



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

# NATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION CURRICULUM GUIDE



NURTURING THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLD CHILDREN  
TOWARDS THE IDEAL

**DRAFT**

April 2006



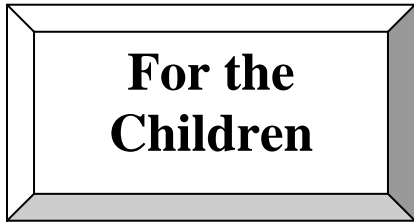
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Trinidad and Tobago  
April 2005**

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**Published by: The Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago**

**April 2005.**

## **I offer my prayers, my care, and my love for the children of the world**



I probably will never get a better glimpse of the future than when I look into the faces of children. The children who are playing at my feet or in my neighborhood today will grow up to be caretakers of the world. And I know within my own heart that, whatever these children choose as their life's work, they can never be less than beloved children of God.

And what better can I do for my family, my neighborhood, my world than to care for and about children? Whether I am a parent, grandparent, teacher, or a caregiver, I pray for children in faith and with unconditional love. I give the kind of love that allows children to unfold their God-given abilities as gently and beautifully as a rose unfolds its petals for all to behold. And amidst all the worries and the irritations of my job, help me to remember that the future of the nation and of the world is in my hand.

This I ask for love's sake.

Author: Unknown

# ACRONYMS AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following acronyms and glossary of terms are provided to assist in the interpretation of the document.

## ACRONYMS

CRC	-	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECCE	-	Early Childhood Care and Education
EC	-	Early Childhood
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

## GLOSSARY

<b>Centres of Excellence</b>	Early childhood centres that demonstrate high quality in terms of achieving quality standards. A centre of excellence is a structure where high quality standards are performed (including training and/or technological innovation)
<b>Dispositions</b>	habits of mind or tendencies to respond to situations in set ways. E.g. inquisitiveness or curiosity, persistence at a task in the face of difficulty
<b>Feelings</b>	Subjective, emotional or affective states such as feeling accepted, feeling confident or anxious
<b>Goal</b>	A desired end toward which effort is directed; an end that can be attained.
<b>Knowledge</b>	Facts, information, concepts, constructs, stories and myths
<b>Play</b>	Related to everything that children do: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor; the actions and activities through which children construct knowledge.
<b>Skills</b>	Discrete units of action easily observable or inferred from observable behaviour carried out within a relatively short time. Examples of skills include drawing, recognising the sounds of the initial letters of words, cutting with scissors.

## FIGURES TABLES BOX

### List of Figures

- Figure 1.1      Structure of the Document
- Figure 1.2      Aspects of ECCE Curriculum Function
- Figure 1.3      Developmentally Appropriate Concept Map created by Thurente (1997)
- Figure 1.4      The Integrated Nature of Learning
- Figure 1.5      The responsive and reciprocal relationships that influence the curriculum, context and children's learning.
- Figure 3.1      The Child
- Figure 3.2      Teacher Knowledge and Competencies

### List of Tables

- Table 1.1      Philosophical, psychological and pedagogical perspectives
- Table 1.2      The essential elements of active learning
- Table 3.1      Teacher Roles

### Box

- Box 1.1      Profile of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Caribbean Citizen



**GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO**  
**MINISTER OF EDUCATION**

***MINISTER'S MESSAGE***



The education system in Trinidad and Tobago is fast becoming a relevant and quality system capable of responding to the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as it sets a strong foundation for continuous improvement starting with the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) level. This is a time when in our quest for excellence, we are offering the best possibilities for our young children to acquire the knowledge, skills, disposition and feelings that are essential for becoming life long learners and responsible citizens of our democracy.

In this year, 2006, a year designated the year of Curriculum, the Ministry of Education resonates with joy, as we launch the first National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Guide. This Curriculum Guide encapsulates the vision of the

Government of Trinidad and Tobago that human development is fundamental to national success and Early Childhood Care and Education is the platform upon which that success is built.

This National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Guide was also designed in recognition of the importance of teachers, families and communities and the collaborative role that is required to nurture our young children towards the ideal and awaken their genius through the encounters they will experience on a daily basis in their homes and in our Early Childhood Care and Education centres.

As we introduce this National Early Childhood Care and Education Guide, let us work in partnership to transform the Early Childhood Care and Education sector through high quality programming. Our collaborative efforts will lay the foundation for lifelong learning and success as we move towards universal access to Early Childhood Care and Education within our National Education For All Plan to the year 2015.

**Hazel Manning**  
**Minister of Education**

# FOREWORD

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago identified the role of education in national development and the Ministry of Education accepted the challenge as a major mechanism for change. One of the key initiatives of its human development mandate was curriculum reform. The focus was to make the curriculum one that will provide the skill, knowledge, attitudes and dispositions needed for our citizens to be productive, disciplined and tolerant. The inclusion of ECCE was considered critical as there was an increased recognition of its importance to productive citizenship and lifelong learning.

Additionally, there were national concerns about the proliferation of variations in curricular and teaching materials that were inappropriate for three and four-year-old children. There were also global concerns about accelerated curricular based on a downward escalation of curricular which Elkind termed “miseducation.” The National ECCE Curriculum Guide addresses those concerns.

While this document is the outcome of the efforts of the working committee, its development was a shared process based on collaboration with international regional and national partners. Its development was also informed by research based on current theories, lessons learnt from participation in international and regional conferences and study tours especially the study tour to Reggio Emilia in Italy. Exposure to the Reggio Emilia Approach assisted us in gaining a new conceptualization of the role of adults, key organizational features of the physical environment and on enduring social relationships with families and communities.

Therefore, as we focus on the implementation of the National ECCE Curriculum Guide emphasis will be placed on professional development extending beyond the boundaries of the Ministry of Education and the districts to the communities and every ECCE Centre in Trinidad and Tobago. Based on the implementation on a phased basis over the next two years it is hoped that lessons learnt from the implementation process and from consultation with experts in the field and other stakeholders would lead to any necessary changes, the creation of resources with indigenous materials and recyclables, as well as the addition of sample themes and projects developed by the practitioners. Notably, we will reach consensus and adopt a common pedagogical approach ensuring high quality ECCE programmes relevant to the twenty first century.

Zita Wright  
ECCE Specialist  
Ministry of Education

# CONTENT

For the Children

Glossary of Terms

Minister's Message

Foreword

Acknowledgements

The Structure of the Document

## SECTION 1

Introduction

Rationale

Building Blocks of the Foundation

    The Four Pillars of Education

    Philosophical, psychological and pedagogical bases

    Aspirations and Ideals

    Principles

- Principle 1: Holistic Development
- Principle 2: Active Learning
- Principle 3: Interactive Learning
- Principle 4: Integrated Learning
- Principle 5: Learning Through Play
- Principle 6: Authentic Assessment
- Principle 7: Partnership/Relationship

## SECTION 11

Overall Goals, Strands and Desired Outcomes

- Desired Outcomes
- Overall Goals
- Strands



## Summary of Strands, Goals and Learning Outcomes

- Strand 1 - Wellness
- Strand 2 - Effective Communication
- Strand 3 - Citizenship
- Strand 4 - Intellectual Empowerment
- Strand 5 - Aesthetic Expression

## **SECTION 111**

### Curriculum Planning and Implementation

#### Curriculum Context: People and Provision

##### People

The child/childhood

The teacher

- Teacher Knowledge and Competencies

- The Teacher's Role

The Partners

##### Provision

Time

Space

Materials

##### The Educational Approach

Themes

Projects

## **SECTION 1V**

### Information Communication Technology (ICT)

#### Transition/Continuity

#### Reflections

#### Conclusion

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Curriculum Guide reflects expertise and input from international, regional and national professionals, early childhood practitioners, parents, typists and other stakeholders, as well as, information from various relevant documents. The Ministry of Education therefore has to thank many persons for making this document possible.

We first acknowledge the ECCE practitioners and parents from the eight education districts who participated in our collaborative effort by completing questionnaires and sharing their thoughts on curriculum expectations for three and four-year-old children. We also thank the ECCE practitioners for allowing us to observe and document their work with children, and parents' involvement at the centres, as well as those parents who gave consent for their children to be photographed. Their beautiful images do not only enhance the cover of our document, but also served to highlight interaction and learning through play in learning centres. Congratulations to our children for doing so well.

Special acknowledgement is given to Ms. Kathy Burgess of the New York City Board of Education, for sharing best practices and relevant literature during our study tour and for the continuous conversations and contribution of additional materials from which valuable information was gained. The study of documents from New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America such as the Te Whariki Programme of New Zealand, Sure Start and The Foundation Stage of the United Kingdom, The New York City Department of Education, Head Start Programme and High Scope of the United States of America also provided valuable information and insights for content. Additionally, the Ministry of Education gratefully acknowledges the valuable regional input through the use of the Draft Framework for Curriculum Development, which included input from Trinidad and Tobago.

Sincere appreciation is extended to past and present ECCE Curriculum Facilitators, Linda Dick, Kameela Jahoor, Deborah Khan, Catherine Hosein Mohamed, Homaïda Mohammed, Joanne Neaves and Camini Ramnanan, who laboured in the field since 2003 collecting the data from parents and teachers. Thanks also to the ECCE Curriculum Facilitators who joined us in 2004, especially Dawn Newton-Cooper, Ottilene Lara, Lisa Ibrahim-Joseph, Adita Maharaj, Anastasia Coward-Rose and Kathleen Warner-Lall whose day sometimes extended well into the night researching articles, editing as required and contributing to the citizenship strand. Heartfelt thanks to Lisa Ibrahim-Joseph for the much needed assistance in typing. Her help in this area was invaluable.

Special thanks to the School Supervisor II (Ag.), Mrs. Ann Thorhnill for her administrative support. Deepest gratitude to Clerk/Typist, Betty-Ann Maloney, and the on the job Trainee, Adeola Clinton from the ECCE Unit for assistance in typing whenever they were available.

Finally, the Ministry of Education extends its appreciation to the National Council for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCECCE) for selecting the working committee and acknowledges the contribution of Molly Guy and Sharon Marriott, who were involved in preliminary discussions. Heartfelt thanks and appreciation are extended to the two members of the working committee

Patricia Bissessar and Vilma Cropper who worked untiringly with the ECCE Specialist Zita Wright for so many months, including some weekends and public holidays, to develop this document. We are extremely grateful for your professional input, time and support.

May God bless all of you and continue to give you the capacity and resources you need enabling you to enhance the quality ECCE, education as we nurture our young children towards becoming ideal citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

### **Members of the Working Committee**

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Mrs. Zita Wright - **Team Leader**  
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## THE STRUCTURE OF THE DOCUMENT

The document comprises four sections (Fig.1.1). Section 1 includes the introduction, rationale, the philosophical, psychological and pedagogical bases and the principles of learning.

Highlighted in Section 2 are the desired outcomes, overall goals of each strand and learning outcomes, which emerged from the theoretical bases, the learning principles, the collective wisdom of significant others and from research of several documents as well as focus on continuity. The section also includes a detailed description of the five strands, highlighting each goal and learning outcomes.

Section 3 focuses on curriculum planning and implementation and outlines the process for facilitating children's learning and assessment. It includes the curriculum context, made up of people and provision and the educational approach with emphasis curriculum planning and assessment and links to key learning areas.

Section IV addresses two key issues, transition and reflection, the conclusion and the references.

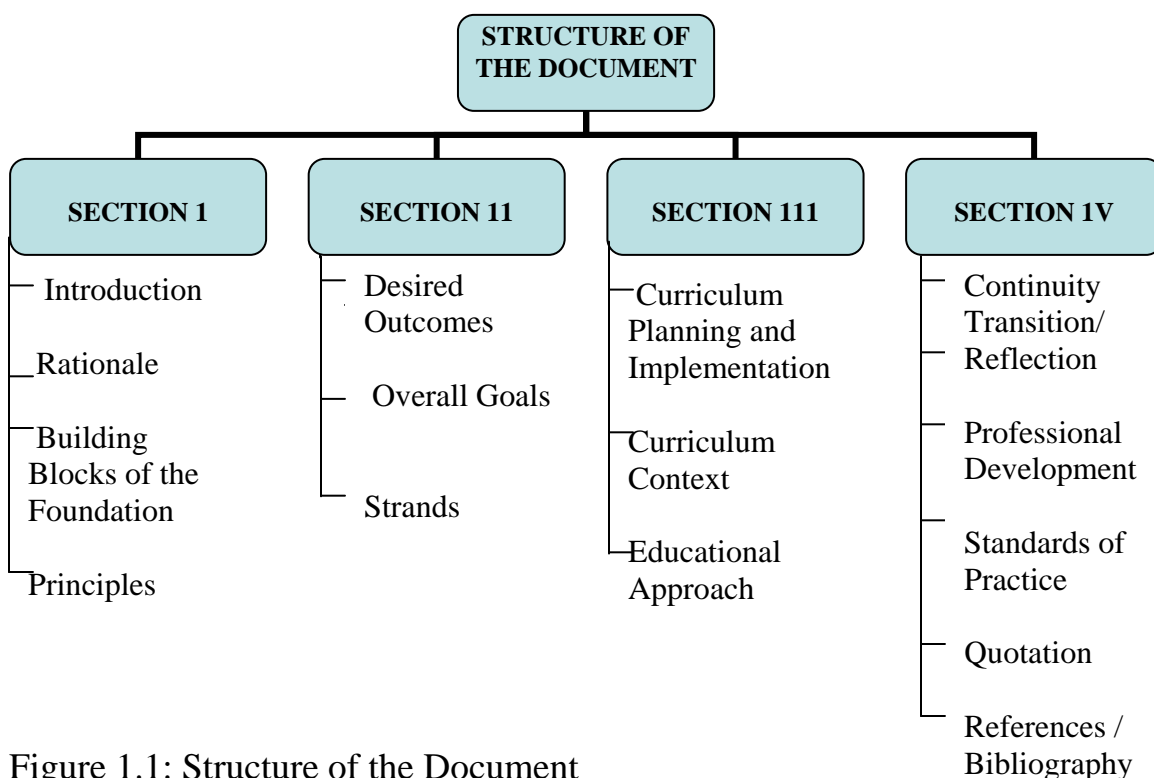


Figure 1.1: Structure of the Document

# SECTION ONE

*“The best investment we can make is in early childhood as what happens to us in the first six years basically sets our coping skills and competence for life...”*

*(J. Fraser Mustard, 1997)*

## INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Education (MOE), cognizant of its mandate for human development and the influence that early childhood has on later life, is improving the quality of early childhood programmes offered to three and four-year-old children and their families at ECCE centres in Trinidad and Tobago. This is going to be accomplished through the implementation of this National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Curriculum Guide, which has been developed for use at the pre-primary level of the seamless education system. It represents a major step in the reform process and is based on the assumption that exposure to rich, high quality early childhood experiences during a child's early formative years result in positive learning outcomes for all children, including those with special needs.

