt and Galper, 2008; Fox et al. 2025).

From birth, children demonstrate an innate sense of spatial awareness. Infants can track movement through space and show a preference for human-like faces, indicating early spatial discrimination (Platas 2017). As children grow, their spatial reasoning is further refined through active engagement with their environment. Concrete experiences, such as manipulating puzzles, playing with blocks and participating in guessing games, provide essential kinesthetic and visual-spatial feedback. These activities not only strengthen fine motor and perceptual skills but also prepare children for the mental manipulation of objects, which is a key step toward abstract thinking (Schindler 2002).

Language plays a significant role in expressing and reinforcing spatial concepts. As children's vocabulary develops, they begin to use spatial terms like "on," "under," "over," "behind" and "between" to describe the location of objects. This spatial language allows them to communicate thoughts, describe their surroundings and articulate needs more clearly ("Ball under bed!"). The ability to understand and use spatial language is closely linked to later success in both mathematical reasoning and verbal skills, particularly those related to following multi-step directions (Murata and Tan 2009; Temple et al. 2020).

M 2 Spatial Awareness

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
M 2a Understands how objects move in space	Tries to put one object inside another.	Purposely manipulates objects, such as turning or spinning them, to discover how things move or fit into a space.	Recognizes objects that are upside-down and turns them right-side up. Puts together three pieces to create a whole object.	Moves objects to assemble a whole, such as simple puzzles with prompting.
M 2b Determines object location	Participates as caregiver raises arms or legs and says up/down.	Follows simple positional directions such as on/off, over/under and up/down.	Finds or places objects next to, between, in front of or behind self.	When prompted, places objects next to, between, in front of or behind objects not related to self.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Moves objects to assemble a whole, such as simple puzzles. May take several attempts to determine the correct orientation.	Identifies and corrects the orientation of familiar objects and symbols. Assembles a puzzle without using a guide.	Creates complex pictures or objects by putting together or taking apart shapes.	Determines when shapes have been slid, turned or flipped and describes the translation.
Explains the location of an object in relation to another object.	Makes simple maps or models to represent the location of objects.	Gives and follows positional instructions to find objects.	Uses representations, coordinates systems and maps to identify locations of objects or places.

M 3 Shapes

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 6 Mathematics skills:

M 1 Number Sense
Develops number sense by understanding concepts of number and quantity through counting, one-to-one correspondence, quantities and comparisons.

M 2 Spatial Awareness
Explores spatial awareness by understanding how objects move in space and determining their location.

M 3 Shapes
Identifies shapes and their characteristics

M 4 Measurement
Measures and estimates quantities, and compares and orders objects based on various attributes.

M 5 Patterns
Copies, Creates, and Extends Patterns

M 6 Classification
Organizes data through classification by sorting objects and graphing for visual representation and analysis.

A child's understanding of shapes involves the ability to identify, name, recreate and compare common two- and three-dimensional shapes. This foundational knowledge includes recognizing and manipulating the characteristics of geometric forms, such as circles, squares, triangles, cubes and cylinders. Developing shape awareness is not only critical for early geometry learning but also enhances overall spatial reasoning and cognitive development.

Geometry in early childhood education encompasses more than just identifying shapes. It includes children's understanding of spatial properties in their environment. According to Clements (2019), a key early-geometry skill is when children recognize common shapes, name them and describe their characteristics. For example, noting how many sides or corners a shape has. As young children grow, their ability to use math vocabulary to describe their surroundings strengthens their geometric reasoning (Ginsburg 1989).

This ability to describe and view shapes in their environment contributes to a broader awareness of spatial relationships, which is strongly correlated with later success in geometry and mathematics (Hindman et al. 2010). Mastering shapes also allows children to break complex shapes into smaller components and reassemble shapes into new forms. Research by Bobis (2008) suggests that this kind of part-whole manipulation in geometry carries over to mathematics–it helps children learn how whole numbers can be split into parts and thereby strengthens their number sense.

Geometry is recognized as a fundamental cognitive skill for young children and serves as a "unifying theme" in the math curriculum. It emphasizes the use of concrete objects and shapes, making it highly accessible for young children. For example, toddlers and preschoolers begin to identify familiar shapes, such as circles, squares and triangles, and use shape names to describe items in their environment (Aslan et al. 2024). The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (2006) recommends that geometry, including shape instruction, be taught using hands-on meaningful activities.

M 3 Shapes

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
M 3 Identifies shapes and their characteristics	Manipulates objects that are a variety of shapes.	Matches two identical shapes.	Identifies one to three two-dimensional shapes.	Identifies four to six two-dimensional shapes.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Identifies sides and angles or "corners" of shapes and uses materials to construct a shape when given a target shape to view.	Compares shapes by describing the attributes, such as the number and length of the sides and the number of angles or "corners" and recognizes shapes regardless of orientation.	Describes objects in the environment as two- and three-dimensional shapes. Identifies one to four three-dimensional shapes.	Separates a shape into halves, thirds and fourths.

M 4 Measurement

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 6 Mathematics skills:

M 1 Number Sense
Develops number sense by understanding concepts of number and quantity through counting, one-to-one correspondence, quantities and comparisons.

M 2 Spatial Awareness
Explores spatial awareness by understanding how objects move in space and determining their location.

M 3 Shapes
Identifies shapes and their characteristics

M 4 Measurement
Measures and estimates quantities, and compares and orders objects based on various attributes.

M 5 Patterns
Copies, Creates, and Extends Patterns

M 6 Classification
Organizes data through classification by sorting objects and graphing for visual representation and analysis.

Measurement is a foundational mathematical concept that includes estimation, seriation and the use of both standard and nonstandard tools to determine attributes such as length, size, weight, volume and duration (Erikson Institute's Early Math Collaborative 2014). Early measurement experiences support children's understanding of "how much" of something they have and are critical in developing abstract mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills (VanDerHeyden et al. 2011).

Children begin acquiring measurement concepts in infancy and refine them throughout early childhood. Their understanding progresses developmentally, starting with intuitive comparisons, moving to informal or nonstandard strategies (e.g., using hands, blocks or string) and ultimately to standard units and instruments (Szilágyi, Clements, & Sarama 2013). Everyday experiences, such as comparing toy lengths, food portions or cup capacities, provide opportunities for this learning. These hands-on interactions foster vocabulary acquisition with terms like longer, shorter, heavier and smaller, and introduce children to quantitative thinking through meaningful contexts—particularly in social play, where fairness and measurement often intersect (e.g., "She had it for longer!" or "I want the bigger cookie!").

Beyond measurement, children also develop skills in seriation, or the ability to order objects based on characteristics such as size or color intensity. Seriation not only strengthens children's grasp of sequence and comparison but also serves as a predictor for understanding arithmetic concepts (Ginsburg 1987). This skill, together with comparing and ordering objects, supports core mathematical abilities, such as pattern recognition, logical reasoning and structured thinking (Carpenter et al. 1999).

Estimation and measurement help children quantify and approximate characteristics, providing a bridge from informal, concrete experiences to formal mathematical understanding. Research confirms that early proficiency in measurement serves as a strong indicator of future success in more advanced mathematics (VanDerHeyden et al. 2011; Seefeldt and Galper 2008).

M 4 Measurement

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
M 4a Measures and Estimates	Recognizes when to use whole hand or just two fingers to pick up an object.	Explores size and weight of objects in relation to self.	Determines which object is bigger when given two to three objects.	Identifies that things can be measured and uses nonstandard measurement tools. Uses measurement vocabulary such as weight, length or volume.
M 4b Compares and Orders	Picks up and puts down objects.	Places objects in a row in any order.	Compares and orders two to three objects. Identifies the first object.	Compares and orders up to five objects. Describes order using words like first, second and third.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Compares the length, weight and capacity of two objects to determine which is bigger or if they are the same and uses measurement vocabulary.	Makes logical estimates and uses measurement tools to check estimation.	Explains which measurement tool makes the best sense for the object being measured. Tells time in hours and half-hours.	Tells time. Estimates length in inches, feet, centimeters or meters. Measures an object using a variety of measurement standards.
Compares and orders up to ten objects. Describes order using words like first to tenth.	Orders objects by one feature, then reorders using a different feature. Orders events in time.	Compares objects by using a measuring tool, then orders.	Compares and explains how much longer one object is than another using standard units of measurement.

M 5 Patterns

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 6 Mathematics skills:

M 1 Number Sense
Develops number sense by understanding concepts of number and quantity through counting, one-to-one correspondence, quantities and comparisons.

M 2 Spatial Awareness
Explores spatial awareness by understanding how objects move in space and determining their location.

M 3 Shapes
Identifies shapes and their characteristics

M 4 Measurement
Measures and estimates quantities, and compares and orders objects based on various attributes.

M 5 Patterns
Copies, Creates, and Extends Patterns

M 6 Classification
Organizes data through classification by sorting objects and graphing for visual representation and analysis.

Patterns are sequences that repeat logically and appear in many forms—colors (e.g., green, orange or green), shapes, daily routines or natural events, like sunrise and sunset (Rittle-Johnson et al. 2015; Hindman et al., 2010). Exploring these patterns helps young children recognize regularity and predict what comes next, building a strong foundation for algebraic thinking and problem-solving.

In early education, it's important for children to identify, copy and extend simple patterns, such as AB or AABB, to support their developing math skills (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics 2006). Research shows that early patterning skills are linked to stronger number knowledge in later grades (Zippert et al. 2020).

Working with patterns also strengthens memory. Even before they use language, young children can remember and replicate sequences they've seen, highlighting the importance of providing rich opportunities to explore patterns (Rovee-Collier 1999). These experiences not only support math development, but also help children make sense of their environment through structure and repetition.

M 5 Patterns

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
M 5 Copies, Creates, and Extends Patterns	Plays predictable activities with caregivers, such as pat-a-cake and peekaboo.	Notices things that repeat in the environment.	Fills in the missing piece of an AB pattern.	Copies, creates and extends AB patterns.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Fills in the missing piece of complex patterns, such as ABC or AABB.	Copies, creates and extends complex patterns, such as ABC or AABB.	Identifies the smallest unit of a pattern, such as AAB as the smallest unit of the pattern AABAABAAB.	Develops and explains own formula for creating a variety of patterns.

M 6 Classification

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 6 Mathematics skills:

M 1 Number Sense
Develops number sense by understanding concepts of number and quantity through counting, one-to-one correspondence, quantities and comparisons.

M 2 Spatial Awareness
Explores spatial awareness by understanding how objects move in space and determining their location.

M 3 Shapes
Identifies shapes and their characteristics

M 4 Measurement
Measures and estimates quantities, and compares and orders objects based on various attributes.

M 5 Patterns
Copies, Creates, and Extends Patterns

M 6 Classification
Organizes data through classification by sorting objects and graphing for visual representation and analysis.

Classification is one of the first cognitive tools children use to make sense of their surroundings. It begins in early childhood and involves recognizing shared features among objects and sorting them into groups, such as putting all of the red blocks together or setting animals apart from vehicles. These early attempts at organizing the world help children begin to think analytically and develop logical reasoning (Alessandroni and Rodríguez 2020).

In the classroom, this skill often starts with matching, or finding items that are the same in one way, and gradually becomes more complex. As children grow, they learn to sort objects by more than one feature at a time, such as color and shape. This ability to consider multiple characteristics not only supports their understanding of the world, but also lays the foundation for higher-order thinking (Sousa 2008). Teachers can encourage this growth by incorporating matching and sorting activities that challenge children to notice how things are alike and different.

Additionally, children also begin to engage in cross-classification, recognizing that an object can belong to more than one category at the same time. For example, a "blue triangle" fits in both the category of "blue things" and "triangles." This type of flexible thinking is more cognitively demanding because it requires children to shift attention between multiple attributes. Research suggests that developing the skill of cross-classification is important for later math, science and reading comprehension when a child must group, compare and relate information across multiple dimensions (Nguyen and Murphy 2019; Nguyen and Gelman 2021).

