EDUCATORS' GUIDE FOR PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT

USING A LEARNING OUTCOMES APPROACH

TOOLKIT FOR THE EARLY YEARS CYCLE

(0-7 YEARS)

Learning Outcomes Framework

Contents

Introduction

The five learning outcomes of the Early Years Cycle (NCF, 2012) must be the overall guide for educators' pedagogy; where pedagogy is understood as the connection between teaching and learning. Pedagogy encompasses skills, knowledge and practices that can be strategically employed to promote children's learning (Dalli & White, 2016). In the very early years, learning outcomes should be conceptualised as a compass not a map: they point in possible directions that children can learn and grow, but do not lay down templates that all children must follow. Piaget (1969), Vygotsky (1962), and Bruner (1986) state that learning is a highly integrated process which cannot be easily separated into domains. This view goes against a subject-based curriculum where learning is fragmented in individual units. Alternatively, it favours a curriculum built around children's interests with an integrated approach to teaching and learning which scaffolds children into higher levels of competence. Effective pedagogy with 0-7 year olds builds on the children's prior knowledge, stimulates them to pose questions, link concepts,and increase their emerging understanding of the world.

During the Early Years, pedagogy is perceived as 'the interactive process between teacher and learner and the learning environment' (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004), characterised by a curriculum that highlights holistic development within the familial and communal context of the young child. Professionals in early years' settings should display trust in the child's potential by adopting positive and encouraging attitudes towards the child's diverse learning dispositions (see Table 1). Early childhood pedagogies should emphasise the child's individual expression as they work with different media elicited from the child's contexts and interests, with the collaborative teamwork of the child, significant adult/s and educator (Directorate for Education, OECD, 2004).

Table 1: Learning Dispositions (adapted from Ministry of Education, New Zealand, 1996:44)
- Knowledge, skills and attitudes can be seen as elements that combine to form a learning disposition – "habits of mind" or "patterns of learning".
- Lispositions are important learning outcomes. They are encouraged rather than taught. When one encourages robust dispositions to reason, investigate and collaborate, children will be immersed in communities where people discuss rules, are fair, explore questions about how things work, and help each other. The children will see and participate in these activities. Teaching and guiding on the different stages of essay writing and the different tools, and understanding methods which could be adopted during each stage.
- An example of a 'learning disposition' is the disposition to be curious:
  This may be characterised by:
  - Enjoying being curious - an inclination to enjoy puzzling over events;
  - Asking different questions - The skills to ask questions about them in different ways;
  - Asking at the right time - An understanding of when is the appropriate time to ask these questions.

Early childhood pedagogical practice embraces responsible curricular decision-making, teaching and learning through significant relationships (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace, 2010). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory promotes interactive and supportive connections between the different contexts in which children live their lives. In an educational setting, this means that there needs to be productive teamwork between educators and the children's significant adults within the community. These nurturing relationships stress the importance of building meaningful experiences upon which to construct new, active, experiential learning and understanding, while respecting children's prior knowledge and experiences (French, 2007). In this way, young children feel they 'own' the learning they discover through careful, planned learning invitations that stimulate their own interests, enticing them to become active participants in engaging activities.

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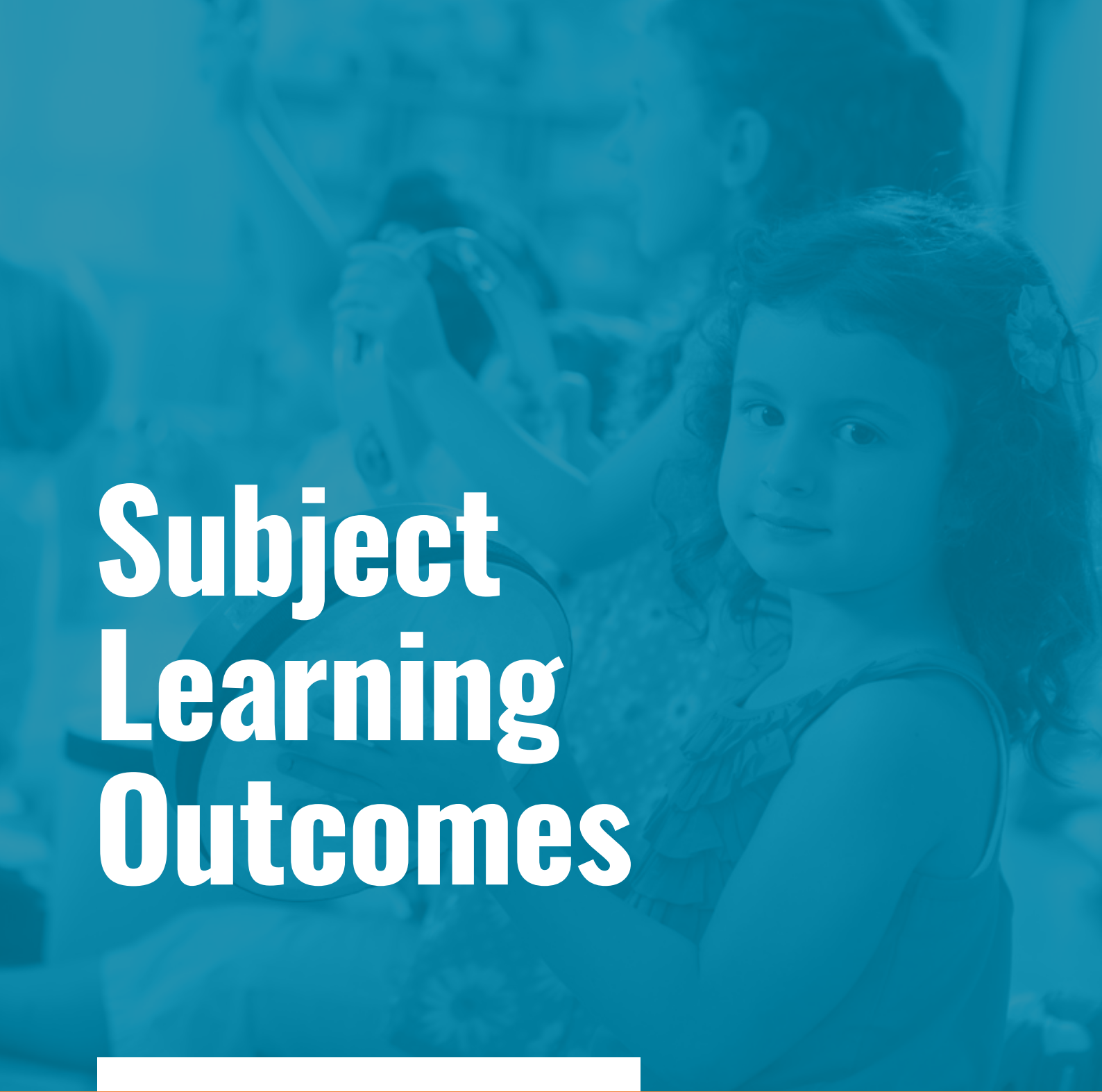
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Subject Learning Outcomes

TOOLKIT FOR THE EARLY YEARS CYCLE

(0-7 YEARS)

The Subject Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for Learning, Assessment and Pedagogy span from Attainment Level 5 to Attainment Level 10.

LEVELS 1&2

Learning Outcome: 1) Children who develop a strong sense of identity
Related Achievements: Children who develop in a safe, secure environment which they can trust
1   I can respond positively to warm interactions.
2   I can initiate interactions through a range of actions e.g. eye gaze, vocalizations and other communicative sounds, one word utterances, simple sentences etc.
3   I show comfort in the company of familiar peers and adults.
4   I show comfort in exploring my environment.
5   I participate in activities and interactions in the setting I am in.
6   I respond to being called by my name.
7   I am attached to my primary caregiver and I show signs of preference for this person over others.
8   I can indicate and express needs using gestures and words.
9   I can begin to explain how I am feeling.

Learning Outcome: 1) Children who develop a strong sense of identity
Related Achievements: Children who develop a sense of independence and autonomy

1   I am confident to initiate play.
2   I can indicate my preferences for people and activities.
3   I feel confident taking risks in a supervised environment.
4   I can predict routines within my environment and willingly participate.
5   I become increasingly independent with dressing myself.
6   I become increasingly independent with feeding myself.

Learning Outcome: 1) Children who develop a strong sense of identity
Related Achievements: Children who become responsible and resilient in the face of challenges
1   I persevere in the face of challenges.
2   I make repeated attempts to achieve my goals.

Learning Outcome: 2) Children who have a positive self-image
Related Achievements: Children who believe in themselves fully aware of their potential and capabilities
1   I approach new situations positively and with confidence.
2   I take an interest in the world around me.
3   I am confident in taking up opportunities to be creative and imaginative.
4   I can apply problem solving thinking in challenging situations.

Learning Outcome: 2) Children who have a positive self-image
Related Achievements: Children who develop positive attitudes which enable them
to take the initiative and become risk-takers
1   I am competent and confident to ask questions and make discoveries.
2   I am motivated to engage with a range of learning opportunities present in my environment.

Learning Outcome: 3) Children are socially adept

Related Achievements: Children who are capable of establishing relationships with others

1 I take pleasure from being with familiar others.
2 I respond positively to others' attempt to engage with me e.g. Through body language such as: eye contact and facial expressions, vocalizations etc.
3 I can seek attention in a variety of ways.
4 I can take turns in interactions.
5 I can collaborate to achieve shared goals during play.
6 I seek out others to share experiences.

Learning Outcome: 3) Children are socially adept

Related Achievements: Children who develop empathy, respect and acceptance of different points of view

1 I respond to the feelings and wishes of others.
2 I can be caring and show concern towards others.
3 I start to demonstrate awareness of the needs of others.
4 I am interested in other people and their stories.
5 I show increasing awareness of the rights of others.
6 I listen to others' ideas and respect their contributions.

Learning Outcome: 3) Children are socially adept

Related Achievements: Children who learn to collaborate with peers and adults with diverse backgrounds and needs

1 I enjoy listening to multicultural music and stories.
2 I react in positive ways to my peers' ethnic, religious and other differences.
3 I invite all peers to join in my play irrespective of their backgrounds.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators
The specific learning outcomes listed under this broad outcome apply to both L1 and L2, unless one or the other is individually specified.