The National ECCE Curriculum Guide does not seek to provide a rigid structure for the delivery of content but clarifies, explains and provides guidelines that inform practice and the context for implementation. It will therefore facilitate curriculum planning for three and four-year-old children, as it will guide ECCE teachers in creating environment; selecting appropriate materials; using effective strategies; guiding children's behaviour; working effectively with parents adapting to the special needs of children and families; and allowing continuing incorporation of new ideas from current research in child development and early childhood education.

The framework is based on a knowledge of child development (how children grow and develop emotionally, socially, cognitively, physically and morally/spiritually); a respect for the unique qualities of each child in the context of her/his family and culture, and an understanding of how children think and learn. It delineates the content that children are to learn, the processes through which children achieve the identified curricular goals, the strategies used by teachers to achieve these goals and the context in which learning and teaching occur.

The implementation of the ECCE programme based on this guide will result in effective programming. This ECCE Curriculum Guide will encourage teachers to think seriously about their purpose, question traditional practice, and transform their environments into warm and inviting centres of excellence for all our three and four-year-old children, as we move towards vision 2020.

## **RATIONALE**

The National ECCE Curriculum Guide was designed by the Ministry of Education to articulate our perceptions of what is desirable for quality early childhood care and development. The intention is to assist Early Childhood teachers to offer the highest quality programmes possible thereby creating ECCE centres of excellence throughout Trinidad and Tobago for three and four-year-old children, their families and communities.

The development of this document was based on an assessment of our country readiness for generating desired outcomes. The findings revealed that none of the ECCE curriculum content in Trinidad and Tobago was appropriate. Additionally, 30% of the private centres and 100% public centres had a 'somewhat appropriate' curriculum (Caribbean Child Development Centre, 1995).

This ECCE Curriculum Guide was done to address concerns about the traditional approach to curriculum, and the lack of quality early childhood experiences being offered to young children and their families, in spite of the knowledge that the quality of learning young children experience is of crucial importance for both their own future and the future of their nation. It was also designed and developed to ensure that curriculum content and instructional strategies offered in this document will assist ECCE teachers in facilitating and encouraging learning and development appropriate to and inclusive of all children, including children with identified disabilities, challenges, and learning and developmental needs. It will provide ECCE teachers with a framework for programming planning to extend learning and promote all children's development.

Another reason for providing the ECCE Curriculum Guide was to support continuity between the home and the ECCE centre, as well as between the ECCE centre and the early years of the primary school. The aim is to nurture the whole child in the areas of wellness, effective communication, citizenship, intellectual empowerment and aesthetic expression. These five strands are further defined by goals and learning outcomes of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions. Emphasis is placed on the knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions that each individual brings based on experiences at home as the starting point for further learning.

Finally, the major objective of this document is to provide curriculum guidelines that will form the basis for a shared philosophy and therefore consistent curriculum offerings at all our ECCE centres in Trinidad and Tobago. Our goal is to prepare three and four-year-old children to educate themselves throughout their lives. Hutchins (<http://www.moe.gov.sg/preschooleducation/>)

## **BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE FOUNDATION**

**The four pillars of education** (UNESCO, 1996), the **philosophy and educational objectives** of the Ministry of Education (NTFE, 1993-2003), the **aspirations and ideals** for three and four-year-old children (ECCE Draft Strategic Plan, 2003), and the **philosophical, psychological and pedagogical basis** (Table 1.1) are the **four** building blocks for the foundation of the National ECCE Curriculum Guide.

### **1. The four Pillars of Education**

As reported by the International Commission on Education (1996), education throughout life (from early childhood) is based on four pillars which are important ideals. They are learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. Learning to know means that young children will be learning to learn, so as to benefit from the opportunities education provides throughout life. Learning to do ensures the acquisition of skills and competencies to deal with situations. Learning to live together is achieved by developing an understanding of other people, working together, respecting others and living in peace. Finally, in learning to be, children will better develop their personality and act responsibly as all aspects of their potential are addressed.

### **2. Philosophy and Educational Objectives**

The following philosophical statements of the Ministry of Education provide a vital pillar for the foundation. The beliefs are:

That every child has an inherent right to an education which will enhance the development the development of the maximum capability regardless of gender, ethnic, economic, social or religious background.

That every child has the ability to learn, and that we must build o this positive assumption.

That every child has an inalienable right to an education which facilitates the achievement of personal goals and the fulfillment of obligations to the society.



That education is fundamental to the overall development of Trinidad and Tobago.

That a system of ‘heavily subsidized’ and universal education up to age 16 is the greatest safeguard of the freedom of our people and is the best guarantee of their social, political, and economic well-being at this stage in our development.

That ethical and moral concerns are central to human development and survival. Fundamental constructs such as “decency”, “justice”, “respect”, “kindness”, “equality”, “love”, “honesty” and “sensitivity” are major determinants of the survival of our multicultural society.

That the parent and the home have a major responsibility for the welfare of the child and that the well-being of the child can best be served by a strong partnership between the community and the school.

That the educational system must provide curricular arrangements and choices that ensure that cultural, ethnic, class and gender needs are appropriately addressed.

That students vary in natural ability, and that schools therefore should provide, for all students, programmes which are adapted to varying abilities, and which provide opportunity to develop differing personal and socially useful talents.

That we must be alert to new research and development in all fields of human learning and to the implications of these developments for more effective teaching and school improvement.

That the educational system must be served by professionals who share and are guided in their operations by a set of systematic and incisive understandings, beliefs and values about education in general and the relationship to the development of the national community of Trinidad and Tobago.

That there is a need to create and sustain a humanized and democratized system of education for the survival of our democracy.

That the democratization and humanization of the educational system are largely contingent on the degree to which the system is professionalized. The nature of educational problems are such that the professional core must be engaged in decision-making with respect to the problems that affect their expert delivery of the services to the clientele and ultimately to Trinidad and Tobago. Professionals must come to experience a real sense of control and ownership of matters educational.

That from a psychological perspective education is a means of looking out beyond the boundaries of the immediate. It can be the viable means which creates individuals with the intellect capacity to develop and lead societies, communities, villages, and or neighbourhoods and families of the future. It should be responsive to, and stimulate the searing human spirit and the emphatic quest for human communication, interaction, love and trust.

That learning is cumulative and that every stage in the educational process is as important and critical for the learner's development as what has gone before it and what is to come. As such, we must view educational programming and development in the round, recognising the importance of every rung on the ladder of delivery by intensifying our efforts throughout the system (NTFE, 1993-2003).

### **3. Aspirations and Ideals for Three and Four-Year Old Children**

The national ideals and aspirations for children under five are that:

- Children will grow up as well adjusted, effective communicators, secure in their sense of well-being and value to society, empowered intellectually as lifelong learners and ideal citizens.
- Early Childhood Educators, parents/families and communities will be partners building relationships in communities that value and support lifelong learning.

#### 4. Philosophical, Psychological and Pedagogical Bases

The National ECCE Curriculum Guide promote an eclectic view. Therefore, a variety of theories and child development principles, current research and contemporary curriculum approaches form the third building block of the foundation. It provides perspective of: the child as a learner, the various roles of the teacher and the pedagogical practices that make up the curriculum landscape.

##### THEORISTS



##### THEORIES



##### MAIN TENETS



<b>JEAN PIAGET</b>	Cognitive Development	<b>Stages of development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children as constructors of knowledge</li> <li>• Development leading learning</li> <li>• Maturation and Environmental factors influence learning.</li> <li>• Children assimilate experiences and then accommodate them within their current understanding.</li> <li>• Children adjust and use new information continually to make sense of experience and perceptions.</li> </ul>
<b>JOHN DEWEY and JEAN PIAGET</b>  <b>JOHN DEWEY</b>	Constructivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning is active and constructive.</li> <li>• Learning by doing.</li> <li>• Learning is interactive</li> <li>• Children learn through play</li> <li>• Schools to prepare citizens for democracy</li> </ul>
<b>LEV VYGOTSKY</b>	Socio-constructivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children are actively engaged in social and cultural experiences</li> <li>• Play leads development</li> <li>• Zone of proximal development – the area between actual and potential learning.</li> <li>• Language is important</li> <li>• Interaction between children and more experienced others</li> </ul>
<b>ERIK ERIKSON</b>	Psychosocial Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development is described in terms of eight stages that span childhood and adulthood, each offering opportunities for personality growth and development.</li> </ul>

<b>ABRAHAM MASLOW</b>	Humanistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children's physical needs must be met</li> <li>Children must feel psychologically safe and secure</li> </ul>
<b>URIE BRONFENBRENNER</b>	Ecological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children living and learning in multiple social and cultural contexts influence children's learning and development.</li> <li>Learning as reciprocal.</li> <li>Interactions and how they affect children</li> </ul>
<b>HOWARD GARDNER</b>	Multiple Intelligences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human cognitive competence refers to a set of abilities, talents, or mental skills, which we call intelligences</li> <li>Individuals differ in the degree or skill and the nature of their combination.</li> </ul>
<b>BRAIN RESEARCHERS: R.N. CAINE AND G. CAINE, E. JENSEN AND R. SYLVESTER</b>	Brain – based learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early childhood is a critical period for brain development.</li> <li>Children learn through all their senses and stimulation triggers chemicals that build connections</li> <li>Children demonstrate different modes of knowing and different ways of representing what they know</li> </ul>
<b>LORIS MALAGUZZI</b>	Constructivist, Socio – cultural	<b>The Reggio Emilia Approach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child and Childhood</li> <li>Physical Spaces</li> <li>Parental Involvement</li> <li>Collaborative Relationships</li> <li>Documentation</li> <li>The Hundred Languages of Children</li> </ul>
<b>D. WEIKART AND P. HOHMANN</b>	Cognitively oriented curriculum based on Piaget and Vygotsky's Theory	<b>The High/Scope Curriculum</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children are active learners</li> <li>Use of a variety of learning centres with adequate materials and developmentally appropriate activities</li> <li>Key experiences</li> <li>Active problem solving – plan – do – review process</li> <li>Balance between child initiated and teacher planned instructional activities</li> <li>Teachers responsible for planning curriculum that reinforce and extend learning activities</li> </ul>
<b>POST-MODERNISTS</b>	Post-modernist Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding children as capable learners having a role and a voice in the decision-making process, with diverse understandings, capabilities and dispositions</li> <li>Understanding the contextualized and</li> </ul>

		dynamic nature of practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the dangers of universalized practice</li> <li>• Recognizing many paths to learning</li> <li>• Having broad and diverse interests</li> <li>• Children need to be supported socially, culturally and emotionally as they engage in learning environments</li> <li>• Diversity is valued</li> </ul>
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**Table 1.1: Philosophical Psychological and Pedagogical Bases**

Constructivist and socio constructivist perspectives and powerful principles of developmentally appropriate practice emerged from the theoretical bases. These perspectives and principles will assist teachers in decision-making about curriculum planning, including assessment and teaching strategies, which in turn inform young children’s learning and development.

Aspects of the perspectives and principles are summarized in Thunert’s (1997) developmentally appropriate practices concept map (Figure 1.2).

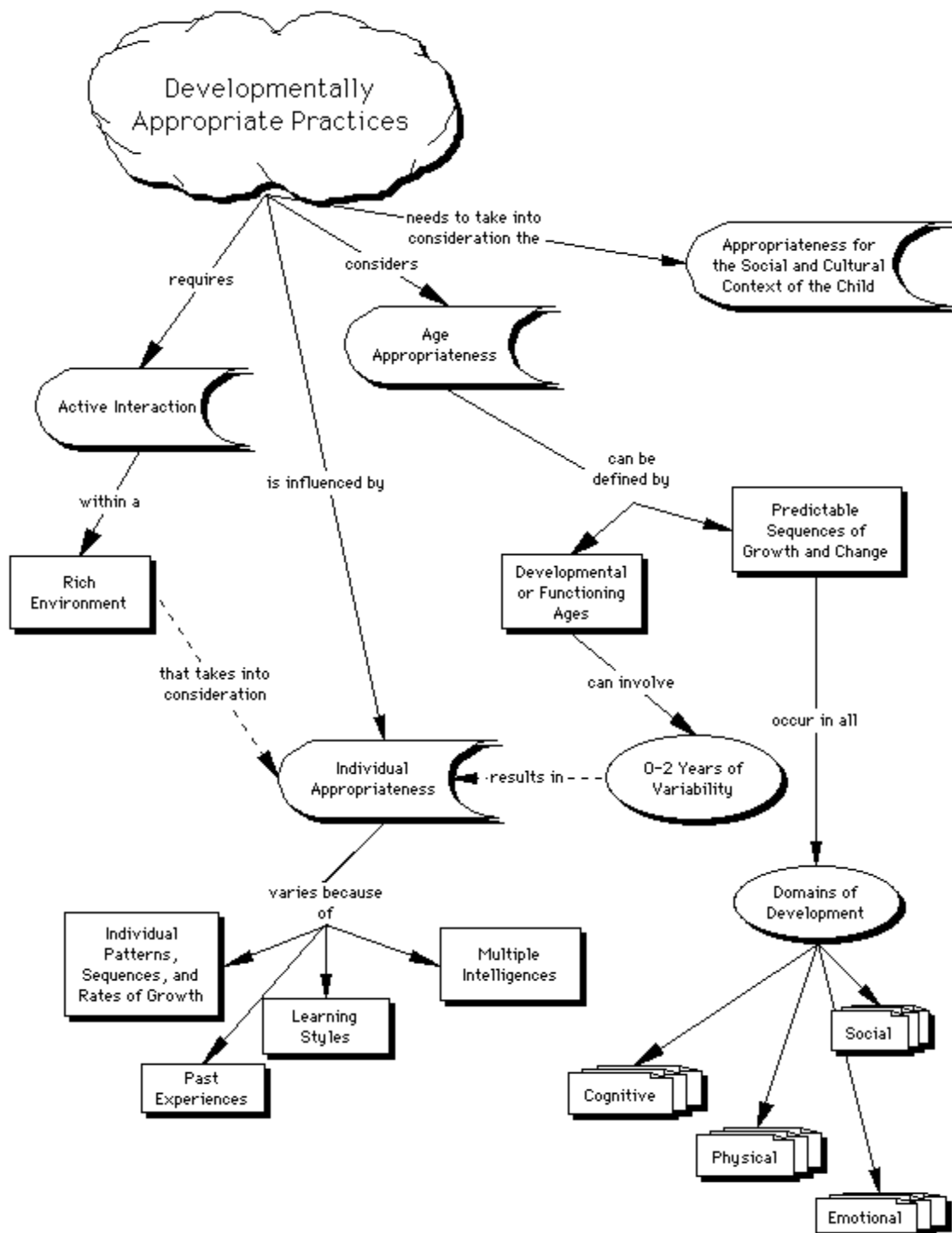


Figure 1.2: Developmentally Appropriate Practices Concept Map (Thuente, 1997)

# PRINCIPLES GOVERNING PRACTICE

Seven broad principles reflecting developmentally appropriate practices emerged from the theoretical perspectives and from our collective experiences. They are: Holistic Learning and Development, Active Learning, Interactive Learning, Integrated Learning, Learning through Play, Partnership/Relationship for Learning, and Authentic Assessment. These principles are central to quality curriculum for three and four-year old children in early childhood settings.