By offering opportunities to classify, sort and re-sort objects using different rules, educators support children's growing brains and build the foundation for lifelong learning. These simple activities prepare students to reason more deeply and solve problems more effectively as they move through school.

M 6 Classification

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
M 6 Sorts and graphs	Notices when two objects are similar in some way.	Creates groups of objects by common characteristics but may be mixed or inconsistent.	Sorts objects by one feature.	After sorting objects by one feature, sorts again by a different feature

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Sorts objects by more than one feature and explains why.	Gathers, sorts and categorizes objects or data into two categories and counts how many are in each.	Gathers, represents and answers questions about objects or data in three categories.	Gathers, represents and answers questions about objects or data in four categories.

Science

Science skills include a child's ability to inquire, make predictions and evaluate observations. They support a child's exploration of everyday life and physical properties, and help them make sense of concepts such as weather, natural habitats and technology.

Science education plays an important role in early childhood development. For young children, it involves nurturing their natural curiosity, encouraging safe exploration and fostering a sense of wonder about the world around them. As they grow, children learn to think like scientists by observing closely, asking questions and trying things out, long before they can articulate formal hypotheses. Introducing science early offers many benefits. It supports cognitive development and strengthens skills such as problem solving, reasoning and communication across multiple domains (Stone 2024). Early science experiences also help children develop positive attitudes toward learning and confidence in their ability to explore and understand new concepts, which can foster a greater interest in science later on (Head Start ECLKC 2024). Recognizing this, researchers and educators emphasize the value of hands-on, inquiry-driven instruction at an early age (National Science Teachers Association 2014).

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes four science skills with seven sub-skills.

SCI 1 **Investigation & Inquiry**	**SCI 1a** Asks questions and makes predictions
	SCI 1b Observes, describes and records
SCI 2 **Natural & Earth Science**	**SCI 2a** Understands living and nonliving things
	SCI 2b Demonstrates knowledge of Earth's environment
SCI 3 **Physical Science**	**SCI 3a** Explores forces and motion
	SCI 3b Explores the physical properties of materials
SCI 4 **Technology**	**SCI 4** Uses tools and technology to perform tasks

SCI 1 Investigation & Inquiry

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 4 Science skills:

SCI 1 Investigation & Inquiry
Observes, describes and records observations, asks questions and makes predictions.

SCI 2 Natural & Earth Science
Understands living and nonliving things and their characteristics and demonstrates knowledge of Earth's environment.

SCI 3 Physical Science
Explores forces and motion, and examines the physical properties of materials.

SCI 4 Technology
Uses tools and technology to perform tasks

Young children are naturally curious and like to explore. They develop an understanding of the world around them by observing, experimenting and discovering how things work (National Science Teachers Association 2014). In fact, "the desire to question, hypothesize, explore and investigate is part of their very being" (Bosse et al. 2009, 10). In early childhood education, scientific inquiry refers to children's active exploration of their environment—asking questions, trying things out and observing what happens. The National Science Teachers Association (2014) emphasizes that engaging in science and engineering practices during the early years "can foster children's curiosity and enjoyment in exploring the world around them and lay the foundation for a progression of science learning in K–12 settings and throughout their entire lives."

SCI 1 Investigation & Inquiry

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
SCI 1a **Asks questions and makes predictions**	Looks for a person or toy that has moved out of sight.	Asks simple questions about a familiar environment through words or gestures.	Begins to understand how things are connected and asks more complex questions about a familiar environment.	When given a question, guesses a possible answer or outcome.
SCI 1b **Observes, describes and records**	Uses senses to explore environment.	Demonstrates curiosity about objects by touching and manipulating them. Begins to understand cause and effect.	Begins to observe, describe and record a simple scientific phenomenon with teacher support.	Observes and uses prior knowledge to describe and record a scientific phenomenon with teacher prompting.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Asks questions about a familiar environment or scientific phenomenon and makes predictions about the outcome.	Predicts multiple outcomes to a question or situation and explains personal reasoning.	Uses prior knowledge and gathered information to make predictions about a scientific phenomenon. Makes hypotheses about scientific phenomena with teacher support.	Asks questions and makes hypotheses about scientific phenomena or hypothetical problems. Conducts an experiment multiple times.
Observes, describes and records a scientific phenomenon.	Gathers information or experiments to prove/disprove a prediction.	Records findings in charts or diagrams and explains one's problem-solving strategy.	Records and discusses observations and evaluates information to explain a phenomenon or prove/disprove a hypothesis.

SCI 2 Natural & Earth Science

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 4 Science skills:

SCI 1 Investigation & Inquiry
Observes, describes and records observations, asks questions and makes predictions.

SCI 2 Natural & Earth Science
Understands living and nonliving things and their characteristics and demonstrates knowledge of Earth's environment.

SCI 3 Physical Science
Explores forces and motion, and examines the physical properties of materials.

SCI 4 Technology
Uses tools and technology to perform tasks

Knowledge in life science allows children to understand the needs and characteristics of living things. It includes the ability to distinguish between living and nonliving things, as well as classifying living organisms. Young children learn natural and earth science through exploration and play, guided by their own curiosity. According to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (2022), "even very young children... can make sense of their world in sophisticated ways." Specifically, children begin to connect ideas, recognize patterns and build basic concepts about how things work. They are capable of engaging in simple scientific reasoning, such as understanding that bigger objects may be heavier or that plants need water, when these ideas are grounded in concrete, observable experiences. Engaging in natural and earth science also supports the development of executive function skills, including attention, memory and self-regulation. For example, following steps in an investigation, staying focused on a task or taking turns during group activities all promote these cognitive skills. Research summarized by the National Academies (2022) suggests that preschool science activities, particularly those involving planning and experimentation, can enhance children's executive functioning and problem-solving abilities (Schachter and Jo 2018; Fayez et al. 2020, as cited in NASEM 2022). Perhaps most importantly, early science experiences lay the foundation for sustained interest and achievement in science. High-quality early science experiences help establish the foundational skills and knowledge children need for later science learning (Raven and Wenner 2023).

SCI 2 Natural & Earth Science

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
SCI 1a Asks questions and makes predictions	Looks for a person or toy that has moved out of sight.	Asks simple questions about a familiar environment through words or gestures.	Begins to understand how things are connected and asks more complex questions about a familiar environment.	When given a question, guesses a possible answer or outcome.
SCI 1b Observes, describes and records	Uses senses to explore environment.	Demonstrates curiosity about objects by touching and manipulating them. Begins to understand cause and effect.	Begins to observe, describe and record a simple scientific phenomenon with teacher support.	Observes and uses prior knowledge to describe and record a scientific phenomenon with teacher prompting.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Asks questions about a familiar environment or scientific phenomenon and makes predictions about the outcome.	Predicts multiple outcomes to a question or situation and explains personal reasoning.	Uses prior knowledge and gathered information to make predictions about a scientific phenomenon. Makes hypotheses about scientific phenomena with teacher support.	Asks questions and makes hypotheses about scientific phenomena or hypothetical problems. Conducts an experiment multiple times.
Observes, describes and records a scientific phenomenon.	Gathers information or experiments to prove/disprove a prediction.	Records findings in charts or diagrams and explains one's problem-solving strategy.	Records and discusses observations and evaluates information to explain a phenomenon or prove/disprove a hypothesis.

SCI 3 Physical Science

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 4 Science skills:

SCI 1 Investigation & Inquiry
Observes, describes and records observations, asks questions and makes predictions.

SCI 2 Natural & Earth Science
Understands living and nonliving things and their characteristics and demonstrates knowledge of Earth's environment.

SCI 3 Physical Science
Explores forces and motion, and examines the physical properties of materials.

SCI 4 Technology
Uses tools and technology to perform tasks

Physical science in early childhood focuses on children's natural exploration of forces, motion and material properties. From infancy, children begin to build intuitive understandings of how the physical world works by manipulating objects, observing movement and engaging their senses. Children's early engagement with physical science supports later learning in physics and chemistry. Developmentally appropriate exploration, through play and sensory interaction, enables children to test ideas, build vocabulary and develop scientific reasoning.

Research shows that even infants possess basic expectations about motion, such as that unsupported objects fall or solid objects block others. They use violations of these expectations to explore and learn (Stahl and Feigenson 2015). Toddlers and preschoolers actively experiment with cause and effect through actions like pushing toys or rolling balls and often engage with gravity, friction and magnetism during free play (Solis et al. 2017). Preschoolers may rely on rules, such as thinking heavier objects fall faster, however, they show growing awareness of how force changes motion (Harris et al. 2018). These early experiences lay a foundation for scientific thinking about physical interactions.

Infants can distinguish solids from liquids by sight and touch, detecting differences in texture, hardness and flow (Imura et al. 2015; Hespos et al. 2009). Toddlers explore materials by squeezing, shaking or sorting them based on sensory cues. By ages 3–5, children describe materials using terms like "soft," "sticky" or "cold," and begin identifying solids, liquids and visible changes like melting or dissolving (Christodoulakis and Adbo 2024). However, their reasoning is often concrete; they may believe matter "disappears" when it evaporates. Even so, their experiences support early chemistry concepts, such as state changes and material classification.

SCI 3 Physical Science

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
SCI 3a Explores forces and motion	Kicks feet or shakes arms to make other objects move.	Uses body to push or pull toys.	Explores motion by moving, rolling, blowing on or dropping a toy.	Explains how vehicles, animals or people move.
SCI 3b Explores the physical properties of materials	Uses senses to explore objects in an immediate environment.	Reacts to changes in texture, temperature, smell, sound or sight.	Begins to name colors.	Describes basic physical properties of objects, such as textures and colors.

	Primary		
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Experiments with and explores invisible forces, such as ramps and magnets.	Experiments and compares the movements of various objects and materials on a variety of surfaces.	Recognizes that gravity makes unsupported objects fall. Identifies objects that are attracted to magnets.	Explains how force is used to change the direction of moving objects.
Manipulates matter and observes any physical changes that may occur.	Classifies and sorts materials by a variety of physical properties.	Identifies materials that are solid, liquid and gas.	Describe how materials change between different states of matter.

SCI 4 Technology

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 4 Science skills:

SCI 1 Investigation & Inquiry
Observes, describes and records observations, asks questions and makes predictions.

SCI 2 Natural & Earth Science
Understands living and nonliving things and their characteristics and demonstrates knowledge of Earth's environment.

SCI 3 Physical Science
Explores forces and motion, and examines the physical properties of materials.

SCI 4 Technology
Uses tools and technology to perform tasks

From infancy, children actively explore objects and gradually discover how to use tools to achieve goals. Research shows that even before age two, many toddlers can use simple tools, like reaching sticks, to solve problems. Around 18 months they succeed mainly after adult hints and by roughly 30 months many can innovate a solution independently. The richness of infants' object play is linked to emerging problem-solving skills; babies who frequently combine objects during play tend to perform better on later tool-use tasks (Rat-Fischer et al. 2024). Young children also learn tool use through observation and imitation. Preschoolers readily copy an adult's use of a new tool and can select the right tool for a task, yet they rarely invent new tools on their own. In one study, most children under five could not devise a hook tool unless shown a solution, though they succeeded after a demonstration (Colbourne et al. 2024). This shows a gap between using tools and inventing them that typically narrows with age and experience.

Young children today also use digital tools, like touchscreens and apps, to solve problems and explore. Research shows that preschoolers can transfer problem-solving strategies from digital platforms to real-world tasks, such as learning a puzzle on a tablet, then applying that solution to a physical model (Tarasuik et al. 2017). Interactive technology that is developmentally appropriate can support early cognitive skills, including spatial awareness and reasoning (Clemente-Suárez et al. 2024). However, how technology is used matters. Passive screen time is linked to weaker attention and cognitive outcomes, while guided, interactive use is associated with more positive effects (Swider-Cios et al. 2023). When used appropriately, digital media allows children to explore, create and solve problems in new ways, reinforcing their early development of technological reasoning.

