

**EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING  
FRAMEWORK**

**TOOLKIT**



## What is a Framework?

A framework provides overarching principles and goals for early learning of children across all learning environments that is based on evidence, research and understanding of best practice. *Navigating the Early Years: An Early Childhood Learning Framework* (The Framework) is the new provincial framework that guides ALL early learning practitioners across the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, including early childhood educators, family resources centre staff and facilitators, pediatricians, librarians, primary teachers and any other professionals who work and interact with children ages 0-8. It focuses primarily on the holistic development of a child through the understanding that play and play based learning is essential to overall childhood development. A Framework does not provide “curriculum” or “outcomes” for ECEs or other practitioners but focuses on the importance of developing child-centred programs for everyone working in the Early Years sector and for ECEs it supports the philosophies of reflective practice and creating purposeful learning environments.

The purpose of implementing an Early Learning Framework is:

- Connections between programs and services for children
- Consistency in goals for early childhood learning
- Quality and inclusive early learning for children
- Increased understanding of the importance of quality early learning experiences
- Communication, collaboration and partnership where appropriate between early learning practitioners and other adults in the child’s community of care

### The Theory

The Framework focuses on development of the whole child. Like the interwoven pieces of the Fisher’s Knot, this Framework recognizes the importance of all factors influencing the child during the critical period of early childhood. [image]

## How does the new framework support ECEs?

In summary the Framework is a vision or philosophical document rather than a “curriculum”. It supports and validates the work that we do as ECEs. The framework is another tool we have in our tool kit that we can use when we try to explain the value of quality early learning experiences and play based learnings to parents and other members in the child’s community of care. Because it is published by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development it supports an early childhood educator in the evidence that “school readiness” comes from strong and healthy social and emotional development, a joy and passion for learning and sense of belonging both to a program and to a community as a whole. As ECEs we are professionals who already recognize the developmental milestones and have the connections to a professional community. The Framework helps validates the idea that quality early childhood education is based in child centred practice and play based programs.



# Principles of Early Childhood Learning from a Child's Perspective

The principles of early learning are grounded in evidence-based research on effective ways to support children's learning and development and lay the foundation for the achievement of the goals for early childhood learning. The goals for early learning reflect the intended outcomes of the framework, such as providing quality early learning experiences to support a child's optimal development. The principles will help to achieve the overall goals by guiding the day-to-day practice of early learning practitioners and others in a child's community of care. The principles are written in a child's voice to emphasize the child's perspective.

The learning principles are organized into three broad categories with each category comprised of specific elements.