## Principle 1: Holistic Learning and Development

Early childhood care and education must reflect all domains of development, which are interrelated and include the social, emotional, physical, intellectual, creative and spiritual/moral. Provision must be made for children's holistic development with goals based on knowledge, skills, dispositions and attitudes. The approach ECCE teachers take must demonstrate their understanding of holistic learning and development.



## Principle 2: Active Learning

Active learning involves thinking; investigating, experimenting, discussing and responding. Three and four-year-old children gain knowledge, skills, dispositions and feelings as they construct personal understandings about phenomena they encounter while they are actively engaged in their environment, interacting with people, a variety of materials and representations. Positive relationships with people and the relevance of activities to children's lives and interests foster positive feelings, while many dispositions are shaped during the active play experiences based on the teacher's positive feedback and their encouragement to question, investigate, and innovate as they learn. In order to facilitate active learning, teachers must incorporate the following elements into children's activities.

<b>Materials</b>	Open-ended materials are provided that allow children to use them in a variety of ways. These materials must invite attention, exploration, manipulation, elaboration and imagination.
<b>Manipulation</b>	Children use materials in many different ways: exploring with all the senses; discovering relations through direct experience; transforming and combining materials; acquiring skills with tools and equipment, using large muscles and enacting real-life situations.
<b>Choice</b>	Children make choices about which materials to use, how to use them and how to meet their needs. When children are afforded choices they get opportunities to perfect their strengths, develop autonomy and exercise their preferences.
<b>Language for children</b>	Language plays a crucial role in the development of children's thinking and learning. Discussions, role playing, singing, rhyming and reading nurture positive dispositions towards language learning. These activities promote children's interactive skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing.
<b>Support</b>	Adults offer environmental, non-verbal and verbal support for children through the provision of a safe environment and experiences that support and extend knowledge, skills, dispositions and attitudes. Risk-taking is also encouraged.

Table 1.2: The Essential Elements of Active Learning



### Principle 3: Interactive Learning

Malaguzzi (1993) stated that interaction among children is a fundamental experience during the first years of life. Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2003) also consider such relationships to be the fundamental organizing strategy of an educational system for young children, and small groups as the most favourable type of classroom organization for an education based on such relationships. A nurturing environment in which children learn through meaningful interactions with other children, adults and materials will satisfy their innate yearning to know, to learn, to explore and discover.

Interactive learning allows children to explore new ideas with other children and adults who are able to converse with them showing that they value what they say and that they are respected as persons. Through interactions, teachers also scaffold children's learning enabling them to go to another level, as they help the children to make better, deeper and more accurate sense of their experiences (Katz and Cesarona, 1994). Interactions facilitate developmentally appropriate practice, as the children's group, individual and cultural needs are met.

These interactions, which must be rich, meaningful, satisfying and engaging include:

- Child : Child
- Child : Teacher
- Child : Teacher and other educational or support personnel
- Child : Parent/Family

Based on children's daily experiences, interactive learning ensures acquisition of knowledge, skills, dispositions and attitudes. Teachers plan decisions about interaction with children, but they must not miss opportunities for interactions when situations emerge as those are teachable moments that promote valuable learning.

## Principle 4: Integrated Learning

Integrated curriculum views children's experiences as learning opportunities, which are all interconnected (Fig.1.3). Integrated themes and project form the foundation for curriculum planning, enabling three and four-year old children to make connections among and between ideas and knowledge, which are meaningful to them. This type of learning employs an interdisciplinary approach which discourages the separation of learning activities into distinct subject areas, but rather promotes the linking of learning experiences across developmental domains, as well as, across content/subject areas. Learning therefore is viewed in a holistic manner using a variety of materials, leading to children's acquisition of knowledge, skills, dispositions and feelings. An integrated curriculum will facilitate children's exploration, discovery, problem-solving, critical thinking and experimentation in a meaningful context and allow for a project-based emergent or negotiated curriculum to inform the learning and teaching processes. Children learn from personally meaningful experiences, which reflect the reality of their lives. Integrated themes and projects must be used to engage young children in thoughtful, purposeful learning.

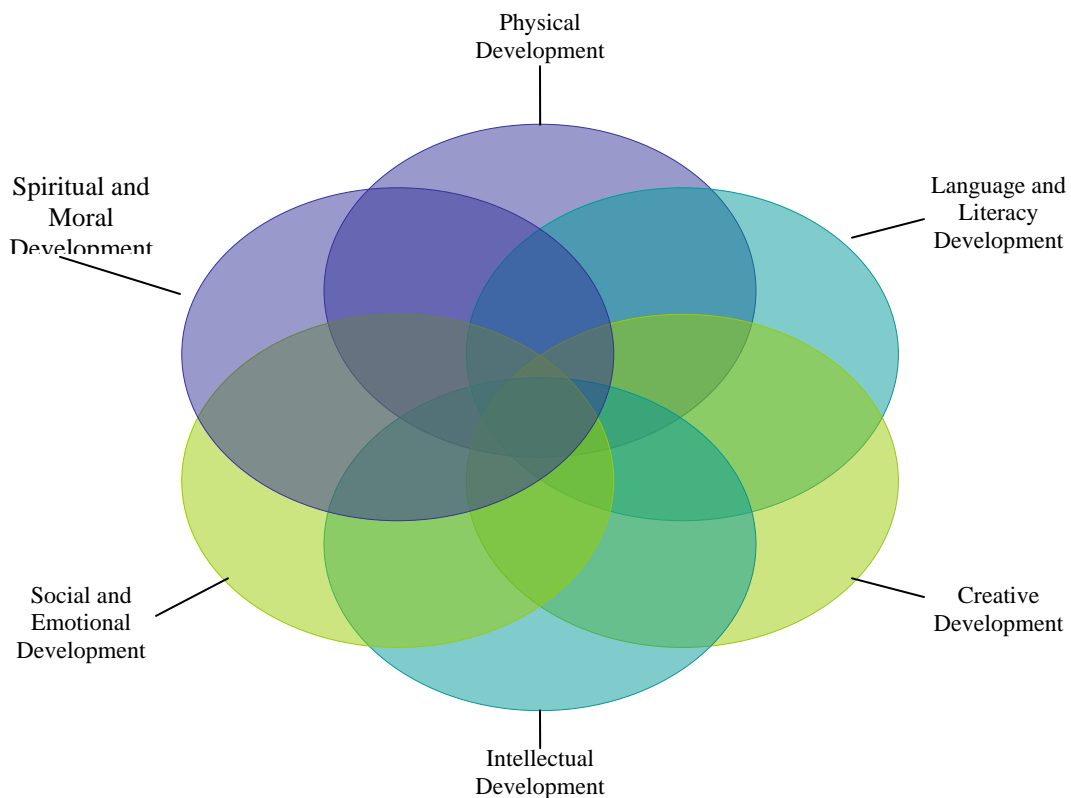


Figure 1.3: An illustration of the integrated nature of learning

## Principle 5: Learning Through Play

Play provides a powerful context in which children learn as they actively engage socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually with people and objects. In play, children get opportunities to explore, discover experiment, manipulate materials, solve problems, think critically, make decisions and take risks, practice skills, display dispositions, and test hypotheses without fear or failure, which provide the foundation for representational thought and language, cognition and socialization. Play also offers meaningful contexts for examining issues such as fairness, justice, peace, privacy and responsibility enabling children to consider alternatives and take action to address inequities as young citizens in society.



During play, the child attitudes, and develop aspects of the curriculum people and the feedback adults.



will gain new knowledge, skills and and strengthen dispositions in all based on the interactions with other that they receive from responsive

Teachers must provide daily opportunities for three and four-year old children to experience a balance of both child-initiated and teacher-structured play which will offer valuable contexts within which teachers can monitor and assess learning. Additionally, teachers can use a variety of modifications and adaptations to help children with disabilities and other special needs to take part in and learn from play. The critical steps are to observe the child's play and match the level of support to the child's need.

## **Principle 6: Authentic Assessment**

Assessment of children's progress should flow directly from the experiences in which they have been engaged. Assessment information is critical to the child, the parent and the success of the programme. Therefore early childhood teachers are required to evaluate the children they teach to discover how they are progressing. While there are many types of assessments that can be implemented with children, authentic assessments should be used to evaluate young children's growth and development.

Authentic assessment is defined as the process of documenting and evaluating growth and development, over time, using real-life situations. It shows what children can do, what they know, and what they understand and gives an accurate picture of who the child is, and how the child is growing and learning.

Teachers must carefully collect, analyze, interpret and display the evidence from documentation, as this makes it possible for others to "see" the learning that takes place when teaching occurs. Documentation does not only provide the evidence needed for reliably assessing children's progress, but also for meeting accountability requirements, for monitoring children's growth and development, provides a vehicle for reflection and for programme evaluation.

Observation is the most widely used way that teachers use to gather information and evidence of children's learning. Teachers can also have conversations with the children, about their learning, help children identify what they have learnt, gather samples of the children's work, comment on children's work as it relates to the curriculum and have discussions with other teachers and parents. Teachers can introduce portfolios, which are used to collect various samples of children's work. The samples may contain notes from: developmental checklists, parent interviews, self portraits, audio or video tapes and anecdotal records; as well as samples of scribbling, drawing, and writing.

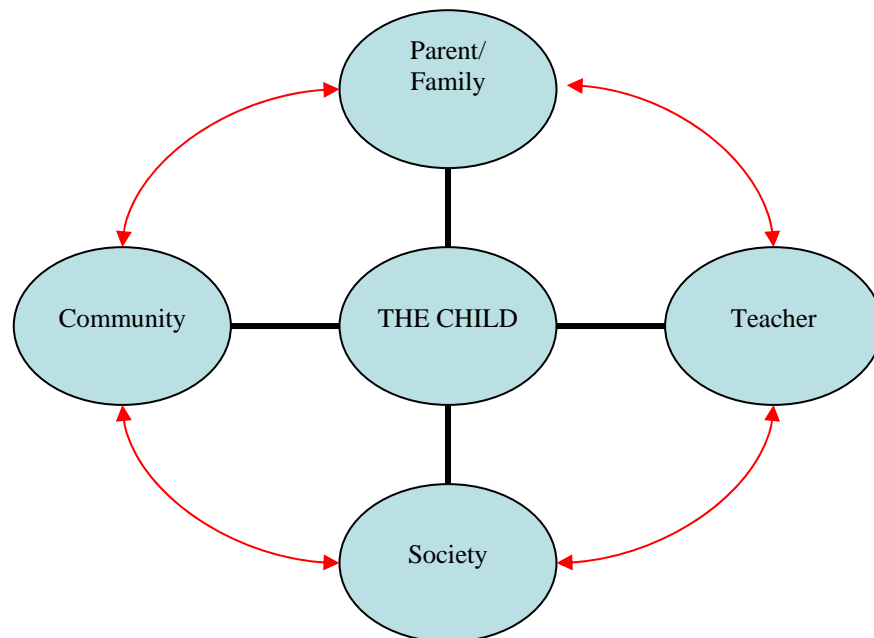
### **Recording Children's Progress**

Children's progress must be recorded and the records must give a clear picture of the child's learning and development and the phases of development. The early learning record for assessment proposed by Bredkamp and Rosegrant (1995) helps teachers to collect reliable evidence and to monitor, assess and report on children's learning. The four phases on the continuum are: becoming aware, exploring, making connections and applying.

## Principle 7: Building Partnerships/Relationships for Supportive Learning

Partnerships must include the formal and informal relationships and processes that people or groups participate in to support children's learning and development in the early years. This approach emphasizes the interrelationship between children and their environments (fig. 1.4) and how learning and development take place through their complex interactions. Early childhood teachers must therefore, plan curriculum recognizing that children influence are influenced by their wider environment and that these responsive and reciprocal relationships impact positively on children's learning.

Teachers must therefore include the family, the neighbourhood and community and cultural as well as the institutional systems.



**Figure 1.4: Responsive and Reciprocal Relationships that Influence the Curriculum Context and Children's Learning**

# SECTION TWO

*“The school is a microcosm of the larger world that we inhabit – a collection of bits and pieces of meaning fashioned together to create a layered, amicable, welcoming whole” (Louise Boyd Cadwell, 2003 p. 106).*

## DESIRED OUTCOMES, OVERALL GOALS AND STRANDS

### Desired Outcomes

The desired outcomes for all levels of the education system, including the three and four-year old children of the pre-primary level are based on the profile of the twenty-first century caribbean citizen (Box 1.1). These outcomes, as well as, the philosophical, psychological and pedagogical bases and

#### Box 1.1 – Twenty-First Century Caribbean Citizen

- ✓ Be imbued with a respect for human life;
- ✓ Be emotionally secure with a high level of self-confidence and self-esteem;
- ✓ Regard ethnic, religious and other diversity as a source of potential strength and richness;
- ✓ Be aware of the importance of living in harmony with the environment;
- ✓ Have a strong appreciation of family and kinship values, community cohesion, and moral issues, including responsibility for and accountability to self and community;
- ✓ Have an informed respect for cultural heritage;
- ✓ Demonstrate multiple literacy, independent and critical thinking, question the beliefs of past and present and bring this to bear on the innovative application of science and technology to problem solving;
- ✓ Demonstrate a positive work ethic; and
- ✓ Value and display the creative imagination in its various manifestations and nurture its development in the economic and entrepreneurial spheres in all other areas of life.

the principles, provided perspectives and shaped the development of the **overall goals** and curriculum **strands**. **The strands** highlight what three and four-year old children will learn to know, to be, to do, as well as how to live together. In addition, ideas from the following documents: Te Whariki programme of New Zealand, the Sure Start programme of the U.K, the Framework for a Kindergarten Curriculum in Singapore, and The Early Years Curriculum Guidelines of Australia were extremely useful.

