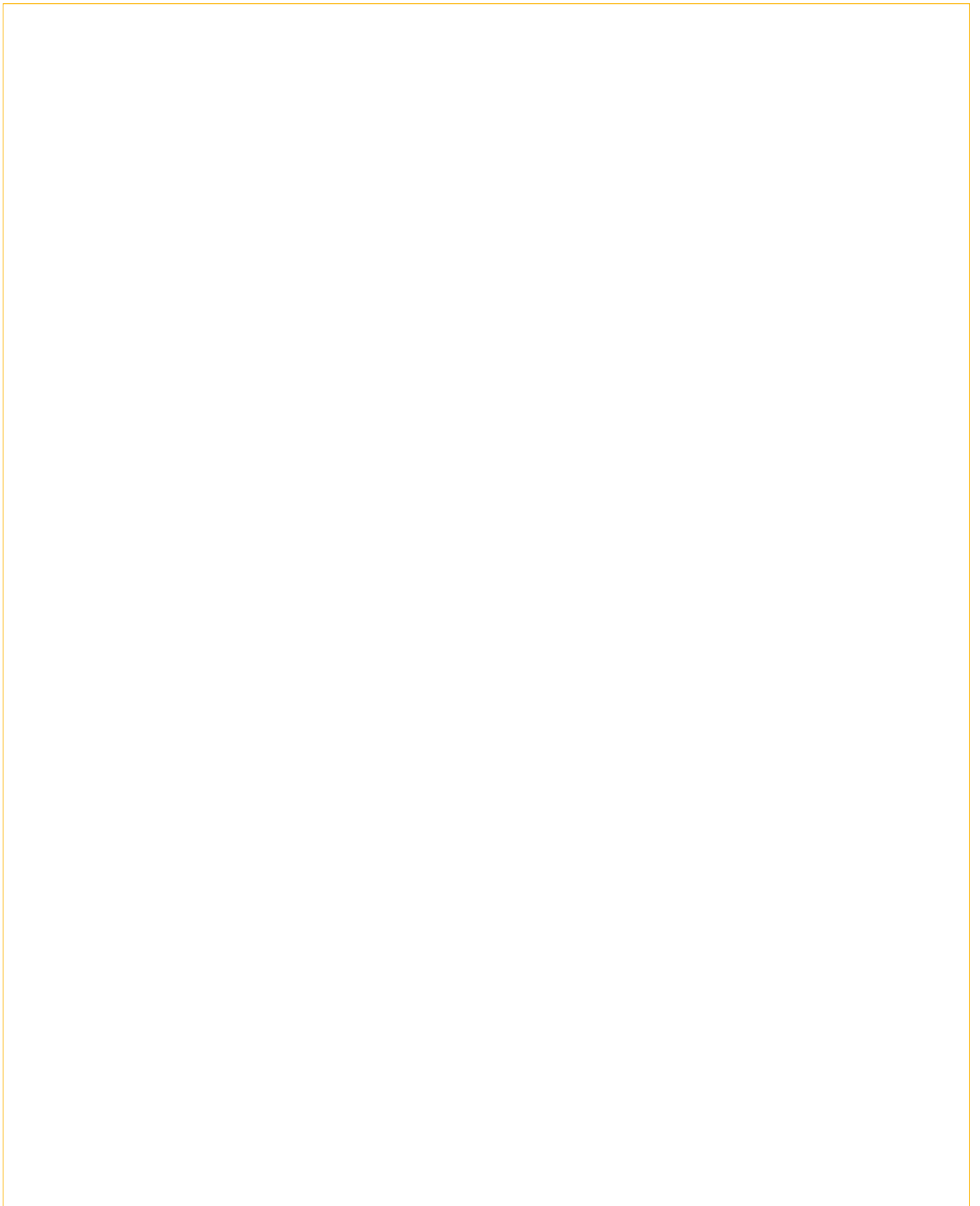


# Understanding the *British Columbia Early Learning Framework:* From Theory to Practice





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## Part 1

# Focus on the *British Columbia Early Learning Framework: Theory*

## Purpose of this Document

This document is a supplement to the British Columbia Early Learning Framework. Part 1 provides ideas and suggestions to guide the reader to reflect on the underlying vision, principles and learning goals set out in the Framework. Part 2 offers specific tools for implementing the Framework into practice.

## Introduction to the Framework

As early childhood educators, we are more than teachers. Along with children and their families, we are part of a community of learners. Our curiosity causes us to wonder about the children, examine our programs, and evaluate our own work with families and children. We are learners as well as early childhood educators, and we must continually examine, reflect and re-assess our work. Assessing our work and ourselves is part of learning and growing as individuals and as groups of colleagues. It is in this spirit that the Province of British Columbia developed its unique Early Learning Framework.

### What is early learning?

“Early learning refers to the emerging and expanding of young children’s physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and creative capacities” (*British Columbia Early Learning Framework*, p. 2).

### How does the Framework “see” children?

“All children are born with a curiosity about themselves, other people, and the world around them, and in this sense are born learners” (*British Columbia Early Learning Framework*, p. 2).

### What is the relationship between children and the adults around them?

“As they grow, [children] develop both their capacity and dispositions to learn through supportive relationships with their families, with other children and adults in their communities, and with their environments” (*British Columbia Early Learning Framework*, p. 2).

The Framework acknowledges that “Early Learning is the foundation for lifelong learning, and the basis for individual, social, economic, and environmental well-being” (*British Columbia Early Learning Framework*, p. 2).



## Background to the Framework

Three British Columbia government ministries were involved in creating the Framework. The Ministry of Education worked in partnership with the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport and the Ministry of Children and Family Development, recognizing their shared roles in supporting children's health and well-being.

Many others provided their views, including

- parents/families
- early childhood educators
- child care providers
- Aboriginal organizations
- teachers
- researchers and post-secondary institutions.



### What is the purpose of the *British Columbia Early Learning Framework*?

At its heart, the Framework strives to guide early childhood educators and adults who work with children and families – and families themselves – to reflect on children's enormous capacity for learning in the early years. The Framework is designed to support the development of tools needed to stimulate learning and create learning environments that build on each child's unique potential.

At the same time, the Framework recognizes the individual, social, cultural, and linguistic identities of B.C.'s children and families. Acknowledging the richness of these identities and providing the tools to support diversity is an essential element of the Framework.