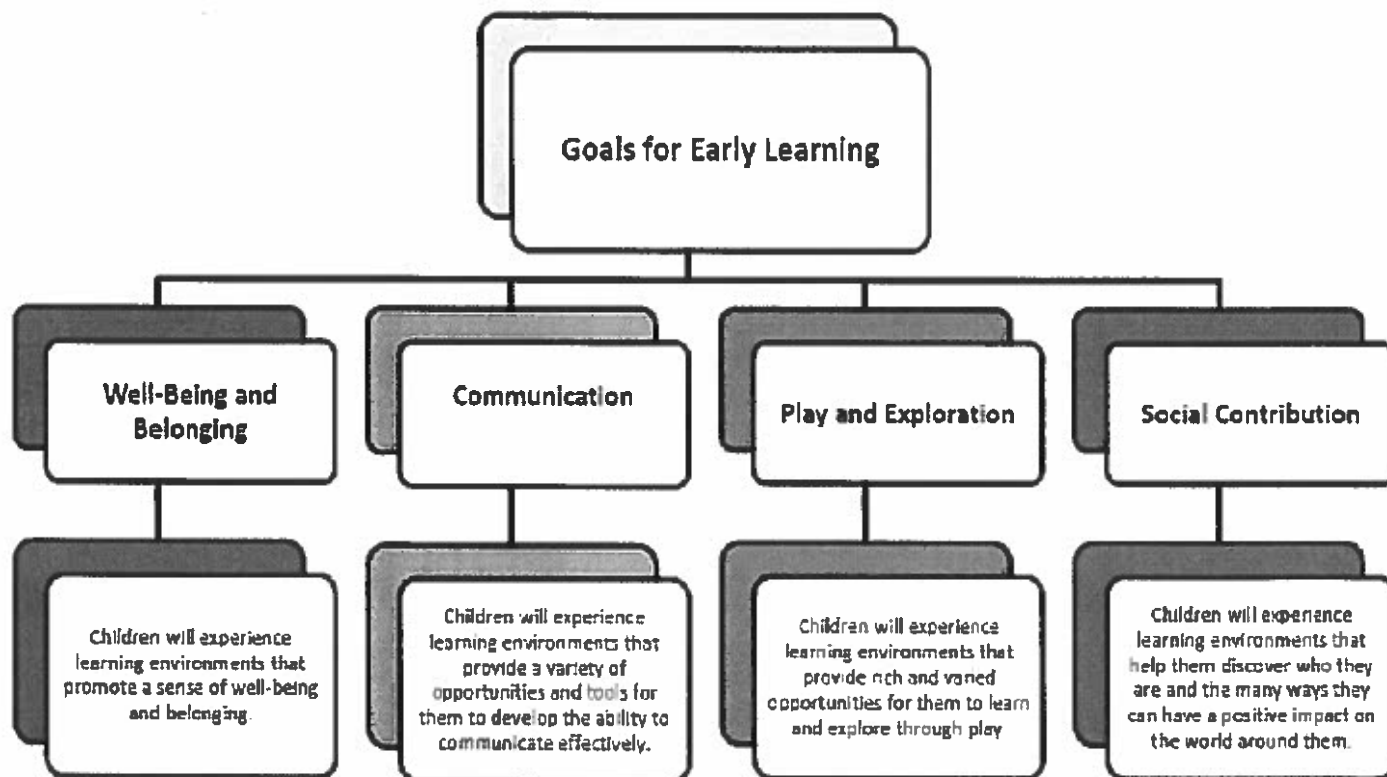


## Principles of the Early Childhood Learning Framework

<b>Principle 1: Individuality</b>	<p>Every child growing up in Newfoundland and Labrador is an individual with his or her own unique life experiences that are fundamental to their development.</p>
<b>Principle 2: Diversity</b>	<p>Early childhood learning is enhanced when diversity is recognized and celebrated in children's learning environments. Children living in Newfoundland and Labrador are diverse, and these differences contribute to making this province rich in compassion, culture, and heritage</p>
<b>Principle 3: Citizenship</b>	<p>Children growing up in Newfoundland and Labrador are valued members of this province whose opinions and perspectives matter. Children are considered active, contributing citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador. Encouraging mutual respect contributes to the development of citizens who respect and care for each other, their province, and the world.</p>
<b>Principle 4: Parents and Caregivers, Family, and Friends</b>	<p>Parents and caregivers are a child's first and most influential teachers. It is through early experiences with parents and caregivers that children learn how to form relationships throughout their lives. It is important that early learning practitioners support parents and caregivers by maintaining communication and partnering with them for learning and development of children.</p>
<b>Principle 5: Community of Care</b>	<p>Children's optimal learning and development occurs when members in their communities of care are positive, responsive, and have a nurturing and consistent presence in their lives. It is essential that early learning practitioners communicate and collaborate, where appropriate, with each other and other adults to develop healthy, respectful, and secure relationships with children.</p>
<b>Principle 6: Growing up in Newfoundland and Labrador</b>	<p>Newfoundland and Labrador is known for its rich culture and heritage and is filled with diverse communities. Children growing up in Newfoundland and Labrador are active contributors to this province and hold the responsibility for its future.</p>
<b>Principle 7: Learning Environments</b>	<p>The learning environment means the physical space and materials, instructional practices, daily routines, expectations, and the inter-relationships between children, adults, and all of these elements. Children's learning environments influence what they learn, how they learn, who they learn from, and when they learn. Children should feel safe and comfortable to explore and discover in their environments. Learning environments should foster a sense of belonging in children, allowing them to feel free to choose from a variety of learning opportunities which interest them.</p>
<b>Principle 8: Play and Inquiry Based Learning</b>	<p>In a quality learning environment, children learn through play and exploration. Play and inquiry based learning experiences promote holistic development of a child's physical, social, emotional, language, cognitive, and self help skills. It is during imaginative and creative play that children learn self-regulation, and how to manage their feelings in appropriate ways.</p>
<b>Principle 9: Effective Communication</b>	<p>Learning occurs through effective communication. Children must be able to understand what is being communicated and have their communication understood by others if they are to experience optimal learning and development.</p>