### Overall Goals

#### Children will:

- develop knowledge, skills attitudes and dispositions to enhance their physical wellbeing;
- acquire basic self-help and physical skills, both gross and fine motor;

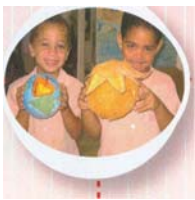
- gain knowledge about the care of their bodies and maintain a desirable level of health and fitness;
- develop the dispositions to be learners – curiosity, independence, social responsibility, initiative, creativity, willingness to take risks, to ask questions and to persevere;
- acquire the knowledge, skills attitude and feelings they need to become effective communicators;
- gain an increasing understanding of themselves, their community, society and the world around them;
- develop self-worth and self-confidence in themselves as successful learners and the capacity to trust and respect others and self in a caring, nurturing democratic society;
- function as contributing members of their communities and society by developing effective social skills, and emotional competence: making choices that are fair, just, responsible and peaceful;
- acquire the skills they need to become intellectually empowered and successful learners – mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social inquiry and the ability to express their ideas through the use of technology;
- use tools, machines, materials and techniques to communicate, to learn new information, to create, to explore how things work and to solve problems;
- develop independence, self motivation and self expression in environments that stimulate aesthetic expression/creativity through music, dramatic play, dance and the visual arts; and
- understand and respect social and cultural diversity.

## Strands

The five curriculum strands: **wellbeing, effective communication, citizenship, intellectual empowerment and aesthetic expression** reflect the desired outcomes for children to grow up as competent and confident lifelong learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to their democratic communities and society.



# SUMMARY OF STRANDS GOALS LEARNING OUTCOMES



## Wellness

Emotional/  
Mental  
Well-Being

Physical  
Health

## Effective Communication

Emergent  
Literacy &  
Oracy

Listening

## Citizenship

Belonging

Democracy  
▪ Making choices  
▪ Negotiating  
choices  
▪ Sharing decision  
making

Respect for self  
others/Appropriate  
Behaviour and  
▪ justice  
▪ peace  
▪ privacy  
▪ responsibility  
▪ fairness

## Intellectual Empowerment

Valuing culture  
National pride  
regional identity  
Moral/spiritual

Problem  
solving

Informational  
gathering &  
processing

Exploring  
investigating &  
experimenting

## Aesthetic Expression

Creativity

Critical  
thinking

Imagination

Appreciation for  
cultural art  
forms

## **STRAND 1: WELLNESS**

Wellness focuses on developing a child who is healthy, strong and well-adjusted. Children experience emotional well being, knowing who they are and where they fit in and feel good about themselves. They develop social and emotional competence and positive dispositions for learning.

### **GOALS**

**Children will live in an environment where they are healthy, strong and well-adjusted through promotion of their physical, social and emotional development**

- Physical Health and Development(fine and gross motor)
- Emotional Well-being
- Protection and Safety of themselves and others

### **Goal 1**

**Children will live in an environment where their physical health and development are promoted and they make choices about their own and others' health with increasing independence.**

**Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

Children develop:

- Increasing understanding of their bodies and how they function;
- Personal responsibility for their physical needs such as self-help and self-care skills (personal grooming, oral hygiene);
- An awareness of measures that can be taken to prevent disease and promote wellness.
- An appreciation of gender differences and different gender related body parts;
- Gross motor control, using and extending gross motor skills when integrating movements and using equipment. These include balance and stability; movements such as running, hopping, jumping, skipping; and physical manipulations objects for throwing, kicking and catching; exploring rocking, sliding and swinging.
- Fine motor control, by using and extending fine motor skills when integrating movements and manipulating equipment, tools and objects. These include coordinating the small muscles in the hands and wrists with dexterity to perform self-help skills and manipulate small objects such as writing tools and using technology such as woodworking tools, the computer, the printer, CDs and digital cameras.

- Using language to describe their position and that of others developing spiritual and kinesthetic awareness by moving in and out, over, through developing and extending balance and control.

## **Goal 2**

**Children live in an environment where their emotional well-being is nurtured and where they learn the values and behaviours accepted by society.**

**Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

Children develop:

- Confidence and ability to express emotional needs;
- Ability to identify their own emotional responses and those of others;
- Social skills and habits;
- A positive self-concept: knowing oneself and relating to others;
- Ways to take responsibility for self and others: following rules and routines, respecting others and taking initiative;
- Sensitivity and self confidence towards health issues affecting themselves and others (e.g. HIV, AIDS);
- A sense of personal worth and awareness of own preferences, potential, abilities and limitations;
- Ways to explore concepts related to people and how they live;
- An understanding of people demonstrating this through the use of role play;
- Cooperative skills and problem solving skills through working together;
- Pro-social behaviours/dispositions: showing empathy, getting along with others, friendliness, ability to communicate various emotions.

## **Goal 3**

**Children live in an environment where protection and safety of self and others is understood and practiced and build a sense of well being making choices about their own and others' safety with increasing independence.**

**Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

Children develop:

- Confidence that they can participate and take risks without fear or harm;
- The ability to avoid dangerous situations;
- The capacity to distinguish between sensible and dangerous ways of helping others;
- The ability to distinguish between objects in the home that are safe and unsafe;

- An increasing range of responsibility for protecting others from injury and from physical and emotional abuse;
- The responsibility to practice safe habits at home and at school, including road safety skills;
- The ability to use tools safely.

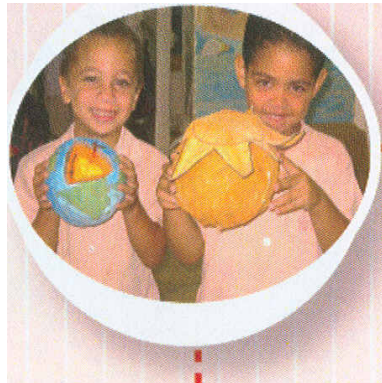
#### **Goal 4**

**Children live in an environment where its role and importance to life and health is appreciated**

**Learning Outcomes: Knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions**

Children develop:

- An understanding of the composition of the environment, with special emphasis on the basic elements essential to life and survival : air, water, food, shelter;
- An awareness of the various ways in which they can and do contribute to environmental damage;
- Knowledge of the common adverse consequences to health which result from not protecting the environment;
- The ability to express and examine feelings that they have experienced in an aesthetically pleasing, clean and health-enhancing environment;
- Basic skills and competencies in implementing simple strategies and methods for enhancing the environment e.g. a class plan, garden.



## **STRAND 2: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

Language and literacy play a critical role in the development of children's thinking, learning and communication. To develop into successful, contributing adults, children must learn to be effective communicators and masters of their official language. This can be achieved through immersing young children in a print rich environment with many developmentally appropriate language experiences including role-playing, singing, rhyming and reading. These activities will promote children's interactive skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing resulting in effective communication, creative thoughts and ideas, and the laying of the foundation for becoming future confident, proficient language users and communicators.

### **GOALS**

**Children listen with understanding and respond appropriately in a variety of situations and contexts.**

**Children will converse effectively in their home language or Standard English for a variety of purposes relating to real experiences and different audiences.**

**Children will explore and use their emerging reading abilities and become readers and viewers by using emerging understandings to predict and make meanings from a variety of written, visual and multimodal texts.**

**Children will experiment with and use their emerging understandings of written, visual and multimodal texts to convey meaning and communicate their thoughts and ideas.**

#### **Goal 1:**

**Children listen with understanding and respond appropriately in a variety of situations and contexts.**

## **Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

Children will:

- Develop a growing awareness of the conventions associated with attentive listening in formal and informal group settings;
- Develop the ability to listen for various purposes and respond in an appropriate manner (e.g. demonstrate that a response is expected when a question is asked; repeat parts of stories, poems or songs);
- Display an interest, pleasure and enjoyment during listening activities by responding with appropriate eye contact, body language and facial expressions.

## **Goal 2:**

**Children will use spoken language including their home language or Standard English for a variety of purposes relating to real experiences and different audiences.**

## **Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

Children develop

- A growing awareness that speaking is an effective way to communicate their thoughts, ideas and views and use spoken language including their home language or sign language;
- The ability to informally speak and share their views with their peers, and other members of the community;
- Learn new vocabulary and extend language;
- The ability to describe previous experiences and relate them to new experiences and ideas;
- Explore the rhythm and rhythm of spoken language. Learn new vocabulary and extend language to communicate and negotiate ideas and plan for activities;
- The ability to use vocabulary needed for classroom learning experiences and explore the patterns and conventions of language in familiar social and learning situations.
- Learn to follow and give directions, ask questions and give information;
- Identify with support alternative ways to express feelings and needs.

## **Goal 3**

**Children will explore and use their emerging reading abilities and become readers and viewers by using emerging understandings to predict and make meanings from a variety of written, visual and multimodal texts.**

**Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

Children develop:

- A growing awareness that print (common signs and symbols) conveys meaning;
- The ability to derive and convey the meaning of common signs and symbols (exit signs, area labels etc.) in their various environments (school, home and community);
- Book handling knowledge as they explore and become familiar with various types and genres of literature;
- Reading-like behaviours in which they pretend to read to self and others and read their own writing;
- A love for listening to and retelling familiar stories, as well as a desire to “*read*” on their own;
- Various ways of reading, such as reading storybooks, signs and symbols and their own writing;
- An increasing understanding of some symbols, language patterns, letter-sound relationships to predict, confirm or make meanings from using their hundred languages, which includes multimodal texts.

**Goal 4:**

**Children will experiment with and use their emerging understandings of written, visual and multimodal texts to convey meaning and communicate their thoughts and ideas.**

**Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

Children will:

- Develop ways to construct and co-construct different types of texts for a range of purposes;
- Develop ways to express feelings and ideas through different representations;
- Develop ways to experiment with conventional letters, words signs and symbols to convey meaning;
- Investigate ways that information and communication technologies can be used to communicate (e-mail, telephone, television, internet, radio);

- Understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds during experiences with writing;
- Develop ways to explore how symbols and written and visual texts are used to communicate meanings;
- Expressing and representing personal feelings, ideas through various representations
- Increasing confidence and a repertoire for symbolic, pretend or dramatic play
- The ability to identify and use information from a range of sources including books and computer technology
- Using products of technology and making connections with ways it is used in everyday life to support language and literacy





## STRAND 3: CITIZENSHIP/BELONGING

*“Curriculum content and process should reflect democratic ideals of community involvement, liberty, freedom of choices, equality, fairness and justice” (NAEYC and NAECS/SDE, 1991).*

Sowing seeds of peace and democracy in three and four year old children could nurture a generation of citizens equipped with the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions to live peacefully and justly in the world. This could be accomplished if the children and their families experience an environment where there are opportunities for learning with each child’s contribution being valued irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity or background (White Policy Paper: Standards Of Practice 2005 - category 3) and through interaction with others.

Early childhood educators must work with the children to create a culture of peace in our early childhood care and education centres, as well as in their families and communities. Our centres should be seen as microcosms of the positive society we envision, where children and their families are provided with opportunities to exercise the principles of peace and democracy.

### GOALS

- **Children are aware of the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour and cooperate with others in social situations.**
- **Children experience an environment where they show respect for self, others and the environment.**
- **They value culture and develop an appreciation for their own and other cultures, building early understandings about diversity.**
- **They demonstrate pride in national and regional identity.**
- **Children are in an environment where they develop resilience**
- **Children and families are in an environment where every person’s input is valued and where they are part of making choices, negotiating choices and sharing in the decision-making process.**
- **Children live in an environment where ability to assume responsibility for own actions and behaviour is encouraged.**
- **Children have equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, disability, age, ethnicity or background.**

## **Goal 1**

**Children are aware of the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour and cooperate with others in social situations.**

### **Learning outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

Children develop:

- Gradual knowledge of the boundaries and limitations of appropriate social behaviour;
- The capacity to discuss and negotiate rules, rights and fairness;
- Positive and constructive attitudes to competition;
- An understanding of the consequences of stepping beyond the limits of acceptable behaviour;
- An increasing ability to take responsibility for their own actions;
- The ability to disagree and state a conflicting opinion assertively and appropriately;
- A range of strategies for solving conflicts in peaceful, democratic ways, and a perception that peaceful ways are the best;
- An understanding of the rules of the early childhood setting, of the reasons for them and of which rules will be different in other settings;
- Respect for family rules and the law of the country;
- The ability to promote a culture of peace and non-violence through which children learn active non-violent conflict resolution and problem solving skills.

## **Goal 2**

**Children experience an environment where they show respect for self, others and the environment.**

### **Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

Children develop:

- A sense of self worth/self confidence; taking pride in their own work/effort;
- Concepts of self control, fairness and respect for their peers and others;
- Self-concept as they learn to accept themselves and others, as well as build group identity
- An increasing ability to take another's point of view and to empathize with others;
- An understanding that the early childhood education setting is fair for all;
- Respect for each other's personal space and each other's personal property, and for human life;
- Respect for the differently-able and the elderly;
- An appreciation of the ways they can make contributions to groups and to group well-being;
- Social skills and abilities which enable them to relate well with other children and adults;
- Moral values such as honesty, kindness, love for one another, tolerance and respect for self and others;
- Strategies and skills for initiating, maintaining and enjoying a relationship with other children - including taking turns, problem solving, negotiating, taking another's point of view, supporting others and understanding other people's attitudes and feelings in a variety of contexts;

- Ways to care for, protect and preserve the environment;
- Non-violent conflict resolution and problem solving skills which will enable them to promote a culture of peace and non-violence.

### **Goal 3**

**They value culture and develop an appreciation for their own and other cultures, building early understandings about diversity.**

**Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

Children develop:

- An interest in what is happening in their homes and in the homes of other children at the centre, nationally and in other countries;
- An appreciation for and recognition of differences and similarities among themselves;
- Some early concepts of the value of appreciating diversity;
- Willingness to participate in cultural activities;
- An understanding of how to behave respectfully towards people of other cultures, ethnic groups and religions;
- An interest in stories and songs about people and events from their own, neighbouring and foreign communities through repetition and patterns;
- Ways to express their own and respond to others in ways appropriate to social and cultural contexts.

### **Goal 4**

**They demonstrate pride in national and regional identity.**

**Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

Children develop:

- Some early concepts of national pride and being a citizen such as showing respect for rules of protocol, for national symbols, anthem, pledge, flag and laws of Trinidad and Tobago;
- Some early concepts of regional identity;
- An awareness of national heroes and heroine;
- Awareness of connections between events, festivals, cultural traditions and experiences of our people within and beyond the early childhood education setting.