### Who should be familiar with the Framework?

- early childhood educators, early years professionals and other service providers
- parents/families and other caregivers
- kindergarten and primary school teachers/educators and administrators.

If you are an early childhood educator, early years professional, or other type of service provider, the Framework and this document will give you tools to

- reflect on the early learning experiences you create with and for children
- guide programs and activities you provide for children
- assess and document children's early learning in effective, innovative ways
- facilitate dialogue with children about their learning
- support dialogue with and between families about their children's early learning.

If you are a parent/family member or other caregiver, the Framework and this document will serve to

- stimulate reflections on your children's early learning
- support you to engage in a dialogue with early childhood educators and others about your children.

If you are a First Nations, Inuit or Metis parent/family member, other caregiver, early childhood educator or other service provider, the Framework may provide a foundation for beginning a dialogue – with each other and with the sector – about the early learning needs of B.C.'s Aboriginal children.

"Finally, the Framework provides a focal point for dialogue among British Columbians, so that together we can develop a common language and greater understanding of the vital importance of early learning for all young children" (*British Columbia Early Learning Framework*, p. 3).

## Image of the Child

The concept of the image of the child, which emerged from the work in the Italian town of Reggio Emilia, is a key concept in the British Columbia Early Learning Framework. Please refer to page 4 of the Framework.

We all have different images of the child, but we rarely make them explicit in our practice. By examining our practice, perhaps we can gain insight into our image of the child and make this image visible to ourselves as early childhood educators, and to families and children. By making the image visible, we are able to describe and understand in depth our beliefs about children and how those beliefs influence our practices and relationships with children.

For example, making your culturally-specific images of the child explicit is essential to making the Framework equitably relevant to Aboriginal children.

### My Practice and the Image of the Child

By making our image of the child visible to ourselves and by talking about it with other early childhood educators, families and ultimately the children themselves, we can further our aims to create respectful programs and environments, which build on the capabilities and complex identities of the children we care for.

Let's begin to think about our practice in a way that shows us how to make our images of the child visible.

- What is my image of the child? For example, do I see the child as an empty cup waiting to be filled with knowledge? Do I see the child as a seed that needs watering and care to grow?



- How is the Framework's image of the child reflected in my practice? For example, how are children's complex identities supported in my program?
- What assumptions are embedded in the way I look at, talk about and work with children?
- How do these meanings lead to "taken-for-granted" assumptions about children?
- What can I do to bring my practice more in line with the Framework's image?
- How can I know if this image of the child is evident in my program?
- What does inclusion mean to me? Are all children welcome?
- How do I take into account each child's individual abilities and challenges?



- How do I take into account each child's unique familial, social, cultural, linguistic and spiritual heritage?
- How do I honour the Aboriginal child's cultural, linguistic and spiritual identity?
- How have I balanced my image of the Aboriginal child, recognizing gifts, strengths and resilience?
- How have I come to understand the particular images of Aboriginal children (i.e. what processes have I used to acquire knowledge about the culturally-determined images of the child)? For example, besides the child's parents/family, do I know who to talk to? (i.e. have I identified, spoken to/consulted with Aboriginal Elders, cultural teachers/advisors and other wisdom keepers)?
- Which sciences do I bring into my own image of the child (e.g., child development, psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, genetics, biology, traditional cultural and ecological knowledge)?

Think about how you can share your responses with your early years colleagues, Kindergarten and primary school educators, Aboriginal communities, parents/families and children.

## Image of the family in the Framework

Although families should be recognized as their child's first, lifelong and most important educators, the Framework also recognizes and supports the significant amount of "shared responsibility" that exists between families, community, and professionals. The Framework also recognizes that family diversity includes families with significant challenges and that there is evidence that such challenges can negatively impact children's healthy development and early learning. Promoting children's early learning must, therefore, include building the capacity of professionals to recognize, respond appropriately to, and work effectively with families, in the best interests of the child's early learning.



## Image of the community in the Framework

Communities and governments play an important role in the lives of children. By working together, communities can nurture and support families in their efforts to promote children's learning and overall well-being. Relationships and dialogue will contribute to effective partnerships and relationships between families and communities.

### My Practice and the Image of the Family and Community

The ideas embedded in the Framework's description of the image of the child reflect the importance of parents/families as the child's first caregivers and educators, as well as the importance of communities and the surrounding environment.

Let's begin to think about our practice in a way that shows us how to make our images of the family visible.

- How have the parents/families of the children contributed to the development of the learning community?
- How do we make this possible for families whose first language is not English?
- How do we nurture and encourage contributions from home?
- How do we help parents/families, Elders and other culture, language and spiritual resource people feel welcome in our programs?
- How do we ensure our assessments reflect the diversity of cultures in our learning community?
- How do we nurture and encourage contributions from families of children with special needs?
- Have we spoken to the parents/families of children with additional support needs to discover their expectations and goals for their children?
- How do we invite and foster acceptance of diversity and integration of those with special needs within our learning community?
- What do I know about accessing additional support services in my community, (e.g. public health, intervention services, family support)?

## Vision and Principles in the Framework

### My Practice and the Framework's Vision Statement

The Framework's vision for early learning in British Columbia is expressed in terms of the children themselves; their families, communities, and governments; and children's environments.

Consider the vision statement on page 14 of the Framework and reflect on these questions:

- How do I respond to the vision overall?
- How is the Framework's vision statement reflected in my practice? How is it reflected in our program's vision statement or mission?



- What can I do to bring my practice more in line with the Framework's vision in terms of partnerships with families? With communities? With other early years professionals? With public and community health services?
- How can I know if this vision of early learning is evident in my program and my environment?

### Summary of the principles in the Framework:

- Children are born with the innate desire to learn.
- Families are the primary caregivers of children and have the most important role in promoting their children's well-being, learning and development in the context of supportive communities.
- Play is vital to children's healthy development and learning.
- Consistent, responsive and nurturing relationships are essential to the health, well-being, and early learning of children.
- All aspects of children's development and learning—physical, social, emotional, cultural, linguistic, and intellectual—are interrelated and interdependent.
- Language plays a central role in connecting thought and learning.
- Children are active participants in their families and communities.
- The individual, cultural, and linguistic identities of children and families are respected and integrated into early learning settings, programs and activities.
- The physical environment shapes children's learning and well-being.