Related Achievements: Children who are capable of using different forms of media for communication

*The learning outcomes identified in this section assume that children are experiencing a balanced literacy programme based on the Literacy Strategy For All in Malta and Gozo, (Ministry for Education and Emplyment, 2012) and A Language Policy for the Early Years in Malta and Gozo

1 I respond to interactions with a repertoire of communicative acts e.g. gestures, vocalizations and other verbal means.
2 I enjoy listening to and making music.
3 I can explore and engage with digital devices and their communicative functions.
4 I join in rhymes, songs, poems, and jingles.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators

Related Achievements: Children who interact and engage with varieties of text and printed material increasing their awareness of purposes/functions

1 I have discovered the joy of books and other printed material, including popular culture.
2 I show interest in books and print in my environment.
3 I handle books and printed material with interest.
4 I ask for stories to be read.
5 I relate to favourite stories e.g. repeat my actions, words or phrases from familiar stories.
6 I handle books appropriately e.g. holding book right way up, turning pages, pointing and naming some pictures.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators

Related Achievements: Children who are familiar with symbols and patterns and their use

1   I use symbolic gestures with meaning e.g. pointing, wave goodbye, blow a kiss.
2   I make marks with different materials e.g. crayons, finger paint.
3   I recognise my own name/symbol on personal belongings.
4   I am aware of symbols/print in the environment around me.
5   I use symbols in play to convey meaning e.g. pretend to write name in a card.
6   I notice and predict the patterns of regular routines and the passing of time e.g. mealtimes, home time.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators

Related Achievements: Children who are aware of different language systems, notably L1 and L2

1   I show progressive engagement in nursery rhymes and songs in L1 and L2.
2   I recite nursery rhymes and songs in L1 and sometimes in L2.
3   I listen to and understand simple stories in L1.
4   I hold simple conversations in L1.
5   I listen to and begin to understand simple stories in L2, especially when accompanied by pictures.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators

Related Achievements: Children who engage with digital literacy as a means of retrieving data as well as representing and communicating ideas

1] I engage with interactive toys and digital media.
2] I can use technology around me e.g. press buttons, use remote controls etc.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators

Related Achievements: Children who are versatile with the use of numbers, data handling, shapes and measurement, and print in context as a means of production of knowledge and information, as well as meaning making and comprehension

1   I become aware of number names through action rhymes and songs.
2   I sort objects into simple categories e.g. shape, size or colour etc.
3   I organise objects by similar characteristics e.g. line up cars, dolls, blocks etc.
4   I relate to numbers in conversation and rhymes.
5   I explore and use numbers in meaningful activities e.g concept of number, value etc.
6   I understand simple concepts e.g. shape and size.

Learning Outcome: 5) Children who nurture positive attitudes towards learning and become engaged and confident learners

Related Achievements: Children who develop a range of cognitive skills to include labelling/identifying, recognition, sorting, hypothesising, predicting, comparing, sequencing and grouping

1   I explore associations and cause-and-effect e.g. cry and get picked up, banging, rattling, and dropping objects.
2   I remember and anticipate simple sequences e.g. Jack in the box that jumps up at the end of the story.
3   I recognise and label common objects.
4   I understand a simple sequence e.g. nest boxes, cups, or stacking rings.
5   I can predict the outcome of regularly occurring actions and events e.g. a knock on the door followed by somebody enters.
6   I classify and sort objects by size, shape, texture and function e.g. putting blocks of the same size together.

LEVEL 3

Learning Outcome: 1) Children who develop a strong sense of identity
Related Achievements: Children who develop in a safe, secure environment which they can trust
1   I show comfort in the company of familiar peers and adults.
2   In a familiar environment I respond positively to new people.
3   I engage enthusiastically with new challenges when knowing I am safe.
4   I feel that I belong in this setting e.g. I can name the people around me, I know where things are placed.
5   I participate in daily routines e.g. I hang up my jacket and bag when I arrive at school.
6   I know who I am and can talk about myself e.g. my likes and dislikes, my family and friends, daily experiences.
7   I am aware that I am important to those around me and I feel loved.
8   I can approach adults easily when I need help.
9   I confidently approach adults knowing that I will be listened to.

Learning Outcome: 1) Children who develop a strong sense of identity
Related Achievements: Children who develop a sense of independence and autonomy.
1   I can complete a task independently.
2   I am confident to initiate play and other activities.
3   I successfully initiate play that involves others.
4   I can name the things that I am good at.
5   I seek opportunities to test my abilities.
6   I know that there are consequences if I do not respect the rules.
7   I look after the resources available in my setting.
8   I make good use of resources to complete given tasks.

Learning Outcome: 1) Children who develop a strong sense of identity
Related Achievements: Children who become responsible and resilient in the face of challenges
1   I explore different solutions when faced with a problem.
2   I persevere in the face of challenges.

Learning Outcome: 2) Children who have a positive self-image
Related Achievements: Children who believe in themselves fully aware of their potential and capabilities
1   I interpret my ideas creatively e.g. through art, music, movement, play, etc.
2   I approach new situations positively and with confidence.
3   I explore the world around me using a range of strategies.
4   I use multiple tools to solve challenging situations.

Learning Outcome: 2) Children who have a positive self-image
Related Achievements: Children who gain confidence in themselves and their achievements
1   I understand that I can learn from my mistakes.
2   I am prepared to try things out.

Learning Outcome: 2) Children who have a positive self-image

Related Achievements: Children who develop positive attitudes which enable them to take the initiative and become risk-takers

1   I am confident taking the lead in activities.
2   I am clear about my preferred activities and am able to make my own choices.
3   I try to solve problems I encounter myself before asking for support.
4   I exercise self-help skills independently.

Learning Outcome: 3) Children are socially adept

Related Achievements: Children who are capable of establishing relationships with others

1   I actively interact with others in games and activities.
2   I negotiate with others about shared activities.
3   I regulate my own behaviour to ensure cooperation and good communication.
4   I take turns and share ideas when working collaboratively in a group.
5   I respond positively to others.
6   I express an opinion in matters that affect me.
7   I practice inclusive ways and reach out to others.

Learning Outcome: 3) Children are socially adept

Related Achievements: Children who develop empathy, respect and acceptance of different points of view

1   I show interest in others and their needs.
2   I am able to express my opinion and accept the opinion of others.
3   I respond appropriately to the behaviour of others.
4   I am able to repair disagreements with my friends.

Learning Outcome: 3) Children are socially adept

Related Achievements: Children who develop an awareness of the notions of fairness, a sense of justice and non-preferential treatment

1   I take up opportunities to contribute to decision making in my setting.
2   I recognise unfair behaviour and am able to talk about it.
3   I acknowledge that others have rights too.

Learning Outcome: 3) Children are socially adept

Related Achievements: Children who learn to collaborate with peers and adults with diverse backgrounds and needs

1   I collaborate with all children irrespective of their diverse backgrounds.
2   I treat peers and adults around me with respect.
3   I react in positive ways to similarities and differences among people/peers.
4   I engage in school and cultural events in a positive way.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators The specific learning outcomes listed under this broad outcome apply to both L1 and L2, unless one or the other is individually specified.

Related Achievements: Children who are capable of using different forms of media for communication*

*The learning outcomes identified in this section assume that children are experiencing a balanced literacy programme based on the Literacy Strategy For All in Malta and Gozo, (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2012) and A Language Policy for the Early Years in Malta and Gozo

1   I can communicate independently and initiate a conversation verbally.
2   I listen attentively and respond appropriately.
3   I speak coherently in my mother language using clear sequenced narrative.
4   I show increasing knowledge and skill in using a range of media to convey meaning.
5   I understand and use increasingly complex and varied vocabulary.
6   I actively participate in shared reading.
7   I can tell a story.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators

Related Achievements: Children who interact and engage with varieties of text and printed material increasing their awareness of purposes/functions

1   I can choose a book that appeals to my interest and look at it independently.
2   I listen attentively to stories being read or narrated.
3   I respond with relevant comments and questions related to a variety of text.
4   I retell stories or information from books through conversation, art work, creative movement, drama, emergent writing, etc.
5   I predict what will happen in a story.
6   I understand that print carries meaning.
7   I understand that pictures can tell a story.
8   I understand that there is a wide variety of print in the environment.
9   I identify labels and signs in the environment.
10 I understand that spoken language can be written down.
11 I understand that thoughts and ideas can be represented through words, pictures and images.
12 I begin to understand the letter and sound relationship.
13 I understand that print is organised from left to right.
14 I can make a variety of marks and scribbles.
15 I can make rudimentary graphic representations to express my ideas for a particular purpose.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators

Related Achievements: Children who are familiar with symbols and patterns and their use

1   I use symbols in play to represent ideas.
2   I understand basic concepts such as colours, shapes, numbers and patterns.
3   I can discriminate between different sounds in my environment.
4   I have learnt to see symbols as a means of representation.
5   I listen and respond to sounds and patterns in speech, stories and rhymes.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators

Related Achievements: Children who are aware of different language systems, notably L1 and L2

1   I can use my mother tongue to achieve my communicative goals.
2   I recite a selection of songs, rhymes and stories in L1 and L2.
3   I can tell the difference between words in L1 and L2.
4   I know that I can use different languages to communicate with different people and in different situations.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators

Related Achievements: Children who engage with digital literacy as a means of retrieving data as well as representing and communicating ideas

1   I am comfortable using everyday technology.
2   I can use some computer programmes to develop early mark making and create digital drawings.
3   I follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities.
4   I can use a camera to record my experiences and the world around me.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators

Related Achievements: Children who are versatile with the use of numbers, data handling, shapes and measurement, and print in context as a means of production of knowledge and information, as well as meaning making and comprehension

1   I understand that numerals are symbols used for quantities and letters represent sounds.
2   I can sort, match, compare and contrast, classify and seriate a wide variety of objects during play.
3   I can name numbers, describe size, length, volume and capacity.

Learning Outcome: 5) Children who nurture positive attitudes towards learning and become engaged and confident learners

Related Achievements: Children who develop a range of cognitive skills to include labelling/identifying, recognition, sorting, hypothesising, predicting, comparing, sequencing and grouping

1   I can identify, sort, group, sequence, classify and organize objects in play activities.
2   I can predict, think logically, make assumptions, hypothesise, ask questions and reply to open-ended questions.
3   I can make connections between experiences, concepts and processes.

Learning Outcome: 5) Children who nurture positive attitudes towards learning and become engaged and confident learners

Related Achievements: Children who develop positive dispositions to include enthusiasm and motivation, curiosity, questioning, concentration, perseverance, imagination, ability to accept alternative suggestions/criticism

1   I show a positive disposition towards learning, am curious and enthusiastic in my learning.
2   I use play to investigate, imagine and explore ideas.
3   I persist in the face of challenge.
4   I can follow and extend my interest with enthusiasm and concentration.
5   I am motivated to pursue my interests and seek answers to my questions.
6   I take risks and learn from mistakes and failure.