### **Goal 5**

**Children are in an environment where they develop resilience.**

## **Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

Children develop:

- Knowledge of survival and apply safety procedures to self and others;
- Co-ordination, flexibility and endurance;
- An awareness of objects, actions and situations that are potentially harmful to them;
- Coping skills such as the ability to cope with difficulties, challenges, conflicts, moods, stress and depression;
- Survival skills with the ability to cope with conditions such as violence, threat, bullying, death, abuse, disease and natural disasters and show assertiveness about their needs and desires and make their own decisions;
- Discernment with the ability to distinguish harmful situations, events or persons from those who are not;
- Dispositions of persistence, willingness to complete unpleasant or challenging tasks, perseverance, determination and curiosity.

### **Goal 6**

**Children and families are in an environment where every person's input is valued and where they are part of making choices, negotiating choices and sharing in the decision-making process.**

## **Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

Children develop:

- An awareness of their own strengths and confidence and a feeling qualities that these are valued;
- The ability to exercise the principles and values of democracy – responsibility, privacy, justice and authority;
- A sense of responsibility and respect for the needs and well –being of the group;
- As decision makers in an atmosphere where every person's input is valued;
- Ways to promote a culture of cooperation in which they work collaboratively with one other and with adults in their environment to achieve group goals and objectives;
- An understanding of the links between the early childhood education setting and the family;
- Skills in negotiation, peace-keeping and conflict-resolution;
- Awareness of local , environmental , social and national issues which can have an impact on their lives such as HIV Aids;
- An appreciation of differences in families' religious beliefs and practices.

### **Goal 7**

**Children live in an environment where ability to assume responsibility for own actions and behaviour is encouraged.**

## **Learning Outcomes: Knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

Children develop:

- A simple rationale for actions / behaviour;
- An understanding of the consequences of their work and action for themselves and others;
- An awareness of the rules of behaviour;
- A willingness to volunteer for small tasks;
- Leadership qualities;
- Dispositions such as confidence, willingness, persistence, self regulation.

## **GOAL 8**

**Children have equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, disability, age, ethnicity or background.**

## **Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions.**

Children develop:

- An understanding of their own rights and those of others;
- The ability to recognize discriminatory practices and behavior and respond accordingly;
- Confidence in themselves and their ability to learn;
- The ability to remain true to their individual natures, and their own potentials regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity or background;
- Positive judgments of their own gender and the opposite gender;
- Confidence that their family background is viewed positively within the early childhood education setting;
- Respect for others who are different from themselves and ease of interaction among themselves.

***“... Establishing peace is the work of education.” Maria Montessori***

## **STRAND 4: INTELLECTUAL EMPOWERMENT**

All children are competent learners, who must be provided with a supportive environment that lends itself to active exploration, with positive adult/child interaction for children's minds to develop. Cognitive development deals with the mind and how it works. It involves how children see their world and how they use what they learn through the use of critical thinking, learning and problem solving skills. Through active and interactive learning children will develop problem solving, critical thinking, representational and symbolic thinking and will become intellectually empowered. Use of computers and other technologies will affect children's learning by extending and enriching many experiences offered in the classroom as teachers integrate their use across the curriculum.

### **GOALS**

Children experience a caring, nurturing, learning environment where:

- **Through child initiated and teacher directed learning, they develop early mathematical understanding;**
- **Through child initiated and teacher directed play, children develop working theories for making sense of the natural, physical and material world;**
- **They learn strategies for active exploration, and interaction;**
- **They will use computers and other technologies to enrich and extend experiences.**

### **Goal 1**

**Through child initiated and teacher-directed play, children develop early mathematical understandings.**

### **Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

Children will:

- Develop basic skills in posing simple questions, measuring, sorting and classifying.
- Investigate and communicate information about quantities, sequence and pattern;
- Develop mathematical thinking involving the active process of investigating, thinking, solving problems;
- Develop positive dispositions towards investigating and communicating mathematical information;
- Using critical thinking skills to compare, contrast, classify, count, measure, sort and recognize patterns to organize their world;
- Confidence in using a variety of strategies for exploring and making sense of the world, such as in setting and solving problems, looking for patterns and relationships, classifying for a purpose, guessing, using trial and error, thinking logically and making comparisons, asking

- Familiarity with numbers and their uses by exploring and observing the use of numbers in activities that have meaning and purpose for children;
- Skill in using the counting system and mathematical symbols and concepts such as number, length, volume, shape and pattern for meaningful and increasingly complex purposes;
- Experience with technology including use of the computer as a learning tool;

## **Goal 2**

**Through child initiated and teacher directed play, children develop working theories for making sense of the natural, physical and material world**

**Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

### **Children will develop:**

- A perception of themselves as explorers: competent, confident learners who ask questions and make discoveries;
- The confidence to choose, experiment and manipulate materials and objects, to play around with ideas, and to explore actively, using all their senses;
- The ability to represent their discoveries, using creative and expressive media and the technology associated with them,
- Develop learning and problem solving skills as they acquire information, use resources and materials, observe events, ask and answer questions, make predictions and test hypotheses;
- Acquiring dispositions such as persistence, curiosity and interest;
- Representing and thinking symbolically as they use objects to represent other things, by pretending, using graphs, drawings and pictures, using different media and their imagination;
- natural, social, physical and material world;
- Begin to develop an understanding of life processes and the nature and properties of familiar materials, such as sand, water, ice, bubbles, blocks and paper;
- Develop spatial understanding, including an awareness of how two and three dimensional objects can be fitted together and moved in space and ways in which spatial information can be represented such as in maps, diagrams, photographs and drawings;
- Explore physical science using balance scales, pulleys, mirrors, pipes, plastic, wood, etc.;
- Develop working theories of planet earth and beyond by using props and other materials for building and talking about how electricity and water get into the buildings;
- Use natural materials such as shells, stones and leaves in various ways and develop a relationship with the natural environment and a knowledge of their own place in the environment;
- Display basic knowledge of features of the land which are of local significance;
- Develop respect and a sense of responsibility for the well-being of both the living and non-living environment;

- Investigate ways technology is used in their communities (e.g. garbage collection factories, telephones).
- Develop basic scientific skills that enable them to enquire, explore, and about the natural, social, physical and material world;

### **Goal 3**

**Children learn strategies for active exploration and interaction as they learn through play**

**Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skill, attitudes**

Children develop:

- The ability to make decisions, choose their own materials and construct their own knowledge;
- The attitude that not knowing, being uncertain and risk taking are part of the process of being a good learner;
- High expectations of themselves as successful learners;
- Responsibility for their own learning;
- Dispositions to try out things, explore and be curious as important and valued ways of learning;
- The knowledge that playing with ideas and materials, with no objective in mind, can be an enjoyable, creative and valid approach to learning;

### **Goal 4**

**They will use computers and other technologies to enrich and extend experiences.**

**Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skill, attitudes**

**Children will:**

- Learn about technology and how it is a part of everyday life;
- Experience the use of hardware and software, including children with challenges as they are available with features for their use;
- Be able to use some manipulatives which are easier to use on the computer than concrete materials;
- Will use open ended software which could result in nonverbal skills, structural knowledge, long term memory, manual dexterity, self esteem and encourage collaboration.



## **STRAND 5: AESTHETIC EXPRESSION**

### **Visual Arts Music Dance and Drama**

Children are born with natural talents in the area of the aesthetics. Three and four year olds love to move, dance, sing and pretend as they express their feelings and ideas. In addition, the creative arts can be used to enhance children's development of skills in all the curriculum areas. Opportunities in which children are free to express themselves, play, explore, invent and create must therefore be provided through a variety of media such as dance, drama, music, movement and the visual arts. Problem solving and higher order thinking skills can be developed and refined through creative and autistic opportunities. The arts also draw upon multiple intelligences because human communicate in multiple ways: visually, orally, kinesthetically and linguistically.

### **GOALS**

- **Children will discover and explore their creative talents through the visual arts.**
- **Children will discover and explore their talents in music and dance**
- **Children will discover and explore their creative talents using drama**
- **Appreciation for local, national and international forms.**
- **Use various media to develop arts and aesthetic expressions**

### **Goal 1:**

**Children will discover and explore their creative talents through the visual arts.**

### **Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

#### **Children will:**

- express feelings and emerging concepts and understanding freely using different art media;
- work alone or with others in creative activities, interact socially and experience satisfying; interactions, talk about and appreciate art work, visit art displays, met artists;
- derive enjoyment from using their imaginations;
- develop awareness of various tools and art media;
- develop creativity, concentration, hand eye co-ordination, self discipline.
- Use lines, colours, materials, shapes, textures and size in their drawings, paintings, sculpture, claywork;
- Talk about and represent are from various groups;
- Talk about and represent art after field trips;
- Identify and represent art forms based on projects

## **Goal 2:**

**Children will discover and explore their talents in music and dance**

**Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

**Children will:**

- enjoy a variety of musical experiences vocal, instrumental and environmental sounds;
- explore and experiment with sound patterns;
- learn a variety of songs, finger plays, rhythms and dances;
- express themselves rhythmically to many genres of music;
- develop love for and interest in music;
- explore and experiment with a variety of musical instruments;
- learn about age appropriate music concepts through participatory experiences: soft, loud, fast, slow, names of instruments;
- observe others in skilled use of musical instruments, singing and dancing;
- develop coordination;
- have satisfying experiences with music in many contexts;
- appreciate local, national and international music.
- Use appropriate computer software and other technology to create and play music.
- Explore music individually and with small groups during free play/self initiated activities;
- Sing in a variety of simple songs (improvised and structured) alone and with groups
- Perform, create, listen and talk about music
- Become aware of, explore and experiment with a variety of musical instruments;
- Use an assortment of small percussion instruments;
- Perform simple rhythmic accompaniments including the steelpan. Respond to music in various tempos and styles;

## **Goal 3 :**

**Children will discover and explore their creative talents using drama**

**Learning Outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

**Children will:**

- engage in sociodramatic play alone and with others;
- be exposed to a variety of themes for sociodramatic play through age-appropriate children's literature and drama;
- talk with others and share in spontaneous dramatic presentations;
- share books and story reading and act out stories;
- experience special performing arts events;
- shout appreciation for the performing arts based on visit to or visit by artists.

#### **Goal 4:**

**Appreciation for local, national and international forms.**

**Learning outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

Children develop:

- an increasing awareness that the creative expressions of their peers should be valued
- positive attitudes towards the cultural art forms of their nation, including song, dance, drama and artwork.
- Awareness of the cultural expression of other countries in the Caribbean and in the World.
- Acquire dispositions such as curiosity, responding emotionally, valuing music, self initiated use of music.

#### **Goal 5:**

**Use various media to develop arts and aesthetic expressions.**

**Learning outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions**

**Children will**

- Understand and apply media, techniques and processes;
- Explore and experiment with various media;
- Use different media, techniques and processes to communicate ideas, experiences and stories;
- Use materials and tools in a safe and responsible manner.



***Creativity is feeling free  
to be flexible and  
original, to express  
one's own ideas in  
one's own way***

# SECTION THREE

*We must “implement curriculum that is thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, comprehensive, and likely to promote outcomes for all young children” (NAEYC and NAECS/SDE, 2002).*

## **PROCESSES OF CURRICULUM PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION: PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE**

“A proven curriculum that takes a holistic view of a child’s development; provides a variety of relevant, stimulating, and enjoyable learning experiences pertinent to both planting roots and learning to fly; encourages children to explore, play, and initiate their own learning activities; and respects and attends to individual differences. A quality curriculum will integrate education and care while attending to physical, social, and emotional needs as well as to cognitive or intellectual needs. It fosters sound relationships of the child to self, others, and the environment”. (Ball 1994; Moss and Pence 1995; NAEYC 1986; Basili 1994; Schweinhart 1995)

According to Gordon and Browne (2004), planning the curriculum is the process of translating theories of education into practice: it is spontaneous, yet organized; it is planned, yet it emerges; and it is based on children’s interest, tempered by adult awareness of children’s needs. The curriculum must also reflect awareness and sensitivity to diversity in all areas of the child’s life.

One of the aims of this ECCE Curriculum Guide is to provide guidelines that will assist ECCE teachers in developing the ideal Caribbean child. Educators and all the other partners who are involved in the three and four-year-old children’s learning and development must employ best practices, which are based on the principles and processes identified to govern practice.

### **CURRICULUM CONTEXT**

The context of the curriculum is made up of people and provision and gives children access to quality programmes.

#### **People**

The context of the curriculum comprises children, teachers and all the other partners who support the children’s learning and development.

### 1. *The Child*

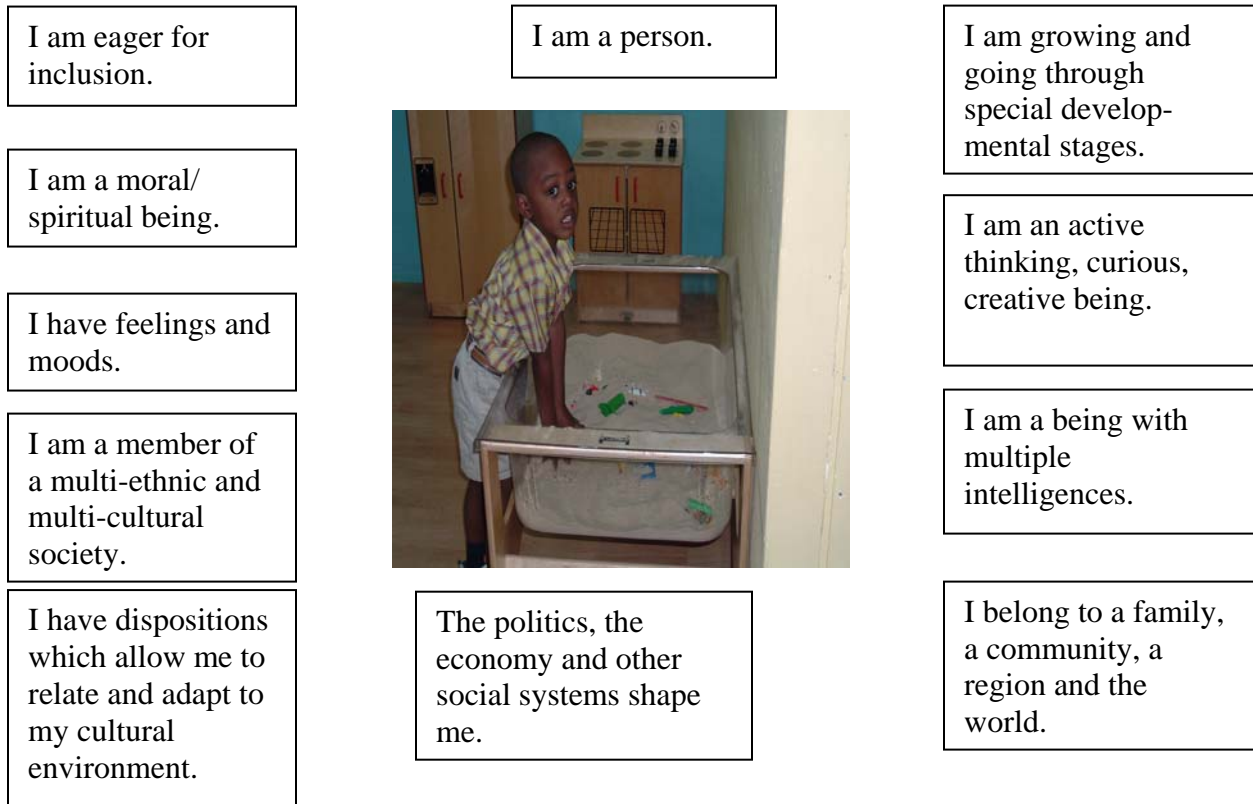


Figure 3.1: The child with special characteristics and needs

Based on the above characteristics, children must be provided with opportunities to imagine, explore, hypothesize, investigate, interact, solve problems, think critically, construct and co-construct new understandings of their worlds as they are supported in a nurturing environment.