### My Practice and the Principles of the Framework

Building on the discussion of supporting young children's early learning and the vision statement, the Framework identifies key tenets about children, family and environment, and early learning. Consider the principles on pages 15 and 16 of the Framework and reflect on these questions:

- How do these principles correspond to my image of the child? Of the child and family? Of the child, family and community?
- How do I respond to the principles overall?
- How are the Framework's principles reflected in my practice? In my program?
- What can I do to bring my practice more in line with the Framework's principles?
- How can I know if these principles of early learning are evident in my program?
- How does my program support the learning needs of all the children? How can all the children participate in the activities that are offered?
- How can I adapt or modify the program and activities to meet the learning styles of all the children?
- How does the physical environment of my program support all the children?
- How does the program respect a range of diversity in our community?

## Areas of Early Learning

The foundational ideas in the Framework are that children feel safe and secure in their sense of belonging, confident as learners and communicators, and active, respectful and responsible agents in their lives and society. By providing children with rich experiences in the four areas of early learning of the Framework (Well-Being and Belonging, Exploration and Creativity, Language and Literacies, Social Responsibility and Diversity), early years professionals can support children to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions that are the foundation for lifelong learning.

The aim of identifying the four areas of early learning and their goals is to provide experiences and environments that support young children's learning holistically. These areas of early learning have been drawn from innovative practice research. The areas of early learning recognize that children represent their knowledge and skills in a variety of ways. The areas are inter-related—"learning in one area is likely to support learning in all three other areas" (*British Columbia Early Learning Framework*, p. 17).

Because there is no one way to work with the four areas, it is beneficial to reflect on the areas of early learning and think deeply about their meanings in the context of your practice. As you undertake this review, you are beginning the process of critical reflection.

Let's take a closer look at each of these areas of early learning and the learning goals. In reviewing the areas of early learning, please take a look at the *Questions to Consider* for each of the four areas. In Section 2 of the document there will be an opportunity to reflect on how to use these guiding questions as part of a process of innovative practice.



### My practice and Well-being and Belonging

#### *Well-being and Belonging*

"A sense of well-being and belonging is vital to children as they learn about and explore the world around them. In the first years of life, children develop increasing mastery over their bodies and daily routines, supporting health and well-being over their lifespan and providing them with a sense of place - a feeling of being grounded in their immediate environment, their communities, their culture, and the wider world. This confidence is essential to children as they begin to explore their creative capacities as family members, friends, thinkers, citizens, and stewards of the natural environment: (*British Columbia Early Learning Framework*, p. 18). Think about

- How are well-being and belonging currently reflected in my practice?
- What can I provide that makes room for a broad range of abilities?
- How can I encourage the acceptance of diversity between the children themselves?



- What can I do to bring my practice more in line with the Framework's description of well-being and belonging and its learning goals?
- How can I know if well-being and belonging and its goals are evident in my program? What can I do to make this area of early learning more explicit in my practice?
- How can I promote a discussion of well-being and belonging in my practice, and with families and communities?
- How have I reflected upon the *Questions to Consider* included in the Framework for well-being and belonging?

### *Exploration and Creativity*

"The capacity to explore and create is vital to nurturing the zest for life that is the basis of all learning. Through play, children express their natural curiosity about the world and explore multiple early learning goals simultaneously. Supporting children's explorative play is perhaps the most important—and the most natural and accessible—means to promote meaningful learning in the early years." (*British Columbia Early Learning Framework*, p. 23).

## My practice and Exploration and Creativity

Think about

- How are exploration and creativity currently reflected in my practice?
- What can I do to bring my practice more in line with the Framework's description of exploration and creativity and its learning goals?
- How can I know if exploration and creativity and its goals are evident in my program in a way that meets diverse needs? What can I do to make this area of early learning more explicit in my practice?
- How can I promote a discussion of exploration and creativity in my practice, and with families and communities?
- How have I reflected upon the *Questions to Consider* included in the Framework for exploration and creativity?

### *Languages and Literacies*

The development of languages and literacies among young children provides them with a strong basis for successful learning throughout their lifetimes. 'Literacies' is a broad term used to describe the development of the physical, emotional,



social, creative, linguistic and intellectual means of communication among young children.

In cultivating language and literacies, it is essential to nurture the emotional, social, creative, and intellectual capacities that support the fluent use of a range of expressive mediums, rather than limiting learning activities to only pre-reading skills, such as learning the alphabet or counting to 10. By nurturing these capacities, and by encouraging children's natural tendencies to engage in creative play, adults can help young children learn to respect, explore, and enjoy the languages and symbols of their own and other cultures.

### My practice and Languages and Literacies

Think about

- How are languages and literacies currently reflected in my practice?
- What can I do to bring my practice more in line with the Framework's description of languages and literacies and its learning goals, including the Aboriginal specific provisions?
- How can I know if languages and literacies and the goals are evident in my program? What can I do to make this area of early learning more explicit in my practice?
- How can I promote a discussion of languages and literacies in my practice, and with the families and communities?
- How have I reflected upon the *Questions to Consider* included in the Framework for languages and literacies?
- For Aboriginal children in my program, how have I appropriately recognized, honoured and supported the children's ancestral languages?
- How have I promoted discussions with Aboriginal parents/families about their Aboriginal language goals for their children? How might those goals be supported through my program?
- Have I identified and consulted with the appropriate First Peoples language and literacies experts, including Elders, Big House Speakers, language speakers, language teachers and linguists, and have I incorporated their recommendations into my program?
- How have I explored Aboriginal language and literacies "best and promising practices" from other jurisdictions (e.g. the Maori Kohanga Reo and Native Hawaiian language nests, as well as B.C. First Nations communities that have created language nests based upon these models)?
- How have I incorporated these practices into my program?

#### *Aboriginal Languages and Literacies*

"Cultural and linguistic revitalization is an additional learning goal of critical importance to First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples. Aboriginal communities are striving to ensure that First Peoples' languages are acknowledged as living and relevant, appreciated, valued and honoured in all early learning contexts" (*British Columbia Early Learning Framework*, p. 29).



### Aboriginal Social Responsibility and Diversity

“Aboriginal communities support early learning approaches that emphasize children’s responsibilities and rights, consistent with each First Nation’s cosmology and world view. This includes:

- respectfully using and caring for earth’s gifts;
- showing respect for Elders, valuing the traditional knowledge Elders carry, and developing the ethic and practice of seeking wisdom and guidance from Elders;
- discovering their place and their responsibilities within the social, economic, political, cultural, and spiritual institutions (including the Potlatch, Big House) of their family, Clan and Nation” (*British Columbia Early Learning Framework*, p. 33).