Learning Outcome: 5) Children who nurture positive attitudes towards learning and become engaged and confident learners

Related Achievements: Children who broaden knowledge and reinforce their understanding through availability of and access to various sources of information

1   I can broaden my knowledge through enquiry and discovery and develop working theories about the world around me.
2   I can manipulate resources to investigate, take apart, assemble, invent and construct.
3   I can respond creatively to a variety of stimuli.
4   I can demonstrate interest in the larger world beyond my immediate environment.
5   I can express and communicate ideas, thoughts and feelings through the expressive arts (music, drama, movement and art & design)

LEVEL 4

Learning Outcome: 1) Children who develop a strong sense of identity
Related Achievements: Children who develop in a safe, secure environment which they can trust

1   I can discuss and appreciate all the features that make me special, similar and unique e.g name, hair colour etc.
2   I know my name, address, phone number and can identify local landmarks.
3   I recognise the name of my own school and town/village where I live.
4   I understand that growth is part of the process of life, which makes each person unique e.g.
     increase in clothes size, shoe size, haircuts.
5   I can identify and name persons and their roles in my family.
6   I convey my feelings about how I feel about my family and talk about what we can do together.
7   I explore my familial connections and ancestors e.g. where they were born and raised.
8   I appreciate my personal abilities and respect skills and talents of my peers e.g. being a friend,
     being co-operative, playing games etc.
9   I recognise the roles of significant adults who contribute within my school and the community and understand
     that each contribution is unique, important and necessary in society e.g. teacher, doctor, head of school,
     caretaker etc.
10   I can identify persons who are responsible for safety in my school and community and practice safety strategies
     e.g. crossing the road etc.
11   I recognise and state my personal preferences when I engage in a variety of learning and play activities e.g.
     things I like and things I don't like and why.
12   I feel confident in communicating my personal experiences, cultural background, observations, feelings,
     emotions and personal ideas with significant others.
13   I am able to build positive relationships and interact with educators and significant others, building trust in an
     environment where I feel respected for who I am as a human being.
14   I am a good team player and can contribute well in group work towards achieving a common goal.
15   I know why classroom rules exist and can contribute towards improving them.
16   I show that I accept responsibility for my actions and their consequences for myself and others.
17   I can regulate my emotions using different strategies e.g. taking time to reflect etc.

Learning Outcome: 1) Children who develop a strong sense of identity
Related Achievements: Children who develop a sense of independence and autonomy

1   I can manage my physical wellbeing and demonstrate self-care skills in the school setting e.g.
     eat my lunch, washing my hands, collect my belongings before going home etc.
2   I seek opportunities to test and further my abilities.
3   I seek opportunities to use my body's potential.
4   I can undertake simple projects and ask for assistance when required.
5   I am confident in taking a leading role and support others with consideration,
     courtesy and good manners within my group.
6   I am able to make every day choices.
7   I can manage my time and resources to achieve my goal.

Learning Outcome: 1) Children who develop a strong sense of identity

Related Achievements: Children who become responsible and resilient in the face of challenges

1. I demonstrate responsibility for the environment by caring for it to the best of my abilities.
2. I promote environmental sustainability by participating in energy and other resource-saving strategies e.g. switching off lights, turning off taps etc.
3. I respond to setbacks and challenges by trying again.
4. I know where to seek help when I encounter bullying.

Learning Outcome: 2) Children who have a positive self-image

Related Achievements: Children who believe in themselves fully aware of their potential and capabilities

1. I manage myself well within the rules in my setting e.g. respecting rules, offering support and encouragement etc.
2. I am confident asking questions about my world and can seek further information from diverse sources e.g. teacher, internet, library etc.
3. I approach new situations with confidence.
4. I am confident to express how I feel about different experiences and situations.
5. I am confident in using my imagination and curiosity to think of new ideas and share them significant others.
6. I seek diverse solutions to resolve a problem.

Learning Outcome: 2) Children who have a positive self-image

Related Achievements: Children who gain confidence in themselves and their achievements

1. I am well-informed e.g. about a particular learning area etc. and my proficiency is valued and respected.
2. I can identify my positive qualities.
3. I am proud of my achievements and am happy to share my talents with others e.g. show and tell etc.
4. I can describe my role and contributions within a group.
5. I am confident to work alone when appropriate.
6. I am confident to try new things.

Learning Outcome: 2) Children who have a positive self-image

Related Achievements: Children who develop positive attitudes which enable them to take

the initiative and become risk-takers

1. I actively participate in activities that require me to take an initiative e.g. cooking, outdoor play etc.
2. I am clear about my preferred activities and am able to make my own choices.
3. I am confident taking initiatives to push the boundaries of my learning.
4. I am positive about following rules and procedures.

Learning Outcome: 3) Children are socially adept

Related Achievements: Children who are capable of establishing relationships with others

1. I use interactive practices e.g. co-operate, share, encourage, turn-take etc., that help me to be accepted by others.
2. I recognise the unique qualities of others and treat them respectfully.
3. I can express my feelings and thoughts to others so that they can understand me.
4. I can listen attentively to others to help me make friends.
5. I can ask others for help when I need it.
6. I show that I care when I cooperate with others in my setting.
7. I can collaborate with others in the everyday routines, events and experiences.
8. I can share ideas and contribute to decision making affecting my environment.

Learning Outcome: 3) Children are socially adept

Related Achievements: Children who develop empathy, respect and acceptance of different points of view

1   I show respect for the beliefs and the practices of those who are different from me.
2   I participate in celebrations of customs from different culture traditions e.g. Christmas, Ramadan, Hanukkah etc.
3   I show awareness of other people's feelings, needs, abilities and limitations.
4   I show empathy towards others through various ways such as listening, sharing and repairing friendships.

Learning Outcome: 3) Children are socially adept

Related Achievements: Children who develop an awareness of the notions of fairness, a sense of justice and non-preferential treatment

1   I can restore justice in daily interactions with others e.g. speak the truth, give second chances etc.
2   I am fair in my behaviour towards others e.g. I listen to others, I give others a chance to speak etc.
3   I can talk about practices that are fair, just and non-preferential e.g. helping out and sharing equally etc.
4   I behave in ways that promote peaceful and just relationships.
5   I behave in ways that respect other people's rights.

Learning Outcome: 3) Children are socially adept

Related Achievements: Children who learn to collaborate with peers and adults with diverse backgrounds and needs

1   I collaborate, appreciate and value all children irrespective of their diverse backgrounds.
2   I treat peers and adults around me with respect
3   I help children who face different challenges.
4   I can name and put in practice different actions that sustain an inclusive environment.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators The specific learning outcomes listed under this broad outcome apply to both L1 and L2, unless one or the other is individually specified.

Related Achievements: Children who are capable of using different forms of media for communication*

*The learning outcomes identified in this section assume that children are experiencing a balanced literacy programme based on the Literacy Strategy For All in Malta and Gozo, (Ministry for Education and Emplyment, 2012) and A Language Policy for the Early Years in Malta and Gozo

1   I speak coherently in my mother tongue using clear sequenced narrative.
2   I can recognise, respond to and use facial expressions and body language
3   I can use multiple modalities to express myself e.g. spoken language, stories, rhymes, images, artwork, mime etc.
4   I can make use of a range of digital resources to access, discover or share information.
5   I can use language, listening skills and turn-taking skills in conversations with peers and adults.
6   I can adapt my use of language to fit different contexts and play scenarios.
7   I explore texture, form and space in two or three dimensions through the use of different media.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators

Related Achievements: Children who interact and engage with varieties of text and printed material increasing their awareness of purposes/functions

1   I seek out books to read for pleasure.
2   I actively engage in storytelling and other reading activities.
3   I can identify and access books of genres that appeal to my interest and engage with their texts and illustrations.
4   I show interest and engage in multimodal and multimedia texts that relate to popular culture, new media and digital literacy practices.
5   I can name and talk about my favourite authors, illustrators and characters in books.
6   I can create my own text which I can explain and elaborate on in multiple ways.
7   I can make predictions about stories based on book titles, covers and illustrations.
8   I can identify and access appropriate sources of text for different information needs and purposes e.g. internet, books/eBooks, magazines etc.
9   I can use my emergent writing skills for entertainment, communication, documentation or information purposes.
10 I can use some basic print conventions in my writing e.g. directionality, word spacing, capitalization etc.
11 I can create my own signs/symbols in order to communicate information for relevant and contextualised purposes.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators

Related Achievements: Children who are familiar with symbols and patterns and their use

1   I can identify patterns in language sounds.
2   I can demonstrate understanding of the one-to-one correspondence between written and spoken words by pointing to words as I read them.
3   I can identify various patterns in written language and can apply these patterns to my reading and writing.
4   I can demonstrate correct pencil grip and can write letters with correct, shape and directionality.
5   I can read and write my name.
6   I use symbols and patterns in my pretend play.
7   I can identify symbols in my school and community which convey important information, and I can explain their meaning to others e.g. poisonous, dangerous, wet floor, fire exit, etc.
8   I can identify numbers in my environment.
9   I can recognise basic mathematical symbols and can demonstrate understanding of what they represent through my engagement in and computation of sums which include such symbols.
10 I can recognise symbols such as a line, square, circle or triangle as representing an unknown quantity and can input that quantity in the respective symbol.
11 I can identify, repeat, continue and create patterns using numbers, colours, shapes, paint, sounds and objects.
12 I can understand the numerical value of basic coins in the currency of my country of residence and can add some coins together to make up different totals.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators

Related Achievements: Children who are aware of different language systems, notably L1 and L2

1   I am fluent in L1. I use full sentences and a wide range of vocabulary.
2   I can repeat key words, phrases or refrains in L2.
3   I can use my repertoire of vocabulary in speech and can talk about familiar themes/contexts using full sentences in L2.
4   I can use multimodal resources e.g. sound, image, digital technology, etc. to extend my language skills.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators

Related Achievements: Children who engage with digital literacy as a means of retrieving data as well as representing and communicating ideas

1   I can use a mouse, touchpad, touch screen, keyboard and/or basic buttons to navigate and access the user interface of a computer/laptop or electronic device.
2   I can choose from and use age-appropriate eBooks, websites, cameras, CDs, DVDs, and/or memory sticks in order to meet different needs.
3   I can follow basic prompts on electronic devices in order to open, close, view or select files/applications.
4   I can make use of a number of digital programmes, applications and devices in order to communicate with people within and/or beyond my school and community.
5   I can use digital media as a means of self-directed learning e.g. to gain information about different cultures etc.
6   I can use digital media as a means of expressing and exploring my creativity.
7   I can use digital media as a means of extending the knowledge, attitudes and skills embedded within different learning areas.

Learning Outcome: 4) Children who are effective communicators

Related Achievements: Children who are versatile with the use of numbers, data handling, shapes and measurement, and print in context as a means of production of knowledge and information, as well as meaning making and comprehension

1   I can use numbers, shapes, measurement and print to communicate my thoughts and ideas.
2   I can demonstrate understanding of number value e.g. through the use of appropriate actions in number songs, rhymes and stories etc.
3   I can apply the mathematical concepts which I have mastered to solve real-life and mathematical problems.