SCI 4 Technology

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
SCI 4 **Uses tools and technology to perform tasks**	Explores simple toys.	Begins to use simple toys purposefully.	Explores movable parts on toys.	Explores simple tools or interacts with simple types of technology.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Experiments with tools or technology to solve problems or accomplish tasks.	Uses familiar tools or technology to produce a desired result or solve a specific problem.	Experiments with familiar and unfamiliar tools or technology to achieve a variety of results.	Identifies which tools can best help save time, solve a problem or increase enjoyment.

Social Studies

Social Studies in early childhood lays the foundation for understanding the world and a child's place within it, building on their innate curiosity and observations (National Association for the Education of Young Children 2024). Research shows that "children's perceptions about themselves, others and the environment are influenced long before children have language" (Iruka et al. 2021). These concepts emerge organically from their everyday interactions and explorations.

By building a strong sense of community, children begin to grasp how people are connected and the importance of shared spaces and responsibilities (Vilotti and Berson 2019). Connecting with a child's neighborhood experiences, such as visiting local parks, interacting with community helpers and understanding different types of buildings, makes learning meaningful. Providing opportunities for teamwork and collaborative play teaches children how to negotiate, share and work towards common goals. Creating expectations around routines like naps or meals helps children develop an understanding of history and the concept of time.

The pedagogical approach in these early years emphasizes active engagement through play-based learning, hands-on exploration and interactive activities. This allows children to actively construct their understanding rather than passively receiving information. It is through these opportunities that children learn leadership qualities, the value of including others and group contributions, laying the groundwork for responsible and engaged citizenship in the future.

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes four social studies skills with eight sub-skills.

SS 1 Culture & Community	**SS 1a** Identifies community and family roles
	SS 1b Explores and respects cultures and traditions
	SS 1c Respects diversity
SS 2 Civics & Economics	**SS 2a** Follows rules, limits and expectations
	SS 2b Understands concepts of money and economics
SS 3 Geography	**SS 3a** Identifies types of places
	SS 3b Interacts with maps
SS 4 History & Sense of Time	**SS 4** Develops sense of time

SS 1 Culture & Community

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 4 Social Studies skills:

SS 1 Culture & Community
Explores communities, families, culture and traditions.

SS 2 Civics & Economics
Follows familiar rules and routines and explores concepts of money and economics.

SS 3 Geography
Identifies types of places and interacts with maps.

SS 4 History & Sense of Time
Develops a sense of time.

Exploring community, family, culture, tradition and diversity forms the basis of culture and community skills for children. Through play, they safely investigate social rules and cultural norms relevant to their communities and experiment with varied community roles. As children recognize how they contribute to their community, their self-worth and ability to cooperate are strengthened (NAEYC 2022; Kaiser and Raminsky 2020).

An inclusive classroom establishes a safe environment where every child feels valued and respected (Swinder Boutte 2010). Meaningful interactions and the development of friendships among children from diverse backgrounds offer a sense of belonging and foster a deeper understanding of differing perspectives (ChildCare Education Institute 2024). This builds a child's confidence and resilience. By intentionally providing a nurturing space that celebrates the richness of various cultures and communities, we cultivate characteristics of empathy, mutual respect and a sense of global citizenship in young children. Not only does this approach enrich the overall learning experience for everyone involved, it also ignites innovative and creative approaches to problem-solving, preparing children to navigate the world with greater skill and sensitivity.

SS 1 Culture & Community

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
SS 1a **Identifies community and family roles**	Responds to and recognizes primary caregivers.	Recognizes the difference between a familiar and unfamiliar person.	Identifies familiar people and pets.	Describes family members and their relationship to self. Identifies and role-plays familiar community helpers.
SS 1b **Explores and respects cultures and traditions**	Listens to stories or music related to cultures and traditions.	Participates in activities related to cultures or traditions.	Recognizes familiar symbols or artifacts of traditions or customs.	Describes the routines, familiar stories, traditions, foods or celebrations of own family or community.
SS 1c **Respects diversity**	Sees diverse features of people in books, toys or media.	Explores people and their features, either in person or in pictures.	Identifies similarities and differences between self and others.	Respectfully participates in activities with others different than self.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Identifies roles of self and others and describes the job each may do.	Compares roles, rules and responsibilities between different groups.	Describes how roles and responsibilities or families and groups change over time.	Identifies features of different communities and how these features impact roles and responsibilities.
Explains the meaning and importance of their own traditions or customs. Begins to learn, ask questions and respect other cultures.	Explains the meaning and importance of traditions or customs of other people.	Compares diverse cultures or traditions.	Names influential people or events that have impacted familiar cultures and traditions.
Shows interest in learning about and interacting with peers who look, learn, believe or move differently.	Explains and celebrates how individuals, families or cultures differ.	Demonstrates an understanding that some people have different needs or beliefs than self and seeks to support them accordingly.	Demonstrates respect for people who look different and have differing abilities or traditions.

SS 2 Civics & Economics

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 4 Social Studies skills:

SS 1 Culture & Community
Explores communities, families, culture and traditions.

SS 2 Civics & Economics
Follows familiar rules and routines and explores concepts of money and economics.

SS 3 Geography
Identifies types of places and interacts with maps.

SS 4 History & Sense of Time
Develops a sense of time.

Young children develop fundamental civic and economic skills through play and daily interactions. They learn critical thinking by analyzing situations, making choices and solving problems within their environment (Halverson et al. 2024). Working together during play and activities fosters collaboration, negotiation and the achievement of shared goals. Simple trading systems, like exchanging toys, help children understand basic economic transactions. Additionally, they begin to grasp the concept of ownership and respecting others' belongings, which cultivates a sense of responsibility.

Introducing rules and expectations, such as classroom routines, helps children understand governance and social norms. These norms are acquired through the observation, imitation and modeling of others (Borg 2017). They experience group decision-making in simple scenarios, like choosing a game, laying the groundwork for understanding democracy (Illinois Early Learning Project 2023). Engaging in role-playing activities, like voting or as classroom leader, supports the development of children's civic skills (Halverson et al. 2024). Through these experiences, children develop a sense of community and learn the importance of shared spaces and responsibilities. These early lessons in civics and economics build social skills, promote empathy and prepare them for active participation in society.

SS 2 Civics & Economics

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
SS 2a **Follows rules, limits and expectations**	Attends to others in immediate environment.	Participates in communal activities.	Recognizes and attends to adults to hear rules, routines and expectations.	Follows familiar rules and routines and helps make group decisions. Expresses feelings about fairness.
SS 2b **Understands concepts of money and economics**	Reaches for desired objects.	Expresses a desire for an object or action. Expresses ownership such as by saying me or mine.	Expresses choice and recognizes interests and desires may be different from others. Explores the concepts of trade.	Asks before taking an object that doesn't belong to them and offers an object to others to get what they want. Explores the concept of money.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Applies familiar rules and suggests new rules in a variety of situations.	Discusses the purposes of rules, laws and civic leaders. Participates in voting to make decisions.	Identifies individual rights. Determines if rules support the common good.	Describes different levels of government, such as local, state and national. Makes democratic decisions.
Explores the use of trade of both goods and money to receive/buy objects or services.	Exchanges money, goods or services for other goods or services. Identifies value of differing coins.	Describes how and why we save, earn and spend money.	Explains how and why people work together in trade to get what they need and want. Explains why some items are more expensive or valuable.

SS 3 Geography

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 4 Social Studies skills:

SS 1 Culture & Community
Explores communities, families, culture and traditions.

SS 2 Civics & Economics
Follows familiar rules and routines and explores concepts of money and economics.

SS 3 Geography
Identifies types of places and interacts with maps.

SS 4 History & Sense of Time
Develops a sense of time.

Geography focuses on helping children understand their immediate environment and place within it. Young learners naturally possess an innate curiosity and rely heavily on their five senses to explore and interact with the materials and people in their environment, constructing their initial understanding of the world. A child's awareness of their environment is key to their sense of belonging, which is critical for social-emotional growth and school readiness (Epstein 2014).

Educators can encourage children to observe and respond to changes in their surroundings, such as weather shifts or new decorations in the classroom. Engaging discussions about these changes can foster observation skills and an understanding of reoccurring patterns in nature.

Navigating within a familiar environment, like the classroom or neighborhood, helps build spatial awareness, creating a "mental map" of a child's surroundings. Incorporating activities that involve identifying and discussing geographical landmarks within their community, as suggested by Catling (2006), provides reference points for this developing spatial understanding. This could include parks, libraries, stores and unique features like bridges or hills (NAEYC; Brillante and Mankiw 2015).

Geography should emphasize exploration and observation. Children should be given ample opportunities to interact directly with their physical world, using all of their senses to gather information and construct their own understanding. This hands-on, experiential approach fosters a deeper and more meaningful connection to their environment.

SS 3 Geography

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
SS 3a **Identifies types of places**	Responds to changes in the immediate environment.	Recognizes familiar places.	Identifies a variety of familiar places in own community.	Identifies different types of water bodies, streets, buildings or landmarks in own community.
SS 3b **Interacts with maps**	Navigates within a familiar environment.	Finds ways to move around obstacles in a familiar environment.	Follows a path.	Recognizes symbols or landmarks.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Explains the purpose for different types of structures, such as bridges and buildings. Asks questions about landmarks.	Compares the geographic features of one's community to another community.	Identifies and describes various types of landforms and natural resources.	Explains how the physical features and characteristics of an environment affect how people live.
Identifies what is represented on a map and draws pictures of current location.	Recreates a map of something they cannot immediately see.	Locates familiar places on maps. Uses cardinal directions to follow and give directions.	Uses a variety of maps to gather information.

SS 4 History & Sense of Time

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 4 Social Studies skills:

SS 1 Culture & Community
Explores communities, families, culture and traditions.

SS 2 Civics & Economics
Follows familiar rules and routines and explores concepts of money and economics.

SS 3 Geography
Identifies types of places and interacts with maps.

SS 4 History & Sense of Time
Develops a sense of time.

The knowledge of history is the understanding of events that have happened in the past. Understanding historical events enables children to link their present experiences with the past, fostering their sense of time and spatial awareness within their surroundings. By helping children understand events they have directly encountered, such as birthdays or holiday celebrations, they begin to understand the sequence of events that occur. Introducing time language like "yesterday," "today" and "tomorrow" builds vocabulary. Individual views and actions are shaped by both personal experiences and community history. "When we fail to consider history, we lose a valuable source of information about why people behave the way they do" (NAEYC; Bowman 2021).

Children's social and cognitive development, as well as life patterns, provide a framework for understanding time. This understanding is built upon concepts like rhythm, repetition, periodicity, classification and the order of events in a sequence (Fardi 2022). Using simple narratives and visual aids, educators can incorporate storytelling to illustrate timelines and the concept of past events. Activities that involve sequencing picture cards or discussing routines can reinforce the understanding of chronological order. By linking historical concepts to their immediate lives and routines, children can begin to grasp the passage of time and the idea that events have a beginning, middle and end.

SS 3 History & Sense of Time

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
SS 4 Develops sense of time	Focuses on interactions with others for a short time.	Indicates the beginning or ending of an event	Describes events as they happen. Uses words such as "first" and "then."	Recalls information and events from the past. Recognizes sequence of events to establish a sense of order and time.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Uses language of time to describe familiar sequences of events.	Retells historical, fictional or past events or stories.	Compares and contrasts current and historical conditions of familiar environments.	Describes relationships between past events and current conditions. Explains why it is important to understand historical events.