### Social Responsibility and Diversity

Children’s learning experiences in the early years have implications for their whole lives, and also for the future of their local, provincial, national and international communities, and the planet as a whole. Children benefit from opportunities to build relationships, to learn about their own heritage and culture and that of others, and to recognize the connection between their own actions and the wider world. These activities help build the ethical foundation for social and environmental health and well-being, now and in the future.

### My practice and Social Responsibility and Diversity

Think about

- How are social responsibility and diversity currently reflected in my practice?
- What can I do to bring my practice more in line with the Framework’s description of social responsibility and diversity and its learning goals, including the Aboriginal-specific provisions?
- How can I know if social responsibility and diversity and its goals are evident in my program? What can I do to make this area of early learning more explicit in my practice?
- How can I promote a discussion of social responsibility and diversity in my practice, and with families and communities?
- How have I reflected upon the *Questions to Consider* included in the Framework for social responsibility and diversity?
- Have I appropriately accommodated the unique circumstances of Aboriginal children with respect to social responsibility and diversity?



## Part 2

# Focus on Pedagogical Narration: Practice

### Critical Reflection and the Image of the Child

The British Columbia Early Learning Framework invites critical reflection to transform early childhood education. It acknowledges that the image of the child is not universal, but varies in response to people's experiences, beliefs and aspirations, and according to who participates in the dialogue about childhood. With that in mind, early childhood educators need to challenge common knowledge and explore new viewpoints and actions. We can do this through the art of critical reflection.

#### What is critical reflection?

Critical reflection is the art of thinking deeply about our own fundamental beliefs, with the goal of understanding the various cultural and social forces and factors that shape our own sense of self – and then taking our thinking one step further to

- explore where our ideas about how the world works have come from, who has generated them and whom they benefit
- seek many perspectives on our 'truths' about teaching and learning
- understand the world from the perspective of groups who are consistently marginalized and silenced in it
- attempt to reconstruct what we do and what we think so that it honours the understandings of diverse groups.

Here are some of the ways we can apply the art of critical reflection during observation of children in various settings.

#### Being a careful observer

"Adults who are skilled at supporting early learning and development are careful observers of children and encourage them to go beyond their current level of understanding or skill" (*British Columbia Early Learning Framework*, p.10).

Early childhood educators need to effectively notice children, observe what they are interested in and how they are learning in the course of their day-to-day activities and quiet times, in other words in *children's ordinary moments*.

#### *Paying Attention*

Paying attention to the other person is not always comfortable. The words attend and tension share a common root, *tendere*, which means "to stretch". To really attend to another or to pay attention to another person, we must stretch ourselves, we must really strain to listen, to see, to feel—it is not a casual process.

### *Observation is a Subjective Activity*

In observing, you will spend time with the children and family and notice and listen to what is happening. Observation is a subjective activity; you should strive to refrain from placing set boundaries on your observations.

Reflect on what children are up to, what they are trying to do, what they are interested in, how they play together. Listen carefully. Pay attention to what is happening. Pay attention to the children's strengths. Remember to keep in mind that the children and their families are capable.

Careful observation means paying attention. Early childhood educators should be noticing what children are doing, saying, exploring and what they are concerned about.

### Discovering ordinary moments

After careful observation, adults can recognize (the root of this word is to learn again, to know again) what children are up to, what are they trying to do, what are they interested in – these are the elements of children's ordinary moments.

Early childhood educators are not imposing their ideas on the children, but truly recognizing the children and their efforts. In a way, it is like viewing a child through new eyes. It is challenging to really observe and get to know a child again and to resist previous ideas of who that child is.

Observation of these ordinary moments provides an opportunity to wonder at what we are seeing. Observation is the most effective starting point for thinking about children, considering our own roles with children, and, as early childhood educators, questioning how we see.

### Documenting ordinary moments

An ordinary moment is a common occurrence or habitual instance that is observed, recorded and/or analyzed. Best practice research has found that documenting ordinary moments is a very useful learning tool.

Since everyday life includes moments that are atypical and challenging, as well as moments that are usual and predictable, observing, recording and examining an ordinary moment provides an opportunity for critical reflection that may often be overlooked. Observing and interpreting what children do and why they do it probes the connection between thinking and questioning, and shows or makes visible the way children are making meaning of their learning or of their interaction with the world. As one interprets and analyzes an ordinary moment/observation, intriguing questions and insight can be gained without requiring absolute certainty about the particular situation or occurrence.

An ordinary moment may be an anecdotal observation, children's work, photographs that illustrate a process, audio or video tape recordings, or children's voiced ideas. Documenting can range from jotting a few notes, to taking pictures, to capturing a moment on videotape.

The formats you may select to capture ordinary moments include

- written field notes,
- digital audio-recording of the conversations you have with the family and the child with or without transcripts of the audio-recordings,



- photographs,
- video clips, and
- materials created by the children such as drawings, paintings, constructions.

## Introduction to Pedagogical Narration

Now let's look closely at a specific tool, pedagogical narration—a tool that we are recommending to make the reflections on the Framework operational. Pedagogical narrations can be used in any setting to engage in critical reflection through observation.

### The term Pedagogical Narration

British Columbia has adopted the term pedagogical narration to refer to a process to make children's learning visible. A similar tool is called pedagogical documentation in Saskatchewan, Reggio Emilia, Italy and in Sweden; learning stories in New Brunswick and New Zealand; and action research in Australia.

### The “What” of pedagogical narration

Pedagogical narration is the process of observing, recording, and, individually and collectively, interpreting a series of related ordinary moments in your practice. The process should be ongoing, cyclical and based on the art of critical reflection on the part of a community of learners. Keep in mind that it “is contextual and involves children in a process of co-construction with teachers” (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999).

### The “Why” of pedagogical narration

Pedagogical narration makes children's learning visible and helps us reflect upon the educator's practices. In the vision and principles outlined in the Framework – and in the *Questions to Consider* under each of its goals – there are many opportunities for reflection as a guide to improving children's learning experiences and opening up dialogue.