Learning Outcome: 5) Children who nurture positive attitudes towards learning and become engaged and confident learners

Related Achievements: Children who develop a range of cognitive skills to include labelling/identifying, recognition, sorting, hypothesising, predicting, comparing, sequencing and grouping

1   I am able to gather information from different sources to learn about the world around me including through: labelling, identifying, recognising, grouping, sequencing, hypothesising, exploring, experimenting, organizing, planning, selecting, memorizing, predicting, analysing, justifying, questioning, anticipating and verifying.
2   I make and express choices, plans, and decisions.
3   I sort objects according to more than one criterion.
4   I can investigate in order to understand how and why things happen.
5   I can use my senses to gather information about objects or events and master the necessary vocabulary to share my discoveries.
6   I compare by noticing similarities and differences in objects.
7   I classify objects according to properties e.g. such as size, colour etc. and by creating categories and sub-categories.
8   I am able to talk about cause and effect relationships.

Learning Outcome: 5) Children who nurture positive attitudes towards learning and become engaged and confident learners

Related Achievements: Children who develop positive dispositions to include enthusiasm and motivation, curiosity, questioning, concentration, perseverance, imagination, ability to accept alternative suggestions/criticism

1. I enquire about my environment to try and make sense out of it by forming questions, collecting information, interpret information, discovering relationships, comparing results, discussing findings and re-adjusting were needed.
2. I make observations, formulate questions, plan investigations and satisfy my curiosity by assessing available evidence.
3. I concentrate on the task at hand.
4. I am open to new ideas, uncertainty and different perspectives.
5. I show determination and persevere when faced with challenges and can cope with frustrations.
6. I demonstrate a belief in my own abilities and feel confident that my contributions are valid.
7. I use information to develop working theories about how the world works.
8. I master enough learning independence to make choices.
9. I share what I learn with others, speak of the difficulties involved and strategies used to overcome them.
10. I express satisfaction with the completion of the task at hand.
11. I accept alternative suggestions and constructive criticism.
12. I make connections and associations between what I already know and new learning.
13. I can use my imagination to think of new ways to solve problems.
14. I draw on my imagination to pose questions and explore ideas, spaces, materials and technologies.

Learning Outcome: 5) Children who nurture positive attitudes towards learning and become engaged and confident learners

Related Achievements: Children who broaden knowledge and reinforce their understanding through availability of and access to various sources of information

1. I can talk about the features of my immediate environment and how it varies from others.
2. I daily reinforce my knowledge of my environment around me e.g. books, special events, media messages and everyday objects etc.
3. I know how to avail myself of information technology to extend my learning.
4. I investigate, disassemble, design, make and evaluate items for their usefulness.
5. I can transfer and adapt what I learn from one context to another.

Pedagogy

0-TO 3-YEAR-OLDS

Infants and toddlers require a specialised pedagogy that recognises their unique characteristics. Infants learn through their senses and bodily movement (Piaget), and neuroscientific evidence is clear that physical experiences such as being held, stroked and rocked, as well as rough-and-tumble play are essential for their overall well-being and contribute to a healthy immune system (Schore, 2001). Very young children communicate differently to older children and require a higher level of physical care. For these reasons, pedagogy with under-three year olds is more intimate and requires higher levels of emotional nurturing than with older children (Dalli & Kibble, 2010; Elfer, 1996; Leavitt, 1994).

A key ingredient of high quality pedagogy with this age group is the establishment of intersubjective relationships between educator and child in which the educator is continually mindful of the child and their interests (McMullen & Dixon, 2006). It requires a focus on responding to infants and toddlers as individuals with their own needs and interests (Stephen, Dunlop, & Trevarthen, 2003). It requires communication between the practitioner who knows the early childhood centre environment best, and the parents who know their child best. It requires stable ongoing relationships between adult and children, and educators who adopt an approach to practice based on an ethic of care (Noddings, 1984; Goldstein, 1998).

An ethic of care approach to pedagogy means that the educator approaches the child from a stance of the one caring, open to the child's needs, and willing to respond to them without trying to make the child fit a particular mould. This approach is increasingly referred to as a pedagogy of care, or a pedagogy of listening – where listening is not just through hearing but through attentiveness to all the cues that a child gives about what they are interested in, how they are feeling, and what would meet their need. This care orientation to teaching is complementary to Vygotsky's model of cognitive development. Caring has a pedagogical power because it establishes an interrelational connection that enables adult and child to enter into the "zone of proximal development", where the adult can guide the young child's learning in an emotionally warm environment that opens up the brain for learning (Goldstein 1998; Shonkoff, et al. 2000). A related concept in infant and toddler pedagogy is sensitive responsive caregiving – a concept found in both attachment theory (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991) and Erikson's psychosocial theory of development. Sensitive responsive caregiving highlights the importance that adults are attentive to the cues/messages given by the child, and provide care that is contingent on those cues. A sensitive adult picks up the cues through ongoing observation that keeps track of the child without becoming intrusive, allowing them to respond in an appropriate manner.

Practices that enable this pedagogy to be realised include: a primary caregiver system or a key worker system (Elfer, 1996; Dalli & Kibble, 2010); an environment rich in resources that offer opportunities for exploration; regular self-review practices; and assessment practices that notice, recognise and respond to children's learning, thus identifying possible next steps in learning within identified priorities.

Identifying priorities for children's learning requires that educators are consistently alert to children's focus of attention, and to their expressions of interest in people, places and things – which they display in primarily embodied ways: their gaze, hand and body movements, changes in vocalisations, and attempts to engage others through the deployment of any combination of the above. In the early years, people, places and things are the curriculum through which children experience the world.

We know that children learn by being active, exploring and investigating, playing, using language and interacting with others. This means that educators who work with this age group need to provide: opportunities for activities; access to the real world; freedom to play in which the child leads; language about what matters; and opportunities for authentic engagement with children (Fisher, 2013). These opportunities require preparation of the environment and knowledge of how the physical resources can be flexibly used when the educator is able to notice and interpret the child's interest and level of competence, and then take steps to respond in a way that guides the child forward. In this activity, the educator's guidance should be the five learning outcomes of the NCF (2012):

- Children who develop a strong sense of identity.
- Children who have a positive self-image.
- Children who are socially adept.
- Children who are effective communicators.
- Children who nurture positive attitudes towards learning and become engaged and confident learners.

As noted earlier, these learning outcomes are the compass that should guide educators in making judgements about where and how to build on children's interests, so that they may mediate children's learning and thus, move them to the next level of complexity of understanding, skill competence, and dispositions towards learning.

Assessment Strategies

0- TO 3-YEAR-OLDS

The principle that should guide assessment is that it is a tool for learning. In other words, the purpose of assessment is that it should inform educators in ways that enable them to support children's learning. Assessment in the early years should be: formative; informed by an understanding of learning as co-constructed in interactions with people, places and things; inclusive of children's voices and parents' perspectives; and credit-based. Effective assessment reflects children's learning and development and thus, needs to be dynamic and ongoing. Research clearly shows that early childhood educators cannot rely solely on children's ages to decide their competencies and capabilities (Raban et al., 2007). A more 'authentic assessment' is therefore increasingly favoured. Assessment is considered authentic when it occurs as part of children's everyday learning experiences within their natural environment where they feel comfortable. This will maintain the children's own participation in the assessment being conducted. Authentic assessment provides a broader, more holistic and genuine picture of the children's learning (Zessoules and Gardner, 1991). Some examples of authentic assessment strategies include:

• Observing individual children or groups of children
• Journals kept by children or educators, depending on the children's age
• Drawings
• Photos
• Artwork
• Portfolios
• Learning Stories
• Audio and/or video tapes of children's learning
• Work samples from any content area showing ongoing growth and progress (PEI ELF, 2011).

In practice, this means that educators need to use their observation skills to notice children's actions and changes in behaviours, skills and dispositions, and recognise the significance of what they notice for children's learning, so that they can put that recognition to good use. Thoughtful and continuous observations will help educators to better understand the needs and interests of the children in their care, and plan/facilitate further learning through these observations. Traditionally, learning is often understood as content knowledge, but in the early years, learning is not differentiated into discrete subject areas: it is holistic and encompasses the full repertoire of human behaviour, including making meaning of objects and events, learning about one's own identity, about roles and relationships, and connecting things up in hypotheses about how the world operates. In this context, the educator's role is to notice what is happening and to strive to understand it. In other words, the educator needs to recognise the significance of what they observe about the child's learning, and then respond by putting it to good use in planning flexibly for how to lead the child forward in their learning. Responding might involve scaffolding, enriching, consolidating, celebrating, as well as including through the involvement of others.

An Example of an Assessment Strategy with 0-to 3-year-olds

With very young children, educators need to recognise that there are diverse pathways and multiple directions that learning can take. Learning may not always happen as planned by educators, and thus they need to engage in self-reflection, asking: "What happened as a result of my response and how can I respond further?" This process is described by Drummond (1993) as 'Notice, Recognise and Respond'.

Educators' reflections on their observations, and on their pedagogical response to these observations can be recorded in various ways, including, for this youngest age-group, through learning stories (Carr, 1988). Learning stories are an assessment tool used to describe a child's learning process in the form of a story. It captures the meaningful elements of the child's learning. Learning stories are quite effective in describing how children cope with and resolve conflicts and challenges, and how they are resilient when faced with these situations. Some of the elements that can be captured in a Learning story include the child's:

- interests, achievements and strengths.
- feelings, knowledge and skills.
- interactions with both adults and peers.
- experiences arising from family, culture and community.
- emerging dispositions toward learning (e.g., perseverance, curiosity, etc.).

Educators can use various media to put together a learning story. These may include: children's artwork; photos, diagrams, video/audio recordings or written/computer generated narratives including children's own narrative. According to Carr, et al. (2002) there is a four-part assessment process of a learning story:

- Describing: highlighting the learning to be assessed.
- Documenting: gathering evidence for a range of audiences including educators, children and parents.
- Discussion: with the child, practitioner, and/or the family.
- Deciding: planning the next step based on the evidence collected.

Educators have to keep in mind that a learning story may not happen in one context at a given time, so observation is key to producing effective learning stories that can be used as an assessment tool. Sharing learning stories with parents and getting their feedback and contribution is important and should be an integral part of such stories.

- collaborative planning with other teachers, peer review and discussion of standards and expectations when teaching learners at the same level.

Pedagogy

3-TO 7-YEAR-OLDS (KG1, KG2, YEAR 1 AND YEAR 2)

This age range reflects the fact that children can start in KG1 when they turn three.