## Early Childhood Learning Framework Structure



## Goals of the Early Childhood Learning Framework

<b>Goal One: Well-Being and Belonging - Children experience learning environments that promote a sense of well-being and belonging.</b>	
1.1 Physical Well-Being	
1.2 Emotional Well-Being	
1.3 Belonging	
<b>Goal Two: Communication - Children experience learning environments that provide a variety of opportunities and tools for them to develop the ability to communicate effectively</b>	
2.1 Language Development	
2.2 Creative Expression	
2.3 Cultural Connection	
<b>Goal Three: Play and Exploration - Children experience learning environments that provide rich and varied opportunities for them to learn and explore through play</b>	
3.1 Investigation and Thinking	
3.2 Creativity	
3.3 A Positive Attitude Towards Learning	
<b>Goal Four: Social Contribution - Children experience learning environments that help them discover who they are and the many ways they can have a positive impact on the world.</b>	
4.1 Equality	
4.2 Diversity	
4.3 Social Responsibility	

**Goal One: Well-Being and Belonging - Children experience learning environments that promote a sense of well-being and belonging.**

Physical well-being is fostered when early learning practitioners promote physical literacy in children by:

- providing for and helping them to understand how to be physically healthy through a balance of: - proper nutrition; - sleep; - activity and movement; and - self-care routines.
- supporting them to become aware of their own bodies and how to respond to physical signals;
- modelling and promoting physical safety;
- motivating them to adopt an active lifestyle by limiting sedentary behaviours;
- providing them a wide range of physical activities in a variety of environments for fine and gross motor development;
- providing them opportunities for moderate to vigorous intensities of physical activities;
- providing them with materials and opportunities for involvement in physical activities for various durations;
- providing them opportunities for development of fundamental movement skills such as jumping, running, catching, hopping, and climbing; and,
- communicating, collaborating, and partnering, where appropriate, with each other and other adults in the children's community of care for ensuring physical wellbeing of children.

**1.1 Physical Well-Being**

Emotional well-being is fostered when early learning practitioners provide a learning environment that communicates that children are:

- loved;
- valued for their individuality;
- respected;
- capable;
- confident in their abilities;
- secure in their safety and well-being;
- knowledgeable of consistent routines within each learning environment;
- connected to consistent, responsive, and compassionate caregivers;

**1.2 Emotional Well-Being**

### 1.2 Emotional Well-Being

- safe to take age-appropriate risks and try new things;
- free to express their thoughts, opinions, and emotions;
- acknowledged in their feelings, wants, desires, and preferences in a respectful manner;
- important and that they belong;
- aware of their own and others' emotions;
- capable of accepting change during transition;
- encouraged to build positive relationships with peers and other adults in their community of care; and
- encouraged to be optimistic about themselves and their life circumstances.

### 1.3 Belonging

Belonging is fostered when early learning practitioners provide children a learning environment that enables them to:

- develop an awareness of family and community, and feel they have a place within these;
- embrace differences, promote equality, recognize similarities, and celebrate diversity;
- develop their own identities; and
- have an understanding of who they are as unique individuals and an awareness of their strengths and abilities.



## Goal One Reflection Questions:

Our society is becoming more and more sedentary. As ECEs we KNOW how valuable early learning is on creating positive attitudes and behavioral changes towards more physical activity. What are some of the things YOU and your program do to promote physical well-being? What worked and what did not?

How do you support children in new situations? How do you welcome new children into your program, plan for field trips, or when substitutes fill in for regular staff?

How does your program build relationships of trust between people? Think about relationships between adults, children and adults and between the children.

Developing a sense of belonging can be challenging for new families. How does your program support the development of a sense of belonging to your program?

How do you develop and inspire a sense of community in your program?

How do you ensure that children have an opportunity to express themselves in a way that is meaningful to them?

Think about an experience your kids have been engaged with recently. Can you think of it fitting into any of the Framework goal for belonging? Which ones?

Think about 2 things you could do to expand on the above experience. Does it now fit into other framework goals?

How can you include the children in your documentation process? What goals would child-directed documentation meet? How can the framework help with documentation and reflections?

