

NATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION (ECCE) CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK



MINISTRY OF WOMEN
AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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Background for the Early Childhood Care and Curriculum Framework

The programme at the early childhood stage helps to ensure opportunities for holistic learning and growth. The ECCE programme needs to be determined by children's developmental and contextual needs, providing for more need based inputs and an enabling environment. Given this need for an individualised approach, it was believed that a common 'curriculum' would not be appropriate for all. However, over the years it has been observed that the practical realities are different and most of the ECCE programmes on offer currently do not have developmentally appropriate programmes for the young child. The vacuum created by a lack of curriculum framework has resulted in its being filled with either a minimalist programme or the downward extension of the primary stage curriculum leading to overburdening the child which can have a negative impact on the child's learning potential.

To ensure optimal development for all children, there is a need to create a planned curriculum framework, encompassing developmentally appropriate knowledge and skills, with flexibility for contextualization and diverse needs of young children. A curriculum framework is also required to ensure that important learning areas are covered, taking care of all the developmental needs of the young child. It also facilitates adoption of a common pedagogical approach to ensure a certain level of quality and address the widespread diversity in the ECCE programmes available for the young children in India.

The purpose of this framework is to promote quality and excellence in early childhood education by providing guidelines for practices that would promote optimum learning and development of all young children and set out the broad arrangement of approaches and experiences rather than detailed defining of the content. A cautious approach is being adopted to not provide a detailed curriculum/syllabus which would be prescriptive and 'delivered' to the young children in a 'straight jacketed manner'. The Curriculum Framework calls attention to the common principles and developmental tasks, at the same time, respecting the diversity in the child rearing practices and contextual ECCE needs.

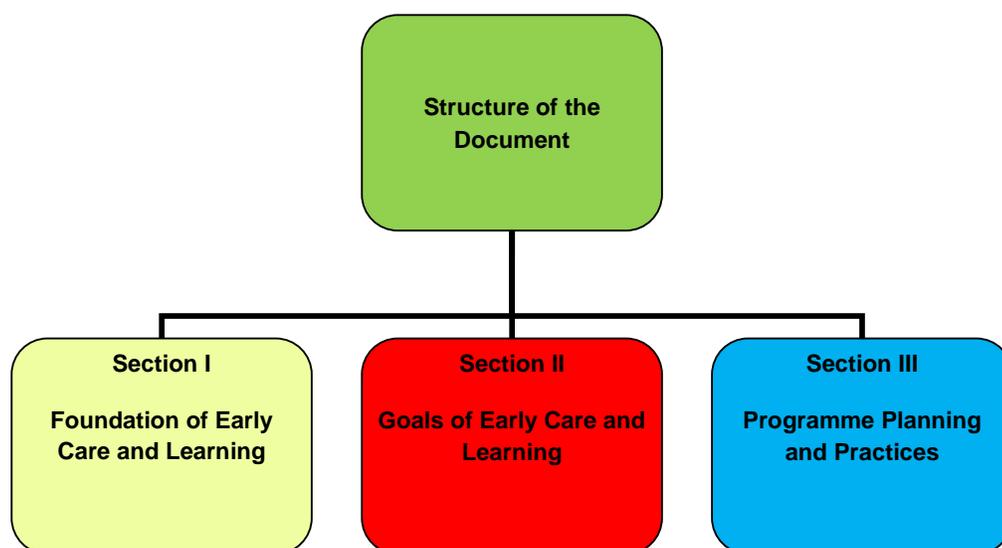
Each programme is expected to develop its own curriculum to meet the needs of its children, their families, the specific setting, the linguistic culture and the local community. However, the programmes should be based on the curriculum principles and guidelines laid down in this framework.

This Framework is a dynamic document and would be continually reviewed and evolved in the light of emerging needs. Also, with the adoption of the framework, case studies of emerging best practices will follow and learning from them would further strengthen the framework.

This Framework is firmly focussed on the needs of the child and should lead to improved child care and developmentally appropriate environment for children, leading to a positive impact on quality of learning and increased attainment of learning outcomes for children participating in ECCE programmes. Furthermore, this framework focuses on providing guidelines for child care and early educational practices. The other components for the holistic ECCE programme such as nutrition, health and hygiene, protection and care are to be ensured by cross reference from related policies and instruments as mentioned in the National ECCE policy.

The National ECCE Curriculum Framework comprises of broadly three sections.

- **Section I** consists of introduction, vision for an Indian child, rationale and theoretical foundation for ECCE. The objectives of early childhood education; pedagogical bases and principles of early learning are laid out.
- **Section II** comprises of details of the goals for different domains of development, i.e. physical, language, cognitive, socio-emotional and creative and aesthetic appreciation, to be fostered to ensure holistic development of children under six years. It comprises of suggested developmentally appropriate practices for different age groups.
- **Section III** focuses on implementation details such as principles of programme planning, stages of programme planning, role of parents and caregivers/ECCE teachers, essential play materials and assessment procedure etc.



SECTION 1: FOUNDATION OF EARLY CARE AND LEARNING



1. Introduction

The first six of life are critical years of human life since the rate of development in these years is more rapid than at any other stage of development. Global brain research also informs us about the significance of early years for brain development.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) makes a positive contribution to children's long term development and learning by facilitating an enabling and stimulating environment in these foundation stages of lifelong learning.

Parents as caregivers are critical in providing a stimulating learning environment to the child and the first two and a half to three years need not be in a formal learning environment. The National Curriculum Framework acknowledges the significance of involvement of parents, family and community.

The National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Curriculum Framework for all children below six years of age is aligned with the Government's vision of ECCE as spelt out in the National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy. The National ECCE Curriculum Framework is informed by the Position Paper on ECCE (National Curriculum Framework, NCERT, 2005) and the curriculum detailed there under.

The purpose of this framework is to promote quality and excellence in early childhood care and education by providing guidelines for child care and early educational practices. The framework is intended to be a guiding document for ECCE service providers across all regions. It wishes to support to early years professionals, service providers, ECCE teachers/caregivers, communities and state governments in providing rich early stimulation and learning experiences for children from birth to pre- primary years. This document may also be of interest to families of young children too.

1.1 Growing up in India

India has a tradition of valuing the early years of a child's life, and a rich heritage of cultural practices for stimulating development and inculcating "*sanskaras*" or basic values and social skills in children. In the past this was delivered primarily within joint families, through traditional child caring practices which were commonly shared and passed on from one generation to another. However, there have been changes in the family as well as social context in the last few decades.

Families and communities represent vast geographic, social, cultural, linguistic, and economic diversity within the country. Children also differ in their physical, emotional, social, and cognitive capacities. Urban and rural communities offer different types of opportunities and face distinct challenges in providing good quality early care and learning experiences to children. Socio –economic status as well as social and cultural diversity characterize the nature of family life and the context for growing up in India.

Each child requires a safe and nurturing environment to develop optimally. Children with special needs and their families need assistance and information regarding prognosis and early intervention in order to support optimal development of children. Other families may also, face stresses that can compromise their ability to support their children's early learning and need support services to assist families in their critical role as primary caregivers.

Discrimination and inequities based on gender, social identity, disability and other exclusionary factors is prevalent in the society that adds to the above problem. The issues need to be addressed proactively to ensure universal access to integrated services towards fulfilment of right to free, universal pre-primary education. Regardless of income, social status, geographic isolation, and other potential barriers, all children deserve and have a right to inclusive and equitable opportunities to build on their unique strengths.

In recent times many children are receiving early education and care outside the home in child care centres, preschool programs, and other community-based early learning settings. Whether children receive early education and care in the home or the community, it is important that their early learning experiences draw on the unique strengths of their relationships with their families. The diversity in social contexts and family structures needs to be appropriately addressed in order to bring balanced parenting, including inputs from fathers, mothers and other caregivers in the family through enabling provisions in programmes. Strengthening capabilities of families, communities and services to ensure quality care and education for children in the early years is therefore a priority for India.

Thus, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) encompass the inseparable elements of care, health, nutrition, play and early learning within a protective and enabling environment. It is an indispensable foundation for lifelong development and learning, and has lasting impact on early childhood development. It is imperative to accord priority attention to ECCE and invest in it since it is the most cost effective way to break the intergenerational cycle of multiple disadvantages and remove inequity. Investing in ECCE will undoubtedly lead to long term social and economic benefits.

1.2 Vision for an Indian Child

The National ECCE Policy visualizes nurturance and promotion of holistic development and active learning capacity of all children below 6 years of age by promoting free, universal, inclusive, equitable, joyful and contextualised opportunities for laying foundation and attaining full potential.

The vision for an Indian child reflects our beliefs about children and childhood and what is possible and desirable for human life at the individual and societal levels. While putting forward a shared image of a child, full of potential, it is accepted that children differ in their strengths and capabilities, there is diversity in views about childhood and children, and that not all children have the same opportunities to develop their potential. However, a strong image of the child can motivate people to promote children's individual strengths, and to address conditions in children's environments that constrain opportunities to engage fully in early learning. This curriculum framework supports the creation of a shared image of an Indian child that can guide our efforts to promote early learning at the local, state and national levels.

It views children as happy, healthy and confident; each child with unique identity, grounded in their individual strengths and capacities; and with respect for their unique social, linguistic, and cultural heritage and diversity. As children grow and learn, they explore, enquire, make discoveries and apply their understanding to become self regulated lifelong learners. Furthermore, they are sensitive to diversity, are communicative, caring and creative in their relationship with people and environment.



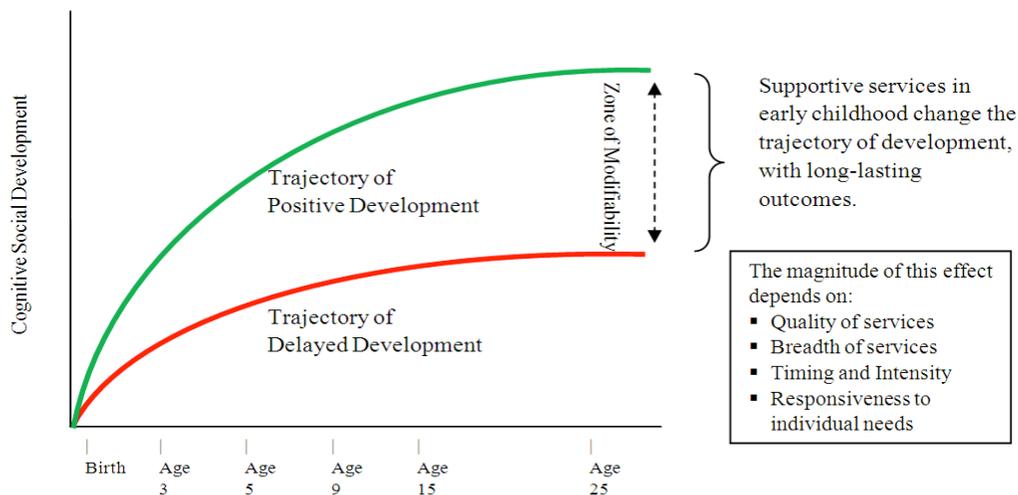
Our young children strive to be:

- Happy and healthy
- Inquirer
- Confident
- Communicative
- Creative
- Caring
- Open-minded
- Resilient
- Sensitive to diversity
- Respectful
- Mindful
- Life-long learner

1.3 Rationale for ECCE

The first six years of life are critical since the rate of development in these years is more rapid than at any other stage of development. Research in neuro-science confirms the importance of the early years in a child's life particularly since 90% of brain development has already taken place by the time a child is six years of age. Research also indicates that the development of brain is influenced not only by health, nutrition and quality of care but also the quality of psycho-social environment the child is exposed to in these early years. (Figure 1). A psycho-socially deficit environment or emotional neglect can lead to negative consequences for a child's development, which may even be irreversible. This places a very large percentage of children from poorer or marginalised families, 'at risk', in terms of their life chances and opportunities. Supportive ECCE services enable to bridge the gap that can lead to more positive long-term outcomes for individuals and society than later interventions.

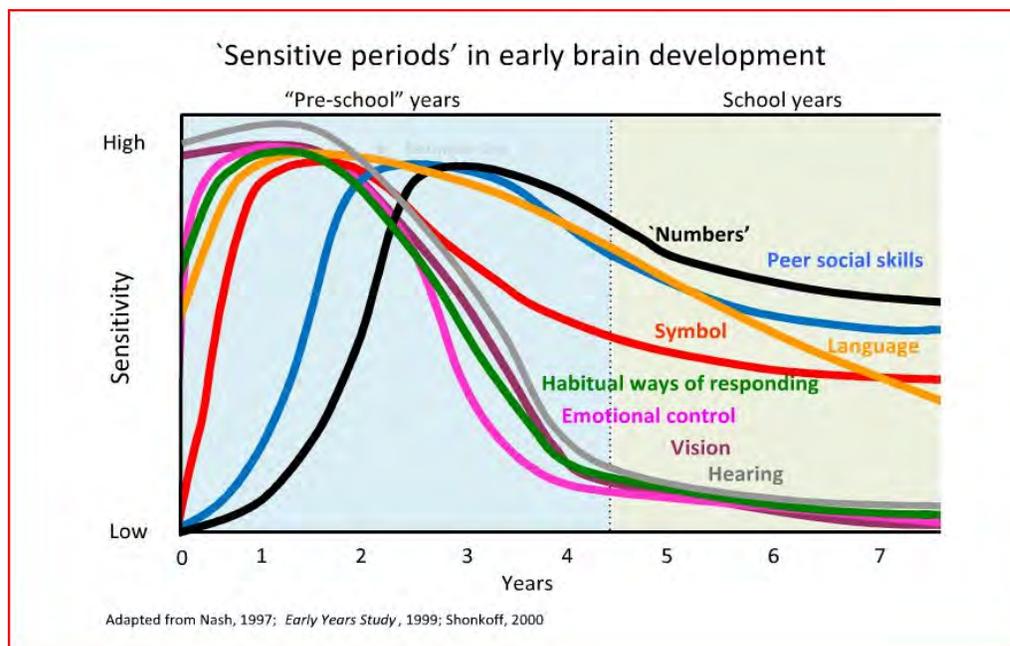
Figure 1: Trajectory of Development



Source: *No Wolves Along the Way: towards a national ECD model in Kyrgyzstan*, Hugh McLean & Rakhat Orozova, UNICEF, 2009)

Scientific research also indicates that within the span of the early childhood years, there are certain 'sensitive periods' or 'critical periods' for development of some cognitive, linguistic, social and psychomotor competencies (Figure 2). These have significant implications for planning of a framework for children's learning and development.

Figure 2: Sensitive periods for Early Development



Source: Adapted from Nash, *Early Years Study*, 1999, Shankoff, 2000

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) makes a positive contribution to children's long term development and learning by facilitating an enabling and stimulating environment in these foundation years of lifelong learning. Therefore, it becomes important to provide a framework for planning for each sub-stage within the early childhood continuum up to the age of six years.

A good learning programme at the early childhood stage helps to ensure appropriate opportunities for holistic learning and development particularly in these sensitive periods. Early intervention is of particular significance for children with developmental delays, infants with disabilities and children growing up in impoverished environments, by counteracting biological and environmental disadvantage, since plasticity in the brain allows circuits in the brain to organise and reorganise, in response to early stimulation.