In the kindergarten years, children are full of energy; they are active contributors to their learning and their choices and interests need to remain the driving force for building skills, knowledge and understanding. Therefore, high quality child-centred pedagogy with this age group requires that educators provide secure nurturing environments where children can safely test out their developing skills and take risks within set boundaries. Such environments also need to be rich in opportunities for play, and be places where children are able to use their energy to make choices and solve problems and conflicts, and where they can develop resilience and an 'I can do' attitude (Lindon, 2014). Meaningful learning experiences in a well-resourced play-based setting leave children feeling confident and competent with high self-esteem and high aspirations.

Early childhood educators thus need to provide environments where children can engage in self-chosen pursuits; they also need to recognise when and how to support children's discovery and construction of knowledge, and to take advantage of teachable moments - unexpected learning opportunities that arise spontaneously.

There is no single way to support children's development. Rather, support can take many forms and includes prioritizing different areas of learning at different times and scaffolding children's self-initiated activities to higher levels of competence. Educators need to identify children's strengths and weaknesses, interests and fascinations, aptitudes and attitudes and choose the most appropriate approach suited to children's needs, previous knowledge and skills.

Contemporary early childhood pedagogical literature further promotes collaborative teamwork as the basis of pedagogy in the early years. This view builds on socio-cultural understandings of learning and development that emphasise the crucial role that adults and other knowledgeable members of a community play in scaffolding children to build their competencies through "intent participation" (Rogoff, et al. 2003, p.176) and 'structured interaction' (McLeod, 2008). It means that children, families and the community function as a learning community.

A 'scaffolded' learning process such as advocated by Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1986) includes educator practices such as active listening, observations and reflective practice. Similar practices have been advocated by Malaguzzi (1993) who also proposed a pedagogy of listening and of relationships. Caring intersubjective relationships between adults and peers remain the essential ingredient that helps facilitate three to seven-year-old children's learning. Other contributing factors include: the style of pedagogical leadership within the early years setting; the philosophical orientation of the educators; as well as the level of parental support and involvement.

On a national scale, children start compulsory education at five years of age and the Early Years Cycle encompasses early childhood up till seven years of age (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2012). Ensuring a smooth transition between the non-compulsory and compulsory phase of children's education is of high importance, and poses its own particular challenges for educators and parents alike. Transitions have an influence on both the wellbeing of the children in the initial phases of the new situation, and also on their success in subsequent experiences, thus having a much longer-term impact (Fabian & Dunlop, 2002; Dunlop & Fabian, 2003).

As the child moves into the first years of compulsory schooling, a successful transition is associated with the use of what Walsh et al., (2011, p.107) have called a "playful structure" in which child-initiated and adult-led activities are blended in a complementary process that infuses structure and playfulness (see full text for examples of pedagogy based on playful structure).

Inquiry-based learning follows naturally from the use of playful structure in an environment that is now often referred to as the third educator (Malaguzzi, 1993). In inquiry-based learning, the environment should act as the scaffold for further learning and foster children's continued interest in lifelong learning. Within an inquiry-based approach to pedagogy, early childhood educators are expected to be flexible and creative so that they can adapt their practice to accommodate the child's learning dispositions as part of the child-centred philosophy of teaching. Learning becomes more meaningful and beneficial to the children when it moves away from the 'teaching without learning' process to the Reggio Emilia-based approach of contextual learning (Malaguzzi, 1993).

Internationally, early years curricular frameworks and approaches, such as *Te Whāriki*, The Reggio Emilia Approach, *Aistear* and *Síolta* favour an emergent curriculum through interactive learning processes where investigations, discussions and active learning are at the core of pedagogy and where reflective practice is promoted. In the local scenario, early years educators are encouraged to draw on different pedagogies to support and develop young learners' competencies (NCF, 2012) while tapping into those pedagogies that instil positive learning dispositions that 'speak the language of learning' (Calleja, 2015). By extending children's interest and targeting a holistic approach within a consistently stimulating environment, reflective educators are able to freely observe and positively discuss the next step that scaffolds learning. Access to challenging and engaging teaching and learning experiences will ensure progress regardless of the children's age and stage of development (Ofsted, 2015).

Assessment Strategies

3-TO 5-YEAR-OLDS (KINDER 1 AND KINDER 2)
AND 5-TO 7-YEAR-OLDS (YEAR 1 AND YEAR 2)

Wood & Attfield (2009) suggest that assessment and evaluation in the early years should incorporate a "knowledge function" and an "auditing function". The "knowledge function" provides the educators with the necessary insights into the child's identity, interactions, needs and interests. This helps the educator to develop knowledge about the pedagogy to use, and about the curriculum being implemented (Wood & Attfield, 2009). The "auditing function" includes the summative assessment of the child's abilities in relation to the curriculum and learning objectives (Wood & Attfield, 2009). There are various forms of assessment which complement each other to provide a complete documentation of a child's learning process (see Appendix 1). This toolkit will be dealing with the formative mode of assessment.

Apart from the promotion and scaffolding of learning, educators working in the Early Years, are also responsible to document the cognitive, social and emotional development, the progress of learning, attainment, and behaviour of the children in their care. While assessment can perform many functions, from a pedagogical perspective assessment is integral to learning and teaching.

'Assessment frames learning, creates learning activity and orients all aspects of learning behaviour' (Gibbs, 2006). It is acknowledged that young children scaffold their learning through hands-on activities. The conducting of authentic assessment while children are participating in activities generally produces important information for assessment. Thus, as much as possible, assessment methods should include observation of children while they are "engaged in spontaneous behaviours in familiar settings and with familiar people" (OSPI, 2008).

Authentic Assessment is considered to be powerful since the assessment process is not just concerned with the tracking of progress. It is seen as being an integral part of the teaching methodology where it forms part of curriculum planning and instructional strategy. As a result, effective, authentic assessment plays a vital role in the provision of quality Early Childhood Education and Care. Recording and reporting of learning experiences in the Early Years should build on the same education philosophy that underpins the chosen constructive pedagogies and assessment practices. This means that recording and reporting practices should reflect the principle of holistic education which permeates all learning in the Early Years Cycle. Documentation of progress in the Early Years Cycle is different from that employed in the Junior Cycle because it should limit the use of checklists and references to syllabi aimed at indicating what has not been achieved. At this level, the provision of a broader framework rather than a prescriptive curriculum is meant to allow different settings across all early years' centres to develop their own specific documentation in order to indicate the next step in the child's learning journey.

Research also shows that primary school children who experience assessment that is embedded in the curriculum demonstrate greater gains in reading than those who were not in similar classrooms (Meisels et al., 2003). Unfortunately, due to the increased focus on instruction and content in compulsory schooling, the process of ongoing, authentic assessment is not commonly implemented.

Assessment records and reporting procedures need to celebrate learners' individual differences, strengths and interests while avoiding defining some learners as being deficient in some aspect of their progress. This is vital in the Early Years due to the diverse ways in which different individuals develop. Early Years educators need to celebrate the individuality which all children bring with them by observing, discussing, reflecting and deciding on the breadth and depth of experiences offered to learners, and then devise ways to record this individuality and report it to the different stakeholders involved in the learning process.

Introducing formal and content-based assessment from the onset of primary school is not only regarded as unnecessary for children's future success or achievement but also might undermine their long-term development (Paton, 2007). In fact, there is no need to prematurely 'prepare' children for formal assessment before they are ready for it, as research has shown that when children experience authentic assessment in the early years, they can easily reveal their acquired knowledge through standardised tests later on (Meisels et al., 2003).

Riley (2008) suggests that in the early years setting, educators need to aim to implement "assessment for learning", in which the learner is seen as an active participant in his learning and its evaluation. Hence, assessment methods need to be formative or conform to the 'Assessment for Learning' paradigm where assessment is used not as an end but as a means to gain information on which to plan for future learning. According to Black & William (1999), assessment for learning implies:
• the active involvement of children in their learning;
• the provision of feedback to children;
• a response to the assessment results in educator's planning;
• an understanding of the effects of assessment on children's self-esteem and motivation;
• children's ability to self-assess and plan for their own improvement.

For these reasons, documentation of the child's progress in the early years should:

• arise from the ongoing observation of, and interactions with children as part of everyday practice, highlighting specific skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviour that the child demonstrates;
• indicate the ways in which parents at home can play an active part in supporting the learning process;
• be holistic by referring to the five areas of development as indicated in the NCF;
• present a truthful yet sensitive reflection of the child's achievements;
• recognise parents' in-depth knowledge of their child by incorporating their observations and comments.

'In short, the effect of assessment for learning… is that students keep learning and remain confident that they can continue to learn at productive levels if they keep trying to learn. In other words, students don't give up in frustration or hopelessness.' (Stiggins, 2000, p. 5).

Reporting procedures and assessment records

There are several characteristics that are specific to the reporting of progress at this level. As in all cases, when reporting a learner's progress to parents, assessment documentation needs to be clear and easy to read so that it can be helpful to parents. Documentation needs to reflect each child's individual personality, strengths and characteristics. At this level, ongoing assessment processes include diverse methods to depict the different pathways that children take to learn. Documentation showing the child's progress ought therefore to give equal consideration to the 'learning-distance' travelled by each individual child, and recognise every small step rather than focusing on outcomes that have not been reached.

Recommended assessment strategies which follow the principles of formative assessment include:
• anecdotal records;
• learning diaries, learning stories, and learning journeys;
• portfolios;
• cooperative tasks;
• photos, videos, recordings and transcripts;
• projects, written work, artwork, and other work samples/products self- and peer- assessment.

Any of the strategies listed above may be used in conjunction with one or more other strategies, according to the focus and goals of the assessment, the type of learning experience being assessed, the needs of the children, and the intended audience of the assessment.

Following such assessment strategies, educators may then evaluate the information of a particular child against the comprehensive standards; that is, the Learning Outcomes. This enables educators to track children's progress, identify the need for early intervention, if any, and identify general strengths, needs and interests. These insights will gradually complement the educator's instruction and modify learning experiences to meet the various needs of the children in class.

The aforementioned strategies are each explained in some more detail below.

Anecdotal records

Anecdotal records are notes taken during or immediately following child-initiated activities and interactions, as opposed to adult-initiated tasks (Glazzard et al., 2010), and are therefore appropriate for the assessment of spontaneous learning occurring through play, conversation, exploration, and other child-led activities. Anecdotal records are observational notes which capture significant learning experiences going on during a given time. Educators may be selective in what they write down in order to highlight what they deem to be the most significant experiences, comments or actions which they have observed. Anecdotal records may be succinct, and thus enable the recording of significant learning experiences in real time, which renders them both efficient and informative.

Learning diaries, learning stories, and learning journeys

Home-school diaries serve as a link between the home and school, and enable the assessment and sharing of significant learning experiences in and across both settings. Educators may add pieces of the child's work, photos or comments made by the child, and can periodically or spontaneously send the diary home for the parents to view and share with their child. Parents may then also add to the diary so that when it is returned to school, the educators will have further insight into the child's development, learning and interests.