## Links to support Goal One:

Activities that Boost Physical Development: [https://www.babycenter.com/0\\_activities-that-boost-physical-development\\_3659030.bc](https://www.babycenter.com/0_activities-that-boost-physical-development_3659030.bc)

Learning Through Physical Play: <https://www.early-years.org/parents/docs/learning-through-physical-play.pdf>

Happy Children - taking care of young children's well being: <https://www.eyalliance.org.uk/happy-children---taking-care-young-peoples-wellbeing>

Developing a Space for Belonging: <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-publications/every-child-magazine/every-child-index/every-child-vol-17-2-2011/developing-space-belonging-free-article/>

Belonging:

<https://academic.oup.com/cs/article/29/1/35/354068>

<http://thespoke.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/children-need-feel-world-safe-place/>

**Goal Two: Communication - Children experience learning environments that provide a variety of opportunities and tools for them to develop the ability to communicate effectively**

<p><b>2.1 Language Development</b></p>	<p>Language development is fostered when early learning practitioners provide a learning environment that consistently:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• sparks curiosity about language (e.g., varied sounds, stories, rhymes, and words —spoken, written, and signed);</li><li>• supports and encourages communication in general (e.g., using alternative forms of communication as an inclusive practice for children who require it);</li><li>• uses rich, developmentally appropriate literacy tools that are readily available (e.g., books, magazines, musical instruments, songs, poems, and rhymes);</li><li>• encourages open, shared communication with responsive members of community of care who regularly listen and interpret children’s expressive and receptive language;</li><li>• encourages the use of appropriate expressive, receptive, and pragmatic language for both community of care and children;</li><li>• encourages different forms of expression;</li><li>• motivates children to engage in social communication on a regular basis;</li><li>• helps children feel safe to share their discoveries, feelings, and desires; and</li><li>• integrates, uses, and encourages mathematical language in activities and play.</li></ul>
<p><b>2.2 Creative Expression</b></p>	<p>Creative expression is fostered when early learning practitioners provide a learning environment that develops creative expression. Early learning practitioners should consistently:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• sing songs and rhymes;</li><li>• encourage children to play with sounds and words;</li><li>• demonstrate musical expression, and have various forms of music available (e.g., homemade or natural);</li></ul>

- tell stories, read books, and allow children the freedom to use their imaginations (e.g., expanding on the story, asking questions, and commenting while interacting with the literacy material);
- have various art materials readily available (e.g., paints, modelling clay, many types and sizes of paper and writing utensils—including paint brushes, crayons, markers, and pens—and also nature’s own ‘art items’ such as leaves, pebbles, shells, twigs, and sand);
- model creative expression (e.g., dance, create, wonder, act, invent, and construct);
- join in children’s imaginary play (e.g., for fun and/or to extend the depth or breadth of the play scenario or experience);
- interact and have playful creative experiences with children both indoors and outdoors;
- appreciate the sounds, rhythms, and beauty of nature as a language and creative platform in and of itself; and
- communicate, collaborate, and partner, where appropriate, with each other and other adults in children’s community of care to develop and promote creative expression.

**2.2 Creative Expression**

Cultural connection is fostered when early learning practitioners help children enhance their cultural connections through communication and provide learning environments that consistently:

- feature daily stories, songs, rhymes, and rhythms that are part of the children’s cultures and histories;
- ensure cultural representation (including First Nations, English, French, and others) can be found in books, symbols, dramatic play items, physical activity, and art materials available to the children;
- ensure children are given the opportunity to express themselves in culturally significant ways;
- respect and engage in the traditions and social rules specific to children’s cultures; and
- promote respect and support for cultural diversity through conversations, activities, and other interactions.

**2.3 Cultural Connection**

## Goal Two Reflection Questions:

What are some activities you have done with children in your care that reminded you how literacy develops through play?

Cultural Symbols: Think of some symbols (could be a picture of a Christmas tree, Tim Hortons sign etc.) and explain what it means to you? What would it mean to a child? What would it mean to the families you care for in your practice?

Think about your practice as an ECE. How does your use of loose parts and creative materials promote attachment and language development?

Think about an experience your kids have been engaged with recently. Can you think of it fitting into any of the Framework goal for belonging? Which ones?

Think about 2 things you could do to expand on the above experience. Does it now fit into other framework goals?

How can you include the children in your documentation process? What goals would child-directed documentation meet? How can the framework help with documentation and reflections?