1.4 Theoretical Foundation

Philosophers have speculated about the nature of childhood and the process of socialisation. Western thinkers like Rousseau, Froebel, Dewey, and Montessori, have been pioneers in the movement of early childhood education. While Dewey emphasized on the wonderful learning opportunities everyday experiences provided and believed that the child's own instincts, activities, and interests should be the starting point of education, Froebel believed that action

and direct observation were the best ways to educate children. Their ideas have opened the way for sensorial and practical activities forming the curricular content. Their insights into the importance of exploration and play, art, rhythm, rhyme, movement, and active participation of the child led to the inclusion of these elements in classroom dynamics.

Indian thinkers have also been guided by their observations concerning young children and their findings about the child's interest in activities using different materials. Gandhi, Tagore, Aurobindo, Gijubhai Badekha, and Tarabai Modak were the first Indians to conceptualise a child-centred approach to the care and education of young children. They were of the view that education must be imparted in the child's mother tongue and should be connected with the child's social and cultural environment and the community should be actively involved in the learning process. Since language is the true vehicle of self-expression a child can freely express its thought in mother tongue/vernacular language.

In more recent times, scholars in Developmental Psychology and Child Development like Piaget, Bruner, Vygotsky, Urie Bronfenbrenner and Gardner have further emphasised, based on their research, play and activity as the child's natural modes of learning and that children living and learning in multiple social and cultural contexts influence children's learning and development. While Piaget emphasised that children constructed their knowledge by assimilating the experiences and then accommodating within their own understanding and that children are adjusting and using new information constantly to make sense of perceptions and experiences. Vygotsky viewed that children are actively engaged in social and cultural experiences and there is active interaction between children and more experienced others in the process of learning and development. Further Jerome Bruner proposed that children represent information and knowledge in their memory in three different but interrelated modes such as action-based, image based and language/symbol based.

In other words he explained how this was possible through the concept of the **spiral curriculum** which involved information being structured so that complex ideas can be taught at a simplified level first where children learn more through concrete experiences, and then re-visited at more complex levels later on. Therefore, topics would be taught at levels of gradually increasing difficulty (hence the spiral analogy).

Their basic tenets are that learning is an active and interactive process in which children learn through play and through interaction between children and more experienced others. Children are actively engaged in their social and cultural experiences, they constantly adjust

and use new information to make sense of perceptions and their experiences. Most importantly play leads to learning and development in children.

Based on the insights and philosophies of these practitioners and thinkers, early childhood care and education programmes should be based on an understanding of the patterns of development and learning that define the essential nature of childhood.

2. Objectives of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

The aim of Early Childhood Care and Education is to facilitate optimum development of the child's full potential and lay the foundation for all round development and lifelong learning. While parents and home have the main responsibility of the welfare of the child, a strong partnership between the community and the ECCE centres is important for the well being of the child and in achieving the following objectives.

Broad objectives of the Early Childhood Care and Education programme are to:

- Ensure each child is valued, respected, feels safe and secure and develops a positive self concept
- Enable a sound foundation for physical and motor development of each child- as per each child's potential
- Imbibe good nutrition routines, health habits, hygiene practices and self help skills
- Enable children for effective communication and foster both receptive and expressive language
- Promote development and integration of the senses
- Stimulate intellectual curiosity and develop conceptual understanding of the world around by providing opportunities to explore, investigate and experiment
- Enhance development of pro-social skills, social competence and emotional well being
- Develop sense of aesthetic appreciation and stimulate creative learning processes.
- Imbibe culturally and developmentally appropriate behaviour and core human values of respect and love for fellow human beings.
- Enable a smooth transition from home to ECCE centre to formal schooling
- Enhance scope for overall personality development

3. Principles of Early Learning and Development and its Implications for Practice

The principles and practices relevant for learning and development in the early years are based on the insights and observations of thinkers and evidences from researches. Each of the principle elaborates specific ideas and at the same time they are all interconnected like the domains of development. The practical implications for each of the principle will also be influenced by the culture and individual prerequisites.

3.1 Development and learning takes place in all domains, development in one domain influences the other domain: Children are thinking, feeling and interacting human beings and it is important to address all domains for their development. Changes or development in one domain facilitates or hinders the development of another domain.

3.2 Children's development and learning follows a sequence in which later acquired abilities (skills and concepts) build upon what children already know and apply. In the first few years of life the growth, change and development mostly follow a predictable pattern; however the way these changes are demonstrated varies in different context and culture. Knowledge of known sequence of development enables in developing early stimulation activities and curricular planning for children.

3.3 Child Development and Learning are characterized by individual variation: While learning and development follows a predictable pattern there may be individual variation in the normative course of development as well as uniqueness of each child as an individual. No two children, even within the same family are the same. Each child has an individual pattern and timing of growth and development as well as individual styles of learning. Each individual child has his/her own strengths.

3.4 Children develop holistically and benefit from experiential learning: This simply means that children learn best through active exploration using the senses such as touch, taste, smell and manipulation to build perceptual skills. Children should be actively interested and engaged in their learning with a high sense of motivation and positive disposition to explore and build skills across various domains.

3.5 Learning begins from birth: From birth onwards children are mentally and physically active. They learn through all their senses and stimulations. Early care and stimulations whether positive or negative have a cumulative impact on children's development. Since care and early stimulation promotes brain development and leads to the forming neural connections, it is imperative that children are provided with optimal stimulation in the early years and prevent cumulative deficit in the long run.

3.6 Development and learning result from a continuous interaction of biological maturation and experience. A child has genetic endowments which may predict healthy growth, but inadequate nutrition in the early years of life will keep this potential from being fulfilled. On the other hand if the child is suffering from an inherent condition, then the detrimental impact learning and development can be minimized through systematic, individualized intervention. With this perspective in mind, it is important for early childhood educators to maintain high expectations and employ all their knowledge, ingenuity, and persistence to find ways to help every child succeed.

3.7 There are critical periods in development: Research evidences reveal that some aspects of development occur most efficiently at certain points in the life span. For example the optimal period for oral language development in children is in the first three years of life, peer social skills are developed effectively during 3-5 years of life etc. Thus it is important to use these “windows of opportunity” and ensure that the children get the needed environmental inputs and supports for a particular kind of learning and development at its “prime time” for desired outcomes.

3.8 Children’s learning reflects a recurring spiral that begins in awareness, and moves to exploration, to inquiry, and finally, to application: Any new learning by children begins with awareness, which is generated from their experiences with objects, events, or people and ends with utilization, where children are able to use what they have learnt for multiple purposes and apply their learning to new situations. At this stage children start exploring the next level of information and the spiral continues. Children with disabilities show a great degree of individual variations and the curriculum should make suitable adaptations to ensure that children are provided developmentally appropriate materials and experiences.

3.9 Children learn and develop in a stimulating/nurturing/supportive/protective environment: During the early years of life, children move from sensory or behavioural responses to symbolic or representational knowledge. They learn within a social context and from meaningful interactions with other children, adults and materials around them. Throughout the early years, adults must provide a nurturing environment and play significant roles in helping children learn to develop empathy and cooperation, cultural socialization and self-regulation, language acquisition and communication, peer relationships, self concept and identity formations.

3.10. Development and learning is largely influenced by the social and cultural context of the children. Development and learning of children happens hand in hand and it largely depends on the influence of the child’s family, immediate environment, the community and at a broader level the society. Every culture has its own norms, structures and behaviours and more so each culture has its own way of interpreting children’s behaviour and development in its own way. Educators must be sensitive how their own culture has shaped their thinking and also consider the multiple environments in which different children live and how they need to be considered while making decision for children’s development and learning.

3.11 Children's have curiosity and desire to learn: Children are curious and have an innate desire to learn. Children observe what happens, talk, discuss and reflecting on their findings, stretch their imagination for possibilities, ask questions, and formulate answers. While exploring and learning young children construct their knowledge and understanding of the world, they learn as well as from teachers, family members, peers and older children, and from books and other media. To enable these ECCE teachers/caregivers must use multiple teaching strategies in meeting children's different learning needs.

3.12 Children learn through play: Play is central to the child's well being and development. Children's spontaneous play provides opportunities for exploration, experimentation, manipulation and problem solving that are essential for constructing knowledge. Play contributes to the development of representational as well as abstract thought. Children engage in various kinds of play, such as physical play, language play, object play, pretend or dramatic play, constructive play, and games with rules. This further influences their motivation, disposition and approaches to learning. Developing positive approaches to learning goes a long way to determine later academic success in life. Adults must provide opportunities for children to explore, play and apply.



4. Curricular Issues and Concerns

4.1 Multilingualism

Language plays an important role in communication, exchange of information, development of reading skills, reading with comprehension, and, in later years, academic success. Yet little attention is being paid to language acquisition and experiences in ECCE programmes.
(ECCE Position Paper)

Language acquisition and teaching of language is a multifaceted issue in a multilingual country like ours. Even though young children are not formally taught language, language acquisition is part of the overall development of children physically, socially, and cognitively. Any single Indian language used as a medium of interaction in preschools/ ECCE centres poses problems for children coming from different language backgrounds and dialects, especially in towns and cities. It is a challenge for the ECCE teacher/ caregiver to cope with different languages at the same time in an early childhood setting. Furthermore, children who come to preschools or ECCE centres in their area or even enter directly into a primary school that uses the state language totally unfamiliar to them face significant challenges. It is observed that such children face tremendous difficulties in various parts of the country, often resulting in their inability to read with comprehension the state language even after Class V. This is compounded by the sense of failure and inadequacy which may ultimately force them out of the educational system altogether.

The linguistic diversity of India poses a number of challenges for early childhood educators; however if leveraged in a systematic way it also provides a range of opportunities to provide a rich environment for the child.

- The **medium of interaction** in the ECCE centre should be home language or mother tongue. However, there may be more than one language as mother tongue, which may pose problems for children coming from different language backgrounds and dialects. It is therefore important to allow as many languages as are in the classroom to be used for expression. We know that language is closely linked to child's identity and emotional security. Therefore, it is important to encourage different languages for expression by children in the ECCE centres.
- Research is now establishing that children can learn many languages in the first six years. Therefore, while promoting mother tongue, there is also merit in utilizing ECCE as an opportunity to provide exposure to school language, so that children enter school better prepared. However, this should be done in a phased manner. Children should be

encouraged to be proficient in their mother tongue/ home language first and then the formal school language (regional language or English) should be introduced.

- There is a widespread and **growing demand for English** at the preschool level, since it is seen as the path to upward mobility and achievement. The majority of parents from all classes, occupations and regions have an explicit desire for their children to learn English. However, teaching through child's mother tongue/ home language, is internationally recognised as the most appropriate way of working with children in the early years of concept formation. Children who attend ECCE programmes conducted in their own mother tongue face fewer problems of comprehension as compared to children whose mother tongue is different from the medium of instruction. When the child is comfortable and proficient with the mother tongue/ home language first, it supports developing proficiency in the second language later. However, it is crucial that when the school language (which may be regional language or English) is introduced, the ECCE teachers/ caregivers must continue to convey a positive attitude about children's first language (mother tongue/ home language). There is also an urgent need for community awareness and parental education initiatives so parents can be made aware of what is developmentally appropriate for their children. Parents and families should be provided materials with information on dual/ multiple language learning and on the importance of home language.
- **Multilingual classroom:** ECCE perspective, or a developmental pedagogy, would suggest that language should be learnt by processes in the following order: 'Listen–speak–read–write.' In the early years, the focus is on listening and speaking as the major activities in the classroom, facilitated through free play with peers. Teachers should also attempt to learn a few words and phrases of the child's home language. In a multilingual classroom, children should be encouraged to express themselves in their own language and to pay attention to and learn from each other. This is a natural and easy process in play situations. Multilingualism and children's learning abilities are not the issue here, but rather the ability of the educational system to address the issue and find the appropriate solutions.
- **Training support:** It is a challenge for the ECCE teacher/ caregiver to cope with different languages at the same time in an early childhood setting. ECCE teachers/ caregivers must be trained on supporting children to continue to develop proficiency in their mother tongue/ home language, especially if it is not the language spoken by the majority of

children. ECCE teachers/ caregivers require ongoing professional development and resources to support parents' use of mother tongue/ home language and bilingual/multilingual language acquisition at home.

4.2 Inclusion

In India, a learner with special education needs is defined variously in different documents, and over a period of time the approach of the Government has shifted from the medical model of care to a more child's rights model of accepting diversity and making it inclusive. '*Inclusion in the early years*' implies that children with disabilities should have access to mainstream early learning environments which should accommodate them with a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting their individual needs (Singh, 2005). Since segregated services for children with disabilities have historically been based on the 'medical model' approach to disability which explains children's needs in terms of 'deficit' and 'cure' (Oliver, 1996), it has, by its nature, been limiting in terms of opportunities and outcomes, and perpetuated negative attitudes towards disability. With very few special education early learning centres available (particularly in rural India) inclusion must be adopted, in letter and spirit by ECCE.

The basic premise of inclusive education is that children be treated equally rather than be segregated based on their individual, educational, social, emotional or physical impairments. While a learner may have special education needs [SEN], and may need differentiated inputs to be able to learn concepts in a given area, it is critical to identify areas of strength of the child that can be built upon. Therefore the child must have a space where he/she can exercise these faculties and develop them to optimum level possible.

The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are **access, participation, and supports**. When envisioning an inclusive environment for children where an individual's needs are catered to, the challenges involve both infrastructure and personnel. However many of these challenges can be managed if there is a clear commitment to the philosophy of inclusion and the right of every child to learn with his/her peers. It is therefore necessary to make all ECCE programmes sensitive and responsive to the special needs of children, including training of, ECCE teachers and caregivers in identification of needs of the children with disabilities, use of age-appropriate play and learning materials, making adaptations in the physical environment and counselling of parents.

- The **identification** of SEN of children at an early age is crucial to helping them cope with challenges in later life. Thus, the sensitization, orientation and training of parents, caretakers and other stakeholders become imperative.
- Having the **staff trained** and dedicated to this process of inclusion becomes mandatory. From curricular perspective it is important to understand the significance of early identification and intervention, make the curriculum flexible and accessible, make adjustments in the physical environment to ensure it is barrier free, make the curriculum accessible to children with differing impairments, develop appropriate assessment and evaluation procedures, capacity building and empowering all stakeholders to address attitudinal barriers. This process also sensitises typical peers to accept and learn to respect diversity
- **Prevention efforts for families** of 'at-risk children' should focus on strengthening the family and building on the family's positive attributes. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential.

4.3 Multi-Age Grouping

In an ECCE centre there may be teachers who struggle with ways to meet the needs of all the learners in their classrooms. Alternately there may be some children who struggle with learning, others who perform well on their developmental tasks, and the rest fit somewhere in between. Each child has its own pace of learning. Within each of these categories of children, individuals also learn in a variety of ways and have different interests. However the curriculum used is most often driven by '*one size fits all*' approach and with the expectations that all children will achieve the standards by the end of the academic year.

In response to this situation most often ECCE teachers and caregivers would use the concept of '*differentiation*' to meet the varying needs of their learners. At its most basic level, differentiation consists of the efforts of ECCE teacher/ Caregiver to respond to variance among learners in the classroom. An ECCE Teacher / Caregiver may approach differentiation by (1) **content**—what the child needs to learn or how the child will get access to the information; (2) **process**—activities in which the child engages in order to make sense of or master the content; (3) **products**—culminating projects that enable the child to

rehearse, apply, and extend what he or she has learned in a topic; and (4) **learning environment**—the way the classroom/ ECCE centre works and feels.

There is ample evidence that children are more successful in school and find it more satisfying if they are taught in ways that are responsive to their readiness levels, interests and learning profiles (Tomlinson, 2000). So it may be helpful for children work sometimes with like-readiness peers, sometimes with mixed-readiness groups, sometimes with children who have similar interests, sometimes with children who have different interests, sometimes with peers who learn as they do, sometimes randomly, and often with the class as a whole.