A variety of jurisdictions use their forms of pedagogical narrations in their own specific ways. However, there are similarities among these forms:

- the child is seen as a competent individual with multiple potentials
- children's learning is made visible to early childhood educators, other colleagues, families, children themselves and the whole community
- critical reflective practice is required.

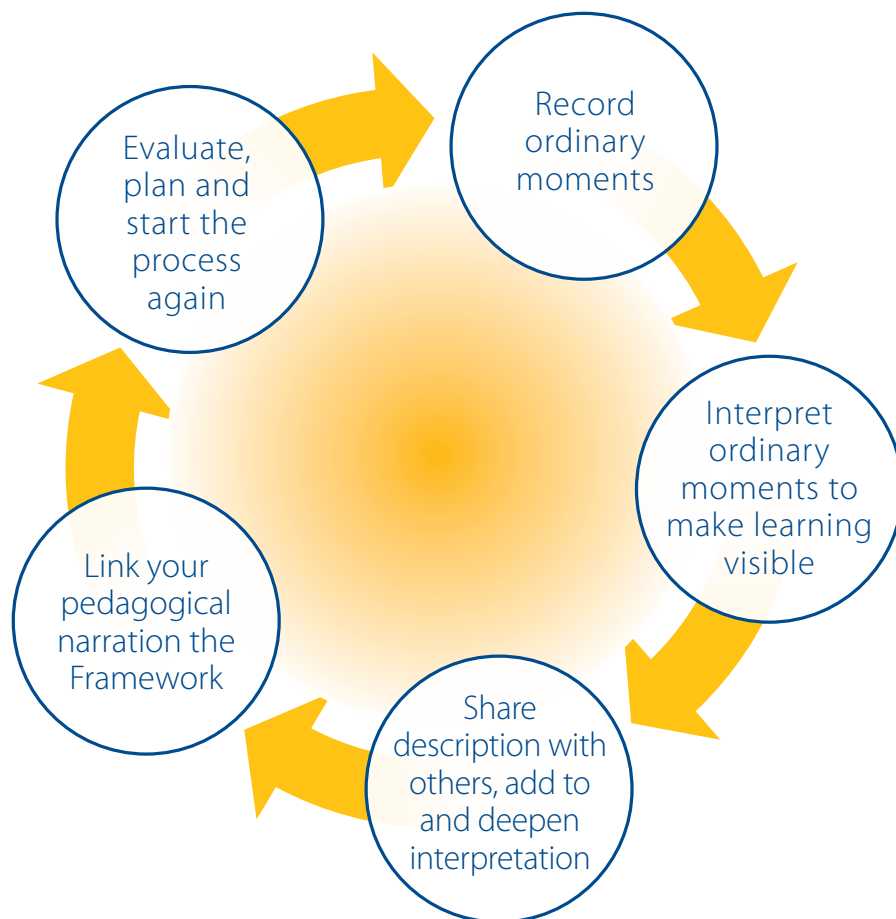
The Framework has been inspired by these current practices. It recognizes that pedagogical narration is a practical, effective tool for working with the Framework.



## The “How” of pedagogical narration

The process of pedagogical narration involves observing and recording ordinary moments, reflecting on what you have observed, sharing your description with others, collectively building new meanings from what you have learned so as to make children’s learning visible, linking what you have learned to the Framework, and incorporating your learning into your planning process. Figure 1 provides an overview of the process.

**Figure 1: Pedagogical Narration and the *British Columbia Early Learning Framework: A Cyclical Process***



### My Practice and Pedagogical Narration

Reflect on what you can do to incorporate pedagogical narration into your practice. Think about these questions:

- How will using pedagogical narration benefit my practice?
- How can I get other early childhood educators, parents and children involved in and excited about the process of pedagogical narration?
- What support do I need to incorporate pedagogical narration into everyday practice? How could I go about obtaining this support?
- What resources do I need to aid other early childhood educators, parents and children in becoming familiar with pedagogical narration? Do I have access to these?
- What factors help enhance the use of pedagogical narration in my setting?
- What kinds of limitations exist for incorporating pedagogical narration as part of practice in my setting? How can I overcome these?

Figure 2: Enriching Your Practice: Steps for Incorporating Pedagogical Narration into Your Practice



## Pedagogical Narration – Engaging in the Process

Let's look at the steps in more depth.

### Step One: Be curious about how the Framework relates to your practice

Review the Framework's areas of early learning, the early learning goals and the respective questions for consideration.

Later in the document, there will be an opportunity to reflect on the early learning goals as part of a process of innovative practice.

You may wish to copy the pages of the Framework on the areas of early learning, including the *Questions to Consider* and post them on your wall to promote discussion with families and the community.

### Step Two: Begin with observation of ordinary moments

An ordinary moment may be an anecdotal observation, children's work, photographs that illustrate a process, audio or video tape recordings, or children's voiced ideas. The ordinary moments you observe in your setting will most likely be a combination of these. The purpose of recording them is to show or make visible the way children are making meaning of their learning or their interaction with the world.

### Step Three: Record and describe an ordinary moment

The next activity is to write a description of what you have observed during the ordinary moment – without interpretation. For this description, you are playing the role of narrator.

### Step Four: Reflect and interpret ordinary moments

The next step in the process is to write a reflective piece about the ordinary moment. For this step, you are playing the role of an analyst. Key questions to consider are:

- How are these children making meaning of the world?
- How can I make the children's meanings visible?

## Example of a Pedagogical Narration: Water and Sand (Steps 1 through 4)

By Deborah Thompson

### Record Of An Ordinary Moment

One morning we went to the 'big' yard to play. We share the yard with three other groups and use it mainly when the others don't. We had the space to ourselves that morning. It was the first sunny warm day of the year. A hose, with a cylinder attached to it, was rigged up along the top of the fence. I turned the water on and got out some containers. Water poured into the large sand box and created a 'river' in the sandbox.

**Emma:** "Do you need more water?"

**Amy:** "Yes I need a lot of water."

**Emma:** "Why do you need a lot?"

**Amy:** "For a lot of flowers to grow."

Amy walked back to the grassy hill.

Amy poured out the water from the blue bucket and then the yellow. The water ran down the hill and on and on to the cement path: "Oh no!"

She ran down and placed the blue bucket in the path of the water.

**Emma:** "Why did you put the bucket there?"

**Amy:** "To stop the water."

**Emma:** "Is it working?"

**Amy:** "No."

Amy stared at the ground for a minute and then walked away.