Creative Arts

Creative arts activities foster cognitive, social, emotional and physical growth, laying a strong foundation for lifelong learning. By participating in music, dance and movement, visual arts and drama, children explore their world, express themselves and build essential skills in a playful and engaging way (Mills 2014). Research highlights the significance of arts education in enhancing cognitive abilities, suggesting that arts integration can lead to improvements in problem-solving and critical thinking (Eisner 2002).

Early childhood arts engagement is crucial for young learners to understand their world. Active participation in art activities helps them use symbols and diverse expressions to explore their environment. Consistent, high-quality creative art skills are essential for cognitive, social and emotional development, fostering creativity, problem-solving, communication and self-awareness. Creative problem-solving develops children's thinking skills by encouraging them to use their imagination and intelligence to gain a broader understanding (Pulver 2018).

Exposure to music, visual arts, drama and dance develops critical thinking, creative expression and confidence. Lack of such experiences hinders foundational skill development and the ability to engage with the world. Integrating arts provides a holistic learning approach, nurturing well-rounded individuals (Barton 2015).

The Experience Developmental Continuum of Skills includes four creative arts (CA) skills with nine sub-skills.

CA 1 Music	**CA 1a** Expresses through music
	CA 1b Develops rhythm
	CA 1c Develops tone
CA 2 Dance & Movement	**CA 2a** Expresses through dance
	CA 2b Develops movement techniques
CA 3 Visual Arts	**CA 3a** Expresses through 2D and 3D visual art
	CA 3b Develops visual art techniques
CA 4 Drama	**CA 4a** Participates in dramatic and symbolic play
	CA 4b Uses and creates props to represent other objects or ideas

CA 1 Music

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 4 Creative Arts skills:

CA 1 Music
Expresses through music and develops rhythm and tone.

CA 2 Dance & Movement
Expresses through dance and develops movement techniques.

CA 3 Visual Arts
Expresses through 2D and 3D visual art. Develops artistic techniques.

CA 4 Drama
Participates in dramatic and symbolic play. Uses props to represent other objects or ideas.

Music development is a child's exploration and understanding of sound, rhythm and tone. Singing, playing instruments and listening to music enhances language skills, memory and pattern recognition. Playful music activities like singing, rhymes, movement and instrument play help children understand musical elements and express themselves creatively. This multisensory exploration in a rich cultural environment boosts brain function, especially auditory, spatial and attention skills. Studies have shown that music can improve a child's spatial reasoning and overall cognitive development (Schellenberg 2004). Music activities also support emotional expression and social interaction as children learn to cooperate in group musical experiences. Music also promotes positive emotions and well-being. In musical group settings, children show more adaptive social behaviors, leading to happier interactions (Ruokonen et al. 2023).

Through active engagement with music, such as clapping along to a beat or imitating musical sounds, young children develop a foundational understanding of rhythmic patterns and tonal variations. This exploration not only enhances their auditory perception and motor skills, but lays the groundwork for future musical endeavors and appreciation. Early exposure to diverse rhythms and tones can positively influence cognitive development, language acquisition and emotional expression in young learners. Music development in early childhood is strongly linked to lasting cognitive and sensory improvements. It enhances sound sensitivity, verbal skills (vocabulary, reading and communication) and general reasoning due to music's complex cognitive demands (memory, attention, pattern recognition and problem-solving). These benefits can persist into adulthood (Ruokonen et al. 2023).

CA 1 Music

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
CA 1a **Expresses through music**	Makes sounds to communicate feelings.	Repeats words in familiar songs and attempts to sing.	Expresses likes and dislikes of familiar songs. Explores shaking, pounding or tapping various instruments.	Uses voice, common objects or instruments to create music. Identifies self as a musician.
CA 1b **Develops rhythm**	Responds to rhythm.	Responds to changes in rhythm.	Claps to beat. May not always be consistent.	Claps along to simple rhythm patterns.
CA 1c **Develops tone**	Responds to sounds.	Responds to changes in sound, volume or melody.	Understands the difference between singing and speaking voices.	Controls voice to mimic the melodic direction.

	Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Uses voice or instruments to express feelings or to mimic sound effects.	Communicates ideas by creating rhythm or melody.	Interprets and compares many types of music.	Experiments and performs self-written music or rhythmic patterns.
Repeats simple rhythm patterns.	Creates simple rhythm patterns.	Maintains a steady beat. Recognizes strong/weak beats. Begins to read rhythm notation.	Maintains rhythm in various meter groupings.
Hears the change of musical phrases in a song. Sings along to familiar songs.	Controls pitch when singing a familiar song.	Matches vocal pitch in a limited range.	Participates in call-and-response and two-part rounds.

CA 2 Dance & Movement

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 4 Creative Arts skills:

CA 1 Music
Expresses through music and develops rhythm and tone.

CA 2 Dance & Movement
Expresses through dance and develops movement techniques.

CA 3 Visual Arts
Expresses through 2D and 3D visual art. Develops artistic techniques.

CA 4 Drama
Participates in dramatic and symbolic play. Uses props to represent other objects or ideas.

Dance and movement activities promote physical development, coordination and body awareness. Children learn to express themselves through movement, developing rhythm and timing. Research shows that dance supports creativity, cultural understanding and self-esteem. Engaging in dance also improves motor skills, balance and spatial awareness. Dance is a natural form of expression for children, supporting overall development and offering benefits like stress reduction and improved physical skills (Theodotou 2025).

Dance offers physical, psychological and social benefits, including improved body image, self-awareness, stress reduction and decreased anxiety and aggression. It enhances coordination and provides social connection, enjoyment and spontaneous self-expression. This adaptability makes dance a valuable activity, especially for children with emotional challenges, allowing for customized programs that support physical and emotional well-being (Tao et al. 2022).

CA 2 Dance & Movement

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
CA 2a **Expresses through dance**	Uses body language to express feelings.	Uses purposeful gestures and body language to communicate.	Moves in own way to music and rhythm.	Demonstrates different levels of energy in dance, such as gentle versus explosive or small versus large movements.
CA 2b **Develops movement techniques**	Moves body in a variety of ways.	Moves body purposely such as by swaying or bouncing to music.	Follows the movements of others. Explores personal space and direction.	Demonstrates multiple ways to move body parts. Moves to the beat.

	Primary		
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Demonstrates the difference between spontaneous and planned movement. Creates movements based on own ideas.	Expresses ideas, feelings and stories through creative movement.	Coordinates movements of self and others to create a cohesive dance or idea.	Describes how dances and movements express certain ideas or feelings.
Follows a leader to perform a simple movement pattern.	Recalls a simple movement pattern and performs it individually or in a group.	Recalls and dances a sequence of two or three movement patterns. Identifies the beginning, middle and end of a dance.	Creates simple movement sequences.

CA 3 Visual Arts

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 4 Creative Arts skills:

CA 1 Music
Expresses through music and develops rhythm and tone.

CA 2 Dance & Movement
Expresses through dance and develops movement techniques.

CA 3 Visual Arts
Expresses through 2D and 3D visual art. Develops artistic techniques.

CA 4 Drama
Participates in dramatic and symbolic play. Uses props to represent other objects or ideas.

Visual arts, such as drawing, painting and sculpting, allow children to explore their creativity and develop fine motor skills. Activities like these stimulate imagination, problem-solving and decision-making. Classrooms that value visual arts promote a child's expression, communication skills and self-confidence. Such skills build on a child's well-being and social development, such as cooperation, experimentation and interpretation (Vasilaki 2024).

Visual arts enhance children's perceptual abilities and help them develop a deeper understanding of their environment. Throughout history, art has been a fundamental means of communication. Engaging in art allows children to activate their senses while simultaneously building brain connections (Tyler and Likova 2012). The visual arts serve as a channel for children to communicate their creativity, emotions, thoughts and individual and cultural beliefs (de Lautour 2020). It also promotes critical thinking skills in young children, actively processing information from various sources. The process of creating art provides an outlet for emotional expression and self-discovery.

CA 3 Visual Arts

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
CA 3a **Expresses through 2D and 3D visual art**	Expresses emotions while exploring materials.	Scribbles, colors or paints intentionally on paper.	Explores a variety of artistic tools and media.	Makes choices throughout the artistic process.
CA 3b **Develops visual art techniques**	Explores materials using gross motor movements and senses.	Uses hands and feet to explore a variety of media.	Uses materials to create shapes or symbols.	Chooses an object or art tool to use with a given medium for a desired effect.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Plans, designs and seeks materials to make a creation.	Creates art to represent an idea or object. Explains how it was made.	Creates art to express ideas, thoughts and feelings.	Creates art and explains why and how they chose specific materials and techniques.
Uses artistic tools and media to create intentional designs or images.	Demonstrates a variety of techniques using a given tool or medium.	Uses various tools and techniques to achieve desired artistic results.	Compares artistic techniques and creations of many artists.

CA 4 Drama

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 4 Creative Arts skills:

CA 1 Music
Expresses through music and develops rhythm and tone.

CA 2 Dance & Movement
Expresses through dance and develops movement techniques.

CA 3 Visual Arts
Expresses through 2D and 3D visual art. Develops artistic techniques.

CA 4 Drama
Participates in dramatic and symbolic play. Uses props to represent other objects or ideas.

Drama and imaginative play allow children to step into different roles, explore emotions and develop social skills. Engaging in dramatic play enhances language and communication skills, as children learn to articulate their thoughts and ideas. Dramatic play teaches empathy and understanding by allowing children to role-play and consider different perspectives, behaviors and emotions. Dramatic play is characterized by symbolic representation, imaginative experiences, role-playing and the changing of events over time. Developmental research recognizes the importance of dramatic play as it promotes self-regulation (Khomais et al. 2019).

Engaging in dramatic play with peers also helps children develop crucial social skills, such as negotiation, cooperation and navigating group interactions (Ambrosio 2023). Pretend play fosters social development by offering a platform for experimenting with social behaviors and peer engagement within a pretend context and is crucial to a child's social growth. Providing dramatic play opportunities for children allows them to practice and refine their social behaviors through interactions (Jaggy et al. 2023).

CA 4 Drama

	Infant		Toddler	Preschool
Sub-skill / Definition	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**
CA 4a **Participates in dramatic and symbolic play**	Imitates simple movements and facial expressions.	Mimics observed behaviors and words.	Uses words, actions and props to pretend.	Plays a role in group dramatic play.
CA 4b **Uses and creates props to represent other objects or ideas**	Responds to props or puppets.	Mimics the use of familiar objects.	Uses realistic toys as replacements for real objects. Distinguishes between real and pretend.	Uses an object as a replacement for a realistic prop or real object.

Primary			
Benchmark 5	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Assigns roles and plays out unscripted scenes in dramatic play.	With cues, performs a simple pre-planned drama.	Describes how a character may feel in a given situation, then integrates that emotion into performance.	Rehearses, memorizes and performs a short play.
Uses a combination of real and imaginary props or characters to play out a scene.	Uses a combination of real and imaginary props or characters to play out multiple scenes or events.	With adult support, plans a story and creates costumes, settings or props to create a mood or environment.	Plans a story and creates costumes, settings or props to create a mood or environment.

Second Language Acquisition

Young children acquiring a second language in classroom settings typically progress through identifiable stages. Initially, many experience a silent period, during which they observe and comprehend the new language without yet speaking it. During this time, children often rely on gestures, facial expressions and their first language to communicate (Kan et al. 2025). As comprehension builds, they begin to use single words and memorized phrases, such as "thank you" or "want toy," often in routine or familiar contexts (Latta 2019). Many children then enter a productive speech phase, forming simple sentences and engaging in basic conversations. While grammar may still be developing, children can express needs, share observations and begin participating in classroom discussions (Kan et al. 2025; Latta 2019).