## 2. *The Teacher*

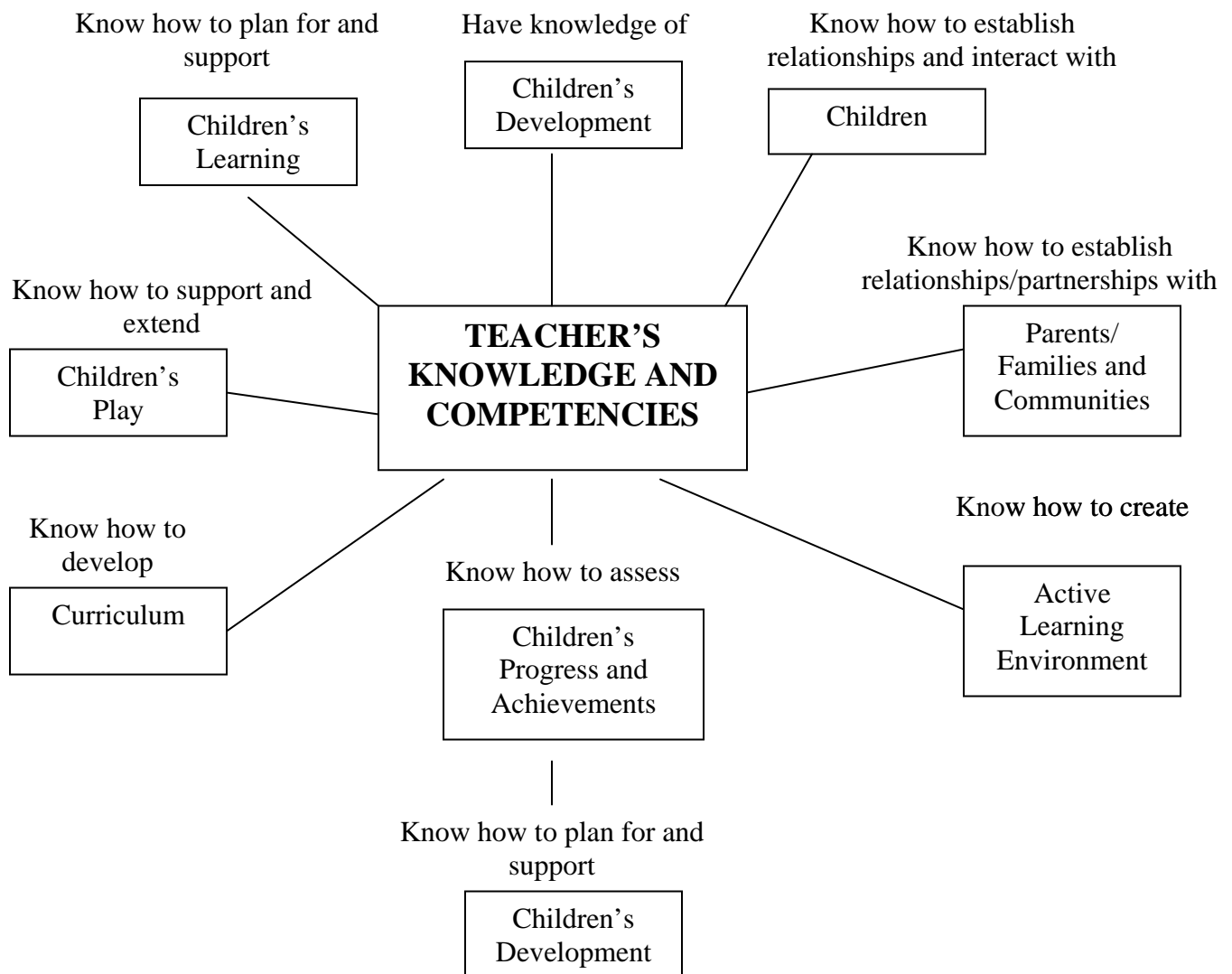
The teacher is primarily a **curriculum developer**. As curriculum developers, teachers must understand that curriculum development is a complex process requiring a commitment to a broad-based educational philosophy; extensive knowledge of human growth and development; practical experience with children and an understanding of their interest; and an ability to consolidate and interpret an ever-expanding body of research about teaching and learning (Hohmann and Weikart, 2002).

Therefore, the teacher as **enactor/enabler of the curriculum** will be expected to fulfill various roles in ensuring that curriculum standards are attained and maintained. During the processes of building relationships, scaffolding children's learning, planning for and assessing learning and engaging in lifelong learning themselves, teachers will function as:

- |                  |                        |
|------------------|------------------------|
| • Partner        | • Negotiator           |
| • Collaborator   | • Practitioner         |
| • Communicator   | • Creator              |
| • Mediator       | • Action Researcher    |
| • Supporter      | • Observer             |
| • Net-worker     | • Recorder             |
| • Researcher     | • Documenter           |
| • Strategist     | • Interpreter          |
| • Listener       | • Reflector            |
| • Interactionist | • Evaluator/Assessor   |
| • Problem-solver | • Theorist             |
| • Modeler        | • Investigator         |
| • Facilitator    | • Researcher           |
| • Questioner     | • Critic               |
| • Prompter       | • Life Long Learner    |
| • Provoker       | • Professional Partner |
| • Co-constructor | • Curriculum developer |

Table 3.1: Teacher Roles

The teacher will have to demonstrate the following knowledge and competencies when planning for children three to five years old (figure 3.2).



**Figure 3.2: Teachers' Knowledge and Competencies**

### **3. Partners**

Teachers must develop the following partnerships to promote children's learning:

- partnerships with children;
- partnerships with parents/family;
- partnerships with the community;
- professional partnerships

These partnerships are built on collegiality, trust and mutual respect and promote ownership of the curriculum.



## **Provision**

Provision is structured through time, space and materials. Knowledge of these must be used by teachers to organize a context which gives children access to the curriculum.

### **1. *Time – daily schedule***

Schedules are very important because decisions about scheduling greatly influence children's feelings of security, the accomplishment of performance goals, and the staff's effectiveness.

Scheduling involves planning the length of the session, timing and arranging activities during the session. Good schedules begin with friendly informal greetings; meeting children's personal needs; providing a balance between physical activity and rest; fitting the goals of the programme and the needs of the children – goals have a balance between indoor and outdoor activities, group and individual times and child-initiated and staff determined activities; must be readily understandable to children; must be flexible under unexpected circumstances; end with a general evaluation/reflection of activities, tidying of areas, indicate the next possible session and farewell.

### **2. *Space***

Effective learning environments for three and four-year-olds can best be facilitated by providing learning centres or interest areas. Learning centres help children to choose and focus on particular activities, giving them the freedom to pursue these activities on their own. Such hands-on-experiences are meaningful and relevant for their development. When working in learning centres young children manipulate materials, make choices, develop confidence in their problem solving abilities, expand their oral language, enhance their creative abilities as well as develop social skills and emotional competence as they interact with others. Teachers must ensure that the space is organized to:

- create a place of beauty
- welcome and empower parents
- encourage community
- be used as a place for listening and conversation
- challenge children to explore and learn
- encourage staff communication and reflection

Additionally, through working in these centres, children understand each other, develop responsibility, learn how to make plans and carry them to completion. Furthermore, they can move into more advanced play, develop a longer attention span, enhance their self-image, integrate

learning and understand symbols as they use concrete items in these centres. Among the learning centres that can be included are: blocks and manipulative, creative arts, language and literacy, dramatic play, sand and water play, computer and discovery/exploration.

### **3. *Materials***

The physical environment must be equipped with a wide variety of bountiful materials available on open shelves for children's use. These must include art materials, design supplies and materials and tools that offer many possibilities for children's creations. Materials could be found outside the classrooms, but they must be within the children's everyday experiences and they must promote language and thinking.

## EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

### **Integrated Curriculum**

Theoretically, the integrated curriculum approach is grounded in the theories of constructivism, brain-based learning, Gardner's Multiple Intelligences as well as best practices in the field of ECCE. It also incorporates the understandings of young children proposed by Bruner and Dewey who advocated engagement of children through experiential learning activities. The ECCE Curriculum design reflects an integrated, individualized, creative and developmentally appropriate approach for optimizing and nurturing children's holistic development.

Since the ECCE level focuses on the holistic development of the child, the Integrated Curriculum allows for the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions in all domains of development including social, emotional, physical, cognitive and spiritual. Additionally, it ensures that learning is meaningful and relevant to the child as it enables the focus on holistic development to be maintained.

The curriculum is integrated so that children's learning in all areas occurs primarily through the in-depth explorations of themes, which are organized in such a way that they cut across subject matter lines, bringing together various aspects of the curriculum into meaningful association. Accordingly, young children learn in spreads rather than in steps. For example, children making soup are learning the names of the vegetables (language), the shapes of the vegetables (geometry), the weight of the ingredients (math), and the effect of heating up the contents (science) not to mention social cooperation in making and enjoying a consumable product. The integrated curriculum is emergent, incorporating the use of **projects** and **themes** and using **learning centres** with a variety of materials and resources, which help to add depth to the curriculum, and four interactive processes are to be used in implementing. Themes, projects and activities are based on children's expressed or observed interests. It is within this context that the Integrated Curriculum is being advocated

## YOUNG CHILDREN LEARN BEST

through....  
active involvement  
sensory exploration  
investigation problem  
solving trial and error

through appropriate,  
meaningful and challenging  
activities which are matched  
to my needs.

by identifying with  
important role models and  
emulating their behaviour.

through language and  
communication .....  
by talking with other  
children and adults;  
by exchanging ideas;  
by sharing my feelings  
and experiences.

by observing  
objects, events and  
people.

by being intrinsically  
motivated and self-directed;  
by taking responsibility for  
my actions and my efforts.

through adults, and sometimes  
other children demonstrating  
specific skills.

when I feel confident and valued  
by others; through positive and  
genuine feedback, recognition,  
encouragement and success.



I learn through play,  
exploration and interaction.

when there is a  
partnership between  
my parents and  
educators, who  
collaborate and have  
appropriate  
expectations of me.

by repeating and  
consolidating experiences;  
by practicing skills; by  
reflecting upon, by  
making connections with  
and by building upon past  
experiences and thoughts.

by responding to and  
representing  
experiences in a  
variety of ways:  
talking, writing,  
modeling, designing,  
moving, painting,  
drawing.....

## Themes

- Themes are used as frameworks for planning and organizing integrative learning experiences reflective of how young children learn. Steps for Developmental Theme Planning:
- The teacher observes children to uncover the developmental themes they are exploring. The teacher provides further materials and activities to sustain the interest.
- The teacher bases her or his approach on inquiry and learning, which is focused on real lives, relationships, and issues.
- The teacher plans materials and activities to provoke curiosity and exploration of new ideas and questions that the children generate.
- The teacher places emphasis on “doing to know” – interaction and investigation with materials, people, and ideas interesting to the children.
- The teacher’s planning revolves around children’s strengths and interest. Discovering and building on children’s existing questions and ideas is central to the process.

## Projects

A Project is an investigation or in-depth study of a topic or theme, usually done by small groups within a class, an entire class or sometimes by individual children. Projects are research-based and focus on:

- i) Determining answers to questions presented by the teachers or their children.
- ii) Topics that are of interest to the children and related to curriculum goals.
- iii) Resources collected by children, by the teacher and also collected on field-trips.
- iv) The structured questions and problems engaging children in discussion, problem solving, investigating..
- v) Integration of the curriculum and opportunities for children to apply and use what they learn.
- vi) The development of higher order thinking skills

- vii) A structured approach which supports children's investigation as well as teacher-directed enquiry.
- viii) Parental participation, linking home and school.

### Phases and Structural Features of the Project

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
	BEGINNING THE PROJECT	DEVELOPING THE PROJECT	CONCLUDING THE PROJECT
<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sharing prior experience and current knowledge of the topic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparing for fieldwork and interviews.</li> <li>Reviewing fieldwork.</li> <li>Learning from secondary sources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparing to share the story of the project.</li> <li>Reviewing and evaluating the project.</li> </ul>
<b>FIELDWORK</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children talking about their experience with their parents and caregivers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Going out of the classroom to investigate a field site.</li> <li>Interviewing experts in the field or in the classroom.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluating the project through the eyes of an outside group.</li> </ul>
<b>REPRESENTATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using drawing, writing, construction, dramatic play to share prior experience and knowledge.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brief field sketches and notes.</li> <li>Using drawing, painting, writing, math diagrams, maps, to represent new learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Condensing and summarizing the story of the study to share the project with others.</li> </ul>
<b>INVESTIGATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raising questions on the basis of current knowledge.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigating initial questions.</li> <li>Fieldwork and library research.</li> <li>Raising further questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speculating about new questions.</li> </ul>
<b>DISPLAY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sharing representations of personal experiences of the topics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sharing representations of new experiences and knowledge.</li> <li>Keeping ongoing records of the project work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summary of the learning throughout the project.</li> </ul>

## Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of curriculum decision-making in the early years. The NAEYC and NAECS/SDE define assessment as the gathering of useful information for the purpose of constructing understanding about children that guide educational decisions (Bredekamp and Rosegrant, 1992).