### Educator's Reflections

As soon as I saw the way that the teachers from the older kids' programs had rigged up the hose, I knew that I would use it. I believe that this kind of 'big' water play engages most children in a way that few other materials do. As the morning progressed, I felt satisfied because the children all seemed so peaceful and connected to what they were doing and the adults were relaxed and enjoying the children's experience.

So I started to wonder about the feelings and sensations that I believed were being experienced: satisfaction, peacefulness, contentment, curiosity, engagement, pleasure, and more. If these feelings were felt, what was it about the experience that created them? I know that I felt successful, which tells me that I think that I provided a rich experience. What made it rich? What meaning did it have for the children? How do others respond to the moment?



### *Making Learning Visible*

In developing and interpreting throughout the pedagogical narrations process, the educator strives to make meaning of what has been observed and to make that meaning visible to oneself, colleagues, children and families.

In reflecting on the ordinary moment, the educator asks the following questions. Do we observe

- Children developing theories?
- Children acting on their theories?
- Children developing their narratives of meaning?
- Children making observations?
- Children finding joy in movement, noise, touch, etc?
- Children using their senses/their bodies?
- Children exploring, building, inventing?
- Children exploring power, drama, excitement?
- Children forming relationships and learning to negotiate within them?
- Children's connections with families?
- Children wondering about and exploring representation and literacy?
- Children re-visiting/ remembering an action, a theory?

As you engage in this process of reflection, all the goals in each area of early learning in the Framework are important. Pedagogical narration provides a tool to help you engage in critical reflection and to guide you in applying the Framework in your practice or in any setting. The aim is not to answer every question listed by goal in the Framework. The aim is to use the goals and questions to further your reflections and capture and analyze the ordinary moments – to make children's learning visible.

#### *Add to your pedagogical narration to expand your understanding*

Please keep in mind that you can record and add new ordinary moments that serve to make visible and expand on your original ordinary moment at any point in the process of creating a pedagogical narration. These additions can be quickly integrated into the interpretation.

### Water and Sand Example Continuation (Step 4)

#### Adding New Ordinary Moments And Interpretation

The next week, we returned to the big yard. It was cooler out so we dressed in muddy-buddies and boots so that we could play in the water. We turned the hose on and new puddles and streams were created.

This day wasn't as warm, so the sunny summer day peacefulness of the previous experience wasn't evident. But the play was focused and very engaged. The first day was warm enough to experience the water in bare feet. [Interpretation: This time they felt the water with their hands. Is this because the sensation is the important part of the experience?]



### Step Five: Share your description with your colleagues, with children and families

The next step in the pedagogical narration process invites others to engage in dialogue and collaborative inquiry.

It is important that we make our pedagogical narrations public and open for discussion. This is the time to share your description – the one without your own interpretations – with your colleagues. It is through this collaborative inquiry that we make our practices transformative.

In sharing ordinary moments, the role of the narrator is to collect the multiple readings of others as a way of enriching one's own, initial interpretation of the ordinary moments that were collected and observed.

Colleagues can help to extend the interpretations of ordinary moments by suggesting new ideas and perspectives. While interpreting ordinary moments with others, we construct and test ideas to explain what has been observed.

### Water and Sand Example Continuation (Steps 5 and 6)

#### Seeking Others' Interpretations

The practicum teacher who interacted with Amy in this story was most interested in the learning and understanding that Amy was creating. She saw her testing theories about how water moved. She also noticed how some children watched while others touched.



"Parents, grandparents, and other family members are often in the best position to notice the details of children's behaviour, and to share the meaning of that behaviour with early years service providers" (*British Columbia Early Learning Framework*, p. 10).

In the Water and Sand example, the educator takes the opportunity to learn about the mother's image of the child and to gain new perspectives about the child's relationship with the environment. Sharing the description of the ordinary moment has deepened the educator's knowledge of the child.

### Water and Sand Example Continuation (Steps 5 and 6)

#### Amy's Mother's Comments

"Two pails, not just one - she loves a challenge." She commented on the how and what of Amy's learning: "dumping water to see what happens - always checking out cause & effect, consequences."

"Is she wondering, 'Hmm what's going on over there?' Is she watching and learning?"

Amy's mother informed me that since they live in an apartment and have no plants, Amy's experience with flowers is with wild flowers that grow in the grass.



### Asking for Parent Reflection

Here are some suggestions of ways to approach parents for their contribution to the narration.

Describe what a pedagogical narration is in simple terms.

- It is a tool to help make your child's learning visible.
- It is a description of an ordinary moment (day-to-day activities).

Ask for their reflection.

- Your input is important to further understand what your child is learning and experiencing.
- What do you think your child is doing/ learning in this moment?
- Can you help me deepen my understanding of what is happening in this moment?
- Is there anything you could add to this story (background information, personal experiences, insights to personality).

The narrator should also share the ordinary moments with children, when appropriate, and with other members of the learning community. Capturing the questions from new audiences fulfills two purposes: their questions can be quickly integrated into the interpretation, and the recording adds to your ordinary moments.

This information can provide directions and ideas for furthering your thinking and your own planning and work with children. Some of the most interesting exploration in the early years is done collaboratively.

It is a key step to ask each new audience for their questions and assumptions and to then document those questions and assumptions to integrate them into the reflective piece and your own planning.

### Step Six: Incorporate the comments of others to your interpretation

After reviewing the comments you received from colleagues, children and/or families, reconsider your own interpretations.

### Step Seven: Link the pedagogical narration to the Framework

Now let's consider everything together specifically in relation to the British Columbia Early Learning Framework goals. Think about the multiple and deeper meanings of the goals. Enrich your reflective piece by adding specific links to the Framework ( i.e. consider the ways in which the goals are expressed in your piece).

For ideas and guiding questions in interpreting your ordinary moment, you can refer to the areas of learning, the early learning goals and the *Questions to Consider* posed in the Framework, Section 3. Remember that some of the questions will be more relevant than others to your ordinary moment during the interpretation process.

In the Sand and Water description and the reflective description, the educator calls into play specific areas of early learning.

- Can you identify the areas? The goals?
- Which *Questions to Consider* from the Framework do you think are relevant to this ordinary moment?