In the above context, *Multi-age grouping* refers to "a class grouping in which students of different ages and identified age levels are grouped together in a single classroom for the purpose of providing effective instruction" (Miller, 1995, p. 29). The multi-age environment is deliberately created for the benefit of children, not because of economic needs or declining enrolment. The intention is to allow children of various ages and abilities to progress at their own individual pace rather than according to specified objectives for a particular grade level.

Research shows that multi-age groupings benefit both younger and older students in the classroom. According to Dr. Lilian Katz, "Mixed-age grouping resembles family and neighbourhood groupings, which throughout history have informally provided much of children's socialization and education. The intention of mixed-age grouping in early childhood settings is to increase the heterogeneity of the group so as to capitalize on the differences in the experience, knowledge, and abilities of the children". Moreover, children learn from each other and from older children- thereby facilitating cooperative learning skills.

In rural areas multi-age grouping is more often a pragmatic response to the needs of communities, where it is practical to set up a single Anganwadi/ ECCE centre for a village or settlement. Various reasons such as insufficient students of a similar age, places with limited physical or human resources may seem viable to have a multi-age grouping in the ECCE centres.

4.4 Gender Equality

The early years lay the foundation for gender socialization. Gender Socialization is a process by which individuals learn to act in a particular way and mostly conforming to the societal beliefs, values, norms, attitudes and examples. Early gender socialization starts at birth and is a process of learning socio-cultural roles according to one's gender. Right from the beginning, boys and girls are treated differently by the members of their family and immediate

environment, and learn the differences between boys and girls. Even by the time children are two year old they have absorbed the gender stereotypes in some form which is evident because of clothing and toys chosen by adults and provided to them. As they reach preschool age, children begin to develop their sense of self in relation to others.

Certain gender inequities can persist right from infancy through the lifespan. Gender stereotypes may get perpetuated by family, teachers and society by having different expectations for girls and boys. However, early childhood period also presents a crucial opportunity to promote gender equity right from the start and facilitate the development of gender-sensitive attitudes and beliefs.

ECCE interventions can promote gender equity by compensating for gender biases in nutrition, health care or stimulation that may occur in the home. (Arnold, 2004:10). A gender sensitive curriculum needs to ensure that gender stereotypes are broken. In the early years it is important:

- Adults are there to support, protect and involve children in approaches and activities that help them develop their minds, their bodies, their social skills and behaviours.
- Caregivers should not perpetuate gender stereotypes. Instead, they should be encouraged to have equal and appropriate expectations of boys and girls and promote equal opportunities for them. They can provide opportunity to explore the children's thinking about gender and help children expand their understanding of gender.
- ECCE teachers /Caregivers have had gender training and know how to routinely do gender analysis. This equips them to see gender bias in the community and to actively keep it out of the classroom. Girls and boys receive equal attention and respect. It is ensured that during the day the tone of voice and comments given, wait time provided for answering questions, feedback provided, opportunity in classroom tasks are same for both boys and girls. As a result, they learn to value themselves and others equally. Equal treatment sends messages that each child is worthy and valued regardless of her or his sex or other differences.
- Facilitate as much active learning as possible through play and other activities which are free of gender bias. Stories, songs, activities and facilitation aids should depict girls and boys in the same roles and men and women in all professions. Both women and men should appear as leaders, heroes and problem solvers etc.
- Girls do some things that boys don't do and some things more or less than the boys. So boys and girls have different ideas, experiences and behaviours. However, preschoolers enjoy imitating adults and role plays are good ways for them to show the

different things they do and know. Girls like to pretend to be boys or fathers and boys like to role play female roles. While enacting they understand the other sex and teachers/caregivers can explore what feelings girls and boys have, build the comfort of both sexes in discussing their feelings too. As the educator treats each child well, it may be easier to get children to listen to each other, to share and to play respectfully.

- There are few male ECCE teachers and Caregivers. Encourage male ECCE teachers so that learners will benefit from male role models.
- The families and local community is encouraged to participate and support the programme. Parents need to be sensitized and educated so that they can support these practices at home. It is important here to help them understand and stop discrimination against boys or girls.

4.5 Harms of Early Formal Instruction

Surveys have indicated that play-based, development-oriented ECE programmes as advocated in the National Policy of Education (1986) are more of an exception than the norm. The curriculum surveys in all major cities indicated that children as young as 3 to 5 years old are being taught the syllabus prescribed not only for Class I but even for Class II, for which they are neither cognitively nor physically mature enough. Children are made to give regular tests and examinations, and are assigned regular doses of homework. Exposure to formal instruction is causing harm to children. This is a result of misinterpretation of early care and education.

The risks are both short term and long term; the short-term risks include the manifestation of stress and anxiety symptoms among children and the long-term risks include far-reaching effects on the children's motivational, intellectual, and social behaviour.

The above findings resonate with what is termed as '*damaged disposition hypotheses*'. Lilian Katz's theory of learning dispositions (1985) describes the child's 'natural tendency' or 'emotional attitude' to learning. Katz considers learning dispositions as '*relatively enduring habits of mind or characteristic ways of responding to experience*'. Both the fostering and assessment of positive attitudes or 'dispositions' to learning experiences are viewed by Katz as the basis of the curriculum for early childhood education. An important feature of children's dispositions is that they are environmentally sensitive—meaning they are acquired, supported, or weakened by interactive experiences in an environment with significant adults and peers. However early formal instruction, structured curricular practices, repeated negative outcomes, in the form of criticism from adults or the inability to achieve tasks successfully, can lead to feelings of 'helplessness'. We often focus on knowledge and skills

and the cognitive domain and give little consideration to feelings and dispositions. As a result the disposition to learn, make sense of experiences, being reflective, inquisitive, inventive, resourceful, full of wonder and perhaps puzzlement is damaged at a very early age.

- When ECCE Teachers/Caregivers display curiosity and creativity and value the same dispositions in children, these are likely to flourish in the classroom.
- ECCE Teachers/ Caregivers can influence parents' perceptions of their children's dispositions, address to parental concerns in terms of dispositions.

4.6 Preparing ECCE Teachers/Caregivers

The staffs running an early-childhood care and education programme is the single most important factor in determining the quality of the programme, and yet it is the most neglected aspect of the educational system (*ECCE Position Paper*). Preparation of ECCE teachers, training, coaching and ongoing support which is very crucial, is hardly emphasised. ECCE teachers/ caregivers are either unprepared or inadequately prepared; the courses are obsolete and devoid of practical hands on training. Currently, what is offered as training for the staff varies tremendously in terms of the duration of training, methodology, and exposure to theory and practice. On one hand, there are university and government recognized courses with fixed curricula and duration and some standards set for trainers and organisations. On the other hand, there are private institutions which run their own courses with no standards for curricula or duration, producing individuals who are unable to develop healthy programmes for young children. There is clear absence of any induction programme or continuous professional development and ongoing support available for teachers.

- Given the variations in duration is dire need for standardization and for providing better professional development opportunities to ECCE teachers/ caregivers in all sectors. Teachers should undergo and complete a course with hands-on supervised training period, working with young children in classroom settings of in ECCE centres.
- Provide ECCE teacher/ caregiver does require ongoing training (through regular, onsite mentoring support) and professional development to build the skills required for an ECCE professional.
- Curriculum for teacher education in ECCE should cover the entire developmental continuum from birth to eight years, to provide fuller understanding of child development and the early child care and education practices.
- The selection of teachers should ideally be made from the local community or area. These individuals should have undergone training in Early Childhood Education and / or Child Development or have a degree in Primary Education. They should also display suitable personal characteristics that are conducive towards working with young children. The nurturing and teaching style of the ECCE teachers/caregivers

has a strong influence on children's motivation and learning. Therefore, it is crucial that the ECCE teacher/ caregiver have the capacity and temperament to build a warm, caring relationship with young children.

- In the context of involvement and active partnership of the community members **women and men from the local community**, having a good understanding of the socio cultural context can be chosen to support the teachers in the preschool centres. She can be provided induction and intensive training and support to address the developmental needs of the children. More so they can take the role of local resource person who provides valuable information to women, adolescent girls and other care givers on issues related to health, child care and earl learning. Women from the local community are considered as potential change makers in this process.
- For this reason, the teacher-child ratio and group size are important planning considerations. The younger the group of children, the more important it is to have adequate numbers of staff in the classroom. Appropriate staffing patterns will vary according to the age group of the children, the type of activity, and the inclusion of children with special needs. Appropriate teacher-child ratios encourage the bonding of children and teachers.



4.7 School Readiness

Typically school readiness is understood or rather has been based on the assumption that there is a predetermined set of skills and abilities that all children need before entering primary school. Most specifically in India it is assumed that children entering primary schools would have achieved the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic (commonly known as 3Rs). In India a large number of children are first generation learners and come to school without social, academic or language readiness. Across the country learning levels in first few grades are low which may be symptomatic of this issue. It is well known that as more and more children enter school, there are high incidences of drop outs, repeating grades, enrolling too late or too early, and thus failing to learn. As a result educational disparities are ever increasing.

One need to recognize that child's early learning, growth and development is multidimensional, cumulative and is influenced by individual, social, cultural, and contextual factors/variations. A recent study (CECED, 2013) in India has revealed that phonetics, communication skills and cognitive activities such as sequential thinking and classification are areas needing attention. However, any discussions or conclusions regarding school readiness or what we expect children to know and do before entering school will be guided by three basic factors:

- the diversity of children's early life experiences as well as inequity in experiences;
- the wide variation in young children's development and learning; and
- the degree to which school expectations of children entering kindergarten are reasonable, appropriate, and supportive of individual differences (NAEYC, 1995)

The concept of readiness includes much more than children's readiness. School readiness is currently defined by three interlinked dimensions: a) ready children; b) ready schools; and c) ready families and communities. 'Children are not innately *ready* or *not ready* for school. Their skills and development are strongly influenced by their families and through their interactions with other people and environments before coming to school', (Maxwell & Clifford 2004). Children, schools and families are considered ready when they have gained the competencies and skills required to interface with the other dimensions and support smooth transitions of children from home to ECCE centre and subsequently to primary school. Each of the aspects is elaborated below.

Ready Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Children are eager to learn, thereby enabling a smooth transition to a primary school environment. ✓ Children learn in their mother tongue/ first language as a prelude to and complement bilingual and multilingual education. ✓ Children who enter school without having mastered specific skills or little or no ECCE experiences, primary curriculum should include child-initiated as well as teacher supported activities, and should emphasize hands-on, integrated learning to boost their school readiness. ✓ Comprises of building readiness for reading, writing and numeracy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading readiness is developing familiarity with print material, developing vocabulary and ability to handle books. ○ Writing readiness involves fine motor development, understanding directionality and finding meaning in writing. ○ Number readiness includes pre-number concept, categorization, classification, sequential thinking, seriation, problem solving and reasoning (shapes, colour).
Ready Schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Children have access and opportunity to develop their behaviours and abilities across the domains of development ✓ Schools accept that children learn at different pace. ✓ Schools may be transformed to accept and accommodate different kinds of learners. ✓ Effective kindergarten-primary programs meet children where they are and take extra care to help make meaningful connections with each child's home, culture, and community ✓ Curriculum in kindergarten and the early grades builds on prior learning and the skills that children learn and practice are embedded in meaningful experiences. ✓ Ensure smooth transition from ECCE to primary school through different strategies (such as training ECCE and primary school educators together, integrated curricula and options that bridge ECCE programmes with primary schools) ✓ Teachers must know how to teach young children and have the resources to do so.
Ready Families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supportive parenting and stimulating home environment is one of the strongest predictors of school performance during primary years and beyond. In the ECCE programmes home based/ centre based stimulation for mother and child is imperative to bring in parental involvement, address to their beliefs, attitudes and commitment. ✓ Enable parents and family members to reading books, playing games, singing narrating stories and conversing with children. ✓ Ensure parental commitment to enroll their children at the right time for getting timely intervention.

All the dimensions are equally important and must work together to ensure the transition is smooth for the child, family and the school system.

SECTION 2: GOALS OF DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING



5. Domains of Development

Every child is a unique individual and has skills and abilities that can be further enhanced and developed. A good early childhood care and education programme respects the different pace of development of all children and ensures that the child develops physically, socially, emotionally, morally and intellectually to their full potential. Thus, the main aim of providing quality care and education during the early years is to enable the child to develop as a holistic individual and realise his/her potential to the fullest in all the areas of development. Development of the child is classified under six main areas of development. The curriculum must address the following interrelated domains of holistic development through an integrated and play based approach which focuses on development of life skills.

5.1 Birth- Three Years

Sensory and Perceptual Development:

- Development of the five senses through visual, auditory, olfactory and kinaesthetic experiences
- Learning to control and coordinate their reflexes
- Coordination of sensory perceptions and simple motor behaviours
- Display awareness of location and spatial relationship

Physical, Health and Motor Development:

- Developing coordination and control of large motor muscles
- Developing strength and coordination of small motor muscles
- Integrating the movements of many parts of their body
- Developing a sense of balance in movement
- Adequate nutrition and sound health status
- Begin to display personal hygiene skills
- Recognise the importance of safety rules

Language Development:

- Begin to develop active listening skills
- Use expressive and receptive communication skills
- Develop vocabulary and use language to engage in conversations.
- Develop verbal and non-verbal communication skills
- Display emergent literacy skills (preparing children to read and write): such as identify and differentiate sounds, phonological awareness; print awareness and concepts; recognition of letters; letter- sound correspondence; building words and sentences.
- Display the use of prewriting skills (scribbling, marking, drawing, etc) for variety of purposes

Cognitive Development:

- Development of object permanence (know that objects have substance, maintain their identities when they change location, and continue to exist when out of sight)
- Development of perceptual categorization based on how things look, feel, and taste
- Development of memory for objects, people and events
- Begin to develop vocabulary and skill related (comparing, classification, seriation; space, quantity, length, counting etc)
- Develop skills related to observing, reasoning and problem solving
- Explore the physical, social and natural environment by manipulating objects, asking questions, making predictions and developing generalization

Development of Creative and Aesthetic Appreciation:

- Begin to represent objects, events and ideas in the form of drawing, clay modelling and other art forms
- Develop expression, enjoyment and disposition for music and movement

Personal, Social and Emotional Development:

- Display awareness of their abilities, preferences and characteristics
- Development of self concept; self control; self help skills;
- Develop initiative and curiosity; independence and autonomy;
- Display awareness of behaviour and its effects
- Display increased attention span, engagement and persistence in daily activities
- Emergence of pretend play and use of objects as representation
- Develop friendship with peers, show cooperation and participate in group activities
- Development of attachment, and emotional bonding with adults
- Develop empathy, learn to control feelings and express emotions in relevant manner

5.2 Three- Six Years

Sensory and Perceptual Development:

- Demonstrate the use of different senses (sight, hear, feel, taste, smell) to guide movements and recognize objects
- Awareness of space and direction, distance, quantity etc.

Physical Health and Motor Development:

- Developing coordination and control of large motor muscles
- Developing strength and coordination of small motor muscles
- Demonstrate the use of body with proper sense of space and direction
- Coordination of fine muscles with dexterity; eye hand coordination
- Developing sense of balance, physical co-ordination
- Recognize different food and demonstrate healthy dietary habits
- Display healthy habits, personal care and hygiene. Display ability to follow safety rules, make choices and avoid danger

Language Development:

- Develop Listening and Comprehension skills
- Use expressive and receptive communication skills
- Develop effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills
- Develop vocabulary and use language for a variety of purposes.
- Display emergent literacy skills and love for reading (preparing children to read and write): such as identify and differentiate sounds, phonological awareness; print awareness and concepts; recognition of letters; letter- sound correspondence; segmentation, building words and sentences and early writing.
- Demonstrate interest and ability in writing
- Develop competency in home language while acquiring beginning proficiency in language of school transaction and/ or English, if needed.

Cognitive Development:

- Development of various concepts including pre number and number concepts and operations (knowledge and skills related to comparing, classification, seriation; understanding of and vocabulary related to space, quantity, length and volume, one to one correspondence; counting etc),
- Predicting patterns and making estimations in measurement; data handling;
- Develop skills related to sequential thinking, critical thinking, observing, reasoning and problem solving;
- Explore the physical, social and natural environment by manipulating objects, asking questions, making predictions and developing generalizations.
- Differentiate between events that happen in past, present and the future
- Develop knowledge of relationship between people, places and regions

Development of Creative and Aesthetic Appreciation:

- Representing objects, events and ideas in the form of drawing, clay modelling and other art forms
- Develop expression, enjoyment and disposition for music and movement
- Demonstrate creativity and inventiveness with materials

Personal, Social and Emotional Development:

- Development of self concept; self control; life skills/ self help skills;
- Develop initiative and curiosity in new experiences and learning
- Developing a sense of independence and autonomy;
- Display awareness of abilities and preferences, appreciates similarities and differences in people and awareness of behaviour and its actions
- Displays relevant and appropriate habit formation, increased attention span, engagement and persistence in daily activities
- Develop interpersonal skills with respect to peers, family, teachers and community
- Display behaviours of cooperation; compassion; social relationships; group interaction; pro- social behaviour; expressing feelings, accepting others feelings
- Develop the ability to adapt and control emotions

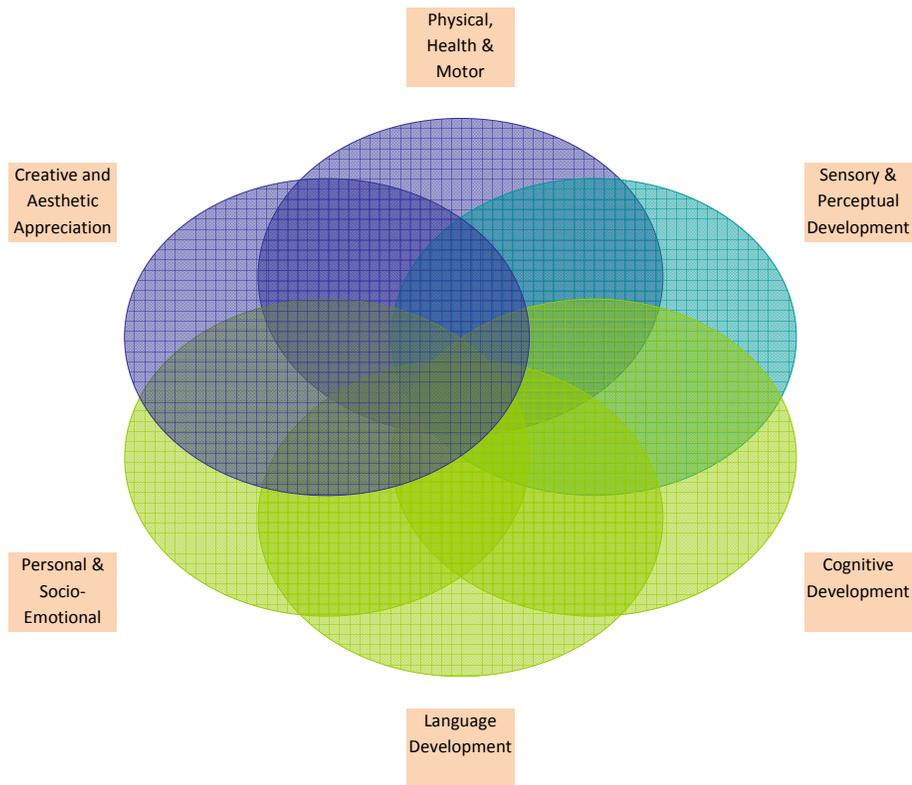


Fig 3: Domains of Development

The ECCE programme should ensure 'holistic development' of the child and reflect the inseparable nature of care and education by comprehensively addressing the need for care, nutrition, health and well-being of young children and parent counselling along with supporting the development of all domains. The holistic development approach is vital for provision of interconnected and interconnected activities covering all domains of development while keeping diverse needs of children in mind.

6 Pedagogical Approaches to Principles of Programme Planning

The Early Childhood Care and Education Programme recognise that children learn best through play and learning by doing. Children of this age group are naturally curious to explore their immediate world using their senses. Anyone who has spent time observing young children will have noticed that they are in constant interaction with their environment, they want to touch everything they see. All that matters to children is Play, Play, and Play. Furthermore children learn by doing, by experiencing and actively participating in the learning process. Thus the ECCE curriculum adopts a play and activity based approach in which the learning processes are based on the needs, interests, abilities and social context of the children for whom it is planned. The methodology in this approach is largely based on creating a stimulating learning environment for the child through planned activities/ tasks which are joyful, and involve active thinking/learning by the child. Children are visualised as active beings who construct their own knowledge and the process of teaching –learning is one of co-construction of knowledge, with adults as facilitators.

What is Play?

Play for a child is natural, spontaneous, enjoyable, rewarding and it is self initiated. While children do not engage in play for its learning outcomes, yet it has been shown that play prompts growth and development.

In recent times play has been considered as a behavioural disposition that occurs in describable and reproducible contexts and is manifested in a variety of observable behaviours. (Fein & Vandenberg, 1983). There are majorly four types of play such as

Functional Play: Children use their senses and muscles to explore and experiment with materials and learn how things go together. It satisfies children's need to be active and to explore.

Constructive Play: Children learn use of different materials, put things together based on a plan, develop and use strategies of reaching their goal.

Dramatic or Pretend Play: Children take on a role, pretend to be someone else and use real or pretend objects to play out a role. Children re-enact they have experienced or watched earlier, use words and gestures and show the role they are playing.

Games with Rules: Children gradually learn to play with others, control their behaviour and conform to a structure of preset rules. However the focus is more on enjoyment rather than winning or losing and cooperative and collaborative games in which children play with each other than against each other.

What is an activity?

A good activity is a

- Part of a well planned series of experiences identified by the teacher for the child for a particular learning area/areas and not an isolated learning experience.
- Where child is actively engaged physically and mentally.
- Challenging enough for the child so as to help her/ him practice and apply here/his skills and knowledge in a variety of ways, across many situations.
- Enables children to learn in a joyful and interesting way.

Keeping the above perspectives in mind the curriculum in early childhood is defined as an organized framework that includes three components (Bredenkamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 10):

- **Context:** This component is the setting, the environment in which stimulation and learning takes place.
- **Content:** This component is the subject matter of the curriculum, the goals and objectives for children's learning.
- **Processes:** This component is the pedagogy of learning, how ECCE teachers/caregivers interact with children, creates opportunities for learning and the ways in which children achieve the goals and objectives of the curriculum.

Each of these components, to be implemented well, requires knowledge of how children develop and learn at each stage of development; their individual strengths, interests, and needs; and the social and cultural contexts in which they live (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997, p. 9). These dimensions of learning, known as developmentally appropriate practice, guide all aspects of teaching and learning. When ECCE teachers/Caregivers understand developmentally appropriate practice, they can use this information to guide children's learning.

<u>Early Childhood Care and Education is.....</u>	<u>Early Childhood Care Education is</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A balanced play and activity based program which provides a stimulating environment for the language, intellectual, social emotional and physical development of the child. • A child centred program catering to individual children's learning and emotional needs through individual, small and large group activities and one to one communication. • Lays the foundation for the development of reading, writing and number work. • A school readiness programme which 'readies' children for learning to read, write and do arithmetic later. • A programme which indirectly promotes self control and thereby inner discipline in children through interactions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOT a syllabus bound program for teaching 3R's nor 'a song and a rhyme and go home' approach. • NOT a teacher centred programme that follows formal classroom approach as in school • NOT a program for formally 'teaching' reading, writing and arithmetic, which is to be done in primary. • NOT a downward extension of the Primary Grades • NOT a programme which demands unquestioning obedience or exercise strict classroom discipline • NOT a programme to conduct tests to know how children are learning and developing.

Source: V. Kaul, *Early Childhood Education Programme*, NCERT

7. Guiding Principles of Program Planning

Keeping the vision of holistic and integrated development of the child, with **focus on care and early learning** at each sub-stage of the developmental continuum and the interrelatedness of the domains of development there is a need to have separate section for Birth to three years and 3-6 years as far as the specifics are being laid out.

In the life cycle approach to care and learning, in the first three years of life focus is on a nurturing, stimulating and protective environment with appropriate child care. Supporting child development in primary care involves strengthening resilience and protective factors and decreasing the number, duration, and severity of risk factors. Children between three to six years need care, protection as well as planned play based programme for all round development with more of free play, but some guided, adult – child, child to child interaction and opportunities for holistic development of all domains of development. As children move towards their pre primary years focus would be on developing their school readiness skills and concepts. The National ECCE Policy lays down the features of the substages as follows:

- **Birth to three years** – survival, safety, protective environment, health care, nutrition including infant and young child feeding practices for the first six months, attachment to an adult, opportunity for psycho-social stimulation and early interaction in safe, nurturing and stimulating environments within the home and appropriate child care centres.
- **Three to six years** – protection from hazards, health care, nutrition, attachment to an adult, developmentally appropriate play-based preschool education with a structured and planned school readiness component for 5 to 6 year olds.

The programme should be relevant to individual and societal needs. The age demarcations are indicative and the activities have to be planned and adapted according to the developmental level of the children.

7.1 Birth – Three Years: Focus on Care, Stimulation and Interaction

Care refers to the behaviours and practices of caregivers (mothers, siblings, fathers, and child care providers) to provide the food, health care, stimulation, and emotional support necessary for children's healthy growth and development. Not only the practices themselves, but also the ways they are performed with affection and with responsiveness to children are critical to children's growth and development (Engle 1997).

Care practices and resources can be improved through actions of different sectors, including health, early child development, community development, women's income generation, water and sanitation, and the environment. Caring practices and resources vary tremendously by culture, and even by groups and communities within cultures. There are differences in how each culture attempts to meet the needs of their young ones. Understanding care practices and resources for care would help adults identify the practices and resources that are important, relevant and essential for their ecological setting.

However, as humans we are much more similar than we are different. Children's basic needs for food, health care, protection, shelter, and love are the same in all cultures. The focus for children from birth -3 is not on *what they must learn but rather on how they need to be cared for.*

A fundamental aspect of early childhood care is that infants and toddlers need safe environments that give them opportunities to be active using all of their senses. In addition to complete nutrition and adequate health care and hygiene, they need interaction with adults, preferably the same adults, day after day, so that they can confidently explore and experience the world that responds to their growing abilities.

The nurturing and interacting style of the primary caregivers at home, and in out-of-home programmes at the ECCE centres, have strongest influence on children's motivation and learning. Certain principles and processes that guide effective care and stimulation practices at home as well at the ECCE centre is delineated below.

Care, Stimulation and Interaction at Home

- Traditional customs often provide warmth and support for young children. Infant massage, touching, holding, talking to the child while breastfeeding and other feeding times must be practiced to create bonding and attachment between mother and child.
- Parents and family members may understand the child rearing approach taken in the child care centre and extend the care and stimulation practices at home.
- Provide a variety in interactions in which make time for children to play together without much caregiver input (free play time), time alone if wanted, and time with caregivers in regular activities.
- Prevent and protect children from child abuse and violence as children who are exposed to aggression and who have been victimized are likely to repeat these roles later in life.
- Have men take the responsibility towards health and nutrition of women and children.
- Be alert to signs of listlessness, low activity level or delayed achievement of developmental milestones, find out the reason and take actions accordingly.
- Storytelling plays a significant role in facilitating language development in the early years. The tradition of narrating local stories and folktales to children should be encouraged at homes.
- Both mothers and fathers work as a team to facilitate their children's language development (which could include two or more languages).

Care, Stimulation and Interaction at the ECCE Centre

- Ensure that setting is supportive of children's existing culture, socio economic background, individual needs, etc.
- Have consistent routines from day to day to offer a good balance of predictability and with scope for variety and different experiences in familiar, comfortable settings.
- Display children's artwork, photographs of family and friends to encourage and motivate them for greater participation and develop self confidence
- Children learn from games, play and guided imitation. Children understand simple adult speech, and can learn the give and take of conversation. Choose topics of conversations and play materials that interests the age group, those materials which have scope for manipulation and creation.
- Ensure that activities in all developmental areas are integrated in a daily schedule – physical and gross and fine motor co-ordination, language development, socio emotional experiences etc.
- Provide guidance to very young children to attain reasonable eating and sleeping habits, cooperation with family or group needs, and socially acceptable ways of dealing with frustration and conflict.
- Have books and learning materials in the mother tongue/ home language of children, even if they are developed locally. This is important to raise the status of the languages spoken by children and their families and encourages bi- and multilingualism.
- Be aware of their children's signals and needs, interpret them accurately, and respond to them promptly, appropriately and consistently.
- Involve parents to bring relevant local and family culture to the care environment, which helps young children transition from home to the care setting.
- Children under age 3 are intuitive, sensitive to the attitude and responses of adults who care for them. To make children comfortable and feel secure it is important to have consistent caregivers with whom they have an emotional bond.
- A child-centred and responsive approach requires that each child gets the time he or she needs without pressuring the child to respond verbally. However, non-verbal communication should be interpreted by the caregiver and expressed in words.



7.2 Suggestive Developmentally Appropriate Activities during Birth – Three Years

Approximate Age	Birth to 3 months
What Children Do	What Children Need/ What Care Givers Provide for
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about the world through all their senses • Track people and objects with eyes • Respond to faces and bright colours • Reach, discover hands and feet • Lift head and turn toward sound • Cry, but are often soothed when held • Begin to smile • Begin to develop a sense of self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection from physical danger • Adequate nutrition (through exclusive breastfeeding is best) • Adequate health care (immunization, oral rehydration therapy as required, hygiene) • An adult with whom to form an attachment • An adult who can understand and respond to their signals • Things to look at, touch, hear, smell, taste • To be held, sung to and rocked • Opportunities for infant massage as it promotes health benefits, and encourages bonding
Approximate Age	4 to 6 months
What Children Do	What Children Need/ What Care Givers Provide for
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smile often • Prefer parents and older siblings • Repeat actions with interesting results • Listen intently and respond when spoken to • Laugh, gurgle, imitate sounds • Explore hands and feet • Put objects in mouth • Sit when propped, roll over, scoot, bounce • Grasp objects without using thumb 	<p>All of the above, plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to explore the world, play with a variety of objects • Appropriate language stimulation • Focus on Health, nutrition and early psycho social stimulation through free play and a lot of adult child interaction. Egs.(infant games, traditional songs & syllables, access to variety of play materials, individualized adult attention and interaction, opportunities to explore, early introduction to stories, infant books, drawings etc.) in safe, spacious and clean environment • Play and interact with children frequently to stimulate their cognitive, language, social, and motor development. • Exposure to music and rocking. • Calling child by name to develop self-identity.
Approximate Age	7 to 12 months
What Children Do	What Children Need/ What Care Givers Provide for
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember simple events • Identify themselves, body parts, familiar voices • Understand own name, other common words • Say first meaningful words • Explore, bang, shake objects • Find hidden objects, put objects in containers 	<p>All of the above, plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to the child's nutritional requirements by providing appropriate quantity and quality of food. • Introduction of supplementary foods • A safe environment to explore • Conducting variety of activities with children and giving space to explore according to one's innate interests. • Developing self-confidence through providing enough opportunities to explore, touch, taste, smell and respond to the environment. • Cleaning children and washing their hands at regular intervals to promote good hygiene and inculcate healthy practices. • Regular and constant positive interaction with children to

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit alone • Creep, pull themselves up to stand, walk • May seem shy or upset with strangers 	<p>promote development of language, imagination, manipulation, concepts with activities like clapping, peek-a-boo, push and pull toys, rolling hands, reading picture books, singing lullabies and rhymes etc...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to hear stories, be read to • Establishing bonding and warm relationship with children and building trust by giving lots of love, care and affection and praising child's achievements
Approximate Age	1 to 2 years
What Children Do	What Children Need/ What Care Givers Provide for
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imitate adult actions • Speak and understand words and ideas • Enjoy stories and experimenting with objects • Walk steadily, climb stairs, run • Assert independence, but prefer familiar people • Recognize ownership of objects • Develop friendships • Solve problems • Show pride in accomplishments • Like to help with tasks • Begin pretend play 	<p><i>In addition to the above:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health care must also include deworming if required • Support in acquiring new motor, language, thinking skills • A chance to develop some independence • Help in learning how to control their own behaviour • Opportunities to begin to learn to care for themselves • Opportunities for play and exploration • Play with other children • Read to/tell stories daily • Provide opportunities to establish contact and engage with other children and adults to promote a sense of self and social development
Approximate Age	2 to 3 years
What Children Do	What Children Need/ What Care Givers Provide for
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy learning new skills • Learn language rapidly • Are always on the go • Gain control of hands and fingers • Are easily frustrated • Act more independent, but are still dependent • Act out familiar scenes 	<p><i>In addition to the above:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to children to dress themselves, use toilets, wash hands, brush teeth, comb hair etc. • Providing children with objects that encourage sorting, matching, imagining, pushing, pulling etc. • Naming body parts and other common objects in and around child's environment. • Provide opportunity to make choices and engage in different tasks • Giving opportunities to learn, think and understand from concrete to abstract. • Opportunities to listen and articulate short stories and rhymes , indulge in imaginative play and simple problem solving activities • Identifying and giving special attention to 'at risk' children. Developmental screening of all children is essential to provide critical intervention that allows opportunities for children's development • Early identification of impairments/disabilities and initiating medical intervention and parent counselling and parent training to provide necessary stimulation is necessary for supporting children with disabilities and developmental delay

Source: Adapted from Kaul, 2009, NAEYC, 1985, 1995 and Donhue- Colletta (1992)

7.3 Three – Six Years: Focus on Care, Early Learning and School Readiness

The pluralist and culturally diverse society of India, made of numerous regional and local cultures, necessitates a flexible and contextual approach to ECCE. It also demands sensitivity on the part of the educator to link the ECCE programme to the child's culture and take the existing experiential knowledge of the child as the base for the ECCE programme. A developmentally appropriate programme for this age group considers the following aspects with its components while planning the curriculum.

Context

- Early childhood initiatives that are strongly rooted in the children's homes and communities are more likely to be effective. Ensure that it reflects responsiveness to family/ home values, social and cultural background, their immediate environment, the learning and experience already with them.
- Provides a flexible class arrangement to allow for change from large group to small group activities or from quiet to more energetic activities.
- Display in which every child can find something of her/his own which she/he can identify with and thus feel proud of.
- Periodic change of display which arouses curiosity of the children and stimulates them to talk and discuss with each other.
- Learning/ Activity corners are established places in the ECCE centres with resources that keep changing according to the themes/topics in focus and provides opportunity to explore according to the skills that need to be developed and practiced
- Provides flexibility in being responsive to children's strengths, needs and interests or should allow for changes based on immediate learning situation.
- Ensure parent and community involvement in planning and implementation of ECCE programmes

Content

- Curriculum goal and objectives guide the learning process and observation of the children.
- Both long term and short term planning is designed for effective implementation of the programmes.
- Choose topics/themes related to the child's self, relationship with people and understanding of the world around.
- Children learn in many different ways and thus ECCE teacher needs to plan a variety of experiences or activities for the children.
- Learning opportunities should be interconnected, linking learning experiences across developmental domains in a meaningful context, reflecting the real life context of the children
- The activities should be age and developmentally appropriate and contextually relevant for the children attending the programme.
- Children learn in a spiral and not in a linear way make it necessary for teachers to provide opportunities to children through materials and activities, to revisit concepts introduced earlier again and again, for a deeper understanding. The experiences should progress from simple to complex, concrete to pictorial to abstract.
- Adaptations and accommodations are necessary for supporting young children with disabilities e.g. activities and play materials may be modified to meet individual needs.



Process

- The duration of the ECCE programme should be 4 hours. The program should provide for some rest period during the day and if it is of longer duration, as a full day programme, then a nap time is to be ensured.
- The attention span of young children is 15-20 minutes; therefore the duration of activities should be around 20 minutes, with additional time allotted for winding up and initiation of the next activity. However, the programme should allow space and flexibility for need based variations.
- Routine fosters a sense of security in children. Therefore some routine should be followed in the daily programme.
- There should be a balance between structured and unstructured; active and quiet; outdoor and indoor; self-directed and adult initiated learning opportunities and individual, small group and large group activities which are related to the child's environment , are enjoyable and challenging for children.
- Depending on the nature of learning task, grouping may be done on the basis of interests and styles of learning of children, ability levels of children and age of children.
- When the child is comfortable and proficient with the mother tongue/ home language first, it supports developing proficiency in the second language later. Children, who develop proficiency in using their home language to communicate, get information, solve problems and think, can easily learn to use a second language in similar ways. Therefore, children should be encouraged to be proficient in their mother tongue/ home language first and then the formal school language (which could be the regional language or English) should be introduced. Continuous, consistent, and rich exposure to both languages is important for full bilingual development.
- ECCE teachers/caregivers must actively seek parental support by showing them how they can work with their children at home to reinforce the learning experiences that take place in centres.
- Family members must be included and encouraged to be involved in programme activities and governance. Family members must be involved in their child's learning experiences at the early childhood care and education centre.
- ECCE centre-community joint ventures have a positive impact that helps in supporting the school staff, students, and families in the development and implementation of healthy school initiatives. Its helps in accessing resources and services that is available.

7.4 Suggested Developmentally Appropriate Activities for 3-6 years

Approximate Age	3 to 5 years
What Children Do	What Children Need/ What Care Givers Provide for
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy learning new skills • Learn language rapidly • Are always on the go • Gain control of hands and fingers • Are easily frustrated • Act more independent, but are still dependent • Act out familiar scenes • Have a longer attention span • Act silly, boisterous • Talk a lot, ask many questions • Want real adult things • Keep art projects • Test physical skills and courage with caution • Reveal feeling in dramatic play • Like to play with friends, do not like to lose • Share and take turns sometimes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to develop fine motor skills • Hands-on exploration for learning through action • Providing children with objects that encourage sorting, matching, imagining, pushing, pulling etc. • Opportunities to children to dress themselves, use toilets, wash hands, brush teeth, comb hair etc. • Naming body parts and other common objects in and around child's environment • Giving opportunities to learn, think and understand from concrete to abstract. • Encouragement of language through listening to music, talking, reading, singing • Opportunities to listen to stories, learn rhymes, indulge in imaginative play, ask questions, do simple problem solving, experiment to promote active and interactive learning and generally have a 'feel good' experience for a positive self image • Emergent literacy activities like phonological awareness, exposure to environmental print; sight vocabulary; experiential writing by creating pretend and real letters and by organizing scribbles and marks on paper • Experimentation with pre-writing and pre-reading skills • Opportunities for self-expression (drawing, painting, work with clay or mud), encouraging creativity • Encourage Rhythmic movement • Opportunities to learn cooperation, helping, sharing • Opportunities for taking responsibility and making choices • Encouragement to develop self-control, cooperation, persistence in completing projects • Support for their sense of self-worth and pride in accomplishments • Activities which will develop a positive sense of mastery • Identifying and giving special attention to 'at risk' children. Developmental screening of all children is essential to provide critical intervention that allows opportunities for children's development • Early identification of impairments/disabilities and initiating medical intervention and parent counselling and parent training to provide necessary stimulation is necessary for supporting children with disabilities and developmental delay • Continuous opportunities, more free but some guided, for adult – child, child to child interaction and interaction with play materials and environment through a variety of individual, small group and large group activities.

Approximate Age	5 to 6 years
What Children Do	What Children Need/ What Care Givers Provide for
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a longer attention span • Talk a lot, ask many questions • Want real adult things • Naturally curious, and have an incredible capacity and desire to learn. • Explore and experiment through their senses as they discover the world around them • Keep art projects • Test physical skills and courage with caution • Reveal feeling in dramatic play • Like to play with friends, do not like to lose • Become independent and gain more self control 	<p><i>In addition to the above:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing ratio of adult guided vs. free play activities, and more of large group activities and focused more on specific school readiness, with increasing complexity in all of above. • <u>Reading Readiness</u>: e.g. picture –sound matching, shapes, phonetics; increasing vocabulary; verbal expression, developing bond with an interest in reading through picture books, storytelling, charts etc • <u>Writing Readiness</u>: e.g. eye hand coordination, interest in writing, left to right directionality • <u>Math</u>: Develop skills in sorting and classification according to one or two attributes, seriation, pattern identification/ pattern making , reasoning, problem solving, forming concepts: pre-number, number concepts, observing and describing shape and space concepts using appropriate vocabulary, counting objects, counting groups and comparing groups using the terms more, fewer or same; understanding of computation • <u>Physical and Motor development</u> : Build body awareness, strength and coordination through locomotor activities like running, walking etc.; stability activities like jumping, beam balance walking etc.; manipulative skills like catching, throwing, kicking etc.; and movement and physical fitness activities • <u>Creativity and aesthetic appreciation</u>: Use imagination and creativity to design and perform music and dance. • <u>Social Emotional</u>- Positive self identity, confidence and independence, manage own feelings and needs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's whose growth is faltering, at any age • Child does not respond to stimulation and attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregivers who know when to seek help and how to provide a caring and loving environment. • Extra time from caregivers, playing and talking, and massaging the child's body. • Encouragement to play and interact with other children.

Source: Adapted from Kaul, 2009, NAEYC, 1985, 1995 and Donhue- Colletta (1992)

SECTION 3: PROGRAM PLANNING AND PRACTICES



8. Early Learning Environment

In planning for an effective Early Childhood Care and Education Programme it is important to make sure the environment includes and caters to the many learning styles of young children. Children between the ages of two to six acquire knowledge in ways that are considerably different from the way older children learn. Children during the early years learn best through direct sensory encounters with the world. They acquire knowledge by manipulating, exploring, and experimenting with real objects. We can say that they almost exclusively learn by doing and hands-on experiences. The indoor and outdoor play areas form the physical environment for facilitating learning for the children. These must provide opportunities for children to explore discover and learn in safe environment.

- ***The indoor environment*** should be planned keeping in mind the interests and developmental needs of young children. A large indoor space can be divided into learning/activity corners with an appropriate arrangement of shelves and furniture. It is of utmost importance to keep in mind that the quality of the physical classroom space, along with the materials provided, affects the levels of child involvement and the quality of interactions between adults and children.

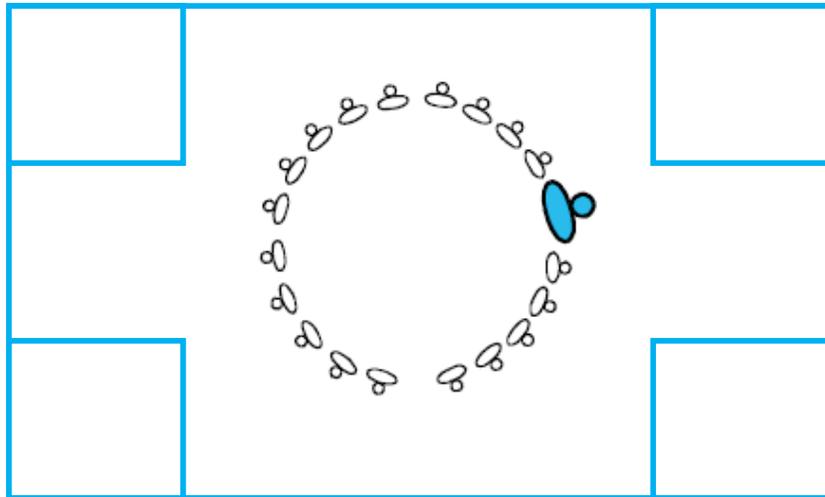
Further details on organizing the preschool classroom are provided in the following section.

- ***The outdoor environment*** plays an equally important role in the development of children as it provides a space for play, exploration and social interactions. It is mandatory that all children have the opportunity to engage in daily outdoor physical activity. A specific time must be set aside every day for break time and for outdoor play/activities. This time can be used for free choice of play on the climbing and playground equipment, for more structured activities involving physical movement and balance, and for practical activities such as working in the gardening patch, digging and planting, etc. The sand and water play area can be in troughs with wheels to enable both indoor and outdoor play. It is important that the learning materials are modified for children with special needs.

8.1 Setting up an early years classroom

The ECCE classroom arrangement must be flexible, which can be adjusted to lesson plans and activities, such as large groups for singing, storytelling and smaller groups for activities like drawing, blocks and for individual play. It should also have learning/activity 'corners', such as creative corner, book corner, game corner, so that the children can play according to their interests and choose their activity. An example of optimal utilization of classroom space which allows flexibility is given below:

- **Classroom arrangement during large group activities** (e.g. circle time): During the morning circle time, leave enough space between the children. This way the children who come late will be able to join the circle easily and participate in the activities with minimal disruption.



- **Circle time:** During this time, the children sit in a circle, along with the ECCE teacher. Circle time may be used for engaging the children in a discussion, reading a book or singing songs/ rhymes etc. Sitting in a circle allows all children to face each other clearly. The teacher sits on the same type of chair/ mat as the children, which conveys that the ECCE teacher is a facilitator rather than a director.
- **Classroom arrangement during small group activities:** The classroom should allow for the ECCE teacher to engage children of a particular age group in small group activities. During this time, other children can play independently in one of the four corners (free play). The children should be encouraged to choose a corner of their own interest as this will motivate them to be engaged in the learning process. Meanwhile, in the small group, the ECCE teacher can focus on facilitating activities or discussions that are somewhat challenging and need guidance from an adult. In this way, the space in the ECCE centre can be used efficiently by dividing the children into

one large group and four small groups. It should be ensured that the ECCE teacher can observe all children in each of the corners from where she might be working with a group of children



- **Free play:** It is important to give children some opportunities to engage in free play. When children have the opportunity to choose what to play with, they follow their interests and usually remain engaged in activities for long periods of time (15-20 minutes) and require minimal teacher supervision. Such opportunities help children to make simple choices, a skill that is needed for problem solving. In addition, as they remain focused in such activities for a longer duration, it helps to increase their attention span.

8.2 Learning/Activity Corners

A physical space is divided into interest areas in an ECCE setting where children can explore, make things, experiment and pursue their own interests. Separate interest areas or learning corners are established places in the classroom with resources that actively engage children and may change according to the theme/ topics. Young children learn a great deal by interacting with objects in their surroundings. They are naturally curious; they love to explore and experiment with objects and learn from such experiences.

The important learning corners that need to be set up in a preschool classroom are: dramatic play corner, reading/ story books corner, puzzles and block corner and drawing/ painting corner. The other corners such as the creative art corner, writing corner, science corner and music corner could be included and set up on a rotation basis in the classroom.

- **Reading and story books corner:** Young children need to have the opportunity to touch, feel, and smell the books. When exposed to books, they begin to identify the front and the back of the book and learn how to turn pages. After reading a story in the class it is helpful if the ECCE teacher leaves a copy of the book in the book corner. Thus children have the opportunity to revisit the book and take an active interest as they begin to understand what this book is about. After some exposure children begin to bond with different books, sometimes they have a “favourite book” based on their favourite story or the pictures in the book. It is essential for children to interact with books as they acquire a number of pre-literacy skills through such experiences. A variety of children’s books, children’s magazines and books made by children in the classroom should be in this corner. These can include large board books, picture books, local folk tales, simple story books, theme related books, comics, newspapers etc.
- **Dramatic play corner:** Children often enjoy pretending to be a teacher, a parent, a policeman or a doctor. While this may seem to be just a child’s fantasy, it is an important mechanism for children to learn. By acting out what they see in their environment, they strengthen their memory. Also, this is a way for children to solve problems and engage in perspective taking. The materials here can include: various kinds of dolls, doll-sized furniture and clothes, doll-sized cooking utensils (pots, dishes, spoons etc), pretend food (vegetables or fruits made of clay), dress- up clothes (e.g. scarf, cap, *stole*, jacket, small sari, long pieces of cloth etc.), combs and a mirror.
- **Puzzles and block corner:** By playing with blocks, children begin to learn about shapes, sizes, and colours. They may compare the blocks, arrange them in some shapes (e.g. railway track), or create elaborate three dimensional structures. Blocks motivate children to think in creative ways as they build different kinds of structures. Moreover, sometimes children build a structure cooperatively, which requires them to communicate with each other and work as a team. This corner should have blocks of different colours, shapes and sizes. Puzzles, matching cards, lacing strings or lacing cards, threading strings and beads should also be included. Include small toys such as cars, trucks, animals, people figures and other toys that relate to children’s current interests and objects from the environment.
- **Creative art corner:** Through drawing, painting and working with clay children begin to understand that real life objects and events can be represented in many ways. This fosters symbolic thinking, which is an important pre-writing skill. In addition, these activities provide opportunities to exercise fine motor muscles of the fingers and the

hands, which prepare them to write. The materials in this corner can include: different types of paper, crayons, pencils, washable markers, slates, different coloured chalks, pieces of fabric, paints, brushes, tape, play dough or clay, rolling pins and boards, old newspaper and magazines for collage and ice-cream sticks.

- **Writing corner** can provide children with opportunities to develop their early literacy skills. Children should be allowed to experiment and activities in this corner should not be directed. This corner should have materials that encourage children to explore writing such as different varieties of paper in different sizes, note books, note pads, thick pencils, stamps and stamp pads, punchers, string, envelopes, etc.
- **Science corner** *need not be a permanent corner in the classroom* as children learn scientific concepts and skills in other areas of the room as well. We know that young children learn best through play and investigation. This corner may be equipped with materials that focus on only one topic at a time for example ramps and wheels, magnifying glass, shells, plants, seeds, magnets and iron filings, weighing scales and weights, measuring tapes, or any other locally available materials.
- **Music corner** should provide the children with a comfortable space to relax in. It may be equipped with a tape recorder and a variety of music including rhymes on CDs / tapes, if possible. This corner may have materials such as ribbons or scarves for the children to use to promote creative movement. This corner must also encourage children to experience and explore the sounds of different instruments, such as bells, singing bowls, flutes, tambourines, string instruments and other local musical instruments.

Points to keep in mind:

- All the materials should not be displayed at once, as this will be too overwhelming for the children. Consider changing the materials in each corner after every two weeks. Children need time to practice but if the materials are never changed they will get bored and will lose interest in the corner.
- Keep active, noisier centres (blocks and constructions) at a distance from quiet ones (reading, games and toys).
- All corners should be labelled using words and illustrations alongside and stating how many children can work there at a time by drawing stick puppets such that children can 'read' it.
- All containers in each corner should be labelled and similar labels should be put on the storage shelves showing children where the materials need to be stored. Once

children finish working with a specific material, s/he over time and with support, can participate in cleaning up and caring for the materials.

8.3 Displays on the walls

It is essential to display children's artwork and projects on the wall. This helps children to remember the activities in which they participated and fosters their self-esteem, as they feel their work is valued. Parents also feel proud of their children and take a more active interest in their education when they see their children's work displayed in the centre. All displays should be at children's eye level.

Other pictures displayed on the walls must relate directly to the current curriculum in the classroom, such as the theme of the month. It is best to label pictures as this helps young children understand that written words can be used to represent objects, which in turn helps them to understand the purpose of reading and writing. Pictures can also include those of the children in the class or the community in which they live.

8.4 Furniture and mats

If there is furniture in the classroom, it must be child-sized, so children are comfortable sitting and working on them. It should have rounded edges and height of furniture should be such that children can sit comfortably and use their hands freely. Furniture is not essential for preschool classrooms. Colourful mats can be used to mark the sitting area. It is important to consider the texture when selecting mats. Children must feel comfortable as they sit on the mat and focus on their tasks.

8.5 Shelves

Shelves should be low in height and hold manipulative toys, puzzles and other learning materials for children to explore. Children must have easy access to these resources. Storage shelves and/or low room dividers can be used to separate learning corners to clearly mark boundaries.

Establish 'traffic patterns' of movement for entering the room, putting belongings in a specific space, access to bathrooms and sink areas and moving from one area to another.

8.6 Grouping

An effective ECCE programme should use appropriate grouping practices. It is well known from research that a multi grade as well as mixed-age grouping is on the whole more appropriate for young children. In classroom environments, teachers have the

flexibility to use grouping that ranges from individual work, to small and large group work, as well as whole class engagements to facilitate learning.

- **Individual / multi age groups and ability:** If the children in the class are more or less of a similar age, consider grouping them according to their developmental needs and abilities. Offer a range of activities for each group that caters to individual children and their educational needs.

If a class has children with different ages, consider dividing them into groups according to their ages. Let each group of children work together. The curriculum should be planned to meet the developmental levels of each age group. Consider each child. Observe, collect and record significant data that provides you with information that highlights their strengths and needs. The next step is to plan and set goals for individual children.

- **Individual, small and large group interactions:** While planning the day and activities, make sure to balance quiet individual time with large and small group interactions. Individual time might include the choice of free play in quiet centres such as the reading, writing or the puzzle centre. Group time is often energetic and noisy. Songs, rhymes, finger plays, dramatics, science, math and physical activities can be used during group time. Group times should fit into the whole curriculum and support themes and projects. Plan opportunities for group interactions both in the indoors and outdoors settings. Balance it with active and quiet activities. A large group quiet time might include a story read aloud session. Small group interactions might include children working together in the creative centre on a collage or in construction work in the block centre.

The ECCE learning environment should be planned creatively and imaginatively. While planning specific activities, remember to include the development of the whole child. A well thought out and planned activity can involve several aspects of development.

9. Essential Learning and Play Material

In early childhood stage, a child learns through interacting with immediate environment hence environment should be stimulating which have a variety of materials to arouse and sustain the child's curiosity, interest and promote his learning. Any preschool care and education centre should have adequate and varied supply of play equipment and materials which is developmentally and age appropriate.

- Developmentally appropriate play materials to foster all round development should be available at the ECCE centre
- The materials should be safe, clean and in good conditions. Sufficient quantity should be available to work in small groups and it should be easily accessible to the child.
- The materials should promote gross and fine motor development and help the child to discover and explore including constructing and reconstructing. It should promote sensory exploration and social interaction along with creative expressions through arts, painting, etc.
- The materials and teaching strategies should be differentiated on the basis of children's needs and context. Materials which can be adapted for meeting diverse abilities and multi-purpose usage should be given preference. Strategies such as simplifying directions, use of concrete materials/examples, sequencing learning tasks from easy to hard, repeated opportunities to practice skills and adapting materials by increasing stability (by utilising Velcro), accessibility (e.g. developing a hand splint to hold materials,), visual clarity or distinctiveness (adding contrast or specialized lighting) etc can be adopted
- The materials should be differentiated on the basis of child use, teacher use and home use. Materials which can be adapted for multi-purpose usage should be given preference.
- Teachers should be encouraged to develop learning materials using resources available. Parents, local toy makers, craftsperson and other community members may be involved to create play materials for children.
- Naturally occurring materials may be adapted and used for different purposes.

Some essential learning and play materials are

9.1 Indoor Material

- Blocks for constructive play
- Manipulative toys
- Material for imaginative play /Dramatic play material – dolls, puppet, masks, kitchen sets, mirrors, old spectacle frames, purses, old shoes, weighting scales, clock etc
- Material to develop Language skills – Books and picture books, storing telling aid-puppet, etc, story cards, sound board, conversation cards, flash cards, picture

dominoes, collection of rhymes and stories, visual discrimination and auditory and visual association, slates, chalks, crayons, blackboard, drawing paper, etc

- o Material to develop cognitive skills – sound boxes, visual discrimination cards, touch cards, feel bag, food items of varying kind to develop sensory skills and materials in the environment, cards, picture jigsaw and self correcting puzzles for matching, sorting, arranging, classifying, problem solving, memory and sequential thinking to develop cognitive skills
- o Musical and art material for creative expression such as paints, crayons, sketches, pencil, paint brushes, cotton, threads, clay, knife, papers, scissors, cloth, gum and fevicol, bead, etc. Any open ended material that can be used by children in a variety of ways
- o Nature as learning material.
- o Indigenous play materials and teacher made learning materials using available resources



9.2 Outdoor Materials

Play equipment like climbers, swings, sports field, sports equipment, bicycles, jump ropes, balls, movable items (boxes, plastic crates), storage shed to build balancing, jumping, climbing, swinging, swaying, cycling, etc

Materials like large or small balls, old tyres, rings, etc for throwing, catching, kicking, rolling, etc

Sand and water play arrangement with sand pit, mugs, spoons, cups, bucket, sieves, strainer, etc.



10. Planning

Effective planning is an essential prerequisite for an ECCE programme. The following elements of planning are imperative for effective transaction in the ECCE centres.

- **Long term planning** is concerned with children's entitlement to broad and balanced curriculum addressing the long term goals of all domains of development. It should cover the length of time that children spend in an ECCE setting. In the ECCE centre it could mean from 6 months to 6 years. Considerations need to be given to whether the planned programme covers all the essential elements of the given curriculum and how other aspects of importance to the setting are to be included. In the education of children under 6 years, all areas of development are likely to be included in their daily experiences. However, it may be that certain aspects within those areas of learning are emphasized in different ways from one term or space of time to the next.

- **Medium term planning** addresses continuity and progression from one stage in each area of learning to the next, and from one setting or class to the next, drawing on the long term goals, curriculum policies and principles and identifying skills, knowledge, and dispositions to which children will be introduced over a specific period of time. It is in this stage that the curriculum may be seen as most effectively organized by linking the different areas of learning through themes or topics.

The most effective medium term plan draws upon the progression of concepts, skills, knowledge and attitudes in each area of development. For example, once the children have begun to differentiate between the number of surfaces and corners of a triangle or rectangle what concept or understanding should be planned for next?

In developing choosing a topic/theme or an individual unit of inquiry, organized around a central idea, the following are proposed as useful criteria.

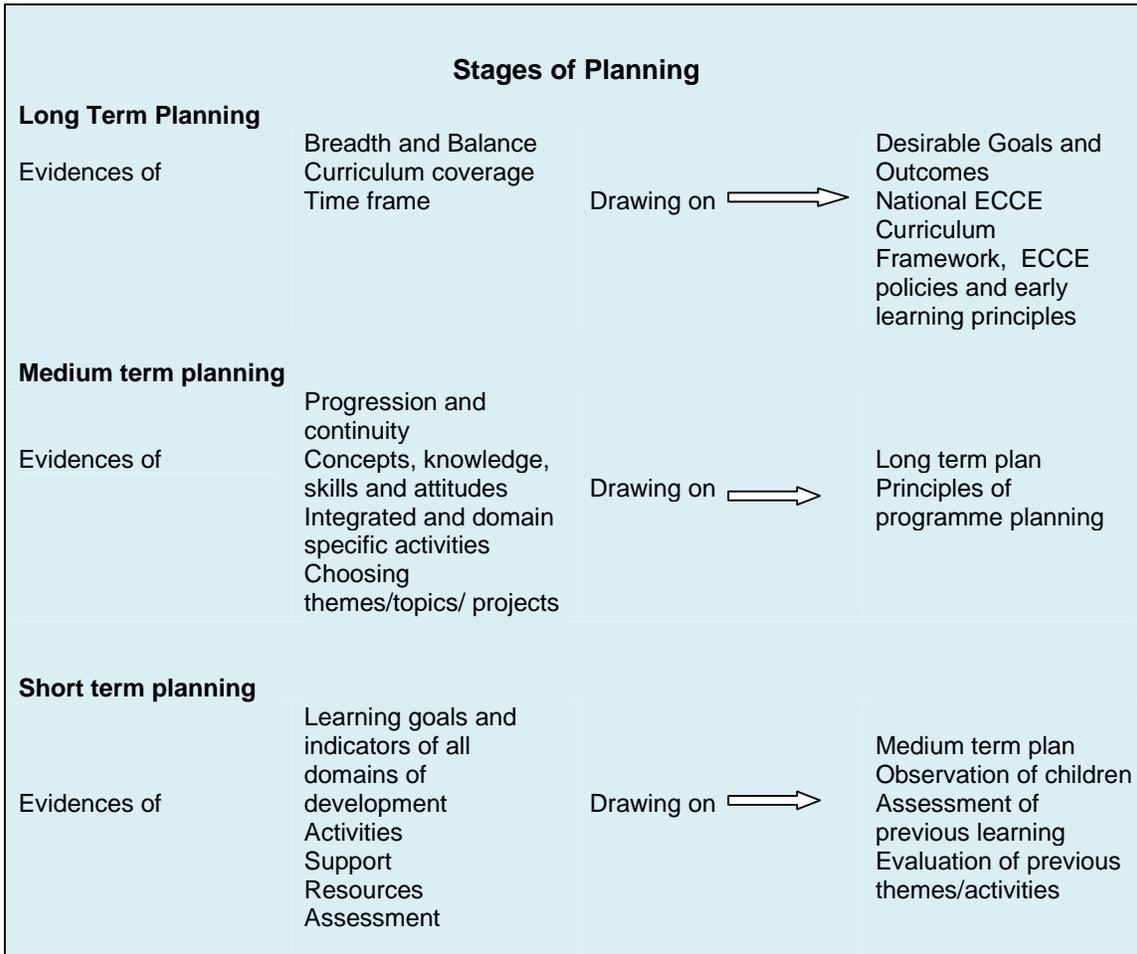
Each unit/ theme or topic may consider the following elements:

- **Engaging:** Of interest to the children, and involving them actively in their own learning.
- **Relevant:** Linked to the children's prior knowledge and experience, and current circumstances, and therefore placing learning in a context connected to the lives of the children.
- **Challenging:** Extending the prior knowledge and experience of the children to increase their competencies and understanding.
- **Significant:** Contributing to an understanding of the transdisciplinary nature of the theme or topic, and therefore to an understanding of commonality of human experiences.

Source: Making PYP Happen, IBO, 2007

- **Short term planning** is concerned with weekly/daily activities laid out with differentiation and planning for needs of the specific groups and individual children. It provides all the details of activities, experiences, resources, groupings, and teaching strategies which are identified through ongoing observations and assessment of young children. WHAT is to be taught is already in place at the long and medium term planning stage and now is the time to make decisions about HOW these concepts, skills and attitudes are to be introduced to the children in the ways that are relevant and meaningful.

The whole planning process may be summarized as follows:



Source: Adapted from Julie Fisher, 1998

Keeping the above in mind, it is suggested for a preschool programme to have the following:

1. Yearly plan
2. Weekly schedule
3. Daily routine

1. Yearly plan

One of the ways of preparing the plan for the year is to identify the theme/topic for each month or so, along with the activities on different development domains to be undertaken.

Some of the suggested themes/ topics are:

- **Identity and relationships:** Myself, my family and community
- **Maintaining well-being:** Food, body, health, hygiene and cleanliness, safety
- **Nature:** plants, animals, birds, fruits and vegetables
- **Physical environment:** air, water, earth, universe and seasons
- **Social environment:** My country, festivals and celebrations, neighbourhood, transport.

Under each of the theme, organize the goals and indicators of development and learning to ensure that all the domains are addressed in an integrated manner. It will also help to ensure that the activities and experiences are balanced, developmentally appropriate and enough opportunity is available for revisiting of concepts, skills and dispositions. Activities should to be planned for different age groups of children with increasing order of difficulty.

2. Weekly schedule

Weekly schedules should be designed by the ECCE teacher so that they are activity-based, theme-based and age-appropriate. While drawing up a weekly schedule, it should be ensured that the theme-related activities for all developmental domains are covered over a course of a week.

Two sample weekly schedules are given below as a reference for planning. These are provided as guidelines and are not to be followed rigidly. They should be adapted to suit the specific requirements and the context of different programmes. Both the examples provide a 4 hour schedule (which includes a half-an-hour break for snacks/ meals).

Example 1

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
9.00 -9: 30 AM	Welcome					Revision of concepts of transacted during the week; strengthening children's abilities focussed upon during the week
	Checking Personal Hygiene					
	Attendance and Prayer					
	Warm up physical activities like yoga, music and movement using dholak etc					
09:30- 10:00 AM	Theme/ topic related language and communication activities - discussion, stories, rhymes, story books					
10.00- 10:30 AM	Indoor play - free /organised					
10:30-11.00 AM	Snacks					
11.00- 11:30 AM	Activities related to Cognitive Concepts and abilities (may/may not be related to Theme/topic)					
11:30-12:00 AM	Language and Early Literacy Activities - self-expression, phonemic awareness, handling story books, picture reading, letter sound correspondence					
12.00 AM - 12.30 noon	Activities for creative expression (may/may not be related to Theme/ topic)					
12:30 - 1.00 pm	Outdoor play - free /organised					

Example 2

	30 minutes	80 minutes		30 minutes	40 minutes		30 minutes
Day/ Time	Morning circle time (welcome/greeting, prayer, conversation)	Free play and guided play with materials		Outdoor play	Story/rhymes Goodbye/ Circle time	The feeding time duration is 30 minutes. After the feeding young children will go home and the elder children will stay back.	School Readiness activities
		3-4 years (40min+40min)	4-6 years (40min+40 min)				
1	Conversation theme: animals and birds that stay in the land and in water	What is missing?	Free play	Exercise	The Anganwadi worker will narrate the story 'tup tap tup'.		Every day, the children of the age group of 5- 6 years will stay back for the school readiness activities
		Free play	What is missing? -				
2	Conversation theme Taking care of animals and birds: building empathy	Join the dots with crayons ... use animal pictures)	Free play	Jump and walk two steps	The Anganwadi worker will read out the story 'tup tap tup'.		
		Free play	Join the dots with crayons.				
3	Conversation theme How do the animals and birds help us?	Sorting- large and small grains	Free play	Throw the ball in the basket	Singing different animal rhymes		
		Free play	Sorting- large and small grains				
4	Conversation theme Life cycle of a duck, or a chicken	Pouring activity	Free play	Big bird and small bird	Bonding with books		
		Free play	Pouring activity				
5	Life cycle of a butterfly : Story with stick puppets	Join the dots with crayon.... Picture of a butterfly	Free play	Jump and walk two steps	role play		
		Free play	Join the dots with crayon.				
6	Conversation theme Life cycle of a butterfly Story – with chalk drawing on the board	Sorting- large and small grains	Free play	throw the ball in the basket game	shared writing and illustration		
		Free play	Sorting- large and small grains				

The thematic approach to teaching and learning mentioned in these examples is described in detail in Annexure 1.

3. Daily Routine

The daily routine is an order of events that shape a child's day so that they can anticipate what will happen next. In general terms, it should consist of 'activity blocks'. The daily schedule must meet individual needs, and therefore variations in scheduling will occur.

Daily routines should be planned in a manner such that it:

- Includes a balance of active and quiet activities.
- Provides for individual, small and whole group instruction and interactions.
- Allows for active exploration of materials within the learning environment.
- Encourages flexibility to meet children's varying needs.
- Incorporates both indoor and outdoor activities.
- Has a balance of both child-initiated and teacher-directed opportunities.
- Has a balance of structure and flexibility.

The routine should be displayed in a location accessible to parents. It should also be posted at children's eye level and in a format that meets their developmental needs, such as a picture schedule indicating the activities for the day.

Sample Daily Routine

1. Morning circle time (30 min): welcome/ greeting, prayer, conversation
2. Work with materials (80 min): free play and guided play (40 min each)
3. Outdoor games (30 min)
4. Goodbye circle time (40 min): Story/ rhymes based on identified themes
5. School readiness activities (30 min): for children aged 5-6 years

In this sample, at least an hour each day is spent on the allotted theme.

11. Assessing Children's Development and Learning

Assessment is an essential and integral component of any ECCE programme to ensure that the programme remains child centric and the experiences and activities are planned according to the level of the child. Assessment is the gathering and analysis of information about student progress. It identifies what children know, understand, can do and feel at different stages in the learning process. It gives an insight into children's interests, achievements and possible difficulties in their learning from which next steps of care, stimulation and learning can be planned. Thereby it provides a platform to support the planning of a sound curriculum for progression in learning. In order to ensure that the

programme is responsive to the developmental needs of the child, it is essential to maintain their developmental and learning profile.

11.1 Why Assess Children's Work

The purpose of assessment is to give useful information about children's learning and development to the adults providing the programme as also to children and their families. It also helps ensure early identification of developmental delays, special educational needs and particular abilities. Assessment contributes to evaluation, revision, and development of programmes.

Principles of Assessment and Reporting

- The assessment of the children is **formative, continuous** and flow from the experiences planned in the curriculum. Formative continuous assessment implies observing and documenting the development of the child, by interpreting the evidence from the day to day experiences of the child with the purpose of recognising and encouraging strengths and addresses learning/developmental gaps.
- Assessment is an **ongoing process** involving the collecting, combining and interpreting of information about the learners, the classroom and interaction. In the early years ECCE teachers need to evaluate each child's progress on an ongoing basis, through observations of their behaviour; their artwork and other products, anecdotal records, checklists and portfolios, interactions of children.
- The younger the child, the more difficult it is to obtain valid assessments. Early development is rapid, intermittent and highly influenced by experience. Performance on an assessment is affected by children's emotional states and the conditions of the assessment.
- At this stage, assessment must be purely qualitative judgments of children's activities in various domains and an assessment of the status of their health and physical development based on observations through every day interactions. On **no account should children be made to take any form of test**, either oral or written form.
- **Home-based observations** may also be conducted and parents should also be encouraged to be a part of the assessment of young children. The current level of performance should be rewarded to reinforce small steps of accomplishments towards the long term goals.
- Assessment has value that goes well **beyond measuring a child's progress**, and should be used to evaluate programmes, identify staff development needs and plan future interactions.
- Teachers must **document each child's learning in a variety of ways**. This will make

them accountable towards improving the programme which in turn will help them in supporting and assisting children in achieving the learning objectives stated for the programme. The documentation will provide administrators and the teaching staff with valid information on how to improve the programme, incorporate changes that are necessary, plan, organise on what to do next, what questions to ask and resources to provide for.

- Each **child's folder should be available for parents and children** to view in the centre and should remain with the centre until such time as a child transitions to another learning centre or into the kindergarten programme or in school. It is then that this portfolio must be handed over to the respective family member who would then require depositing it with the administrators of the centre or school to which the child is transitioning to.
- All parents should receive a **written or verbal progress summary report** of their child at least twice a year.

11.2 What to Assess

The early year's curriculum would provide the opportunity for learners to construct meaning; acquire skills and dispositions principally through play and activity based approach. It further ensures that the whole child is addressed and the activities focus on an integrated learning in all domains of development. Therefore, feedback should be given on child progress and performance in each of these areas.

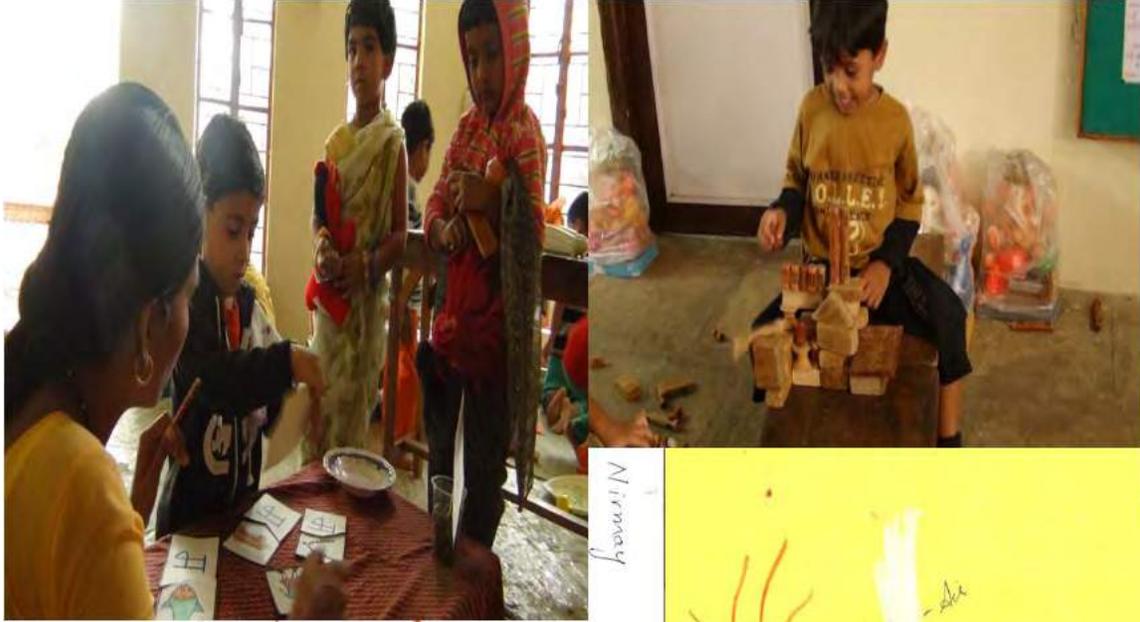
Therefore, assessment of children's learning involves the observation of children by the ECCE teachers/ Caregivers for the purpose of improving the programme in order to help children achieve the appropriate developmental tasks.

11.3 When and How to Assess

Continuous assessment should be an integral part of the ECCE programme. The use of assessment to judge the effectiveness of both care and learning processes is essential to allow ECCE teachers/ caregivers and children to identify their strengths and weaknesses and the effectiveness of the programme. The purpose and means of assessment should be clearly shared with parents and families too. Observation and documentation of children's learning is interwoven with the daily learning and helps ECCE teachers/caregivers find out what the children already know in order to plan the next stage of learning.

Different methods and tools (for. e.g. mother and child protection card, WHO growth chart) may be used for observation and documentation of children's development and learning. It is

essential that they are selected carefully in order to provide a range of approaches and therefore to provide a balanced view of the child.



Assessment Tools and Strategies

Ongoing Observation, Questioning and Listening to Children

All children are observed often and regularly, with the ECCE teacher/caregiver focusing on the whole class to focusing on one child or activity, and from non-participant observing from without to participant observing where listening and interacting with the child is required.

Systematic Procedures

Anecdotal records are brief written notes based on observations of children. These records need to be systematically compiled and organized.

Create anecdotal records and make interpretations of how and where children spend time, their social relationships, their use of language, modes of interaction. Information about health and nutrition habits may be recorded too.

Systematic Sampling of Children's Activities

Choose selected samples of children's art work, scribbling and writing conveying their ideas, photographs of their work, video/audio recordings, dictated stories, records of group participation work etc.

Documentation Procedures

Developmental progress checklists

Portfolios

Summary

Developmental Progress Checklist

Comprises lists of information, data, attributes or elements, criteria that guides ECCE teachers and caregivers to observe children

Specific developmental screening checklists used for identification of developmental delay or impairments for preventive measures and referrals

Portfolio

Collections of children's work that are designed to demonstrate successes, growth, higher order thinking, creativity and reflection

Portfolio maintained for each child to be kept at the ECCE centre. Include

- Cover page with centre name and details.
- Child's personal details along with a photograph.
- Information sheet and feedback from parents discussing children's interests and strengths.
- Medical health form.
- Children's artwork, drawing and writing samples
- Photographs of models made by a child
- Photographs of children at play.
- Noting of interesting discussions held with the child.
- Ongoing developmental progress checklist form.
- Copies of summary progress reports given to parents.

Summary Report

Outline children's progress through narrative reports by ECCE teachers/caregivers

Developmental Progress Card with narratives to share with parents and later to be shared with Primary school

12. Role of Caregiver/ ECCE Teacher

The caregivers/ teachers in an ECCE programme are facilitators who engage children in multiple experiences to foster their all round development. They play the following roles:

- Observe children to identify their needs and capabilities and move with the pace of the child's development
- Plan developmentally appropriate, holistic and challenging activities
- Facilitate learning to meet the objectives of the curriculum
- Adapt activities to suit the learning abilities of children with disabilities. Like, a child with visual challenge could be given multi-sensorial experiences.
- Organise supportive learning environment by taking care of aspects such as the arrangement of the physical environment and equipment; the scheduling of activities and events and groupings
- Develop responsive relationship with children and understand that transactions within the classroom is a journey of mutual learning between the child and herself so that she can continue to learn and help the children in her care
- Respect the child and the social environment the child comes from.
- Focus not only on planning and conducting activities but also on continuous processes for interaction and relating learning to child's environment.
- Create nurturing and positive relationships with children and among children
- Interact verbally with children in a calm, respectful and friendly manner
- Ensure social inclusion of children with disability in the ECCE classroom.
- Help in early identification and intervention for children with special needs
- Work in partnership with parents
- Develop a plan for the transition of children from Preschool to Pre-primary or Primary programmes.

To accomplish the above the teachers need to enjoy being with young children, be knowledgeable about children's development and early childhood curriculum and should be skilled at implementing the curriculum. The other significant adults in the ECCE set up are also an integral part of the programme for the child and must contribute to the above mentioned roles.

13. Partnership with Parents and Family

In planning for an effective Early Childhood Care and Education Programme parental participation and involvement is equally important. The programme recommends that the early childhood staff should form a positive partnership with parents on an ongoing basis

through frequent and positive ECCE centre to home communication in the form of sharing progress reports, holding conferences, sending personal notes, updating parents of events and activities, etc. ECCE teachers/caregivers should actively seek parental support by showing them how they can work with their children at home to reinforce the learning experiences that take place in ECCE centre. If these practices are followed, it will certainly help parents to feel more self-confident and comfortable and encourage them to become actively involved in their child's care and learning.



Fig 4: Parents encouraged looking at child's portfolios and Parent Meeting at the ECCE centre

Parents have a distinct role as follows:

- Providing a nurturing, conducive and supportive environment for optimal development and learning
- Encouraging exploration and experimentation at home and optimally utilising the ample opportunities for incidental and lifelong learning, arising from the daily activities
- Establishing a relationship of trust and mutual respect with the teacher
- Sharing and planning their development along with the ECCE teachers/caregivers
- Participating in the open days and other events for parents and community
- Not to force formal learning and competition at this early age and respect children's abilities and personalities.

ECCE Teachers/Caregivers have distinct role as follows:

- Get to know families by making initial contacts to learn about each family. Learn about the various cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds of children and know how to communicate with diverse families
- Initiate the building of a close and positive relationship with families in the opening conference/meeting of the academic year and continue to provide a comfortable environment for follow-up periodic parent-teacher meetings.
- Have a defined plan that promotes parent-teacher partnerships.
- Be available to parents and families for help and support.
- Find ways to connect with families such that there is a constant connect between the two settings.
- Establish trust by reaching out to families through home visits, organising meetings in less formal and intimidating settings, and using written communication that all parents can understand. For example: send letters home to inform parents about what their child enjoyed doing during the week etc.
- Build an environment of inclusion by inviting parents to school to have them observe classroom sessions and give feedback.
- Parents and family members being welcomed into the centre on a regular basis either informally or during planned events.
- Help parents increase their understanding of child development and support them in their parenting skills. This can be done through ongoing workshops for parents and family members that help them understand the all-round development of young children, know about the importance of practicing a healthy lifestyle, understand what eating a balanced diet means and the nutritional value of different foods, health checkups and immunisation schedules, physical/emotional safety of children, handling behaviour issues etc.
- Communicate regularly with parents in a variety of ways to keep them informed about their child's progress and upcoming school activities.
- Children's work being sent home regularly so parents and family members can see what their child is doing in school.
- Raising any concerns about a child's development and discussing together how to best meet a child's special needs.
- If necessary, recommending community specialists to provide additional help for children.
- Invite parents and family members to class and share their traditions, folk lore, music, dance, food etc. with the children in class. Include thoughts and ideas shared by family

members while planning. Ask for parent volunteers who can support and help you plan activities.

14. Supportive Essentials

The flexible approach to curriculum adopted herein requires certain preconditions as essentials. These are:

- An enabling and stimulating care and learning environment which has been carefully designed and is child friendly
- Contextually and culturally appropriate curriculum content
- Developmentally appropriate learning and play material
- Activity; rhyme and story bank
- Children's Activity Book
- Trainer's Manual and Teacher's Guidebook addressing adult-child interaction, arrangement of the physical environment & equipment, preparing the classroom, maintaining and enriching it according to the needs of the group planning of the daily routine etc. to help teachers implement the curriculum effectively and use adaptation and accommodation to meet diverse needs
- Training of ECCE teachers and caregivers to foster the skills of/help them become reflective practitioners
- Supportive supervision, teacher appraisal and programme appraisal

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Glossary of Terms

Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum: The term “developmentally appropriate” comes from NAEYC’s most celebrated publication, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*. (Bredekamp & Copple 1997) It refers to an approach to learning that is centred on the child. To be developmentally appropriate, a curriculum must be appropriate in three ways.

- (a) The curriculum must be *age-appropriate*. This means that the learning goals and activities must be targeted to the way preschoolers typically develop.
- (b) The curriculum must be *individually appropriate*. This means that it must meet the particular needs and interests of each child in the classroom.
- (c) The curriculum must be *culturally appropriate*. This means it must be consistent with the values and beliefs of each child’s family background. Being developmentally appropriate means that the curriculum addresses the needs of both the individual child and the group.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Developmentally appropriate practice, often shortened to DAP, is an approach to teaching grounded in the research on how young children develop and learn and in what is known about effective early education. Its framework is designed to promote young children’s optimal learning and development.

DAP involves teachers meeting young children where they are (by stage of development), both as individuals and as part of a group; and helping each child meet challenging and achievable learning goals.

Curriculum: The totality of planned learning experience provided to learners to enable them to discover their talents, to develop their potentialities to the fullest, to enable them to construct knowledge, and to develop their physical and interpersonal skills, cognitive abilities and subject-matter expertise, attitudinal and emotional predispositions, character formation and work habits, and capabilities and social and human values to function as responsible citizens

Holistic: A holistic approach to early learning encompasses the physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and creative development of a child. A holistic approach focuses on the development of the whole child, rather than only concentrating on individual components.

Annexure 1

Thematic Approach to Teaching and Learning

The theme based approach of teaching is a powerful methodology and provides the teachers with opportunities to teach a range of skills and content by integrating curriculum areas around themes. This method of teaching includes the interests of the children and provides for opportunities to build on their interests. It helps them develop knowledge and skills in meaningful ways.

Themes can be developed and implemented on the following principles:

- Building activities keeping in mind children's interests
- Creating activities that will encourage exploration through the senses
- Giving children the opportunity to investigate and manipulate by providing hands-on experience with real objects
- Helping children develop new knowledge and skills, based on what they already know and can do
- Providing activities that deals with all aspects of development such as language, cognitive, social, emotional, creative and physical
- Providing children with multiple opportunities to experience movement and physical activity, social interactions, independence and positive self esteem
- Respecting individual differences in relation to cultural backgrounds and home experiences children bring with them to the classroom
- Planning for different ways and opportunities to involve family members of children

Suggested significant Themes/topics/concepts

- **Building and maintaining identity and relationships:** Myself, my family and community
- **Maintaining well being:** Food, Body, health, hygiene and cleanliness, Safety
- **Natural world and environment:** plants; animals and birds; fruits and vegetables
- **Physical environment:** air, water, earth, universe, seasons
- **Social environment:** My country; festivals and celebrations; neighbourhood; means of transport, Interdependence -Care for the Environment

Detailed weekly time table of Example 1						
Time slot	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9.00 a.m. - 9.30 a.m.	Welcome, prayer, personal hygiene, exercises Simple warm-up exercises, simple yoga such as follows, repeating each movement 5-10 times - <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. sit on the floor with both legs together in front and rotate feet , clockwise /anti clock wise; move legs alternatively up-down; move toes - stretch and curl them. 2. clapping, snapping fingers, stamping feet, walking in the circle with fast and slow / soft and loud beat of drum 3. In standing position with both arms in front rotate wrist in clockwise / anti clockwise directions; open palm, stretch fingers and curl them inwards slowly but with strength; arms hanging by sides and move shoulders up and down slowly 					
9.30 a.m. - 10.00 a.m.	Theme related language and communication activities - discussion, stories, rhymes, story books THEME: Myself, My Family, My Relatives and My Home					
	Talking about oneself The preschool teacher will talk something about herself and encourage each child to say something about herself/himself Ones' name; where do I stay; who are there in my family; what do I like and do not like	Identification and naming of the body parts by self-exploration Ask children to touch their faces and each feature of their face, name it, and talk about its functions. Similarly with arms, legs, stomach, back... This will be followed by a rhyme based on body parts	Talk about the cleanliness and care of the body parts. Ask questions like "if you do not wash your hair what will happen?" This will be followed by a story about a boy who did not take care of his body.	Conversation about one's parents Ask each child to talk about the mother - what is the name of their mother, what does mother do in the house; what do they do with the mother; Similarly conversation about the father	Conversation about one's brothers and sisters Ask each child to talk about their brother/ sister what is their name of, what do they do in the house; what do they do with their brother/ sister This will be followed by a rhyme based on family member.	Revision of concepts of transacted during the week; strengthening children's abilities focussed upon during the week
10.00 a.m. - 10.30 a.m.	Free Indoor Play Activities Children select and play with material such as jig-saw puzzle, stringing beads, blocks, stacking cups, shape boards, rings, role play					
10.30 a.m. - 11.00 a.m.	SNACKS					
11.00 a.m. - 11.30 a.m.	Activities related to cognitive concepts & abilities <i>(since the theme is my body, activities have be planned based on the use of the five senses and the cognitive ability which is focussed upon through the activities is the ability to match)</i>					
	Based on sense of sight Ask children to look around and name what all they can see. Ask children to identify two similar objects from a collection of 5	Based on sense of hearing Children will be taken outside and will be asked to close their eyes and hear the sounds in the environment and identify them.(ability to	Based on sense of touch Place 3 objects in pairs in a bag and ask each child to find out similar objects by	Based on sense of taste - Help children to recognize "sweet" and "salty" taste by tasting sugar	Based on sense of smell Take three objects with different smells and ask children to smell them and describe the smells. E.g. flower, onion.	Revision of concepts of transacted during the week; strengthening children's abilities focussed upon during the week

	different objects - e.g. 2 beads of same colour from a 6 beads of three different colours. (ability to match)	differentiate) Children will be asked to place their hands on their ears for one minute and then remove them. They will be asked how they felt in the two situations.	touching them (without seeing) (ability to match)	solution and & salt solution. Then place some sweet and some salty food items in front of children. Ask each child to taste any two food items and say whether they were similar in taste or different (ability to match)		
11.30 a.m. - 12 noon	Language and Early Literacy Activities - self expression, phonemic awareness, handling story books, picture reading, letter sound correspondence					
	<p>“Today’s news” Ask the children to say one thing which they did between the time period of going home yesterday and coming to school today. You can help them by asking questions such as - who woke you up today. what did you eat for breakfast? what did you see on the way when you were coming to the centre?</p> <p>Write the sentence stated by each child on the board or paper and stick the papers on bulletin board.</p>	<p>1. Show the children five real objects (or their pictures) which have names beginning with a particular sound. For example – objects beginning with sound ‘pa’ in Hindi. Ask children to name the objects and then name the first sound of the word.</p> <p>2. Picture reading - Select a picture which has a theme with some human or animal characters (or other pictures). Pictures should be big, clear bold and familiar to children. Ask the children to describe what they see in the</p>	<p>“Today’s news” Ask the children to say one thing which they did between the time period of going home yesterday and coming to school today. You can help them by asking questions such as - Did you brush your teeth today? Did you take bath? Who dressed you up? Who came to drop you today? Write the sentence stated by each child on the board or paper and stick the papers on bulletin board.</p>	<p>Show the children five real objects (or their pictures) which have names beginning with a particular sound. For example – objects beginning with sound ‘ka’ in Hindi. Ask children to name the objects and then name the first sound of the word.</p> <p>(Show and Tell)</p> <p>Ask the children to bring any one object from the home which they like. Or ask them to pick up an object from the AW. Ask the child to describe the object in 1-2 sentences</p>	<p>Give children simple picture books or story books to handle themselves. Move around and go to each child and help the child identify pictures, read words, construct the event based on pictures.</p>	<p>Revision of concepts of transacted during the week; strengthening children’s abilities focussed upon during the week</p>

		picture. Ask questions to help them describe. For example, the picture could be one showing a family eating dinner.				
12:00 noon - 12.30 p.m.	Activities for creative expression (these are related to Theme)					
	Ask children to make a free hand drawing of their own selves.	Ask children to make pairs. They have to touch one part of their body with the same body part on the other's body and dance / make movement. For example, touching their thumb with partner's thumb and dancing, Touching elbow, palm etc.....	Clay Modelling – Give a small ball of clay to each child Ask children to make their own face or the face of any other family member. Help the children to decorate the face using red paper for the mouth & nose Black colour buttons for eyes. You can use different coloured pulses as well.	Displaying emotions - Ask children to display different emotions using their body-anger, fear, happiness, joy, sorrow, excitement	Finger, thumb & Hand printing. Demonstrate how to make various birds & animals with finger, thumb and hand printing	As per teacher's discretion
12:30 - 1.00 pm	Outdoor play - free /organised					
	Outdoor organized play - children perform movements as directed by the teacher -- run, jump, hop,	Outdoor organized play - throwing and catching a ball in a circle	Outdoor free play - children will go on swings, slide, and sand pit.	Outdoor organized play - Animal walk - children walk like different animals	Outdoor free play - children will go on swings, slide, and sand pit.	As per teacher's discretion
1.00 p.m. - 1.30 p.m.	Lunch and departure					

Detailed Weekly timetable of Example 2							
	30 minutes	80 minutes		30 minutes	40 minutes	30 minutes	
Day/ Time	Morning circle time (welcome/ greeting, prayer, conversation)	Free play and guided play with materials		Outdoor play	Story/ rhymes Good Bye Circle time	School Readiness activities	
		3-4 years (40min+ 40min)	4-6 years (40min+ 40min)				
1	Conversation theme : animals and birds that stay in the land and in water	What is missing? (Collect few familiar objects from surroundings – feathers, twigs, leaves, pebbles, etc. Show objects to children and make sure they are able to name them. Then ask children to close their eyes and remove one object.)	Free play	Big bird and small bird (Let children stand in rows. Show them how to raise their hands and bring them up and down all the way, like the movement of birds' wings. For 'big' birds they will have big movements, for 'small' birds they will have small movements.)	The ECCE teacher will narrate a story.	The feeding time duration is 30 minutes. After the feeding young children will go home and the elder children will stay back.	Every day, the children of the age group of 5-6 years will stay back for the school readiness activities.
		Free play	What is missing? (described earlier)				
2	Conversation theme Taking care of animals and birds: building empathy	Join the dots with crayons. (Give children pictures for 'join the dots' – butterflies, animals or birds and ask them join the dots.)	Free play	Jump and walk two steps (Draw lines on the floor 3 year olds will walk on the line 4 year olds will jump on the line 5 year olds will walk 2 steps and then jump 2 steps on the line.)	The ECCE teacher will narrate a story.		
		Free play	Join the dots with crayons. (described earlier)				
3	Conversation theme How do the animals and birds help us?	Sorting- large and small grains (Keep two kinds of grains/pebbles mixed up in a bowl. Ask children to sort out the different kinds of grains/ pebbles and put them in different bowls.)	Free play	Throw the ball in the basket (Keep a basket/ bucket and draw a line as a marker. Children have to pick up the ball, walk to the marker line and throw the ball into the bucket.)	Singing different animal rhymes.		
		Free play	Sorting- large and small grains (described earlier)				
4	Conversation theme Life cycle of a duck, or a chicken	Pouring activity (This is done with two mugs, one of which is half-filled with sand/ dal/ water. Ask the children to pour the materials from one	Free play	Big bird and small bird (described earlier)	The ECCE teacher will narrate a story.		

		mug to another.)					
		Free play	Pouring activity (described earlier)				
5	Life cycle of a butterfly: Story with stick puppets	Join the dots with crayon. (described earlier)	Free play	Jump and walk two steps (described earlier)	Role play		
		Free play	Join the dots with crayon. (described earlier)				
6	Conversation theme Life cycle of a butterfly Story – with chalk drawing on the board	Sorting- large and small grains (described earlier)	Free play	Throw the ball in the basket (described earlier)	Shared writing and illustration		
		Free play	Sorting- large and small grains (described earlier)				

Note: The time allotted for each activity is 15-20 minutes; the time slots of 30 minutes allotted in the plan include setting up, distribution of material and winding up for each activity.

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