Appropriate assessment for three and four-year old children should reflect the following guidelines:

- Assessment and curriculum must be integrated
- All areas of development should be assessed in order to capture an accurate picture of the whole child
- Assessment should be on-going and over time, with a systematic collection of samples
- Assessment can use a variety of tools and processes, such as collections of work, recordings, interviews and anecdotal records
- Assessment occurs during typical daily activities
- Assessment should demonstrate what a child can do alone and with assistance
- Teachers should report meaningful, descriptive information to parents.

The following methods of assessment can be employed for monitoring the development and learning of three and four-year old children:

- Developmental Checklists
- Parent Interviews
- Self Portraits
- Scribbling, Writing, and Drawing Samples
- Audio / Video Tapes
- Anecdotal Records
- Documentation (gathering evidence of children's learning). Evidence about children's learning must be organized and interpreted to feed back into planning and for parent conferencing.

The framework for authentic teaching and assessment involves getting baseline data to know where the child started, continue assessment to discover where he is going, and to determine whether the child is at the awareness, exploration, inquiry or utilization state. The information should be examined in terms of the four categories of goals: the knowledge the child is acquiring (ideas, concepts, facts); the skills the child is developing (physical social etc.); the disposition the child is acquiring (curiosity, creativity, interests, resourcefulness, responsibility); and feelings the child is developing (positive self-esteem, empowerment).



# SECTION FOUR

## **Some Important Indicators of Quality Curriculum Inputs**

Continuity and Transition, reflection, professional development and Standards of Practice are four important quality inputs.

### **Continuity and Transition**

Building continuity from home to the ECCE centre and from the ECCE centre to the primary school is an important aspect of the curriculum. The diverse factors and their early experiences from home that interact to shape their identities must be taken into consideration, as the children's understandings about their world and how to act in it constitute their knowledge and that knowledge allows them to participate as members of their communities, but not necessarily in new contexts. Therefore, as young children transition into new settings, they must have well-planned support. Teachers and families must collaborate to establish the vital continuity that is needed.

### **Reflection**

According to Mac Naughton (2003), reflection is an intellectually engaging activity geared to changing practices and transforming knowledge. It enables early childhood educators to make informed and careful choices about ideas, processes and relationships that underpin their work with young children and support how they shape curricula. Early Childhood educators should engage in individual reflection as well as group reflection.

- Individual reflection helps individuals to discover and transform their understanding and practice.
- Group reflection involves dialogue, which requires social connections with others. These connections entail conversations with others, support from others, colleagues willing to spend time together and a chance to share ideas and possibilities with others.

### **Professional development**

The aim of professional development is to promote high quality early childhood programmes for three and four-year-old children, their parents/families and communities. Early childhood care and education teachers must engage in professional development sessions and make use of the advisory support services which are offered to meet the diverse needs of current and future teachers/educators as well as those of parent/family and community. Membership in professional organizations is also valuable as they serve to create professional partnerships which provide work support, and help teachers to keep up with current trends and exchange best practices, act as advocates for children and provide opportunities for children's voices to be heard.

## **Standards of Practice**

Bredekamp and Copple (1997) pointed out that the quality of an early childhood programme can also be determined by the degree to which it meets the standards of the profession. A standard based environment is important in early childhood education as standards usually influence and are therefore reflected in curriculum planning, organization and assessment. The Standards of Practice for Regulating Early Childhood Services in Trinidad and Tobago (2005) serve as a frame of reference for the development of the curriculum guide. The curriculum standards that promote child-centered instructional practices and measures that will help guide pre primary care and education and support and encourage best practices. The curriculum standards tell us what children should know and what tasks they should be able to perform. They are informed by the knowledge gained from a mix of research and practice and clearly reflect the enormous capabilities and potential of young children and the endless possibilities for learning.

ECCE teachers must have knowledge of these standards and adhere to them as they contribute to high quality ECCE programmes. While all Early Childhood Service Providers must comply with all the Standards of Practice, the following two categories: Quality Early Childhood Development Practices and Quality Standards for children between three and five years old relate directly to the curriculum and will help to provide important guidelines for curriculum planning.

### **3. QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES**

#### **3.1 Equal Opportunities**

- 3.1.1** Mandatory equal opportunities must be promoted for adults and children of both sexes with regard to employment, training and admission to the service provided. (Convention on the Rights of The Child, (CRC), 1989, **Article 2**).
- 3.1.2** All members of staff must treat the children and families, to whom an ECS is provided, with equal concern and, in doing so, must in the care that they give to each child, acknowledge and respect their specific needs with regard to their religious persuasion, culture and linguistic background as well as gender and ability. (Convention on the Rights of The Child, (CRC), 1989, **Article 3**).
- 3.1.3** All settings must show evidence of how they carry out the standards above. The ECS must have a policy statement and guidelines for staff members about how this should be implemented.
- 3.1.4** It is important that children are called by their given name, and that this is not corrupted or shortened. However, during the course of a child's stay at an ECCE Centre he/she should become used to responding to his or her legal name in preparation for formal schooling. In event that the guardian specifies, the child will have the right to be called by the name specified.

### **3.2 Children with Special Needs**

- 3.2.1** Every child benefits from the stimulation he or she receives from contact with other children and those with a physical or learning disability are no exception. Children gain from planned care and education which integrates able-bodied children and children with special needs. This contact at an early age may facilitate understanding that all people have equal value irrespective of ability or mobility. Parents/educators/caregivers of children with special needs may also benefit from the support they can gain from the setting.
- 3.2.2** If special needs children are registered, providers should acquire the support/resources necessary and ensure, wherever possible, that appropriate facilities, e.g. wheelchair access, is available. Lower staff/child ratios may be necessary and negotiated on an individual basis, or special arrangements made with parents/educators/caregivers to provide the support required.
- 3.2.3** Where children's needs have not been identified or where the ECS requires advice or assistance in identifying needs, parents/guardians should be consulted and permission sought to approach an appropriate referral agency.

### **3.3 Discipline/Managing Children's Behaviour**

- 3.3.1** Corporal punishment is strictly forbidden. Staff must treat all children with respect. A child must not be smacked, shaken, treated roughly, called names, teased or belittled in any way (CRC). There are no circumstances in which such punishment can be justified, and staff will be subject to disciplinary proceedings should such an occasion arise.
- 3.3.2** All cases of corporal punishment must be reported.
- 3.3.3** Staff must have written policy guidelines displayed within the centre stating what types of behaviour would be regarded as developmentally unacceptable and inappropriate and how such behaviour should be dealt with. These must present a positive and consistent approach to discipline that is not destructive or damaging to the child, but preserves the child's dignity.
- 3.3.4** Parents must be informed about these guidelines and the setting's policy with regard to discipline. Staff must endeavour to explain the behaviour policy to parents and to consult with them on the rationale for its implementation in the ECS.
- 3.3.5** No action that is inhumane, degrading or humiliating may be used at any time for any reason. (*See Appendix E "Some Alternatives to Punishment"*)

### **3.4 Child Protection**

- 3.4.1** Staff in all settings has responsibility to be aware of the law and the Government's policy regarding Child Protection (Convention on the Rights of the Child). This involves recognizing, recording and reporting signs of child abuse and/or neglect (See Appendix J).
- 3.4.2** Written internal procedures must be in place for staff to pass any concerns on to administrators within the setting, so that they can be recorded and acted upon appropriately.

### **3.5 Confidentiality**

- 3.5.1** Staff must respect the right of the child and his/her family to complete confidentiality unless there are child protection concerns, in which case the government's policy applies.
- 3.5.2** Confidential records, including computer records, **must be secured**. Provision must be made for storage and safe keeping of these records.
- 3.5.3** Care must be taken over the disposal of old records on children who have left the setting, as these may contain confidential information.
- 3.5.4** Confidential records must form part of the transfer documents to the primary school principal. The ECCE centres might want to make duplicates to keep for at least one year.

### **3.6 Partnership with parents/educators/caregivers**

- 3.6.1** A policy of partnership between *parents/guardians* and the setting must be developed, offering *parents/guardians* a variety of ways to support and/or become involved in the setting's operation, as well as in the individual development of their own child. *The model might be negotiated between the ECS provider and the parents/guardians.*
- 3.6.2** *A policy hand book is needed for parents/guardians and must include the following:*
- Name, address, telephone number of setting, with registration and insurance details
  - Names of the provider and the administrator and qualifications
  - Admission criteria
  - Ages of children admitted and the number of places available
  - Hours of opening and periods of closure for holidays
  - Fees, methods of payment, arrears and non payment
  - Attendance and health rules
  - Settling-in procedure for new children
  - Arrival and departure procedures, including details of those authorised to deliver and collect the child, and procedures for late collection of children

- Arrangements for access to the child by relatives/others and details of court orders pertaining to custody of and access to the child
- Information on the curriculum
- What the children will do: activities, play materials and routines/schedules
- Assessment procedures
- Arrangements for children with special educational needs
- Field Trips
- Discipline policy and behaviour guidelines
- Equal opportunities policy
- Child protection responsibilities
- Partnership with parents/caregivers
- Arrangement for festivals and birthdays
- Illness/accident, missing children and incident procedures
- Complaints procedures
- Any expectations of parents/caregivers e.g. spare clothing, nappies, etc.
- Accessibility of other written policies and procedures e.g. fire drill.
- Administration of medication

**3.6.3** Written placement agreements/contracts must be made and reviewed as appropriate.

**3.6.4** Ways must be sought for sharing information, including those items listed above, with parents/caregivers, e.g. notice boards, newsletters, leaflets, parents/caregivers' meetings, etc.

**3.6.5** Parents/guardians must be kept informed about all significant issues concerning the progress and welfare of their children.

### **3.7 Supervision**

**3.7.1** *Children must **never** be left unsupervised.*

### **3.8 Physical Care of Children**

**3.8.1** Children must be physically well cared for. Particular attention must be paid to hair and skin care of all children, as agreed with the parents/caregivers.

**3.8.2** Appropriate treatment for children with a skin complaint must be followed in consultation with parents/caregivers.



- Plain coloured badges, identifying the setting and giving the telephone number.
- 3.10.7** Careful consideration must be given to the need to take first aid equipment and qualified First Aiders on any field trip. This will depend on the length of the field trip and the availability of immediate and appropriate assistance. Appropriate First Aid support must normally be taken on group trips outside the immediate locality.
- 3.10.8** A list of children (with the names of their parents/guardians and contact numbers) must be taken on field trips with a copy left at the setting. The list should include pre-seating arrangements for vehicles.
- 3.10.9** Parents/guardians must give written consent for field trips. Specific consent for special field trips will be needed and parents/guardians need to know when and where their children are going and what time they will be back.
- 3.10.10** *Booster seats and/or car seats should be provided and used as appropriate for children under three. Vehicles must be properly maintained and the drivers adequately insured.*
- 3.10.11** Each adult must be clear which children they are responsible for. There must be register checks at the start of the field trips and on leaving the destination, with regular head counts during the trip.

## **5. QUALITY STANDARDS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN BETWEEN THREE AND FIVE YEARS OLD**

### **5.1 Curriculum Standards**

*Curriculum standards are broad yet measurable statements to which staff should adhere in order to provide quality programmes.*

- 5.1.1** *Provisions must be made to develop children's knowledge, understanding and skills as outlined in the National ECCE Curriculum Guide.*
- 5.1.2** *There must be equitable opportunities for learning irrespective of gender, disability, ethnicity or background.*
- 5.1.3** *Activities planned to facilitate children's learning and development must be integrated through Themes and/or Projects.*
- 5.1.4** *The programme must be planned so that children acquire life skill as they work and play during their daily routines.*



## **5.2 Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

- 5.2.1** *A well-planned programme of personal, social and emotional development must be provided to help children to work, play and co-operate with others.*
- 5.2.2** *High expectations of behaviour must be set and respect for self, others and the environment must be encouraged.*

## **5.3 Cognitive Development/Intellectual Empowerment**

### **5.3.1 *Knowledge and understanding the world***

- 5.3.1.2** *There must be opportunities for children to respond in different ways to their experience of the world and to take part in appropriate celebrations and festivals.*
- 5.3.1.3** *The programme must promote cultural valuing such as pride in national identity.*
- 5.3.1.4** *Development of children's knowledge and understanding of their environment must be encouraged as this provides a foundation for historical, geographical, scientific and technological learning and can also contribute to children's awareness of social issues.*

### **5.3.2 *Language and Literacy Development***

- 5.3.2.1** *Language development/effective communication must be given a strong focus by providing opportunities for children to informally speak and share their views with their peers, and other members of the community.*
- 5.3.2.2** *Opportunities for children to develop and practice the five elements of language and literacy (speaking, listening, reading, writing and viewing) must have a high priority, with emphasis on learning through talk.*
- 5.3.2.3** *There must be encouragement of the use of creative and expressive skills.*
- 5.3.2.4** *Creole or dialect must be recognized as the first language of most children under six and be accepted, valued and respected. Conversations with children must be in Standard English, offering children many opportunities to hear, experience and speak in Standard English.*
- 5.3.2.5** *Emergent Literacy must be supported.*
- 5.3.2.6** *The curriculum must encourage the use of a wide variety of reading materials/books.*
- 5.3.2.7** *There must be a comfortable book corner and listening area where children can hear stories read to them by an adult or on tape, or where they can retreat and browse through books.*

### **5.3.3 Mathematical Concepts**

- 5.3.3.1** *Mathematical learning should be activity oriented and planned within four broad areas: number; patterns, shape, space and position; comparison of measure including time and money; statistics (information gathering), tables and charts.*
- 5.3.3.2** *There must be promotion of an awareness of using gathered information to solve problems, reason and gain understanding of events and experiences*
- 5.3.3.3** *Opportunities to capitalize on children's self chosen activities, (for example, encouraging children to compare the heights of blocks) should be fully exploited.*
- 5.3.3.4** *Mathematical thinking must involve the process of communication, problem solving and representation.*

### **5.4 Physical Development**

- 5.4.1** *Wellness must be promoted to ensure children's physical health and holistic development.*
- 5.4.2** *There must be a carefully planned outdoor and indoor area to support children's wellness*
- 5.4.3** *If there is no access to outdoor space, arrangements must be made to enable children to use large apparatus and to move with confidence, control and awareness of space. (Preference however, is for outdoor space.)*

### **5.5 Creative/Aesthetic Development**

- 5.5.1** *Opportunities must be provided for developing children's ability to express ideas and feelings in creative ways. These must include a wide range of experiences in art, craft, music, dance and imaginative play.*