## Water and Sand Example Continuation (Step 7)

### Through the Lens of the *British Columbia Early Learning Framework*

*How are these children making meaning?*

We can see the children observing and acting. They watch the water and they pour the water, watching as they do. Amy tests a theory about how to stop the water. There seems to be such joy in the play. It is play in which children use their senses and their bodies to discover the essence of the water.



*British Columbia Early Learning Framework Goal: Well-being and Belonging*

Feel safe and respected:

We (the adults) communicated that the environment is safe and they can be themselves by providing a sensory rich experience and allowing the children to explore that environment in any way they chose.

Feel confidence in, and control of, their bodies:

The children used the environment and materials to hold, carry, dump, fill, balance, and move in coordinated ways.



*British Columbia Early Learning Framework Goal: Exploration and Creativity*

Explore the world using their bodies and all their senses:

This moment invited an exploration using especially the sense of touch.

Actively think, explore and reason:

**Emma:** "Why did you put the bucket there?" **Amy:** "To stop the water."

**Emma:** "Is it working?"

**Amy:** "No."

*British Columbia Early Learning Framework Goal: Languages & Literacies*

Develop diverse language abilities and the capacity to communicate with others in many ways.

Emma and Amy had the opportunity to communicate one-to-one.

*British Columbia Early Learning Framework Goal: Social Responsibility and Diversity*

What steps are taken to make children aware of the relationship between human activities and environmental challenges?

The question that concerns me is a question of privilege and responsibility. In a world where wasting resources is of critical concern is playing with water in this way ethical? Will these children feel entitled to please themselves no matter the cost to the environment?

## Step Eight: Incorporate your learning into the planning cycle at your worksite

### *Pedagogical narration is a cycle of learning*

As you adopt pedagogical narration into your practice, keep in mind that it is not a linear process but a cyclical one.

It should also be a realistic one in your setting. Depending on the situation, the critical reflection of your community of learners can be undertaken in any order workable for you.

### *Completing the reflective cycle through planning*

To complete the reflective cycle, we can enter into planning with ideas and thoughts of our own drawn from pedagogical narrations, but we must also continue in conversation with the children. This is what we mean by “co-construction” with children. In other words, planning from your pedagogical narrations can include the child or children. Remembering the event or moment and retelling it and wondering more about it engages the children in proposing and planning the next steps. You can present information or materials that connect to the documentation and see if that intrigues or interests the children or child, while remaining open to other possibilities.

Using the wisdom of the group, we plan how to extend the observations we make of children. In collaboration with our colleagues, we can reflect on how our program meets our goals and vision. Our dialogue has the possibility of becoming richer and deeper, with the analysis of documentation that makes the children’s growth and learning visible. Through our documentation of what we are seeing with children – and what we are experiencing ourselves in the process – we begin to plan differently and think differently about what might be possible.

Pedagogical narration can be used as a focus for recalling, analyzing and reflecting on our practice. Engaging in this process involves critical reflection – examining and challenging our work and our assumptions. This keeps us open to opportunities for learning. It also motivates us to make changes, as necessary, and to be creative.

### *Setting aside time for research and planning*

Adopting pedagogical narration as a research and planning tool supports us to stress the importance of relationships; to create flexible, quality environments; and to understand how children learn through play.

At its most basic, research is nothing more than asking questions and searching for possible answers. Doing this regularly and collaboratively with the people with whom you work is useful; you can set aside time to reflect on what is working and what is not working. This allows time for self-assessment, as well as assessment and evaluation of a program or practice.

Feedback that is useful and meaningful helps a program or individual build on strengths and successes. Asking questions of one’s practice or of one’s fellow practitioners can lead to deeper understanding. Another perspective can change the view and challenge the viewer, while shifts in practice can lead to transformations.

## Part 3

# Activity Sheets

### *Activity Sheet 1*

#### Step One: Think about how the Framework relates to your practice.

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Review the Framework's areas of early learning, the early learning goals and the respective questions for consideration.

For each area of early learning, think about

- How are the early learning goals currently reflected in my practice?
- How can I know if the learning goals are evident in my program?
- What can I do to make the areas of early learning more explicit in my practice?
- How can I promote a discussion of the four areas of early learning in my practice, and with families and communities?
- How have I reflected upon the *Questions to Consider* included in the Framework?



## *Activity Sheet 2*

### Step Two: Begin with observation of ordinary moments.

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Spend some time (over a period of a week) observing ordinary moments in the day of the children in your setting.

Note that it doesn't have to be just one child for your observation. It can be a group of children, one child interacting with an adult or a group of children interacting with an adult.

Here are a few starting points for your observations

- **Notice the child making sense of the world or exploring an issue or idea.**
- **Notice the child's approach to the world.**
- **Be attentive to the child's interests, initiatives, reactions, understandings of the world.**
- **Notice the child at play, at a mealtime, or at a transition point.**

During your observations, consider which media can capture ordinary moments most effectively within the context of your setting.



## *Activity Sheet 3*

### Step Three: Record and describe an ordinary moment

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Observe and record some ordinary moments – in more than one medium if possible.

Write out a description of what you have observed during the ordinary moment.





## *Activity Sheet 4*

### Step Four: Reflect and interpret ordinary moments

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Write a reflective piece about the ordinary moment. You can make a second copy of your description and make notes beside your factual description or write a separate interpretation of the ordinary moment, like the Sand and Water example.

As you write your reflective piece, think about the areas of early learning and the early learning goals related to each area.



## *Activity Sheet 5*

### Step Five: Share your description with colleagues and with children/families

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Present your description (including pictures, audio, etc.) to your colleagues and ask for their comments, questions and interpretations. Try to elicit their ideas about the implications of making children's learning visible (multiple readings).

- Do your colleagues have ideas about how you can work together to extend children's learning building on the ordinary moment you have described?
- Re-visit your own reflective piece and add your colleagues' ideas and suggestions to it.
- Share your description of an ordinary moment with families and with children in your setting.
- Ask each new audience for their questions and assumptions.
- Document those questions and assumptions.



## Activity Sheet 6

### Step Six: Add the comments of others into your interpretation

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Now consider your description of the ordinary moment and your reflective piece with its multiple readings from your colleagues, families and children. Integrate their questions and assumptions into your reflective piece.

- What have I learned about the children from families' comments?
- What have I learned from the children? How can I incorporate children's views into my practice?
- What have I learned from colleagues about the learning that is taking place in the ordinary moment?