During the preschool and early elementary years, children's narrative skills in the second language begin to emerge. Even with limited vocabulary, bilingual preschoolers can tell structured stories that include a beginning, middle and end (Bonifacci et al. 2018). These narratives tend to be shorter and less detailed than those of monolingual peers, but they still reflect an understanding of sequencing and story structure. As fluency increases, children start to use more complex sentences and demonstrate awareness of past tense, plurals and descriptive language. Narrative ability in a second language has been shown to support later reading comprehension and academic success (Uchikoshi et al. 2018).

By ages 7 to 8, many children have developed social fluency in their second language and are beginning to acquire academic language, the vocabulary and structures needed for classroom learning. This includes understanding instructions, describing concepts and participating in more abstract discussions. However, research shows that full academic proficiency often takes 4 to 7 years to develop, especially in environments with limited support or inconsistent exposure (Thompson 2017). Children benefit from continued scaffolding, such as visual aids and opportunities to use their first language alongside the second, to support deeper understanding and expression (Latta 2019).

SLA 1 **Approach to second language acquisition**	**SLA 1a** Participates using target language
	SLA 1b Demonstrates initiative with target language
	SLA 1c Demonstrates use of varied vocabulary in target language
SLA 2 **Comprehension of second language**	**SLA 2a** Demonstrates comprehension of target language
	SLA 2b Demonstrates use of words and sentence structure of target language

SLA 1 Approach to Second Language Acquisition

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 2 Second Language Acquisition skills:

SLA 1 Approach to Second Language Acquisition
Participates and demonstrates initiative and varied vocabulary use in the target language, as well as comprehension and use of its words and sentence structures.

SLA 2 Comprehension of Second Language
Understands the target language, as well as using its words and sentence structures.

Young children approach a second language through observable developmental stages. One of the earliest is the silent period, during which children communicate primarily through gestures while listening and observing. This period is now understood as an active, agentive phase of learning rather than passive behavior (Bligh and Drury 2015). Children later begin using single words or memorized phrases and gradually initiate speech. Individual differences, such as temperament and previous exposure, affect when and how children choose to speak (Siklander et al. 2023).

Code-switching, where children mix their two languages, is common and helpful in supporting communication and conceptual development (Kavak and Gül 2020). Embracing children's full linguistic repertoire, rather than enforcing monolingual norms, supports positive attitudes toward language learning. Bilingual preschool programs that support the home language alongside English foster gains in both languages without compromising English proficiency (Raikes et al. 2019).
Social contexts, especially interactive play, provide ideal environments for second language use. Children naturally engage and practice language in peer-driven play, where they are motivated by shared goals and enjoyment (Siklander et al. 2023). Educators can support language development by creating emotionally safe, language-rich environments that include play, visual aids and modeling strategies to encourage language participation.

SLA 1 Approach to Second Language Acquisition

Sub-Skill Code/Definition	Pre-Production	Early Production	Speech Emergence	Intermediate Fluency	Advanced Fluency
SLA 1a **Participates using target language**	Observes interactions in target language, but may not participate.	When prompted, uses gestures and words in target language to participate in group interactions.	Uses target language to actively participate, working around any language barriers.	Initiates interactions in target language, displaying adequate conversational proficiency with minimal language barriers.	Uses target language confidently and comfortably to participate. Begins to display written and academic proficiency for developmental level.
SLA 1b **Demonstrates initiative with target language**	Uses cues and gestures to understand interactions in target language.	Asks for repetition of target language to clarify understanding.	Seeks explanations for unknown words and phrases in target language.	Asks questions in target language to clarify meaning of idioms and complex interactions.	Uses context clues and resources to clarify any misunderstandings.
SLA 1c **Demonstrates use of varied vocabulary in target language**	Uses cues and gestures to understand interactions in target language.	Repeats often heard words in target language.	Uses social vocabulary to actively communicate and participate in the target language. Begins to use academic vocabulary in the target language.	Asks questions in target language to clarify meaning of idioms and complex interactions. Uses more advanced academic vocabulary in the target language.	Uses context clues and resources to clarify any misunderstandings.

SLA 2 Comprehension of Second Language

Experience Early Learning Framework includes 2 Second Language Acquisition skills:

SLA 1 Approach to Second Language Acquisition
Participates and demonstrates initiative and varied vocabulary use in the target language, as well as comprehension and use of its words and sentence structures.

SLA 2 Comprehension of Second Language
Understands the target language, as well as using its words and sentence structures.

Receptive language typically precedes expressive ability in dual language learners. Young children often understand instructions and vocabulary before they can verbalize responses, and this receptive-expressive gap is especially pronounced in children with limited exposure (Keller et al. 2015).

Children's language comprehension develops through repeated exposure to meaningful input supported by context, gestures and visual aids. Vocabulary comprehension benefits from multi-sensory input, including picture support and physical movement (Andrä et al. 2020). Grammar comprehension also improves with interactive support, particularly when teachers use strategies like dialogic reading, open-ended questions and sentence modeling (Boese et al. 2023).

Effective instruction reinforces meaning through multiple exposures across varied contexts. Shared reading, explicit vocabulary teaching and routine language use (e.g., in songs and daily rituals) help children internalize new language forms and meanings (Davison and Qi 2017). Strategic use of the home language to clarify or connect ideas enhances understanding without impeding language development (Raikes et al. 2019).

SLA 2 Comprehension of Second Language

Sub-Skill Code/Definition	Pre-Production	Early Production	Speech Emergence	Intermediate Fluency	Advanced Fluency
SLA 2a **Demonstrates comprehension of target language**	Responds to cues, such as gestures and visualizations.	Responds to simple words, phrases and questions in target language, especially in combination with other cues.	Responds to simple stories and short discussions in target language.	Responds to stories, shares opinions and engages in discussions in target language.	Demonstrates near-native comprehension of target language in all contexts.
SLA 2b **Demonstrates use of words and sentence structure of target language**	Uses cues, gestures and visualizations to communicate.	Uses words and memorized phrases in target language to communicate.	Formulates sentences by combining familiar words and phrases in target language. May make frequent errors.	Uses increasingly complex linguistic structures in target language with minimal programmatical errors.	Uses target language effectively in all contexts.