## Links to support Goal Two:

Activities to Encourage Speech and Language

Development: <https://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/Activities-to-Encourage-Speech-and-Language-Development/>

Creative Learning and

Development: <https://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/development/creative-development/preschooler-creative-activities>

Culture: Early Childhood Learning: <http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/culture/according-experts/culture-and-early-childhood-learning>

<https://teaching2and3yearolds.com/11-preschool-language-development-activities/>

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## Goal Three: Play and Exploration - Children experience learning environments that provide rich and varied opportunities for them to learn and explore through play

Investigation and thinking are fostered when early learning practitioners provide children with opportunities and an environment that promotes investigation and thinking through play and play-based learning. Early learning practitioners should consistently:

- set children up for success by readily providing materials and information that match their developmental levels and allow them to make their own discoveries;
- challenge them by providing new and thought-provoking items, ideas, and activities designed to ignite curiosity and problem-solving; • support them as they actively explore these materials and information across a variety of learning environments;
- communicate with them patiently and allow them to communicate or express their ideas and experiences in their own ways (e.g., verbally or non-verbally, creatively, and imaginatively);
- encourage them to take appropriate risks and to experiment with ideas and materials;
- model effective problem-solving skills;
- respect individual differences (e.g., temperament, modes of expression);
- provide supportive guidance and scaffolding as needed to promote positive behaviour and to facilitate the learning process;
- provide opportunities for children to experience active play (e.g., running, jumping, and skipping);
- provide opportunities for children to experience concepts such as logic, comparison, classification, opposites, matching, shape recognition, measurement, and time;
- use concrete materials that children can manipulate to learn mathematics and science in the early years;
- provide opportunities for children to develop and experience many forms of communication and to interact with peers in a way that is meaningful to them; and
- communicate, collaborate, and partner, where appropriate, with each other and other adults in children's community of care to develop investigation and thinking skills.

### 3.1 Investigation and Thinking

### 3.2 Creativity

Creativity is fostered when early learning practitioners provide children with a learning environment that develops and promotes creativity, and where early learning practitioners:

- are responsive to the developmental needs of children;

**3.2 Creativity**

- provide a wide variety of materials for children to use to express themselves;
- have models of various creative techniques;
- provide time, space, and support for a variety of play activities, both indoors and outdoors;
- are supportive and encouraging;
- have developmentally appropriate expectations of children’s behaviours, interests, and needs; and
- communicate, collaborate, and partner, where appropriate, with each other and other adults in children’s community of care to develop and nurture creativity in children.

**3.3 A Positive Attitude Towards Learning**

A positive attitude towards learning is fostered when early learning practitioners provide children with a learning environment that develops positive attitudes towards learning. Early learning practitioners should consistently:

- structure the learning environment to encourage play;
- introduce new types of play to children when developmentally appropriate;
- learn about children’s play strengths and needs and respond accordingly;
- ensure play materials are suitable for children’s levels of development and that these are culturally relevant. This will increase the likelihood that the materials are meaningful for the children, and will provoke interest and curiosity;
- encourage children to take responsibility for their actions and behaviour during play and exploration; and
- communicate, collaborate, and partner, where appropriate, with each other and other adults in children’s community of care to develop and promote positive attitudes towards learning.

**Goal 3:**

How does your environment use loose parts to promote creativity? What other loose parts could you add to the environment?

Think about the stages of play that the children in your care are demonstrating.

How can you use your environment to support their play?

What loose parts or open ended material could you add to the environment to enhance their play?

Is there time for associative play in your program? Do children have blocks of time and materials to become engaged in a higher level of complex play?

**Resources:**

Theory of Loose

Parts: <http://www.readingplay.co.uk/GetAsset.aspx?id=fAAyADUAMgB8AHwARqBhAGwAcwBIAHwAfAA4AHwA0>

Social Stages of Play: <https://www.encourageplay.com/blog/social-stages-of-play>

What is Scaffolding in Early Childhood Development: <https://www.verywellfamily.com/education-scaffolding-preschoolers-2764951>

**Goal Four: Social Contribution - Children experience learning environments that help them discover who they are and the many ways they can have a positive impact on the world.**

Equality is fostered when early learning practitioners promote equality by providing a learning environment that consistently:

- promotes individual strengths and contributions;
- considers all children as unique, with differing abilities and interests;
- allows children to have a voice in making the rules and routines in their daily lives;
- helps children to understand the concept of responsibility for themselves and others;
- shows them how to stand up for themselves and others appropriately;
- promotes the concept of fairness;
- acquaints children with their rights;
- communicates peaceful ways to negotiate conflict;
- allows children to make mistakes and learn from these mistakes in supportive ways;
- allows children to participate at the fullest potential;
- promotes a positive discussion and understanding of individual, family, linguistic, and cultural differences; and minimizes stereotypes.