Carr (2001) advocates for the use of learning stories in early years settings, where daily events or 'snapshots' are recorded in detail and shared with parents who, in turn, share the stories with their children. The focus of the learning stories is holistic and takes into account all areas of development, including attitudes and dispositions, and a key component in this form of assessment is parental involvement. However, Glazzard et al. (2010 p.155) explain that, "In settings with limited numbers of staff, learning stories are more difficult to manage, and in these situations staff may wish to document the child's significant achievements over time in a learning journey."

Learning journeys are a form of continuous assessment which records a number of significant learning experiences which occur over time. Learning is therefore documented according to its perceived significance, rather than the significance being recognised during scheduled observations. Learning journeys should be available for parents to view at school at any time, and may even be sent home periodically.

Portfolios

Portfolios are a collection of children's work and artefacts that may be stored either in files, boxes or scrapbooks, and must be periodically reviewed by educators, children and parents for feedback and evaluation. They may also include photos of the children engaged in activities, transcripts of the children's conversations, comments or stories, anecdotes or any other information/material which is deemed as significant to the child's learning and development. Children may be given an active role in this form of assessment through encouragement and opportunity to identify or select material to include in their portfolios. When using portfolios as a mode of assessment, educators must be careful not to view them simply as a place to store children's work. Wright (2010) warns that, "portfolios are much more than a manila folder stuffed with an assortment of mementos from a child; they are purposeful compendiums… of data documenting a child's growth in skills, knowledge, and new understandings over time" (Wright, 2010 p.82). Therefore it is the process behind the portfolio which is important, rather than the physical portfolio itself, including the basis on which material is selected for inclusion in the portfolio, the involvement of the child in building and reviewing their portfolio, the audience of the portfolio and their access to it, and its effect on planning for future learning.

Portfolios for children aged 3-5 years may include:
- Samples of art projects
- Samples of writing
- Photos
- Lists of books read/attempted to read
- Anecdotal notes
- Learning stories, learning diaries and/or learning journeys
- Children's discourse
- Relevant information that speaks about the child's growth and development

Portfolios for children aged 5-7 years may include:
- selecting and organising evidence of a child's efforts, interests, progress, and accomplishments in a given area or areas.
- compilation of ongoing daily observations of child's natural thinking.
- anecdotal notes.
- learning stories, learning diaries and/or learning journeys.
- dated samples of writing – e.g., from journals, writer's workshop, etc.
- conference sheets, observations and writing rubrics – from small group/individual teacher-child conferencing during interactive, shared, guided and independent writing.
- running records such as Miscue Analysis and other recorded observations – from read-alouds, shared, guided and independent reading.
- record-keeping of teachable moments in different areas.
- lists of books/e-books read.
- structured observations schedules.
- questionnaires.
- information collated bythe educator, parents and other professionals who know the child well.
- ratings formats/scales.
- informal interactions with the child.

Some examples of informal techniques, according to Clay (2010 p.44), an early childhood educator can undertake to add to a child's portfolio at this stage include:

- giving the child a small piece of paper and saying: "Write a story on this page. Notice what rules for writing messages s/he is paying attention to (e.g. starting point, directional movement etc.)
- asking a child to point to the words of a simple, clearly written book as you read it to them.
- asking the child to read a book or share a short story book with the child. Then ask them to read it with you. Record what you notice in his/her reading behaviour.

The following is an example of how to write a summary statement about the work in the portfolio of children of this age group:

Miranda's writing samples were collected over eight days. She is currently writing complete sentences and using interesting language. She has begun to write two-sentence stories; however, she does not seem to be aware of punctuation. She writes independently using a sound analysis to record unfamiliar words (for example, Fawrs for flowers; Budfl for beautiful; Balowena for ballerina; sTaT for stayed). She knows a few basic words in detail (for example I, a, is, the, like, so). She understands directionality and uses appropriate spacing. She writes using a combination of upper and lower case letters, and forms some letters well (Clay, 2010 p.41).

Photos, videos, recordings and transcripts

Photos, videos, recordings and transcripts capture significant moments and conversations in the classroom, enabling these experiences to be revisited and relived later on, whether by educators, children, parents, or a wider audience.

Photos are easy to display in a number of different ways, be it digital or in print form. Photos may be added to any of the assessment strategies mentioned above, displayed in albums, framed, projected onto screens, added to noticeboards or displays, used for projects, and more. They are especially useful as a starting point for conversation, for reviewing experiences or emotions, for making comparisons, and for providing an objective account of a significant moment.

Digital recordings are less versatile in how they can be displayed, but offer a wealth of information and opportunities due to the speech and movement that they capture. As with photos, videos are not only useful to recording learning experiences, but may be used in a variety of ways to create new learning experiences from the previous experiences which they capture. When using photos, videos, and recordings for assessment purposes, issues of data protection must be considered.

Projects, written work, artwork and other work samples/products

Glazzard et al. (2010) explain how long-term projects in Reggio Emilia are influenced by children's play and interests. Projects that are meaningful and engaging to children are well worth documenting, not only in their finished state but also during their process; however those where engagement is minimal and not child-led, are not only less beneficial to children, but also less worth assessing. Glazzard et al., (2010) encourage adult involvement – both from parents and educators – in project work so long as they follow the lead of the children rather than direct them. Emphasis should be placed on the thinking skills, problem-solving, interactions, questioning and evolution of the project; to simply focus on the finished product would be to miss out on the significant learning experiences that it offered. Project work may be individual or collaborative, depending on the nature of the project, intentions of the educator, or interests of the children.

Written work, artwork and other work samples or products may also be used in assessment, however these should support other forms of assessment that are more process-based, or should be collected periodically in order to show progress and development.

Journals

Another useful assessment tool is children's journals. This is an ongoing activity that the children partake in, and will eventually give the educators and parents a holistic picture of the child's development and learning. Children's drawings and scribbles are the children's writing in the early years. According to Lieberman (1985), children do not distinguish between drawing and writing at this young age. As they develop their pre-writing skills, they begin to make separate markings to represent 'writing', apart from their drawings. It is important that the educators encourage children to draw/scribble in their journals on a regular basis, as the educator can then assess and evaluate the progress of the child and further facilitate their learning. As the children progress in their development, they will start to try and write phonetically. Educators should encourage this kind of writing without correcting the spelling errors.

Here are a few examples of how educators can support children's journal writing:
• Provide writing materials that encourage children to draw and write about themselves, their family, and friends.
• Ask children to identify initial sounds/letters in words when they show that they are ready to write.
• Ask children to verbalize what they want to write first, and then encourage them to sound the words out.
• Educators can ask children to tell you about their drawings in their journal and you can write down what they say.

One way of encouraging children to use their journal is to get them to sign their work (to the best of their ability) and to offer positive reinforcement for their efforts to draw/scribble and eventually write. As children get older, journal writing can be one way of assessing children's learning, particularly in the assessment of writing and comprehension skills. Educators may use journal writing to make a quick developmental assessment (drawings of people without necks or people with necks, scribbles or recognizable pictures), or note children's abilities with phonological development (identifying rhyming words, making rhymes, hearing beginning sounds, hearing ending sounds, etc.). It gives educators an insight into their thinking and allows them to know where children are at, and where to guide them next in their writing as well as in their reading. Writing and reading are connected, hence from children's writing, an educator can also deduce where that particular child stands in their reading process (Mermelstein, 2006). Educators need a variety of assessment tools which they can deploy separately or in combination in order to effectively assess the learning that is happening, evaluate the child's progress and plan for further learning.

Self- and peer-assessment

Children may be involved in any of the assessment strategies listed above through self- or peer-assessment. Young children need guidance on how to go about self- and peer-assessment, and can gain independence in doing so with practice. In both forms of assessment, children must be guided to emphasise the positive and – if necessary – to be sensitive in pointing out any room for improvement. Educators must be cautious to teach children to use constructive criticism, both of their own work and of the work of others. This can be achieved by stating positive comments on the story their peer wrote during peer response and author's chair (writer's workshop). Self- and peer-assessment may simply involve children selecting pieces of work to display in class, in portfolios, on noticeboards, or simply to take home to show their parents. This encourages them to compare and look for strengths in work, and to vocalise why it is that they have come to such a decision.

Reasons for keeping assessment records

A final step in the assessment process is sharing or communicating the child's performance and progress, which may be done by simply sharing products of assessment such as portfolios, but may also include a written and contextualised summary of the authentic formative assessment data gathered. Such summaries may not only be shared with parents, but may also be used for facilitating transitions of children with educators in upper grades and other school management members. As explained earlier, such ongoing authentic assessments can be seen as a tool to set the way for curriculum development and help children improve their outcomes.

There are several reasons why educators need to keep assessment records. Regularly updated assessment records are indispensable as they:
- provide parents with feedback about children's progress and enable them to follow their children's educational development.
- provide schools with information about their curriculum, planning and resulting learning experiences.
- ensure that children who are identified as requiring additional individual attention can be provided with the appropriate support needed throughout the Junior Cycle (NCF, 2012, p.47).
- support children in the process of gauging their own learning, identifying their strengths, and learning about their needs and next steps, where teachers are meant to jot down their thinking about where to take the child next in their learning trajectory.
- help educators to understand children's learning better, monitor children's progress, reflect on their practice, and adapt their teaching to their children's needs.
- enable class educators to share information with current and future professionals.
- summarise children's learning in all of the areas of learning, enabling them to complete the picture of learners' development, and report it to relevant authorities and stakeholders as required.

Assessment records and reporting procedures

There are several characteristics that are specific to the reporting of progress at this level. As in all cases when reporting children's progress, progress reports need to be presented in a clear manner which can be easily understood by all stakeholders, and must be helpful rather than daunting or confusing. For the purpose of this toolkit, the term 'progress report' does not refer to a checklist or graded report, but to the qualitative data and information obtained via and within the assessment strategies used to collect the information. Progress reports may thus be presented as anecdotes, learning stories, portfolios, or any of the aforementioned modes of assessment, or even as a compilation or combination of different modes.

Reporting to parents through observational checklists in the Early Years is inadequate because checklists convey the message that learners are expected to develop in some imaginary linear order and expected to achieve the same objectives within the same timeframes in a one-size-fits-all mentality. This encourages a deficit model of the learner, implied through the ticked-off achievements which, by default, emphasise the outcomes which have not been achieved. Such assessment procedures encourage educators to focus on predetermined criteria rather than on preparing and adapting activities as a direct response to individual children's expressed interests and abilities.

Additionally, checklist reporting ignores the parents' and children's contributions which can provide rich information about the learners' real progress, and assumes that there is nothing else of significance that could have been learnt other than which was already listed on the checklist. On the other hand, incremental records of learners' progress via ipsative (see Appendix 1) assessment take into consideration the children's prior knowledge, strengths, interests, likes and dislikes, and the parents' views, in order to provide a more holistic record of real child development.