experience™ EARLY LEARNING

Developmental Continuum of Skills

Individual children develop at a unique pace.			Infant		Toddler		Preschool		Primary		
	Skill / Skill Code	Sub-skill / Definition	Benchmark 1	Benchmark 2	Benchmark 3	Benchmark 4	Benchmark 5	Benchmark 6	Benchmark 7	Benchmark 8
Social & Emotional Development	SED 1 Self-Awareness	SED 1a **Knows self and expresses confidence**	Responds to name by cooing, smiling or turning head toward person talking. Explores hands and feet.	Responds to name and interacts with self in mirror. Recognizes self as being separate from others.	Names self and names basic body parts.	Identifies characteristics of self.	Describes thoughts and characteristics of self and expresses confidence in own abilities.	Identifies own strengths and personal talents.	Apply strengths to accomplish a task and exhibits pride in personal accomplishments.	Reflects and describes strengths and areas of growth. Begins to have and apply a growth mindset.
		SED 1b **Expresses needs and preferences**	Vocalizes or moves to express needs.	Seeks out or responds to favorite or preferred toys, objects or people.	Expresses likes and dislikes.	When given two to three options, chooses their most desired option.	Describes and compares preferences of self and others.	Expresses and advocates for one's needs or personal preferences.	Understands others might have different needs and preferences than self.	Expresses and advocates ways for self and others to both participate according to unique preferences and to attain differing wants.
		SED 1c **Completes tasks independently**	Reaches for a familiar object or toy.	Attempts to do a familiar task or explore objects independently.	Completes familiar tasks or activities independently. May still need adult support on occasion.	Expresses interest in planning or trying new or complex tasks and activities with help.	Takes risks and pushes self to accomplish new tasks independently.	Revisits a familiar task or activity with a different approach.	Revisits and plans a familiar task and describes ways to improve results.	Predicts how self and others might be able to perform in a task and describes and plans what is needed to improve.
		SED 1d **Identifies emotions**	Makes facial expressions or vocalizations to express engagement, contentment, stress or discomfort.	Shows a range of emotions with facial expressions and gestures.	Recognizes and names a few personal feelings.	Identifies and describes personal feelings.	Recognizes that feelings can change.	Identifies complex feelings and recognizes that they can have more than one feeling at the same time.	Identifies past, current and future feelings and explains when they might experience different feelings.	Anticipates an emotional response that may result from a given situation.
	SED 2 Self-Regulation	SED 2a **Manages feelings and behavior**	Calms with support from caregiver.	Seeks out a familiar adult, item or behavior to provide comfort when upset or in a new situation.	Begins to use strategies to regulate emotions or behavior with support from familiar adult.	Uses a variety of strategies to regulate emotions or behavior. May still need adult prompting on occasion.	Independently chooses and uses a variety of strategies to regulate emotions or behavior.	Describes and demonstrates appropriate responses to different emotions and behaviors.	Describes strategies to calm oneself in new or stressful situations.	Applies strategies for managing own emotions and behaviors.
		SED 2b **Follows routines and transitions**	Reacts to changes in tone of voice or expression.	Participates in familiar routines and transitions with support.	Recognizes a familiar activity or routine and redirects to a new activity with support.	Anticipates what comes next within a daily routine. Recognizes when the typical routine is not followed and identifies the change.	Follows daily routines. With support, negotiates ways to handle new routines or transitions.	Transitions from one activity to the next and helps others through the transition.	Describes strategies to adjust and calm oneself in new or stressful situations.	Adapts to new situations or routines quickly and with minimal stress.
	SED 3 Social Relationships	SED 3a **Develops relationships with adults**	Recognizes, interacts with and responds to primary caregivers.	Stays close to and interacts with familiar adults for comfort and support.	Engages in interactions with new adults, but returns to the primary caregivers for comfort and support.	Engages in positive back-and-forth interactions with new or familiar adults.	Initiates interactions and uses prosocial behavior skills in back-and-forth exchanges with adults.	Identifies trusted adults in the community and describes when to seek help.	Describes characteristics of trusted adults and seeks help when needed.	Describes how trusted adults can provide support in various settings and how to build positive relationships.
		SED 3b **Develops relationships with peers**	Notices, responds to and looks at peers.	Engages in simple interactions with peers.	Shows interest in interacting with peers and may demonstrate preference for specific peers.	Engages in interactions with peers and has preferred friends that they play with consistently.	Demonstrates connection with others and identifies similar interests as friends.	Describes personal friendships and meaningful relationships.	Describes characteristics of positive friendships and how to build positive relationships.	Describes different types of relationships. Takes care of self, others and considers the needs of others.
		SED 3c **Participates cooperatively in groups**	Engages in simple social interactions, such as games like peek-a-boo.	Mimics actions of others.	Joins a group and participates in an activity when asked.	With support from an adult, initiates play with peers and uses prosocial behavior skills such as sharing, waiting and taking turns. May still need adult prompting on occasion.	Initiates play with peers and uses prosocial behavior skills such as sharing, waiting and taking turns. May still need adult prompting on occasion.	Identifies roles of self and others during group tasks or activities. Offers to help others.	Fulfills personal roles and responsibilities when working in a group.	Begins to use active listening and inclusion of other's ideas to support collaboration in a group setting.
		SED 3d **Identifies and respects emotions of others**	Adjusts behavior according to emotional or facial response of a familiar person.	Explores different facial expressions, such as in pictures.	Recognizes the emotions of others and demonstrates concern for others.	Explains how and why someone may be feeling a certain emotion.	Identifies complex feelings of others and responds accordingly.	Explains how self and others may feel similar or different in a variety of situations and explains why.	Seeks to understand and support others' feelings.	Demonstrates respect for others who have differing feelings and needs. Shows empathy to others.
	SED 4 Problem-Solving	SED 4a **Solves problems**	Uses simple repeated actions or movements to solve a problem.	Explores how things work using repeated trial and error to solve a problem.	Recognizes a problem and asks for adult help to solve the problem.	Suggests and explores possible solutions to a problem with support from an adult.	Uses previous knowledge to determine which solution to try first when solving a problem.	Eliminates possible solutions to a problem by thinking through their potential results and consequences.	Explains the sequence of their problem solving strategy.	Solves problems by connecting personal experiences to possible solutions.
		SED 4b **Responsible Decision-Making**	Begins to recognize choices, such as reaching for a toy when multiple options are available.	Responds to simple guidance on safe and kind choices.	Identifies basic consequences of actions, such as "If I throw my toy, it might break".	With adult support, lists choices or solutions before making a decision.	Makes independent choices based on rules and fairness.	Considers others' feelings when making decisions.	Evaluates possible solutions and their consequences before acting.	Demonstrates responsible decision-making by applying past experiences to new situations.
Approaches to Learning	ATL 1 Attention & Persistence	ATL 1a **Attends**	Focuses for a short time on a person, sound or thing.	Attends to what others are looking at or pointing to.	Focuses on an engaging activity for a short period of time with adult reminders.	Focuses on an engaging activity for a short period of time independently.	Sustains focus for at least five minutes, even if there are distractions.	Sustains focus for at least ten minutes, even if there are distractions.	Sustains focus for at least thirty minutes, even if there are distractions.	Sustains focus for forty-five minutes, even if there are distractions.
		ATL 1b **Persists**	Engages in a continued interaction or activity with a familiar object or adult.	Repeats actions to gain a result.	Asserts a desire to start or end a preferred activity. Asks for help as needed.	Practices or repeats an activity until successful. Expresses delight over a successful project.	Begins to persist on a challenging activity with teacher support.	Persists on a challenging activity independently.	With adult support, plans steps to pursue a challenging activity or idea and implements it with persistence.	Plans steps to pursue an idea and implements it with persistence independently.
	ATL 2 Flexibility & Play	ATL 2a **Shows flexibility**	Shifts attention from one person or thing to another.	Shifts attention from one task to another with prompting and adult support.	With adult support, demonstrates ability to shift ideas, plans or imagination while working on a simple task or activity.	With adult support, demonstrates ability to shift ideas, plans or imagination while participating in complex tasks or role-play scenarios.	Demonstrates ability to shift ideas, plans or imagination while participating in simple tasks or role-play scenarios independently.	Demonstrates ability to shift ideas, plans or imagination while completing complex tasks or games independently.	Imagines new ways to approach a task or discover information when obstacles are present.	Demonstrates ability to fluently shift approaches within complex tasks independently.
		ATL 2b **Engages in play**	Explores and manipulates materials.	Entertains and plays by themselves without adult or child involvement.	Watches others play and plays side by side with another person.	Joins a group and participates in group play. May have different purposes of play.	Engages in cooperative play by sharing, taking turns and offering to help others. Identifies roles of self and others during tasks and play.	Engages in social play and creates goals and scenarios that involve creative problem-solving.	With adult support, plays games or activities with complex rules.	Plays games or activities with others that have complex rules. May create own rules to games.
Physical Development	PD 1 Gross Motor	PD 1 **Builds strength, coordination and balance of large muscles**	Rolls, crawls, sits independently and pulls self into a standing position. Kicks or grabs from a seated or lying position.	Walks and climbs. Carries, drags, kicks and tosses objects.	Runs. Balances on a wide beam. Throws objects in an intended direction. Catches objects against body.	Balances and hops on one foot. Throws both overhand and underhand. Catches or kicks moving objects.	Hops from one foot to the other. Begins to skip. Coordinates multiple movements in simple sequences.	Changes direction and speed of movement.	Balances on a variety of objects. Kicks or strikes moving objects with aim and accuracy. Leaps. Stops at a boundary.	Uses conditioning methods to strengthen muscles and increase endurance. Coordinates multiple complex movements in continuous play.
	PD 2 Fine Motor	PD 2 **Builds strength and coordination of small movements**	Reaches for objects in sight and uses hands or feet to make contact with an object.	Purposefully grasps objects with finger and thumb. Uses hands to accomplish tasks, such as feeding self.	Opens, closes, stacks, twists and pulls objects with one or both hands.	Uses hands and fingers to manipulate objects, such as stringing large beads or snipping with scissors.	Manipulates objects through tasks like buttoning, zipping, buckling, lacing and following a straight line when cutting and copying drawings.	Manipulates objects through tasks like following an outline with scissors, tying shoes and dressing self.	Threads small beads. Stacks small objects. Uses scissors to cut more challenging materials, such as fabric or cardstock.	Manipulates objects of all sizes with speed and accuracy.
	PD 3 Safety	PD 3 **Demonstrates safe practices**	Reacts to unexpected noises, lights or sights.	Responds to possible dangers in environment and avoids them when prompted.	Follows simple safety rules and avoids danger.	Follows safety rules and helps others follow rules. Identifies dangerous situations and seeks help.	Describes reasons for safety rules and reminds others to follow them.	Applies general safety rules to a variety of everyday situations with little prompting.	Identifies emergency situations and how to behave accordingly. Describes how to get help.	Takes appropriate initiative in dangerous and emergency situations.
	PD 4 Personal Care	PD 4a **Implements self-care routines including rest, toileting, handwashing, exercise and dressing**	Cries or moves body when physical needs are not met.	Begins to participate in self-care activities and recognizes the difference between dirty and clean.	With help, participates in self-care routines.	Recognizes personal needs and how to get them met and implements with adult support.	Meets most personal and hygiene needs when prompted by an adult.	Maintains personal needs and proper hygiene with occasional reminders.	Independently maintains personal and hygiene needs.	Explains how to manage health and role of exercise and rest in self and others.
		PD 4b **Understands bodily functions**	Explores body parts, such as hands and feet.	Points to body parts when prompted.	Identifies basic body parts.	Describes the function of basic body parts. Can locate body pain.	Explains how germs spread and describes simple strategies for preventing the spread.	When feeling sick, describes symptoms. Describes some contagious diseases.	Identifies basic organs.	Describes the functions of basic organs.
	PD 5 Nutrition	PD5 **Follows healthy nutrition routines**	Cries when hungry.	Communicates the need to eat and feeds self some finger foods.	Begins to identify familiar foods, anticipates the need to eat and feeds self with spoon or other utensil.	Identifies food and serves a portion into a bowl or plate and feeds self.	Identifies food groups, sorts food and identifies food that is nutritious	Describes how nutritious food helps the body grow and develop and helps to prepare food.	Describes what happens after the consumption of food.	Prepares simple food for self.