**4.1 Equality**

Diversity is fostered when early learning practitioners provide an environment that accepts and respects differences. Early learning practitioners should consistently:

- model respect, acceptance, and openness to difference;
- integrate diversity into all aspects of children’s learning experiences;
- be responsive to children’s questions and explain similarity and difference as children inquire;
- celebrate diversity every day in many ways;
- encourage children to explore the many similarities that we share;
- explore family, community, and international cultures;
- make children aware of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination and model how to appropriately respond; and
- communicate, collaborate, and partner, where appropriate, with each other and other adults in children’s community of care to develop and promote the concept of diversity.

**4.2 Diversity**



Social responsibility is fostered when early learning practitioners enable children to become socially responsible and provide them an environment that consistently:

- provides opportunities for children to work together in their daily activities;
- emphasizes children's responsibility for taking care of themselves, others, and the earth;
- connects them to nature;
- respects and honours the environment (e.g., practices Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle);
- involves them in the care of plants and animals; and
- provides opportunities for inclusion, peer coaching, and peer mentorship.

#### **4.3 Social Responsibility**

## Goal Four Reflection Questions:

Think about a time when a child had communicated their needs or wants to you in a non-verbal way. How did you support their communication development? What other ways could you try next time?

How do I respect the voices of the children in my room? Are they allowed to contribute to how the room works? Do they participate in program planning? When displaying children's artwork do I ask them about the pictures and use their words?

Are there areas which I can encourage more participation from children?

Think about your learning environment. Explain how diversity is represented in:

- The dramatic play area?
- Food props?
- Books and literature?
- Art/pictures on the wall?
- Dolls and puzzles?

What else could you change to reflect the children and cultures in *your* learning program?

How do you explain diversity to parents? To co-workers? What diversity is evident in your program?

Identify an element of diversity that you feel under educated about and identify one resource you could go to for guidance

What types of activities have you done with children to promote social responsibility?

## Links to support Goal Four:

Teaching Social Responsibility in a Connected World: <https://www.thetechadvocate.org/how-to-teach-kids-social-responsibility-in-a-connected-world/>

Five Strategies to teach Social Responsibility: <https://www.teachhub.com/5-strategies-teach-social-responsibility>

Gardening Know How: Composting with Kids <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/special/children/composting-ideas-for-kids.htm>

## Using the Framework in Practice

Think about an experience your kids have been engaged with recently. Can you think of it fitting into any of the Framework goal for communication? Which ones?

Think about 2 things you could do to expand on the above experience. Which framework goals would these planned experiences fit into?

How can you include the children in your documentation process? What goals would child-directed documentation meet? How can the framework help with documentation and reflections?

Child(ren)'s Name(s):

Date	Observations	Follow Up Experiences
<p><b>Framework Goals</b> <small>(Check All That Apply)</small></p> <p><b>Goal 1: Belonging</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.1 PHYSICAL WELLBEING</li><li>1.2 EMOTIONAL WELLBEING</li><li>1.3 BELONGING</li></ul> <p><b>Goal 2: Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2..1 LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT</li><li>2.2 CREATIVE EXPRESSION</li><li>2.3 CULTURAL CONNECTION</li></ul> <p><b>Goal 3: Play and Exploration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>3.1 INVESTIGATION AND THINKING</li><li>3.2 CREATIVITY</li><li>3.3 A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS LEARNING</li></ul> <p><b>Goal 4: Social Contribution</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>4.1 EQUALITY</li><li>4.2 DIVERSITY</li><li>4.3 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY</li></ul>		

**Reflection:** Where could these learning go? What community resources are available? What could you do differently?

Framework based Documentation: SAMPLE



Reflections

Where could this learning go?

What community resources are available to further the learning?

Next steps? Learning invitations, room set up, materials available etc: