Document 16

OUTCOME 5: CHILDREN ARE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS

Communication is an essential component of learning to belong, be and become. From the time they are born children are interested in communicating with others. They use gestures, sounds and language in forming relationships. Understanding language is an important part of communication. Children are social beings who are intrinsically motivated to exchange ideas, thoughts, questions and feelings and to use a range of tools and media to represent and extend their learning.

Children have the right to become competent and continuing users of their home language or dialect as well as to develop competency in Standard Australian English. Maintaining children’s home languages is crucial both for their sense of identity and belonging and for their learning.

Literacy and numeracy capabilities are vital for successful learning. Experiences in early childhood settings build on the range of experiences with language, literacy and numeracy that children have within their families and communities.

A broad view of literacy incorporates a range of modes of communication including music, movement, dance, story telling, visual arts, media and drama, as well as talking, reading and, writing. Contemporary texts include computer-based communications and DVDs as well as books. Numeracy broadly includes understandings about numbers, patterns, measurement, space and data as well as mathematical thinking, reasoning and counting. Positive attitudes and competencies in literacy and numeracy are essential for children’s successful learning across the curriculum. Experiences in the early years provide the foundations for these competencies.

Technologies are part of everyday life for children. Children have the right to express themselves and explore their world using technologies and to develop confidence in the use of digital media. In an increasingly technological, globalised and consumer-oriented world, the ability to critically analyse texts is a key component of literacy.

Key concepts and processes in language, literacy and numeracy

Children communicate in many ways. These include using gestures, facial expressions, body language, spoken language, drawing, movement, music, writing, media, construction and dramatic play.

While there are some general patterns of development in children’s learning, there are also significant variations due to different developmental states and diverse social and cultural contexts. This is particularly the case in the area of communication. Different family and community practices influence children’s verbal and non-verbal language, patterns of interaction, preferred modes of communication, experiences with texts and literacy and numeracy strengths and interests.

Some children’s speech or understanding of language may be enhanced with the use of symbols, signs, technologies and other communication devices. Children with communication disorders or hearing impairments may communicate effectively with the use
of augmented communication strategies such as cued articulation or sign language, or through the use of high or low tech communication devices.

Literacy is more than reading and writing. It also includes the processes of speaking and listening, viewing and critical literacy. To be literate, children need to be able to understand and communicate using a shared language and symbol system.

Table 1 Key literacy processes

| Speaking and listening | • interacting with others  
|                        | • responding verbally and non-verbally  
|                        | • taking part in conversations  
|                        | • using language for a range of purposes: to learn, express feelings, name objects, share information and ideas, give directions and retell events or stories  
|                        | • understanding language used by others  
| Viewing or visual literacy | • interpreting everyday events, objects, and people  
|                        | • interpreting images, photographs, drawings, artworks, videos, diagrams and multimodal texts  
|                        | • responding to the ways in which aspects such as colour, line, shape, design and symbol systems are used to communicate ideas and create moods, and later being able to analyse them  
| Creating visual, gestural, spatial and multimodal texts | • creating meaning through drawing pictures, signs, symbols, maps and diagrams  
|                        | • creating still and moving images  
|                        | • using gestures, dance and body movement  
|                        | • composing music  
|                        | • creating three-dimensional constructions using a combination of the above, sometimes with the addition of letters and words, to
create meaning with multimodal texts

| Reading | • making meaning from images, print and multimodal texts. Understanding of language and text structure is crucial to making meaning from print  
• ‘pretend’ reading and re-telling stories using story language and drawing on knowledge of how stories work  
• using understandings of grammar (the way that language is structured) to make predictions about what type of word comes next when reading |
| Writing | • making marks  
• experimenting with letters and words on paper  
• using technologies  
• demonstrating increasing understanding of print and the symbol system of sound-letter relationships, letter formation, spelling, grammar and punctuation |
| Critical thinking/critical literacy | • understanding how texts such as books, films, songs, advertising catalogues and websites are constructed, and how this construction works to present particular points of view [For example, in the case of advertising, texts are constructed in a way that sells products. Stories might be constructed in order to create suspense. Artworks may be constructed to create an illusion]  
• thinking about and questioning who is included and who is not, and the ways in which particular groups of people are presented – for example, considering stereotyping and gender roles; looking at the meanings and purposes of texts, the views being expressed and how texts work |
Creating texts that are inclusive of diverse cultures and languages and that challenge traditional gender roles.

### Table 2  Key literacy concepts

| Text conventions | • understandings about how texts work and how they are used to exchange meaning. For example, a book is held and read in a particular way and a shopping list usually takes a particular form. |
| Concepts of print | • understandings of how print works, for example, that print has meaning and that in English print is made up of letters and words and is read from left to right and top to bottom.  
• understandings of punctuation and knowledge of upper and lower case letters |
| Phonological awareness | • broad understanding of the sounds of a language; begins with learning to discriminate different environmental and vocal sounds and to discriminate between types of sounds |
| Phonemic awareness | • the ability to recognise the smallest units of sounds in words, such as the three sounds in the word c-a-t.  
• awareness of words that rhyme (words that have the same sound at the end of the word) and alliteration (the same sounds at the beginning of words) |
| Letter-sound relationships | • understanding that alphabet letters and combinations of letters represent specific speech sounds |
Grammar structures of sentences

- understanding the ways that words are put together to make meaning, for example, understanding the word order for statements and questions. Readers use understandings of grammatical structures to help them to make predictions about the type of word (for example a noun or a verb) that comes next in the text.

Structure of texts

- understanding the ways that texts are put together, for example, understanding that stories will typically contain an introduction, an event or series of events and a conclusion.

### Table 3: Key numeracy processes

| Comparing                  | • observing and describing similarities and differences between objects
|                           | • sorting, matching, ordering and classifying objects according to attributes such as size and shape |
| Problem-solving           | • investigation, questioning, trial and error, divergent thinking, decision-making |
| Predicting and estimating | • thinking about objects and data and making informed deductions and inferences, for example estimating numbers and measurements and predicting which object will be the fastest. Estimating often involves recording ideas in order to compare them with the actual result. |
| Reasoning                 | • recognising relationships such as cause and effect
|                           | • hypothesizing |
• making generalizations
• explaining
• justifying thinking

Representing mathematical ideas
• communicating mathematical thinking and strategies to others through representations that use pictures, numerals, three-dimensional shapes, on-screen representations or spoken or written language

### Table 4: Key numeracy concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number understandings</th>
<th>Ability to;</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• count and order numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• recognise and write numerals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• compare quantities such as 'more than' and 'less than'</td>
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| Spatial understandings | • awareness of two- and three-dimensional shapes. Children find shapes in their environments and describe them in their own words and later learn names for these shapes |
|                       | • knowledge about position (for example, under, over), location (for example, near, far) and orientation (for example, turn, roll) |

| Patterns | • recognition of repeating designs in the environment |
|          | • ability to create, copy and extend repeating designs using colours, sounds, shapes, objects, stamps, pictures and actions |

| Measurement understandings | • concepts such as height, length and mass |

| Chance and data | • facts, figures and records, such as the measurements taken of the bean plant as it grows, or children’s height over time and estimations of the |
5a: Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes

Babies often use non-verbal language such as gestures, touch, cooing and babbling to take part in interactions and to express their needs and preferences. This is the beginning of speaking and listening.

As young children develop understandings about spoken language they begin to use single words, word combinations and then sentences to name objects, people and experiences and to express ideas and feelings. Older children use language for an extended range of purposes. With experience and adult modeling and feedback, children’s vocabulary becomes more extensive and specific and their utterances become more complex.

It is important to remember that many children will be developing their communication competencies firstly in their home language, which may be a language other than English, and later in English. In some communities children will speak their own traditional Aboriginal language, as well as a local dialect, and perhaps a Creole language which contains many English words. They will also need to learn Standard Australian English to ensure their future learning and success.

Not all children develop speech or understand language in the same way. Some children will need extra support to develop their capacity to communicate, while others will benefit from the use of signs, symbols and communication devices to enhance their communication and help make the message clearer.

The active role of the educator in acknowledging and extending children’s verbal and non-verbal interactions

To support children’s verbal and non-verbal communication educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- be attentive to attempts to communicate both non-verbally and verbally and respond in ways that model and extend language
- initiate interactions and engage them in conversations
- make use of routine times to sing songs, recite rhymes and interact
- talk with them about what is happening around them and look at and talk about photographs and art works depicting familiar objects and people
- plan experiences with children of different ages so that older children can model using language for younger children.

For all children:

- include songs, rhymes, games, books and posters in community languages and English
• share picture books, told stories, rhymes and songs with children in small groups and individually and engage children in conversations about what is happening and how it relates to their own experiences

• share songs, poems, rhymes and story books with children that include numeracy and scientific concepts and talk with children about these concepts to encourage their vocabulary development

• plan small group experiences with open-ended resources such as sand that enable children of different ages and with different language proficiencies to interact with each other using non-verbal communication as well as conversations about shared interests

• join in children’s play and engage children in conversations about what they are doing

• engage children in extended conversations throughout the day. Use open questions such as ‘Can you tell me about what you are doing….?’; ‘Why do you think that happened?’ and ‘What do you think might happen if…..?’ to encourage children to use descriptive, reasoning and predicting language.

• listen to sounds, music and stories and play listening games with children. Talk about the sounds, clap the beat, repeat repetitive refrains and encourage children to retell stories.

• ask questions, use drama and make comments that encourage children to project into the feelings of others, for example ‘I wonder how Josie felt when she found the puppy?’; and that encourage children to speculate about what might happen.

• provide models of complex sentences and texts, for example, but telling stories about personal experience

5b: Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts

Communication involves sharing and making meaning with a range of texts. These include:

• oral texts: conversations, stories, poems, songs, rhymes

• printed texts: notes, books, magazines

• visual texts: photographs, drawings, paintings

• musical texts: songs, performances

• gestural texts: body and facial gestures, dance, movement

• spatial texts: constructions, sculptures

• multimodal texts (that is, texts that integrate different modes, such as images, words and sound): television, DVDs, computer games, internet sites.

Children have many varied experiences with texts. Some children will be familiar with books. Others will have experiences with told stories or songs and rhymes in languages other than English and/or English. Some children will use Braille and be familiar with communication
boards as aids to communication. Many children will engage with texts on television, DVDs and computers and will be interested in texts of popular media culture. Many of the texts that children interact with are visual and multimodal.

Experiences from infancy with a range of texts encourage children to play with the sounds of language and to take an interest in print and how print works. Babies and toddlers are often interested in picture books, told stories, music, television programs and DVDs.

Because texts are so much part of their world, toddlers and older children frequently notice signs, symbols, images and words in their environment, such as the McDonalds sign. Toddlers will often be interested in reading and may ‘read’ by looking at the pictures and making up the story or using the words they remember if they have heard the story before.

Older children will often have favourite characters and stories that they act out, retell, read along with an adult or read themselves. They use a range of strategies, including using the pictures, their memory, recognition of familiar words and their understandings of text conventions and print to make meaning. As children begin to understand that print has meaning they are able to read familiar words such as their name and begin to understand key literacy concepts such as text conventions and concepts of print and letter-sound relationships.

Children will often engage in reading-like behaviours in their play, for example reading signs and shopping catalogues in a dramatic play area or reading a book to a teddy bear or doll. They will often demonstrate what they know about texts and print in these play episodes, for example holding the book with the title page at the front and running their finger under the print as they read.

The active role of the educator in facilitating children’s engagement with a range of texts and their capacity to get meaning from these texts

Children engage with a range of texts in their play and everyday lives. They may tell stories, talk on the phone, write a message using scribble writing or invented spelling, look at the print and images on food packaging and measure and weigh objects, for example. These experiences provide many opportunities for intentional teaching. Educators also have a responsibility to initiate literacy and numeracy experiences with children and ensure that all children’s capacity to get meaning from texts is supported.

To support children’s engagement with a range of texts and their capacity to get meaning from texts educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- display a range of texts such as photographs and posters at children’s eye level
- make books with photographs of the children and local places and talk with children about these
- point out and talk about signs, symbols and images in the environment
- share picture books, rhymes and songs in community languages and English and play games using rhyming words to encourage children’s awareness of the sounds and patterns of language
• talk with children about what is happening in books and photographs and help them to make connections to their own experiences

For all children:

• provide a range of texts in the environment including books, posters, signs, DVDs and CD-ROMS in relevant community languages as well as English. Include texts created by children as well as commercially produced texts.

• enrich play environments with a range of literacy and numeracy resources and join in children’s play to model processes such as reading and counting

• read and re-read familiar, favourite books, particularly books with lots of repetition and rhyme. Encourage children to join in the reading – for example by pausing and encouraging children to say a rhyming word.

• talk about how texts and print works to help children develop understandings of text conventions and concepts of print. Point out the author and illustrator when reading books, for example.

• play games, such as clapping the syllables in children’s names and use musical instruments to mark the beats or syllables in words to encourage the development of phonological awareness

• make up rhyming games, such as rhyming words with children’s names, and games that involve alliteration, for example ‘tidy Thomas’. Talk about concepts such as rhyme and alliteration when sharing books.

• talk about characters, the structural elements of narratives (the ways that stories begin, and the ways that plots develop, for example), features of factual texts such as a table of contents, and interesting or new vocabulary when sharing books and other texts

• discuss how the illustrations in a picture book create particular moods or feelings in the reader or viewer when sharing books with children. Encourage children to create their own images to reflect different moods.

• ask questions such as who is included and who is left out and how boys and girls are portrayed when sharing books and watching DVDs

• read or tell different versions of familiar stories such as the Three Little Pigs and talk about the story from the perspective of different characters, such as the wolf. Encourage children to create new characters or different endings for familiar stories.

• look at advertising texts and talk about how images, design principles, colour and line are used to attract attention and sell products. Encourage children to think carefully about advertising that appeals to them and why it is appealing.
5c: Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media

Children express ideas and make meaning in a range of different ways. They draw on the narratives and symbols of their family and community cultures and their own preferred forms of expression to share their ideas with others.

Arts experiences allow children to explore ideas, solve problems and make imaginative interpretations. Through exploration and imaginative expression, children can generate new meanings about their world. Children gain immense pleasure from controlling the marks that they make as well as making sounds and movement. As they develop control over their mark making children can communicate more effectively and intentionally with others.

Art forms like music, visual arts, dance, media and drama open up a world of possibilities for communication. These symbol systems allow us to say things to each other that cannot be said any other way. Arts experiences also provide valuable opportunities for all children to engage in positive social interactions, regardless of their ability to communicate with spoken language or in English.

Children can demonstrate their detailed and complex understandings by using their voices and bodies. Think about a box that has been turned into a plane and launched into the air. This may be accompanied by an improvised song with extraordinarily detailed sound effects that show great knowledge of changes that occur when the plane takes off, cruises, avoids other things in the air and lands, and all of this occurs while using a great range of space to demonstrate the physicality of flying. Later, the ‘pilot’ provides a visual trace of the flight activity by using a range of implements to draw the flight path and show the changing perspective of the flight as viewed from the ground. These rich data are all communicated to others via the creative arts.

Babies use gestures, facial expressions, body language and movement to make meaning. As they develop greater control of large and small muscles, children begin to have additional ways to express ideas and feelings, such as dance, drama and music as well as drawing, painting and sculpture. They engage in symbolic play and draw on their family and community experience and shared stories to take on different roles in their play.

Babies and toddlers may experiment with different ways of using materials such as crayons, paintbrushes and pencils to make marks. As children begin to understand more about images and print they manipulate materials such as computers, clay, pencils and lined paper, oil pastels and water colours to make meaning.

The active role of the educator in facilitating children’s capacity to express ideas and make meaning with a range of media

To support children to express ideas and make meaning with a range of media educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- find out about the ways that children express ideas and make meaning at home. Invite families to contribute resources from home or borrow resources that reflect children’s home experiences, language/s and resources.
• provide children with easy access to materials such as crayons, paintbrushes and pencils that they can use to experiment with making marks
• respond to children’s use of their bodies to express their ideas and feelings.

For all children:
• present children with resources such as puppets, lengths of fabric and dress-up clothes that they can use to take on different roles, create their own scripts and act out familiar stories and experiences
• provide a range of resources such as paints, clay, musical instruments, camera and digital recorders to encourage children to create meaning
• share examples of the works of a range of artists such as painters, sculptors, musicians and dancers from different cultures and talk with children about aspects such as colour, line, beat and rhythm
• demonstrate skills and techniques with resources such as clay, water colours and musical instruments
• respond to children’s creations, talking about the meaning they wish to convey and various ways of communicating similar meanings
• add writing materials to children’s play areas, such as dramatic play and construction and join in the play to model writing
• involve children in the documentation of their learning by encouraging them to create learning stories with their drawings or photographs and to add their own narratives or captions (which may be dictated or written) to photographs.

5d: Children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work
Symbols, signs, images and words are part of children’s everyday worlds. Children are often interested in exploring patterns and symbols in their environment and through this they begin to understand that these have meaning. They may be interested in counting objects and may begin to use mathematical language to describe objects in their environment. They also experiment with making marks and writing symbols, letters, numerals and words.

Babies are learning about number when they hear counting rhymes and songs and later begin to be interested in repeating numbers that they know and to say numbers in order, although at this stage they will often miss numbers. Older children will often be able to identify numerals and use number-word sequences to count forwards and backwards. They will also begin to develop one-to-one correspondence and will be able to count objects.

Children learn about space, patterns, measurement, chance and data as they explore their environment. Babies understand space as they crawl and roll and climb into and over objects. They notice patterns in their environment and begin to learn about properties such as size and weight as they manipulate objects and later notice similarities and differences in their environment, which leads to the ability to sort and classify.

Older children refine their understandings of space, patterns, measurements, chance and data as they engage in experiences such as drawing, block building and sand and water play.
They explore patterns with colours, shapes, textures and sounds and can often explain the patterns they have created. They become aware of size as they compare height, weight and strength and begin to understand concepts such as half. They identify objects as ‘the same’ or ‘different’, and then with more refined understandings are able to use terms such as ‘more than’ and ‘less than’ on the basis of attributes that they can measure. Older children also often use chance and data as they predict, compare and record which toy car goes fastest down the hill or which child is the tallest.

Children notice the images and print in their environment and are curious as to how these are used to exchange meaning. Babies and toddlers may make marks on paper (and other surfaces) with paint and crayons and appreciate stories. As children get older they begin to notice symbols, signs and words and want to know what they mean and want to create these themselves.

Toddlers’ writing will often look like a series of marks or scribbles. As children begin to understand more about writing they begin to make approximations of symbols, letters, numerals and words they see around them (for many children these will be in languages other than English) and will use what they know to make strings of letters and patterns. They will often engage in self-initiated repeated writing of letters they know, such as the letters in their name.

Older children will draw on their knowledge of the concepts of print in their reading and writing. They may do scribble writing and sometimes copy print they see in their environment. As they develop understandings of letters and sounds they may write the first letter of a word or the initial and final sound. This results in what is sometimes called phonemic spelling or ‘invented spelling’.

**The active role of the educator in facilitating children’s learning about symbols and pattern systems**

To support children to understand symbols and pattern systems educators can:

*For babies and toddlers in particular:*

- share counting rhymes and songs and encourage children to join in
- provide pencils, paint and crayons that encourage children to experiment with making marks
- provide spaces and materials that encourage children to explore their body in space.

*For all children:*

- provide everyday objects that children can manipulate and begin to sort and categorise in different ways. Talk about the similarities and differences between objects and the categories they have used to make their collections.
• include resources for pattern-making such as blocks and wooden beads and talk with children about the patterns they are making and how the pattern works

• talk about patterns and symbols that you see in the environment, in photographs, artworks, and music. Introduce children to specific language to talk about patterns and encourage them to create their own.

• go on walks in the local community and point out symbols and patterns. Take photographs and make drawings of symbols and patterns and talk about these when you return. Older children can also draw diagrams that recreate the path that they took and add in some of the symbols and patterns that they saw. These diagrams can also be used to talk about direction, location and orientation.

• collect and record data such as the changes in children’s height over time or the growth of a plant

• provide open-ended resources such as blocks to facilitate children’s understandings of measurement, space and number. Join in children’s play and model positional language such as ‘next to’ and measurement language such as ‘bigger than’ and ‘heavier’.

• include magnetic letters and numerals, alphabet and number books and puzzles and matching games with pictures and words, letters and/or numerals

• display posters, signs, labels and alphabet and counting charts in languages other than English as well as English. Talk with children about this print, read it together and talk about letters, words and numerals.

• share a range of texts with children and talk with them about print and how print works. Talk about words, letters and numerals and punctuation marks such as exclamation marks and question marks.

• create texts with children, such as a sign for a block construction or a caption to accompany a drawing

• provide resources that enable children to create their own paper or digital books using drawings, photographs, writing, claymation, children’s voices and/or music created by children.

5e: Children use information and communication technologies to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking

Technologies are part of everyday life for most children in Australia. They see adults and older children using technologies to access information and to communicate with others. Children also use technologies such as mobile phones, music players, televisions, DVD players, cameras and computers at home and in their communities.

For children with additional needs technologies can be an extension of their everyday life or something that provides them with new opportunities. For example, children may use speech output devices or children with sensory impairments may use FM receivers and
hearing aids to help them participate in family, community and early childhood environments.

Children often take on roles of technology users in their play. A baby or toddler might use a block as a mobile phone or use an old keyboard or computer in an office dramatic play setting. They will often be curious about technologies and want to explore equipment such as cameras and computers.

Older children will often be competent users of technologies such as computers, cameras and overhead projectors. They will be able use technologies to investigate and explore ideas as they search for information and will be able to get meaning from a range of visual, print-based and multimodal texts. They will also be able to use technologies to record ideas and data and to create meaning with visual, written and multimodal texts.

Babies will often be happy with toy phones and cameras and old keyboards, as their focus is on exploration. It is important that early childhood settings also provide older children with access to real, working, up-to-date technologies. Still and moving cameras enable children to record and reflect on their own learning and share this with others. Computers are important tools for children to use as they investigate areas of interest and explore their world. Computers also enable children to express their thinking through visual and multimodal texts.

Computers support interactions and collaboration between children and with adults as they share what they are doing or finding, ask questions or provide help for others. Children share ideas and strategies as they play computer games, search for information on the internet, upload photographs or music files and create their own texts.

It is important that educators evaluate the appropriateness of computer software and internet sites. Educators can apply the same selection criteria for appropriate written texts, such as picture story books, when they select appropriate software or other digital media such as internet sites.

The active role of the educator in facilitating children's use of information and communication technologies to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking

It is important that educators are confident in their own use of technologies as well as providing opportunities for children to develop their skills with information and communication technologies.

To support children to use information and communication technologies educators can:

For babies and toddlers in particular:

- provide access to toy cameras and old phones and computer key boards for them to manipulate and explore
• talk with children about what you are doing when you take photographs and encourage them to be involved in viewing images and manipulating equipment with adult support
• use technologies such as computers and music players to share images, music, songs and stories with children.

For all children:
• integrate computers into children’s learning centres and projects so that children can use them to find information, record data, upload photographs they have taken and represent their ideas with drawing, photographs, spoken language, music and writing.
• provide children with still and video cameras to record their own learning as well as using technologies yourself to document learning. Share these images with children and families to facilitate reflections on learning.
• demonstrate specific skills and techniques with technologies, such as how to upload photographs, insert photographs into a document and edit, crop and compose
• engage in collaborative research with children where you use both computers and books to investigate a topic and compare and contrast information from different sources
• plan opportunities for pairs and small groups of children and children and adults to use technologies collaboratively
• use music players to record children’s language, songs and music and share these with children and families
• extend children’s technology skills and creativity by teaching the use of technologies such as claymation
• evaluate computer software and internet sites before including these in the program.

Assessment for learning
Educators, families and children can use a range of assessment methods to identify and communicate children’s learning in the following areas:
• preferred modes of communicating
• interactions with others – verbal and non-verbal
• oral language – for example, conversations, retellings of events and stories, purposes of language (for example, describing, reasoning)
• expressing meaning with visual arts, dance and music – for example, skills and techniques with painting, drawing, three-dimensional constructions, dance, dramatic play
• appreciation of arts and aesthetics – for example, familiarity with artists and artworks, and use of these as references for their own developing artistry
pattern making and children’s descriptions of their patterns
• sorting and classifying of objects
• estimating and predicting
• processes of thinking through a problem and finding and justifying a solution
• interest in symbols and use of symbols to express meaning
• interest in print – for example, interest in books, environmental print
• beginning reading – for example, retelling a story, ‘pretend’ reading
• beginning writing – for example, making marks, scribble writing, writing letters, numerals and words
• understandings of literacy concepts – for example, text conventions, concepts of print, phonemic awareness, letter-sound relationships
• understandings of numeracy concepts – for example, number, shapes, position, measurement
• understandings of arts elements and concepts – e.g. line, shape, colour, texture, design, balance, pattern, contrast.

Talk about
1. Think about a recent play episode in your centre’s sandpit.
   What learning was occurring?
   How were children using language?
   How could you extend children’s thinking about mathematical concepts in the examples?
   How could the children record their ideas and creations?

2. You are sharing the book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle with children. How would you use this book to talk about mathematical ideas with the children? What language skills could you encourage? What symbols and patterns can you find in the book?

Going deeper
The following questions may assist you to critically reflect on the ways in which you acknowledge and extend children’s communication and to plan for ongoing improvements. The questions are grouped under different headings reflecting different themes, but in reality, they are interconnected.

Communication

• What assumptions do we make about the communication skills of:
babies
children with additional needs
children with languages and interaction styles different to our own?
children’s understanding of language?

• How do these assumptions influence the choices we make about how to support each child’s capacity to communicate verbally and non-verbally? What changes do we need to make?
• How often do we engage in sustained conversations with each child? What can we do to engage in meaningful sustained conversations with children more frequently?

Diversity

• What songs, rhymes, books and stories do we share with children? Whose language/s, culture and life experiences do they reflect?
• How do we incorporate the diversity of children’s family and community experiences with literacy and numeracy in ways that value diversity and are not tokenistic? How could we make our program more culturally responsive?
• How do we respond when family expectations for their child’s literacy and numeracy learning challenge our own beliefs and practices? How do we negotiate these differences?
• Are the ways that we document and share children’s verbal and non-verbal communication inclusive of all families and children? How can we make our documentation processes more inclusive?
• How can we make better use of technologies to collaborate with children and families to document children’s learning and to make documentation more accessible?

Technologies

• What is our position on the use of technologies with children? Why? What alternate perspectives are there?
• How do we provide opportunities for children to use technologies to create as well as to play games and research? What else could we do?
• How confident am I in using technologies such as computers, digital cameras, and music players with children?
• How can we encourage collaborative learning with technologies?

Literacy and numeracy

• How do we encourage children who choose not to engage in play experiences involving reading, writing, or numeracy to do so? What other strategies could we...
use? How can we scaffold children’s understandings of literacy and numeracy without taking over their play?

- What opportunities do children have to engage with a range of numeracy materials and texts – oral, print-based, visual, gestural, spatial and multimodal? How could we extend children’s opportunities to express meaning using a range of materials and media?
- What is our position on the use of texts of popular culture with children? Why? What alternate perspectives are there?

**Try out**

In relation to children being effective communicators (Outcome 5) consider your context in relation to the following.

1. What children’s books could you use to talk with children of different ages about spatial understandings associated with position (for example, under, over), location (for example, near, far) and orientation (for example, turn, roll)?

2. Imagine you are the educator. How would you join in children’s play and use it as a critical literacy experience in dramatic play?

**Hear about**

Mario, aged four, has recently begun attending the local preschool two days a week. The preschool staff have observed that he spends much of his time on his own and does not play with the other children. He engages in solitary activities such as painting, drawing and completing puzzles. He does not show any interest in books or writing.

The director spoke to Mario’s mother and asked about his experiences at home. The family migrated recently from Chile. Mario lives with his parents, an older brother and sister and his grandparents. The family has a shop and Mario’s parents spend very long hours working there or shopping at the markets. Mario is often at the shop as well, or he goes to the markets with his father. Mario speaks Spanish at home, particularly with his grandparents and parents. His older brother and sister speak some Spanish at home but prefer to use English in daily interactions. Mario enjoys watching television and his mother says that this is helping him with his English. One of his favourite programs is Dora the Explorer, which includes some Spanish as well as English. The family home includes newspapers and magazines in Spanish and some children’s magazines and colouring-in books and sticker books in English. Mario is particularly interested in magazines that include characters from his favourite television programs.

The director shared this information with staff and they planned strategies to strengthen the continuity between Mario’s home environment and that of the preschool and to support him in his interactions with peers. These strategies included asking Mario’s family to bring in magazines in Spanish, accessing Spanish music and books from a library, including children’s magazines and books about Dora the Explorer, and putting them in the book area, as well as setting up a shop dramatic play area.
What other strategies could staff use to build on Mario’s family and community experiences and extend his language and literacy in both Spanish and English?

Think about the children in your setting. How do you acknowledge and build on children’s family and community experiences and knowledge?

Resources


(For further references and resources, see Document 17 in ‘Linked resources - CSU 2009’ folder.)