By continuing to enrich your reflective piece with additions, especially the links you are making between others' comments, theoretical ideas and your observations, you will reach deeper levels of understanding.



## *Activity Sheet 7*

### Step Seven: Link the pedagogical narration to the Framework

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Take some time to review the Framework's areas of early learning and the goals.

- **What areas of early learning and what goals does your ordinary moment suggest?**
- **Analyze how children are making meaning in your ordinary moment.**

Think about how you can build on that to continue the cycle of learning with your colleagues, the children and their families?





## Activity Sheet 8

### Step Eight: Incorporate Your Learning into the Planning Cycle

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Given what you have learned about pedagogical narration, consider how you can use this tool to analyze your practice and incorporate the knowledge into the planning process.

Ask yourself, what am I paying attention to?

- Am I providing experiences to children in all areas of early learning and for all early learning goals?
- Have I reviewed the *Questions to Consider* for the early learning goals?
- What areas of early learning do I need to pay more attention to? Which ones have I not worked with?
- What goals do I need to pay more attention to? What goals have I not worked with?
- How can I use the tool of pedagogical narration to make the children's learning visible to families? To the children?
- How can I incorporate this learning into the planning cycle?
- What activities can I engage in to change and enrich my practice?

Reflect back to your image of the child

- What is my image of the child?
- How is the Framework's image of the child reflected in my practice?
- What can I do to bring my practice more in line with the Framework's image?
- How can I know if this image of the child is evident in my program?
- What can I do to continue to critically reflect on my image of the child?



## Part 4

# References and Resources

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### Resources

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#### On Images of the Family

*Building Bridges between Teachers and Families*, (n.d.) M. Carter. (Producer). Seattle, WA: Harvest Resources: 21 minutes video

*Diversity: Contrasting Perspectives* (1999) Magna Productions, Barrington, Illinois: 29 minutes video

MacNaughton, G (2003). *Shaping early childhood: Learners, curriculum and contexts.* Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press. Chapters 11, pp. 247-252; Chapter 12, pp 255-281

## On Images of the Educator

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## On Background to Pedagogical Narration

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## New Zealand:

<http://www.educate.ece.govt.nz/Programmes/KeiTuaotePae.aspx>

Kei Tua o te Pae/Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars is a best practice resource that will help teachers continue to improve the quality of their teaching. The exemplars consist of a series of books that will help teachers to understand and strengthen children's learning and show how children, parents and whānau can contribute to this assessment and ongoing learning.

Kei Tua o te Pae explores and informs assessment practice in early childhood education. Everyday assessments from a range of early childhood settings have been selected as exemplars to explore important assessment and learning questions. They are not necessarily "exemplary" in the sense of being excellent or perfect, but rather they illustrate a wide range of learning experiences in a range of assessment formats. The exemplars strongly reflect the principles of Te Whāriki and socio-cultural approaches to learning and teaching. The core framework of noticing, recognising, and responding is at the heart of effective assessment and quality teaching practice.

## Project Zero:

<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/Research/Research.htm>

<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/Research/MLV.htm>

Project Zero is building on 40 years of research to help create communities of reflective, independent learners; to enhance deep understanding within and across disciplines; and to promote critical and creative thinking. Project Zero's mission is to understand and enhance learning, thinking, and creativity in the arts, as well as humanistic and scientific disciplines, at the individual and institutional levels.

The Making Learning Visible (MLV) Project draws attention to the power of the group as a learning environment and documentation as a way for all--students, teachers, parents, administrators, and the community--to see how and what children are learning.

In Phase I of the MLV Project, Project Zero, in collaboration with Reggio Children, explored documentation as a central component of group learning and produced a book, *Making Learning Visible: Children as Individual and Group Learners* (available from Project Zero <http://pzweb.harvard.edu/ebookstore/>). In Phase II, they explored how ideas and practices related to documenting individual and group learning that are grounded in experiences in the Italian context might enhance preschool, elementary, and middle-school education in the U.S. In Currently, Project Zero is engaged in a new collaboration to facilitate the creation of communities of learners in six charter, pilot, and district public schools in Boston and Cambridge.

## Reggio Emilia (Italy) Approach

<http://www.reggioemiliaapproach.net/about.php>

The **Reggio Emilia approach** to education is committed to the creation of a learning environment that will enhance and facilitate children's construction of his or her own powers of thinking through the combination of all the expressive, communicative and cognitive languages.

Reggio Emilia's tradition of community support for families with young children expands on Italy's cultural view of children as the collective responsibility of the state. In Reggio Emilia, the infant/toddler and pre-primary program is a vital part of the community, as reflected in the high level of financial support. Community involvement is also apparent in citizen membership in La Consulta, a school committee that exerts significant influence over local government policy.

## Saskatchewan:

<http://www.learning.gov.sk.ca/Default.aspx?DN=ed3dbc16-14d7-4553-87c7-1728a0907416>

*The Early Learning Program Guide* is an important part Saskatchewan's early childhood development initiatives. The Guide affirms the importance of high quality experiences for all Saskatchewan children during their preschool years – three to five years of age.

The *Guide* draws on knowledge gained from early childhood education research, examples from successful practice of early childhood educators and understandings passed on through community culture, values and beliefs.

Young children experience learning through play and exploration in a variety of settings including the home, child care, Prekindergarten, preschool and other early childhood programs. High quality programs engage children and their families in the planning and delivery of a healthy, safe, culturally sensitive and stimulating program that promotes children's abilities and interests. The intention is that all programs will reflect the vision, principles and quality elements described in the Guide; however, children, families, educators and community context will affect how a particular program looks and feels.

The aim of this guide is to promote high quality, age-appropriate, play-based learning experiences for three-, four- and five-year-old children in a variety of settings.

### Videatives:

<http://www.videatives.com/index-new.php#> <<http://www.videatives.com/index-new.php>

Videatives, Inc. creates text + digital video clips that support your understanding of young children. These “videatives” will explain how to extend children’s thinking during ordinary moments into rich learning encounters and how moments of spontaneous play relate to developmental theory.

Videatives has a digital newsletter, which provides free video clips and e-articles on how children learn, that comes out twice a month. You can sign up for the Videatives newsletter at:

[http://www.videatives.com/content-new/videatives/videatives\\_views/index.php](http://www.videatives.com/content-new/videatives/videatives_views/index.php)