Open dialogue with all stakeholders

In order to strengthen the reliability of such an individualised assessment reporting process, the compiled progress records should be discussed by the educator with other professionals including Senior Management Team members (SMT), Head of Departments (HoDs), specialist teachers, and Education Officers (EOs). This documentation should also be discussed with other professionals working with the respective child, including educational psychologists, speech and language pathologists and occupational therapists, hence addressing the child's needs holistically. Discussing the children's reports with other professionals will help secure the consistency and accuracy of judgements made by different practitioners.

Transition from the Early Years to the Junior Years

It is important that when progress documents are passed on from Early Years classes to the first year of the Junior Cycle, they are detailed and clear enough to be understood and useful to the receiving teacher. Educators', parents', children's and peers' comments in any form of assessment are essential in order to substantiate the work and documentation being recorded during the assessment process. Discussion between educators during the transition period would also improve the support provided to learners through sharing of information among professionals involved in the education and care of the child.

The benefits of authentic assessment: A conclusion

The benefits of authentic assessment are numerous, and may be summarised as follows:

- Children's individual rates of development are respected, acknowledged and appreciated.
- Children are assessed holistically, across a range of developmental areas.
- Parents and children are encouraged to partake in the assessment process together with educators, where feedback is valued and used as a starting point for future learning.
- Children become active participants in processes of assessment, planning and learning, which enable child-initiated learning built upon children's interests.
- Assessment serves as a tool of empowerment for all stakeholders.
- Progress is measured against children's own past performance (ipsative assessment) as opposed to that of their peers, emphasising strengths rather than deficits.
- While strengths and abilities are emphasised, educators may effectively and constructively identify and address needs or difficulties which become apparent.
- Detailed accounts of children's interactions with the people and environment around them prompt in-depth discussions about the various learning experiences that occur within those interactions.
- Reflective and inclusive practice becomes an inevitable part of the teaching process.
- Smooth transitions between home and school, and within school itself, are enabled due to the availability of detailed and authentic information about the children's learning processes and experiences, interests and strengths.
- Process rather than product becomes the focal point of learning and assessment.

In order to reap the benefits of authentic assessment, educators should consider the assessment process as an integral part of the teaching strategies, while keeping abreast with new developments in pedagogy and assessment practices. The National Literacy Strategy (2014) emphasises the importance of teacher training and professional development in assessment methods, and this importance is reiterated herein.

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Appendix 1

Various forms of Assessment (Adapted from The Learning Journey CTB-Mc Graw-Hill LCC, 2013)

Diagnostic Assessment (as pre-assessment)	Diagnostic Assessment takes into consideration the learners' strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills prior to instruction. It is intended to improve the learners' experience and their level of achievement. However, diagnostic assessment looks backwards rather than forwards. It assesses what the learner already knows and/or the nature of difficulties that the learner might have, which, if undiagnosed, might limit their engagement in new learning. It is often used before teaching or when a problem arises.
Formative Assessment	Formative assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. It contributes to learning through providing feedback. It should indicate what is good about a piece of work and why this is good,while also indicating what is not so good and how the work could be improved. Effective formative feedback will affect what the learner and the teacher does next.
Ipsative Assessment	This is assessment against the student's own previous standards. It can measure how well a particular task has been undertaken against the student's average attainment, against their best work, or against their most recent piece of work. Ipsative assessment tends to correlate with effort, to promote effort-based attributions of success, and to enhance motivation to learn.
Summative Assessment	Summative assessment demonstrates the extent of a learner's success in meeting the assessment criteria used to gauge the intended learning outcomes of a module or programme, and which measures the learner's achievement at the end of the process. Summative assessment is used to quantify and reward achievement, and provide data for selection (to the next stage in education or to employment). For all these reasons the validity and reliability of summative assessment are of the greatest importance. Summative assessment can provide information that has formative/ diagnostic value.
Criterion-referenced Assessment	An assessment in which a child's response is compared to a level of performance in an area of knowledge or skill, rather than to a group of children or normative group.Results are typically reported as levels of proficiency, such as emerging skill or mastery.

Appendix 2

Aistear's continuum of interaction strategies (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2015)

Building Relationships	Facilitating	Organising	Directing
Children learn by being with others. This strategy includes methods which the adult uses to build relationships and to create an environment in which children feel secure and confident enough to take risks, to explore, to take part in challenging experiences and to direct and co-direct their own learning.	Children learn by being involved in making choices and decisions and by feeling in control. Learning is enjoyable and rewarding for them when they challenge themselves and when they can use and build on their existing knowledge, understanding and skills. They enjoy learning through child-initiated activities. This strategy includes methods which the adult uses to encourage children to take the lead or to share the lead with adults.	Children learn in a well-planned and well-resourced environment. The environment represents all children in the setting, and makes learning challenging and fun. This strategy includes methods which the adult uses to create and maintain such an environment, including reflecting on the learning that is occurring in the environment and planning ways to enhance it.	Children learn through planned and guided activities which build on their interests and experiences. This strategy includes methods which the adult uses to focus on children's learning and to develop particular dispositions, values and attitudes, skills, knowledge, and understanding.

Appendix 3

Informal methods of assessment, their purpose and guidelines for using them.
(Adapted from Excerpt from Fundamentals of Early Childhood Education, by G. R. Morrison, 2008 edition, p. 152.)

Method	Purpose	Guidelines
Observation Children-watching in a systematic way.	Enables teachers to identify children's behaviours, document performance, and make decisions.	Plan for observation and be clear about the purposes of the observation.
Anecdotal Record Givesa brief written description of student behaviour at one time.	Provides insight into a particular behaviour and a basis for planning a specific teaching strategy.	Record only what is observed or heard; should deal with the facts and should include the setting (e.g. where the behaviour occurs) and what was said and done.
Running Record Focuses on a sequence of events that occurs over time.	Helps obtain a more detailed insight into behaviour over a period of time.	Maintain objectivity and try to include as much detail as possible.
Events Focuses on a particular behaviour during a particular event (e.g., behaviour at lunchtime, behaviour in a reading group).	Helps identify behaviours during a particular event over time.	Identify a target behaviour to be observed during particular times (e.g. fighting during transition activities).
Time Sampling Records particular events or behaviours at specific time intervals (e.g. five minutes, ten minutes).	Helps identify when a particular child demonstrates a particular behaviour; helps answer the question, "Does the child do something all the time or just at certain times and events?"	Observe only during the time period specified.
Rating Scale Contains a list of descriptors for a set of behaviours.	Enables teachers to record data when they are observed.	Ensure that key descriptor and the rating scale are appropriate for what is being observed.
Checklist A list of behaviours identifying children's skills and knowledge.	Enables educators to observe and easily check off what children know and are able to do.	Ensure that the checklist includes behaviours that are important for the programme and for learning (e.g. counts from one to ten, hops on one foot).

Work Sample A collection of children's work that demonstrates what they know and are able to do.	Provides a concrete example of learning; can show growth and achievement over time.	Ensure that the work sample demonstrates what children know and are able to do. Let children help select the items they want to use as examples of their learning.
Portfolio A collection of children's work samples and other products.	Provides documentation of a child's achievement in specific areas over time; can include test scores, writing work samples, recordings, etc.	Ensure the portfolio is not a dumpster, but a thoughtful collection of materials that documents learning over time.
Interview Engaging children in discussion through questions.	Allows children to explain behaviour, work samples, or particular answers.	Asks questions at all levels of Bloom's taxonomy in order to gain insight into children's learning.

Influences on early learning and development

Key concepts	Implications for practice
Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel (1782 - 1852)	
• Children have inborn knowledge and skills and are innately creative beings. • The curriculum consists of a carefully sequenced set of open-ended instructional manipulative materials (known as Gifts) complimented equally by a set of handwork projects (known as Occupations - modelling and drawing). • There is a focus on the child's inner self and leading him to a deepening knowledge of the world and the interrelationships of things.	• To bring these innate skills to the fore, adults must make children consciously aware and able to use all they know. • For the first time play is used as a methodology in schools often in adult-directed activities designed to teach concepts and skills through the Gifts and Occupations and formal games, art, music, and outdoor experiences. • There is a focus on adult-child dialogue strategies of coaching, prompting, giving suggestions, asking questions, modelling, and deductive (reasoning) learning experiences with advanced thinkers.
John Dewey (1859 - 1952)	
• Children are innately social beings; the builders of a new social order – a democratic society. • The curriculum, designed to meet real life challenges, integrated subject areas and required coordination of socio-emotional, psychomotor, and cognitive responses from children. • Greater focus on learning/education than on development. Learning is a reciprocal and collaborative process between adult and child.	• This involved a shift from adult directed to co-operative learning between adult and child. Adult observes, documents, builds on children's interests, plans a purposeful curriculum, and makes sense of the world for children. • Activities are provided to promote social problem-solving processes such as joint adult-child or child-child efforts at making lunch or lengthy projects, e.g. representations of a local park. • Children are allowed to investigate and reflect on their experiences through social interactions in a well-planned social and physical environment.

Key concepts	Implications for practice
Rudolph Steiner (1861 - 1925)	
- Children go through stages (Will, Heart and Head). - The development of the whole child, particularly spiritual development is significant. Understanding the nature of children supports their individuality. - Children who are offered a creative and balanced curriculum will develop into a creative and flexible people. - The adult's role is to help children learn to do things to their best ability. - The design of the environment concerns warm colours, soft materials, rounded corners, and without plastic toys. Outdoors, the equipment is minimal, but logs and trunks are plentiful to encourage children to use their own imagination.	- Children are not given instructional materials and are not introduced to reading or numerical skills. Instead, a routine of singing and opportunities for movement through circle games is provided and children are guided, sometimes with a story to play where full expression of their imagination is encouraged. - Experiences of the arts and sciences are offered, as well as processes of thinking, feeling and willing. Open-ended activities (paintings) are favoured rather than limited options (colouring in sheets). Children play individually and in groups. - The adult greets each child individually each morning. - Wooden blocks and simple natural materials are provided. Sewing materials and a workbench with child-sized but working tools are available. The equipment is versatile; the storage containers can be used in a multitude of ways to stimulate children's imagination.
Maria Montessori (1870 - 1952)	
- Learning is a continuum between refinement of the senses and a broadening of intellectual/ emotional/ social functioning. - Curriculum and apparatus are sequentially introduced to coincide with 'sensitive periods' of a child's development. - Children have 'absorbent minds', sensitive to order and hunger for knowledge of their real world. - The curriculum fosters learning goals around areas of interest and personal challenge. - Sensorial exercises focus on sensorial discrimination. - Social and individual responsibility, dignity and respect are encouraged.	- A prepared environment facilitates enjoyable challenging activities where children grasp complex ideas through multi-sensory, self-correcting materials. - Appropriately trained adults present materials in a sequential manner at the level of the individual child. These are graded from simple to complex. - Children are most sensitive and receptive to language acquisition, order, personal independence, and social/cultural skills. - Practical life exercises develop gross and fine motor skills, concentration and responsibility in independently chosen activities. - The developed senses lay the foundations for reading and writing, maths, the sciences, etc. - Language development occurs through discussion on cultural topics, animals, wild life, and the use of the phonetic method.