Individual children develop at a unique pace.		Infant	Toddler		Preschool		Primary		
Skill / Skill Code	**Sub-skill / Definition**	**Benchmark 1**	**Benchmark 2**	**Benchmark 3**	**Benchmark 4**	**Benchmark 5**	**Benchmark 6**	**Benchmark 7**	**Benchmark 8**
Language & Literacy Development									
LLD 1 Listening	LLD 1a **Understands and interprets language**	Turns head toward the person speaking.	Shows understanding of a variety of single familiar words, such as by pointing at named objects, people or body parts.	Shows understanding of a wide variety of phrases and sentences.	Listens, then responds appropriately.	Listens and understands inferred requests.	Shows understanding of a series of complex statements that explain how or why.	Shows understanding about key details from information or stories shared verbally.	Listens to gather new information and demonstrates understanding.
	LLD 1b **Follows directions**	Responds to speaking in the environment and imitates actions.	With prompts and gestures, follows a one-step direction.	Follows related two-step directions given verbally.	Follows unrelated two-step directions given verbally.	With prompting, follows multi-step directions given verbally.	Follows multi-step directions given verbally.	Remembers and follows previous rules or directions given verbally.	Responds to verbal statements that have implied directions or requests.
LLD 2 Communication	LLD 2a **Uses language to express information and ask/answer questions**	Uses vocalizations and gestures to communicate.	Uses a few words, signs or word-like sounds to communicate.	Communicates needs, desires and ideas or asks simple questions.	Uses descriptions and observations to communicate information and answer questions, or asks more complex questions.	Talks about activities or tells stories. Answers "who," "what," "when," "why" and "how" questions.	Explains personal thoughts about familiar people, places and events.	Discusses ideas and feelings about a wide range of age-appropriate topics.	Uses expression, tone and pacing to reinforce the meaning of what they are communicating.
	LLD 2b **Uses conversational skills**	Responds with babbles or sounds with prompting.	Responds to one exchange, but is not on topic.	Responds on topic for one exchange.	Stays on topic for two to three exchanges.	Engages in conversations through multiple exchanges.	Initiates conversation with adults and peers.	Demonstrate understanding of conversation norms, such as listening, taking turns talking, distance between talkers and body orientation.	Asks for clarification about information or topics that occur during a conversation.
	LLD 2c **Uses sentence structure**	Mimics single sounds.	Communicates using one- to two-word sentences.	Communicates using two- to four-word sentences.	Communicates in sentences. May not always follow grammatical rules.	Communicates in simple, complete sentences.	Uses question words in speech. Speaks audibly. Makes nouns plural by adding /s/. Uses common prepositions.	Uses many types of sentences, including simple and compound. Uses verb tense to express past, present and future.	Uses common irregular plural nouns and conjugated verbs.
	LLD 2d **Uses and expands vocabulary**	Uses sounds and gestures to communicate.	Repeats words heard frequently in environment.	Identifies familiar people, places and objects. Asks what a specific person or object is called.	Describes familiar people, places and objects. Seeks additional words for new ways to describe.	Includes new and technical words in everyday conversations. Asks what unfamiliar words mean.	Uses new or technical words learned in conversations or through reading. Compares words and their meanings.	Identifies words whose meaning are similar. Determines the meaning of unknown words from context or root word.	Explains the difference between closely related words. Uses multiple strategies to determine and learn the meaning of unfamiliar words.
LLD 3 Phonological Awareness	LLD 3a **Rhyme**	Listens to and moves to rhyming songs.	Repeats the last word in familiar rhymes when prompted.	Suggests a missing rhyming word within a poem or song.	Identifies when two words rhyme.	Produces rhyming words when given a word.	Rhymes with real and nonsensical words.	Independently identifies and repeats rhyming word pairs from a poem or song.	Creates an original rhyming song or poem.
	LLD 3b **Hears Large Units of Sound**	Babbles and vocalizes using sound, volume and inflection.	Repeats words or short sentences.	Shows awareness of separate words in spoken language.	Blends large units of sound, such as compound words, syllables or onset-rime.	Segments large units of sound, such as compound words, syllables or onset-rime.	Deletes large units of sound.	Substitutes large units of sound.	Manipulates, blends, substitutes and deletes large units of sound.
	LLD 3c **Hears Small Units of Sound**	Coos and makes sounds such as "oo" and "ah."	Imitates or repeats sounds and tones.	Engages in word and sound play through songs and games.	Identifies and produces words that have the same beginning sound.	Identifies the end sound of a word and blends two-phoneme words.	Identifies medial sound of a word and blends CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words.	Segments phonemes in words.	Substitutes and deletes phonemes in words.
LLD 4 Alphabetic Knowledge	LLD 4 **Identifies letters, makes letter-sound connections and decodes words**	Explores books and toys with letters and related images.	Participates in letter songs and activities.	Recognizes the first letter and letter sound in their name.	Identifies five to ten upper- and lowercase letters and letter sounds.	Identifies eleven to twenty upper- and lowercase letters and letter sounds.	Identifies all upper- and lowercase letters and letter sounds.	Decodes words with long and short vowel sounds, digraphs and blends with increasing automaticity.	Applies phonics strategies and word analysis skills to decode words, such as irregular high-frequency and unfamiliar words with increasing automaticity.
LLD 5 Concepts of Print	LLD 5 **Uses print concepts and explores books and other text**	Opens and closes books, looks at them and points to pictures.	Recognizes if pictures are right-side up. Turns pages from the front to the back of the book.	Distinguishes between pictures and words. Identifies the front and back cover.	Distinguishes between letters and words. Indicates where to start reading on a page.	Identifies some punctuation and recognizes spaces between words.	Recognizes common types of text, such as poems, storybooks or fact books. Names author and illustrator. Identifies punctuation.	Explains the difference between books that tell stories and those that give information.	Identifies and uses text features to find information in texts.
LLD 6 Reading Comprehension	LLD 6a **Responds to text**	Interacts by reaching for or patting when a book is read.	Chooses and holds a book and looks intently at each page.	Talks about pictures and ideas in familiar stories.	Anticipates what comes next in familiar stories. Expresses likes or dislikes within the story.	Relates to the characters or events of the story and shares a similar experience or object from their own life.	With support, compares similarities between two texts.	Makes many text-to-text, text-to-self and text-to-real-world connections. Compares similarities and differences between texts.	Evaluates texts based on content, personal experiences and knowledge of the world. Compares the main points of two texts.
	LLD 6b **Retells, asks and answers questions about a text or story**	Looks at and listens to books read aloud by an adult.	With prompting, answers "where" questions by pointing to pictures and repeating words from familiar stories.	Identifies the characters and setting in a story.	Retells portions of a story using pictures, gestures or props.	With prompting, answers simple questions about the characters, setting and events in a story and retells a story.	Asks and answers questions about the characters, setting and events in a story and retells the events of a story in sequence.	Makes inferences about character goals or causal connections in a story, and retells stories in sequence using more details.	Summarizes texts and their messages. Describes the points of view of various characters.
LLD 7 Writing	LLD 7a **Emergent Writing**	With adult support, makes a mark with a writing tool or other material.	Makes random marks or draws with writing tools.	Marks or scribbles. Begins to make letter-like forms.	Writes letter-like forms or mock letters and letter strings from left to right.	Writes first name and some letters. Begins to use inventive spelling. Letters may be out of order or backward.	Writes first and last name and upper- and lowercase letters appropriately. Writes short phrases with more accuracy.	Writes simple sentences. Begins to use conventional spelling.	Writes simple and compound sentences. Uses punctuation. Checks and corrects spelling.
	LLD 7b **Uses writing to represent meaning**	Explores various tools used to write.	Makes handprints or fingerprints with adults.	Scribbles or draws marks as a representation of an object or person.	Uses a combination of drawing, dictating and writing to explain who or what something represents.	Uses a combination of drawing, dictating and writing to record an event or idea.	Draws and writes to express ideas or share an opinion.	Writes to give information about a topic, including some facts. Provides a concluding statement.	Writes ideas or groups information in logical order. Uses descriptive words in writing.
Mathematics									
M 1 Number Sense	M 1a **Verbally counts numbers**	Listens to counting songs and chants.	Says or sings random numbers, may be out of order.	Verbally counts to five.	Verbally counts to ten.	Verbally counts to twenty.	Verbally counts to 100 by ones and tens. Counts forward from a given number.	Verbally counts in sequence to 120 from a given number.	Verbally counts by fives, tens and hundreds to 1000.
	M 1b **Identifies and writes numerals**	Sees numbers in everyday context.	Begins to identify numbers. Identifies the numeral 1.	Identifies numerals up to five.	Identifies numerals up to ten and understands the numeral reflects the quantity of objects. Writes numerals up to five.	Identifies numerals up to twenty and understands the numeral reflects the quantity of objects. Writes numerals up to ten.	Identifies numerals up to fifty. Writes numerals up to twenty.	Identifies numerals to 100 and understands place value for two- to three-digit numbers.	Identifies and writes numerals to 1000. Understands place value for three- to four-digit numbers.
	M 1c **Counting one-to-one, and composing and decomposing numbers**	Points to objects.	Uses one-to-one correspondence to match objects or pictures.	Points to one object at a time while counting up to five.	Counts up to ten objects and indicates that the last number counted tells how many objects were counted.	Count up to twenty objects and indicates that the last number counted tells how many objects were counted.	Understands that a whole number is greater than its parts and can identify the number combinations that add up to five with prompting.	Identifies the number combinations that add up to five.	Decomposes numbers less than or equal to ten in more than one way.
	M 1d **Number Quantities and Comparison**	Looks for an object that is taken out of sight.	Recognizes amounts up to two without counting.	Recognizes amounts up to three without counting.	Recognizes amounts up to five without counting. Creates and counts groups of up to five objects and identifies which group has more, less or if they are equal.	Creates and counts groups of up to five objects and recognizes which group has more, even if the objects in the larger group are smaller.	Creates and counts groups of up to ten objects and identifies which group has more, less or if they are equal.	Uses the concept of a number line to compare which numbers are closer to each other.	Uses place value to compare numbers.
	M 1e **Addition and Subtraction**	Watches an adult add or take away toys.	Adds to and removes objects from a group as prompted.	Adds and subtracts by adding or removing objects and demonstrating understanding of the total up to three.	Adds and subtracts by adding to or removing objects and recounting to find the total up to five.	Adds and subtracts by adding to or removing objects and recounting to find the total up to ten.	Adds and subtracts by counting on or counting up to for totals up to ten.	Uses addition and subtraction strategies to solve problems with totals up to twenty.	Solves for the unknown in one- and two-step addition or subtraction word problems. Explains problem-solving strategies.
M 2 Spatial Awareness	M 2a **Understands how objects move in space**	Tries to put one object inside another.	Purposely manipulates objects, such as turning or spinning them, to discover how things move or fit into a space.	Recognizes objects that are upside-down and turns them right-side up. Puts together three pieces to create a whole object.	Moves objects to assemble a whole, such as simple puzzles with prompting.	Moves objects to assemble a whole, such as simple puzzles. May take several attempts to determine the correct orientation.	Identifies and corrects the orientation of familiar objects and symbols. Assembles a puzzle without using a guide.	Creates complex pictures or objects by putting together or taking apart shapes.	Determines when shapes have been slid, turned or flipped and describes the translation.
	M 2b **Determines object location**	Participates as caregiver raises arms or legs and says up/down.	Follows simple positional directions such as on/off, over/under and up/down.	Finds or places objects next to, between, in front of or behind self.	When prompted, places objects next to, between, in front of or behind objects not related to self.	Explains the location of an object in relation to another object.	Makes simple maps or models to represent the location of objects.	Gives and follows positional instructions to find objects.	Uses representations, coordinates systems and maps to identify locations of objects or places.
M 3 Shapes	M 3 **Identifies shapes and their characteristics**	Manipulates objects that are a variety of shapes.	Matches two identical shapes.	Identifies one to three two-dimensional shapes.	Identifies four to six two-dimensional shapes.	Identifies sides and angles or "corners" of shapes and uses materials to construct a shape when given a target shape to view.	Compares shapes by describing the attributes, such as the number and length of the sides and the number of angles or "corners" and recognizes shapes regardless of orientation.	Describes objects in the environment as two- and three-dimensional shapes. Identifies one to four three-dimensional shapes.	Separates a shape into halves, thirds and fourths.
M 4 Measurement	M 4a **Measures and Estimates**	Recognizes when to use whole hand or just two fingers to pick up an object.	Explores size and weight of objects in relation to self.	Determines which object is bigger when given two to three objects.	Identifies that things can be measured and uses nonstandard measurement tools. Uses measurement vocabulary such as weight, length or volume.	Compares the length, weight and capacity of two objects to determine which is bigger or if they are the same and uses measurement vocabulary.	Makes logical estimates and uses measurement tools to check estimation.	Explains which measurement tool makes the best sense for the object being measured. Tells time in hours and half-hours.	Tells time. Estimates length in inches, feet, centimeters or meters. Measures an object using a variety of measurement standards.
	M 4b **Compares and Orders**	Picks up and puts down objects.	Places objects in a row in any order.	Compares and orders two to three objects. Identifies the first object.	Compares and orders up to five objects. Describes order using words like first, second and third.	Compares and orders up to ten objects. Describes order using words like first to tenth.	Orders objects by one feature, then reorders using a different feature. Orders events in time.	Compares objects by using a measuring tool, then orders.	Compares and explains how much longer one object is than another using standard units of measurement.
M 5 Patterns	M 5 **Copies, Creates, and Extends Patterns**	Plays predictable activities with caregivers, such as pat-a-cake and peekaboo.	Notices things that repeat in the environment.	Fills in the missing piece of an AB pattern.	Copies, creates and extends AB patterns.	Fills in the missing piece of complex patterns, such as ABC or AABB.	Copies, creates and extends complex patterns, such as ABC or AABB.	Identifies the smallest unit of a pattern, such as AAB as the smallest unit of the pattern AABAABAAB.	Develops and explains own formula for creating a variety of patterns.
M 6 Classification	M 6 **Sorts and graphs**	Notices when two objects are similar in some way.	Creates groups of objects by common characteristics but may be mixed or inconsistent.	Sorts objects by one feature.	After sorting objects by one feature, sorts again by a different feature	Sorts objects by more than one feature and explains why.	Gathers, sorts and categorizes objects or data into two categories and counts how many are in each.	Gathers, represents and answers questions about objects or data in three categories.	Gathers, represents and answers questions about objects or data in four categories.

Individual children develop at a unique pace.			Infant		Toddler		Preschool		Primary		
Skill / Skill Code		Sub-skill / Definition	Benchmark 1	Benchmark 2	Benchmark 3	Benchmark 4	Benchmark 5	Benchmark 6	Benchmark 7	Benchmark 8
Science	SCI 1 Investigation & Inquiry	SCI 1a **Asks questions and makes predictions**	Looks for a person or toy that has moved out of sight.	Asks simple questions about a familiar environment through words or gestures.	Begins to understand how things are connected and asks more complex questions about a familiar environment.	When given a question, guesses a possible answer or outcome.	Asks questions about a familiar environment or scientific phenomenon and makes predictions about the outcome.	Predicts multiple outcomes to a question or situation and explains personal reasoning.	Uses prior knowledge and gathered information to make predictions about a scientific phenomenon. Makes hypotheses about scientific phenomena with teacher support.	Asks questions and makes hypotheses about scientific phenomena or hypothetical problems. Conducts an experiment multiple times.
		SCI 1b **Observes, describes and records**	Uses senses to explore environment.	Demonstrates curiosity about objects by touching and manipulating them. Begins to understand cause and effect.	Begins to observe, describe and record a simple scientific phenomenon with teacher support.	Observes and uses prior knowledge to describe and record a scientific phenomenon with teacher prompting.	Observes, describes and records a scientific phenomenon.	Gathers information or experiments to prove/disprove a prediction.	Records findings in charts or diagrams and explains one's problem-solving strategy.	Records and discusses observations and evaluates information to explain a phenomenon or prove/disprove a hypothesis.
	SCI 2 Natural & Earth Science	SCI 2a **Understands living and nonliving things**	Explores immediate environment using senses.	Plays with natural materials and reacts to animals or plants in the immediate environment.	Identifies familiar natural materials, animals or plants and groups them by common characteristics.	Demonstrates an understanding that all living things have needs. Identifies if an object can grow, eat or move.	Describes the characteristics of living things, sorts objects by living and nonliving and explains why.	Describes how living things obtain what they need to survive. Groups living things by complex features.	Describes how a living thing's features and surroundings help it survive.	Describes threats that living things must overcome to survive. Explains the relationships between a variety of species.
		SCI 2b **Demonstrates knowledge of Earth's environment**	Reacts to weather changes in immediate environment.	Points to and notices natural elements, such as clouds, rain and wind.	Recognizes day and night. Notices changes in temperature and weather.	Identifies the climate and weather in the immediate environment and describes ways to care for the natural world.	Identifies current season and explains how weather affects personal life.	Explains that different places have disparate kinds of weather and climates.	Explains weather patterns and the basic properties and role of the sun, moon and earth.	Describes how the sun and movements of the earth affect climate.
	SCI 3 Physical Science	SCI 3a **Explores forces and motion**	Kicks feet or shakes arms to make other objects move.	Uses body to push or pull toys.	Explores motion by moving, rolling, blowing on or dropping a toy.	Explains how vehicles, animals or people move.	Experiments with and explores invisible forces, such as ramps and magnets.	Experiments and compares the movements of various objects and materials on a variety of surfaces.	Recognizes that gravity makes unsupported objects fall. Identifies objects that are attracted to magnets.	Explains how force is used to change the direction of moving objects.
		SCI 3b **Explores the physical properties of materials**	Uses senses to explore objects in an immediate environment.	Reacts to changes in texture, temperature, smell, sound or sight.	Begins to name colors.	Describes basic physical properties of objects, such as textures and colors.	Manipulates matter and observes any physical changes that may occur.	Classifies and sorts materials by a variety of physical properties.	Identifies materials that are solid, liquid and gas.	Describe how materials change between different states of matter.
	SCI 4 Technology	SCI 4 **Uses tools and technology to perform tasks**	Explores simple toys.	Begins to use simple toys purposefully.	Explores movable parts on toys.	Explores simple tools or interacts with simple types of technology.	Experiments with tools or technology to solve problems or accomplish tasks.	Uses familiar tools or technology to produce a desired result or solve a specific problem.	Experiments with familiar and unfamiliar tools or technology to achieve a variety of results.	Identifies which tools can best help save time, solve a problem or increase enjoyment.
Social Studies	SS 1 Culture & Community	SS 1a **Identifies community and family roles**	Responds to and recognizes primary caregivers.	Recognizes the difference between a familiar and unfamiliar person.	Identifies familiar people and pets.	Describes family members and their relationship to self. Identifies and role-plays familiar community helpers.	Identifies roles of self and others and describes the job each may do.	Compares roles, rules and responsibilities between different groups.	Describes how roles and responsibilities or families and groups change over time.	Identifies features of different communities and how these features impact roles and responsibilities.
		SS 1b **Explores and respects cultures and traditions**	Listens to stories or music related to cultures and traditions.	Participates in activities related to cultures or traditions.	Recognizes familiar symbols or artifacts of traditions or customs.	Describes the routines, familiar stories, traditions, foods or celebrations of own family or community.	Explains the meaning and importance of their own traditions or customs. Begins to learn, ask questions and respect other cultures.	Explains the meaning and importance of traditions or customs of other people.	Compares diverse cultures or traditions.	Names influential people or events that have impacted familiar cultures and traditions.
		SS 1c **Respects diversity**	Sees diverse features of people in books, toys or media.	Explores people and their features, either in person or in pictures.	Identifies similarities and differences between self and others.	Respectfully participates in activities with others different than self.	Shows interest in learning about and interacting with peers who look, learn, believe or move differently.	Explains and celebrates how individuals, families or cultures differ.	Demonstrates an understanding that some people have different needs or beliefs than self and seeks to support them accordingly.	Demonstrates respect for people who look different and have differing abilities or traditions.
	SS 2 Civics & Economics	SS 2a **Follows rules, limits and expectations**	Attends to others in immediate environment.	Participates in communal activities.	Recognizes and attends to adults to hear rules, routines and expectations.	Follows familiar rules and routines and helps make group decisions. Expresses feelings about fairness.	Applies familiar rules and suggests new rules in a variety of situations.	Discusses the purposes of rules, laws and civic leaders. Participates in voting to make decisions.	Identifies individual rights. Determines if rules support the common good.	Describes different levels of government, such as local, state and national. Makes democratic decisions.
		SS 2b **Understands concepts of money and economics**	Reaches for desired objects.	Expresses a desire for an object or action. Expresses ownership such as by saying me or mine.	Expresses choice and recognizes interests and desires may be different from others. Explores the concept of trade.	Asks before taking an object that doesn't belong to them and offers an object to others to get what they want. Explores the concept of money.	Explores the use of trade of both goods and money to receive/buy objects or services.	Exchanges money, goods or services for other goods or services. Identifies value of differing coins.	Describes how and why we save, earn and spend money.	Explains how and why people work together in trade to get what they need and want. Explains why some items are more expensive or valuable.
	SS 3 Geography	SS 3a **Identifies types of places**	Responds to changes in the immediate environment.	Recognizes familiar places.	Identifies a variety of familiar places in own community.	Identifies different types of water bodies, streets, buildings or landmarks in own community.	Explains the purpose for different types of structures, such as bridges and buildings. Asks questions about landmarks.	Compares the geographic features of one's community to another community.	Identifies and describes various types of landforms and natural resources.	Explains how the physical features and characteristics of an environment affect how people live.
		SS 3b **Interacts with maps**	Navigates within a familiar environment.	Finds ways to move around obstacles in a familiar environment.	Follows a path.	Recognizes symbols or landmarks.	Identifies what is represented on a map and draws pictures of current location.	Recreates a map of something they cannot immediately see.	Locates familiar places on maps. Uses cardinal directions to follow and give directions.	Uses a variety of maps to gather information.
	SS 4 History & Sense of Time	SS 4 **Develops sense of time**	Focuses on interactions with others for a short time.	Indicates the beginning or ending of an event	Describes events as they happen. Uses words such as "first" and "then."	Recalls information and events from the past. Recognizes sequence of events to establish a sense of order and time.	Uses language of time to describe familiar sequences of events.	Retells historical, fictional or past events or stories.	Compares and contrasts current and historical conditions of familiar environments.	Describes relationships between past events and current conditions. Explains why it is important to understand historical events.
Creative Arts	CA 1 Music	CA 1a **Expresses through music**	Makes sounds to communicate feelings.	Repeats words in familiar songs and attempts to sing.	Expresses likes and dislikes of familiar songs. Explores shaking, pounding or tapping various instruments.	Uses voice, common objects or instruments to create music. Identifies self as a musician.	Uses voice or instruments to express feelings or to mimic sound effects.	Communicates ideas by creating rhythm or melody.	Interprets and compares many types of music.	Experiments and performs self-written music or rhythmic patterns.
		CA 1b **Develops rhythm**	Responds to rhythm.	Responds to changes in rhythm.	Claps to beat. May not always be consistent.	Claps along to simple rhythm patterns.	Repeats simple rhythm patterns.	Creates simple rhythm patterns.	Maintains a steady beat. Recognizes strong/weak beats. Begins to read rhythm notation.	Maintains rhythm in various meter groupings.
		CA 1c **Develops tone**	Responds to sounds.	Responds to changes in sound, volume or melody.	Understands the difference between singing and speaking voices.	Controls voice to mimic the melodic direction.	Hears the change of musical phrases in a song. Sings along to familiar songs.	Controls pitch when singing a familiar song.	Matches vocal pitch in a limited range.	Participates in call-and-response and two-part rounds.
	CA 2 Dance & Movement	CA 2a **Expresses through dance**	Uses body language to express feelings.	Uses purposeful gestures and body language to communicate.	Moves in own way to music and rhythm.	Demonstrates different levels of energy in dance, such as gentle versus explosive or small versus large movements.	Demonstrates the difference between spontaneous and planned movement. Creates movements based on own ideas.	Expresses ideas, feelings and stories through creative movement.	Coordinates movements of self and others to create a cohesive dance or idea.	Describes how dances and movements express certain ideas or feelings.
		CA 2b **Develops movement techniques**	Moves body in a variety of ways.	Moves body purposely such as by swaying or bouncing to music.	Follows the movements of others. Explores personal space and direction.	Demonstrates multiple ways to move body parts. Moves to the beat.	Follows a leader to perform a simple movement pattern.	Recalls a simple movement pattern and performs it individually or in a group.	Recalls and dances a sequence of two or three movement patterns. Identifies the beginning, middle and end of a dance.	Creates simple movement sequences.
	CA 3 Visual Arts	CA 3a **Expresses through 2D and 3D visual art**	Expresses emotions while exploring materials.	Scribbles, colors or paints intentionally on paper.	Explores a variety of artistic tools and media.	Makes choices throughout the artistic process.	Plans, designs and seeks materials to make a creation.	Creates art to represent an idea or object. Explains how it was made.	Creates art to express ideas, thoughts and feelings.	Creates art and explains why and how they chose specific materials and techniques.
		CA 3b **Develops visual art techniques**	Explores materials using gross motor movements and senses.	Uses hands and feet to explore a variety of media.	Uses materials to create shapes or symbols.	Chooses an object or art tool to use with a given medium for a desired effect.	Uses artistic tools and media to create intentional designs or images.	Demonstrates a variety of techniques using a given tool or medium.	Uses various tools and techniques to achieve desired artistic results.	Compares artistic techniques and creations of many artists.
	CA 4 Drama	CA 4a **Participates in dramatic and symbolic play**	Imitates simple movements and facial expressions.	Mimics observed behaviors and words.	Uses words, actions and props to pretend.	Plays a role in group dramatic play.	Assigns roles and plays out unscripted scenes in dramatic play.	With cues, performs a simple pre-planned drama.	Describes how a character may feel in a given situation, then integrates that emotion into performance.	Rehearses, memorizes and performs a short play.
		CA 4b **Uses and creates props to represent other objects or ideas**	Responds to props or puppets.	Mimics the use of familiar objects.	Uses realistic toys as replacements for real objects. Distinguishes between real and pretend.	Uses an object as a replacement for a realistic prop or real object.	Uses a combination of real and imaginary props or characters to play out a scene.	Uses a combination of real and imaginary props or characters to play out multiple scenes or events.	With adult support, plans a story and creates costumes, settings or props to create a mood or environment.	Plans a story and creates costumes, settings or props to create a mood or environment.

Skill Code/Skill		Sub-Skill Code/Definition	Pre-Production	Early Production	Speech Emergence	Intermediate Fluency	Advanced Fluency
Second Language Acquisition	SLA 1 Approach to second language acquisition	SLA 1a **Participates using target language**	Observes interactions in target language, but may not participate.	When prompted, uses gestures and words in target language to participate in group interactions.	Uses target language to actively participate, working around any language barriers.	Initiates interactions in target language, displaying adequate conversational proficiency with minimal language barriers.	Uses target language confidently and comfortably to participate. Begins to display written and academic proficiency for developmental level.
		SLA 1b **Demonstrates initiative with target language**	Uses cues and gestures to understand interactions in target language.	Asks for repetition of target language to clarify understanding.	Seeks explanations for unknown words and phrases in target language.	Asks questions in target language to clarify meaning of idioms and complex interactions.	Uses context clues and resources to clarify any misunderstandings.
		SLA 1c **Demonstrates use of varied vocabulary in target language**	Uses cues and gestures to understand interactions in target language.	Repeats often heard words in target language.	Uses social vocabulary to actively communicate and participate in the target language. Begins to use academic vocabulary in the target language.	Asks questions in target language to clarify meaning of idioms and complex interactions. Uses more advanced academic vocabulary in the target language.	Uses context clues and resources to clarify any misunderstandings.
	SLA 2 Comprehension of second language	SLA 2a **Demonstrates comprehension of target language**	Responds to cues, such as gestures and visualizations.	Responds to simple words, phrases and questions in target language, especially in combination with other cues.	Responds to simple stories and short discussions in target language.	Responds to stories, shares opinions and engages in discussions in target language.	Demonstrates near-native comprehension of target language in all contexts.
		SLA 2b **Demonstrates use of words and sentence structure of target language**	Uses cues, gestures and visualizations to communicate.	Uses words and memorized phrases in target language to communicate.	Formulates sentences by combining familiar words and phrases in target language. May make frequent errors.	Uses increasingly complex linguistic structures in target language with minimal programmatical errors.	Uses target language effectively in all contexts.

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experience
baby


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preschool