### **5.6 Spiritual and Moral Development**

- 5.6.1** *Focus must be placed on building spiritual awareness as well as positive morals and values. Spiritual awareness refers to the knowledge of a supreme being and the ways to communicate with this supreme being. Moral development refers to acquiring the concepts of what is right and wrong and good citizenship..*
- 5.6.2** *This area must encompass important aspects of spiritual and moral development including the development of personal values such as honesty, fairness, independence, respect and an understanding of self and others.*

## **5.7 Planning a Balanced Curriculum**

**5.7.1** *All plans must be written and well articulated within the environment for parents/supervisors and visitors to see.*

**5.7.1** *Plans should:*

- *identify the purpose of the activities clearly and what children are intended to learn;*
- *summarize what children are to do, how they will be grouped, how staff are deployed and the resources needed;*
- *show how children's knowledge and understanding can be extended and adapted to suit children who learn at different rates or who have particular needs;*
- *be based on the assessments made by staff of children's progress.*

**5.7.2** *At each setting the Curriculum should be broad, balanced and coherent, covering all the areas stated in the National Curriculum Guide. There should be balance both within and across the areas.*

**5.7.3** *Children's words and photographs of events must be displayed and also be kept on record.*

**5.7.4** *The programme should take into account the ages and stages of development of different children, including any who have special educational needs.*

## **5.8 Assessment of Children's Attainment and Progress**

**5.8.1** *There must be careful assessment based on regular observation of children.*

**5.8.2** *Assessment must be based on shared observations of those who work with the children as well as parents/guardians.*

**5.8.3** *Assessments should help staff to listen and respond to children, encourage them, build on their responses and steer them towards new learning or clearer understandings both in the settings and at home.*

**5.8.4** *Staff expectations for children's progress and attainment should be based on child development theories and principles as well as the best cultural practices.*

**5.8.5** *Staff should show awareness of anti-bias issues such as gender, religion and culture.*

## **5.9 Promoting Children's Learning**

- 5.9.1** *Resources should be organized to allow independent access for children.*
- 5.9.2** *The range of materials, equipment and apparatus should be sufficient and appropriate to support good teaching in each of the eight areas of learning. The resources should support the learning of all children, including any with special needs. The accommodation and play space, indoors and outdoors, also need to be suitable.*
- 5.9.3** *An attractive and comfortable place to sit with a variety of books, should be provided*
- 5.9.4** *Classrooms should have writing areas with a variety of paper and tools to scribble and write.*
- 5.9.5** *Early childhood spaces should have an imaginative play area with a variety of resources to promote and extend role play.*
- 5.9.6** *Dry and wet sand and a water tray should be provided, each with suitable equipment for filling, pouring, measuring, and so on.*
- 5.9.7** *Within the Centre's space, growing and living things should be included as part of the everyday environment.*
- 5.9.8** *Children should be provided with interesting objects to sort, count, feel and describe;*
- 5.9.9** *Equipment should also promote early mathematical and scientific investigations.*
- 5.9.10** *Variety of indigenous small and large materials found within the local community should be used.*
- 5.9.11** *Cooking equipment and materials for use by children should be available.*
- 5.9.12** *Range of creative media such as paint, clay wood and junk materials should be part of curriculum resources.*
- 5.9.13** *Range of musical instruments (home-made, durable) tapes, CD's and records for listening to music should be available.*
- 5.9.14** *Artifacts and pictures that reflect both the local and the wider community should be evident.*
- 5.9.15** *Opportunities for active, first-hand experience both indoors and out-doors should be provided.*
- 5.9.16** *The indoor area should be enhanced with labeled displays at children's eye level that include children's work, pictures and posters, letters of the alphabet, a number line with the numerals 1 to 10, and mini-exhibitions with which children can interact.*
- 5.9.17** *The outdoor area should, if possible, have different surfaces and a garden area for planting and growing, and be equipped with climbing and balancing apparatus and wheeled toys. Where there is no direct access to outdoor space, arrangements should be made by the setting to ensure opportunities are provided for children's physical development. Displays should be used to stimulate as well as highlight children's representational skills.*

**5.9.18** *Staff should use good interpersonal skills to encourage children to communicate their own ideas.*

## **5.10 Effective Home/ECCE Communication**

**5.10.1** *Effective links must be established with parents/guardians providing opportunities for the exchange of knowledge and information, which will contribute to children's learning.*

**5.10.2** *There should be a notice board displaying helpful information about the setting and its daily events.*

**5.10.3** *There may be booklets for parents/guardians about the setting and how to help their child at home.*

**5.10.4** *Written forms of communication need to be complemented by informal and verbal communication initiated by staff as frequently as possible.*

**5.10.5** *Parents/guardians should be welcomed into the setting and encouraged to share their particular insights and expertise.*

**5.10.6** *Settings must actively promote partnerships with parents/guardians by encouraging them to help in learning centres and with educational visits/field trips.*

**5.10.7** *Professional contacts with other relevant agencies must occur as required.*

**5.10.8** *Information about children should be shared with the previous and next setting. All records should be passed to the school as part of the transition process. It must be noted that confidentiality must be maintained at all times.*

## **5.11 Monitoring The Quality Of The Programme**

*The success of a setting depends, in part, on the ways in which the strengths and weaknesses of the programme are supervised. Supervision includes monitoring, planning and assessment.*

**5.11.1** **Informal Monitoring** - *Much of the monitoring in ECCE settings may be informal. Staff may work together in the same room and will be generally aware of what others are doing. There may be regular, informal meetings in which all members of staff discuss children's responses to the activities provided and in which they plan the next phase of work. Joint work of this nature helps to ensure consistency in planning, delivery and assessment.*

**5.11.2** *Individual members of staff must be given feedback by the principal on their quality of work.*

**5.11.3** **Formal Monitoring** - *A more formal approach should also be used when the principal of the setting regularly collects and appraises activity teaching plans and records to see how consistent they are in quality. The formal approach may include annual appraisal, or*

- regular supervision sessions, in which the principal of the setting has a discussion with an individual member of staff about his or her work and training needs.*
- 5.11.4** *Targets/standards of performance for teachers should be set as an outcome of the decisions.*
- 5.11.5** *Appraisal may include a formal observation of the work of members of staff.*

**5.12 Extra Curricula Activities**

- 5.12.1** *It must be noted that parents must give written consent for any extra curricula activities for which children have to leave the setting e.g. swimming (in a pool). The adult/child ratio for these lessons must be 1 adult: 1 child (adults should be qualified in first aid and life saving). All other safety precautions for use of the pool by young children must be met.*
- 5.12.2** *Principals/teachers should request copies of policy on safety precautions from the swimming instructors/pool owners. They should share these with parents/guardians and also keep them on record.*

## CONCLUDING QUOTATION

It is absolutely clear that there is going to be a need for a different type of teaching and a different approach to education. We are going to need what we call our orientation three thinkers. They are essentially people who understand the interconnectedness of the world and how to work with a messy environment where you've got lots of children engaged in their own real projects. Teachers are going to need to know how to function with an ever-changing curriculum, with a massive in-flow of information, with a changing cultural environment because different ethnic groups are meeting within their classroom. The person who can do that is not a deliverer of information. The person who can do that is not somebody who is in control of what happens, it is a person who can create the conditions so that people can take charge of their own learning with support from resources in the environment. It's a fundamentally different conception of what it means to be a teacher.

- Geoffrey Caine, ASCD Interview 1997



# **CHILDREN LEARN AS THEY LIVE**

A Child That Lives With  
Ridicule  
Earns To Be Timid

A Child That Lives With  
Fairness  
Learn Justice

A Child That Lives With  
Criticism  
Learns To Condemn

A Child That Lives With  
Praise  
Learns To Appreciate

A Child That Lives With  
Distrust  
Learns To Be Deceitful

A Child That Lives With  
Sharing  
Learns To Be Considerate

A Child That Live With  
Hostility  
Learns To Fight

A Child That Lives With  
Knowledge  
Learns Wisdom

A Child That Lives With  
Affection  
Learns To Love

A Child That Lives With  
Tolerance  
Learns To Be Patient

A Child That Lives  
With Approval  
Learns To Like Himself

A Child That Live With  
Security  
Learns To Have Faith

A Child That Lives With  
Encouragement  
Learns Confidence

A Child That Lives With  
Happiness  
Learns To Find Live And Beauty In The  
World



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The ECCE classroom must be a place for our three and four-year-old children to pursue their interests, to experiment, to reflect, to construct and reconstruct meaning from experiences

## **FOREWORD**

Supported by the Inter-American Development Bank, Caribbean Development Bank and UNICEF Caribbean Area Office and organized by the Caribbean Child Development Centre (CCDC) of the University of the West Indies. The delegates including Dr. Carol Logie and Zita Wright from Trinidad and Tobago, contributed to the development of the framework for learning outcomes and goals for early childhood development in the Caribbean, which A C in.

### **Planning and Organizing a theme.**

To plan and organize a theme, the ECCE teacher has to

#### **STEP 1- *Gather information***

##### **Listen and observe the children**

- What are their current interests and issues?
- What types of activities are they presently enjoying - motivated to complete?
- What are the needs of children (individual and group needs)?

#### **STEP 2- *Brainstorm***

- Once you have selected a theme, think of all the concepts and learning experiences you could introduce to the children.
- Delete the ideas that are not possible due to lack of resources, time or whatever.
- Underline those experiences that are interesting and would benefit and suit the needs of the children.

#### **STEP 3 - *Create a Curriculum***

- For each activity/content area in your classroom, list the theme activities that would fall under each one.

#### **STEP 4 - *Create a Development Web, which will reflect learning outcomes:***

- Review your short and long term objectives for individual children and the group.

- Determine how these skills will be presented and reinforced throughout the learning activities related to your selected theme.

### **STEP 5 – *Develop theme related learning centres***

- Identify the main concepts you want to emphasize throughout the theme.
- Develop learning centers, which will stress the main concepts as well as others.
- Generate vocabulary.

### **STEP 6 - *Organize***

- List/Organize resources you will need while implementing this theme (teacher resources, children's books, pictures to display, materials, guests to the classroom parent resources etc.)
- Consider how you Will change/add to present learning centers and if you will create new ones.

### **STEP 7 – *Motivating the children***

- Devise an activity or experience, which will motivate (whet the learning appetite) of the children.
- . A field trip which gives the children common data base and helps them develop interesting questions.
- Present visual materials, film, display pictures etc.
- Bring new materials/experiences to the classroom and stimulate a discussion with the children, which shares known information and raise questions on what they would like to find out. For example introducing a new hamster provides a stimulus for learning about classroom animals.

## **SUGGESED BEGINNINGS**

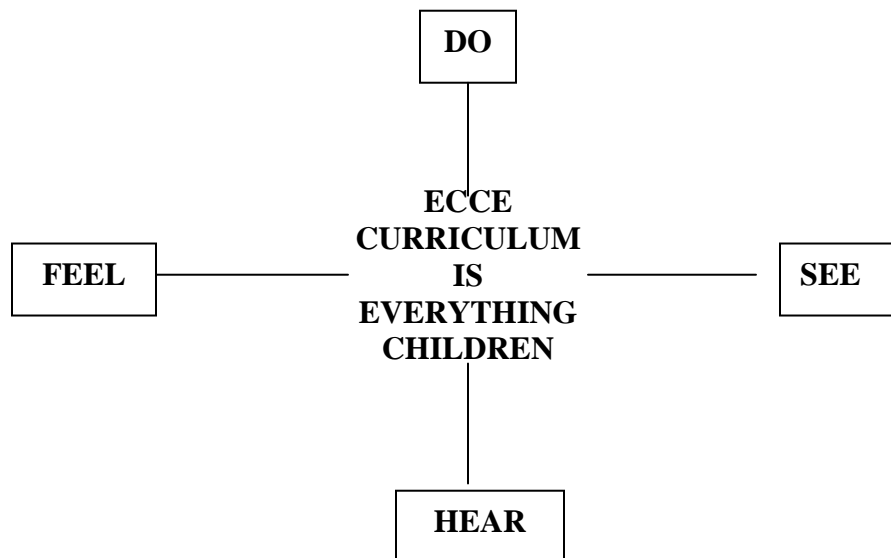
During the initial phases of a classroom theme, it is essential to find out and record what children already know about this subject.(KW L chart). This can be done through discussion and experience charts, opportunities for children to create drawings, constructions writings on the subject, and or allowing children to respond to broad thought provoking questions about the subject

## **DURATION OF THEME**

This depends on many factors

- Children's continued interest.
- The depth and complexity of study.
- Teacher resources, etc.

According to Gordon and Browne (2004), early childhood care and education (ECCE) curriculum, whether planned or unplanned is everything children do, see, hear and feel (Figure 1.2). It engages the children actively in the learning process, provides a variety of developmentally appropriate learning experiences, and encourages children to pursue their own interests in the context of life in the community and the world (NAEYC, 1998). These statements influenced the content of this curriculum guide.



**Figure 1.2: Aspects of ECCE Curriculum (Adapted from Gordon and Browne, 2004)**

. Furthermore, it highlights the different principles that were selected to support and shape the curriculum guidelines to ensure meaningfulness to three and four year old children, their families and their communities.

## **The child in context**



Children are at the centre of early childhood education and all the decisions about pedagogy are governed by the needs of children, their families and communities. People and provision give children access to opportunities for learning and development. The special characteristics of the child (figure 3), inform how children learn and therefore how teachers must facilitate their learning.

During child initiated as well as teacher-planned activities and based on the High/Scope Model - plan, do, review (Hohmann and Weikart, 2002), children are afforded the opportunity to share their experiences, explain how they plan and solve problems, develop thinking skills and recall what they do. Furthermore, for quality experiences to be provided, daily interactions must occur between children and adults.

The following Curriculum Standards as stated in the White Policy Paper: Standards for Regulating Early Childhood Services (2005) played a pivotal role in developing the strands, goals and learning outcomes identified in this document.

## **6. QUALITY STANDARDS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN BETWEEN THREE AND FIVE YEARS OLD**

### **5.1 Curriculum Standards**

*Curriculum standards are broad yet measurable statements to which staff should adhere in order to provide quality programmes.*

**5.1.1** *Provisions must be made to develop children's knowledge, understanding and skills as outlined in the National ECCE Curriculum Guide.*

**5.1.5** *There must be equitable opportunities for learning irrespective of gender, disability, ethnicity or background.*

**5.1.6** *Activities planned to facilitate children's learning and development must be integrated through Themes and/or Projects.*

**5.1.7** The programme must be planned so that children acquire life skill as they work and play during their daily routines.

The early children period is a time of rapid growth and development and during this period, the foundation for future learning is being laid and the dispositions required for the pursuit of lifelong learning are being formulated. It is therefore critical that the learning experiences to which children are exposed during this period are developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant and meaningful in the context of how young children learn.