Key concepts	Implications for practice
Lev Vygotsky (1896 - 1934)	
• Language and communication (and hence instruction) are at the heart of personal and intellectual development. Both cognitive and social development work together and build on each other, and learning leads to development. • He developed the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). • There is emphasis on the importance of interaction with adults and peers in advancing children's knowledge.	• Children learn as social beings, with the support of others, and there is a consequent requirement for adults to take a more active teaching role. • The ZPD is the space between the most difficult things a child can do alone and what they can do with help. An adult or capable peer can act as a scaffold to the child. • Adults observe children carefully to assess what is within each child's ZPD, and plan curriculum experiences that support children's holistic development and emerging capabilities. • Adults encourage conversations through questioning, humour and discussion.
Jean Piaget (1896 - 1980)	
• Through play children pass through a series of graduating intellectual developmental stages (sensorimotor, pre-operational) before they construct the ability to reason by giving meaning to place, people and things. • Learning is neither intrinsic (coming from the child) nor extrinsic (imposed by the environment) but through the child's interactions with the environment. • From birth, children engage in reciprocal acts of 'assimilation' and 'accommodation', in order to form and extend the structures of their minds. • Equilibration is fundamental to learning and refers to the child's continual process of cognitive self-correction, whose goal is a better sense of equilibrium.	• The first stage is from Birth–18 months (sensorimotor) when babies learn through their senses and reflexes, and as they act upon objects and manipulate materials. Children need to be kept safe but interested and to be responded to reassuringly to ease separation anxiety. The second stage is from 18 months–six years (pre-operational) when toddlers and young children form ideas based on their perceptions, focus on one thing at a time, and over-generalise. • Adults can only influence the course of intellectual development if the child is able to assimilate what is said and done. Assimilation is constrained by the child's stage of development which leads to the concept of 'learning readiness'. • Children need time for uninterrupted free-play and to be provided with many real world, problem-solving experiences and open-ended activities.

Key concepts	Implications for practice
Erik Erikson (1902 - 1994)	
• Focus on the emotional and social development of children and subsequent mental health. • The Eight Ages of Man theory covers the entire lifespan and suggests that tasks must be accomplished at each life stage, and each stage successfully resolved before moving on. For children from birth to age six, there are three stages and consequent strengths are developed (Trust versus Mistrust, Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt, Initiative versus Guilt – Purpose).	• From birth to one year (Trust vs. Mistrust) babies establish basic trust in themselves and the world. Attachments with adults are secured through being held and responded to instantly when distressed. • From one to three years (Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt) toddlers establish a sense of independence without shame. They need choice and reassuring limit setting and an acceptance of their emotions by caring adults. • From three to six years (Initiative vs. Guilt – Purpose) young children acquire a sense of purpose. They need opportunities to plan and carry out a task independently, a focus on strengths not mistakes, reasonable expectations and a curriculum focused on real things and action.
Loris Malaguzzi (1910 - 1994)	
• Reggio Emilia is a small town in the region of Emilia Romagna (Northern Italy) and is home to infant and toddler and early years settings. The Reggio experience has been produced within a very particular political, economic and social context with deep reserves of social capital produced by trust, mutuality and cooperation. • The curriculum in Reggio Emilia is not established in advance but emerges totally through the interests of children. The Reggio approach is not just about practice; it is underpinned by a philosophy which continues to grow and develop. • Young children are engaged in long term engrossing projects, which are carried out in carefully planned, beautiful environments catering for the idea of schooling for multiple intelligences.	• The topics for study are captured from the talk of children, through community or family events, as well as the known interests of children (puddles, shadows, dinosaurs), which are then pursued in depth through projects. The adult sees the child's competence in a variety of forms of symbolic representation as a critical feature of early childhood education. Collaborative group work, both large and small, is considered valuable and necessary to advance cognitive development. A well-stocked atelier (art studio) is in place with the integration of the graphic arts as tools for cognitive, linguistic, and social development. • In Reggio Emilia documentation of children's words and representations is adopted which include photographs of children working, conversations they had, observations and interpretations by adults. • Children have extended periods of time to discuss ideas, develop their cooperative projects, research ways of doing things, try things out, and revisit drawings and comments previously made.

Key concepts	Implications for practice
David Weikart (1932 - 2003)	
• The High/Scope approach was designed in response to the persistent failures of high school children from poor neighbourhoods in Ypsilanti, Michigan (USA). • The curriculum emerges from children's interests and the observations of practitioners with a balance of child-initiated and adult-initiated activities and is located within key experiences for the baby and toddler and young child and the school going child.	• The 'key experiences' are a series of statements describing the holistic, social, cognitive, and physical development of children. Each statement highlights an active learning experience which supports the fundamental abilities that emerge during childhood. Given the emphasis on children-initiated activities, adults ensure that children have opportunities to engage in essential key experiences in small group times that they would otherwise not choose to do. • Active learning involves the child having choice of a range of materials and activities. They are free to manipulate those materials, and encouraged to use their own language and have adult support.
• Children are seen as competent, active learners who plan, carry out, and reflect on their activities. • The curriculum process for the young child includes a plan-do-review sequence within the daily routine (for the baby and toddler it is called choice time). In addition, adults guide children's learning through greeting time, transitions, meal times, small group time, and large group time. The children assist with cleaning and have daily outside time. • The High/Scope environment is carefully planned and is divided into distinctive work areas.	The plan-do-review sequence involves: • Planning: children are free to choose their activities. This requires expressing their intentions, which also means the activity is always appropriate to the context of early development. • Doing: children carry out their plan (which often changes), generating experiences. • Reviewing: children reflect on their experiences with their peers and adults. • The environment includes a book, a home, a construction, and an art area as the four base areas. Other areas are added depending on the children's interests; e.g. computer, woodwork, gardening, office, shop. Materials are labelled and stored so that children can find, use and return the materials they need. Children's work is carefully displayed.

Key concepts	Implications for practice

Jerome Bruner (1915 -)

- Bruner views children as active problem-solvers who are ready to explore 'difficult' subjects and who are learning from birth.
- Information is obtained through personal discovery and is classified enactively, iconically or symbolically.
- Within the education system, a teacher would then engage learners in active dialogue and guide them when necessary so that they would progressively build their own knowledge base, rather than be 'taught'. Learning is an active process in which new information would be classified and understood by the learner based on knowledge already gained. This notion underpins the idea of the spiral curriculum. Bruner suggested that people remember things because of their significance and meaning, not because they want to preserve the facts themselves.
- Interest in the material to be learned is the best stimulus to learning, rather than such external goals as grades or later competitive advantage.
- Bruner believes that how one conceives education is a function of how one conceives culture and its aims. Culture provides us with the toolkit by which we construct not only our worlds, but our very conception of ourselves and our powers.

Implications for practice:

- Any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development.
- In their very early years, young children rely extensively upon enactive modes to learn. As a child learns to roll over, sit up or walk, they are learning to do so through their own actions. In iconic representation, children learn to understand what pictures and diagrams are, and how to do arithmetic using numbers and without counting objects. This normally becomes dominant during the next stage of childhood years. Later (usually around adolescence) the symbolic mode of learning becomes most dominant. An adult wanting to help children learn about dinosaurs could use all three modes. Children could be asked to construct models of dinosaurs (enactive); they might watch a film about, or involving, dinosaurs (iconic); or they could consult reference texts and discuss their findings (symbolic).
- How children construct knowledge involves three basic principles of instruction:
- 1. Instruction is concerned with the experiences and contexts that make the child willing and able to learn (predispositions to learning).
- 2. Instruction is structured so that it can be easily grasped by the child. Attention is paid to the most effective sequences in which to present material. A curriculum as it develops should spiral and revisit basic ideas repeatedly, building upon them until the child has grasped the full formal structure that goes with them (spiral organisation).
- 3. Instruction should be designed to facilitate extrapolation and/or fill in the gaps (going beyond the information given). Information can be simplified and new hypotheses generated increasing intellectual manipulation of material.
- Children should be provided with study materials, activities, and tools that they are interested in and are matched to, and capitalise on their developing cognitive capabilities. The adult translates information to be learned into a format appropriate to the learner's current state of understanding and arouses interest in what there is to be learned.
- Culture shapes the mind - mental activity is neither solo nor conducted unassisted. Awareness of children's (and adults') culture is critical to learning and needs to be incorporated in activities and tools.

Contemporary theorists such as Rogoff, Egan, Dahlberg, Prout, James, Traverthen, Lave among others

- Socio-cultural theory views learning as a work in progress, in context, and as a social activity.
- Agency, voice, complex identities, and social justice are critical.
- There are different ways of being a child and different types of childhood. Childhood is not universal. It is understood as a social construction; a product of cultures and as such will vary across time and place. It is only possible to understand the culture of a group by exploring their everyday practice and relationships in detail (deconstructing what they do and why).
- The adult-child relationship and child-child relationships are key learning contexts. Learning is a reciprocal process and emerges through joint mediated activities among participants.
- Language, communication, culture, and learning emphasise the central role of narrative and its manifestations in conversation, story-making and play. There is an emphasis on the meanings which govern how people live and behave. What people think, feel and their reported motivations are relevant to understanding their behaviour.
- The concept that learning and development are biologically determined is challenged.

- Children's development and learning is continuous, takes place in close co-operation with other children and adults, and in many different contexts (home, early years settings, neighbourhoods, community). Children learn through communication with others, while engaging in goal-oriented activities.
- The child is seen as a competent learner, capable of making choices and decisions, from diverse backgrounds, and is deserving of respect.
- Adults need to embrace children's cultures. Children's relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right.
- Adults need a deep understanding of children's learning and development; create learning that is integrated, personally relevant and meaningful; adopt multiple teaching strategies for individual learning styles; observe and document; reflect and strive to form positive relationships.
- Early childhood settings are places of dialogue, participation and education in a process which involves the children, their parents, staff, community, and society. Play is a vehicle for social interaction and is fundamentally important for children. Children's minds can be uniquely engaged with stories, told orally and through texts; talking with children and discussing actions and events provides the words needed to build images.
- Learning and development occurs when children are regularly engaged in meaningful experiences over time with adults and other children. In order for children to produce new learning or ways of viewing the world, children's interest and attention are required; encouragement and feedback given; the key points of a task explained, so children know what's needed; and a demonstration of how it might be done offered from an adult or peer.

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