## What is Play-Based Learning?

Play is not just a pastime for children; it's a crucial part of their learning process. It supports, sustains, extends, enhances, and enriches the child's learning, making it an integral part of their early education.

Through play, children have valuable opportunities to interact with others in a variety of social settings and to use language meaningfully as they explore, plan, imagine, experiment, manipulate, dramatize, negotiate rules, and pose and solve problems. Play enables children to work out their ideas and theories and use what they already know to deepen their understanding and further their learning. It allows them to actively construct, challenge, and expand their own understandings. At play, children of all ages are often highly motivated; they concentrate, persevere, and make decisions.

### Types of Play


Pedagogical strategies for play-based learning (adapted from Pyle & Danniels, 2017).

*Note. Image from "Ministry of Education and Childcare. (n.d.) Learning in the primary years. British Columbia Ministry of Education and Childcare, p. 22. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/early-learning/teach/earlylearning/early_learning_framework.pdf*

The continuum of play, as described by Pyle and Danniels (2017), highlights the range of play-based experiences and their role in maximizing children's learning and well-being. Teachers support Free play by creating the space and time for children to engage in unstructured play. Inquiry play allows a teacher to extend child-initiated ideas through further questions and investigations. Collaborative play is an extension of free play that sees teachers incorporate targeted skills that support more intentional learning. Playful learning occurs when teachers design learning experiences that target specific skills and learning objectives. Learning games are structured learning activities teachers develop to support specific learning outcomes and skills.

## Role of the ECE & Teacher

Intentional Planning: When planning play-based learning activities, it's important to set clear learning objectives aligned with specific teaching strategies.

Create Challenges: Observe play to see how it can be expanded by giving a child a challenge to enhance learning.

Setting the Environment: It's important to be intentional when planning and designing the learning environment. Furniture arrangement and access to culturally and linguistically inclusive and accessible learning materials ensure an inclusive environment that meets the needs of all children.

Modelling Problem-Solving Skills: When a challenge emerges in play-based learning, asking probing questions helps guide children in their own problem-solving skills.

Asking Guiding Questions: Posing guiding questions helps extend children's thinking while also offering open-ended support for learning.

Encourage Efforts & Persistence: Providing positive feedback for efforts and encouraging persistence when encountering a challenge is important in developing children's confidence and critical thinking processes in novel and more challenging learning.

Observing, Documenting, and Assessing: Engaging in ongoing observations and documentation of a child's learning helps with the assessment of learning growth and development.

## Creating the Space for Play-Based Learning

Room Arrangements and Learning Materials: The learning environment sets the stage for engaged and meaningful learning. An inclusive and accessible learning space is designed to promote active learning and discovery and encourage the progress of learning goals through inclusive and culturally and linguistically responsive instruction.

Outdoor Learning and Physically Active Learning: Creating the conditions where all learners have opportunities to engage in at least 30 minutes of structured and unstructured movement is important for learning, development, and well-being. Outdoor learning and Learning with Wstiqamu ensures that children have authentic learning opportunities to connect the heart, body, mind, and spirit with the natural environment. Please see this site for more information on the province's physical activity framework.

# Pre-primary to Grade 2 Play-Based Learning Supporting Literacy and Numeracy

| Literacy learning is evident when learners: | Numeracy learning is evident when learners: |
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| ▪ Actively listen and respond to sounds and patterns in speech, stories, and rhymes in context (e.g., listen to rhymes and incorporate aligned physical movement)<br>▪ Engage with printed, visual, and multimedia texts, responding with relevant gestures, actions, comments, and questions (e.g., use physical materials to highlight components of a text such as learning artifacts for science like different coloured leaves in the fall)<br>▪ Understand key literacy concepts and processes, such as letter-sound relationships, concepts of print, and text structures (e.g., learning games like matching a letter with an object that starts with the letter sound)<br>▪ Explore and analyze texts from various perspectives (e.g., re-enact a story using puppets)<br>▪ Actively use, enjoy, and share language and texts in diverse ways (e.g., children could engage in readers theatre)<br>▪ Share and re-enact stories and symbols from their own culture (e.g., children could bring in artifacts to share)<br>▪ Develop awareness of the relationships between oral, written, and visual representations (e.g., children can engage in role-play scenarios and create a written component to support the play.) | ▪ Recognize patterns and relationships, and understand their connections (e.g., children can connect geometric shapes to real-world objects)<br>▪ Sort, categorize, order, and compare collections, events, and attributes in their social and natural worlds (e.g., children could collect and categorize different shaped objects during inquiry play)<br>▪ Create and use representations, such as surveys and charts, to organize, record, and communicate mathematical ideas (e.g., children can collect data on information that they are interested in such as who in their class has a pet. This can also be a physical activity as children can represent certain pieces of data.)<br>▪ Make predictions and generalizations about daily activities and the natural world (e.g., children can make predictions on the number of sunny days will happen in a school week.)<br>▪ Use patterns to generate observations and communicate findings using language and symbols (e.g., children could engage in outdoor learning where they collect data on weather patterns- days of rain)<br>▪ Manipulate objects and experiment with cause and effect, trial and error, and motion (e.g., children can predict how far an object can roll or can predict if a shape can roll.) |
| The following strategies are adapted from a report by the Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre (2022) on promoting literacy and numeracy in play-based early learning programs:<br>**ECEs and teachers promote literacy and numeracy learning when they:** | |
| ▪ provide accessible and flexible materials in both indoor and outdoor play environments<br>▪ offer non-traditional, open-ended materials to spark interest<br>▪ use a numeracy and literacy lens to enhance observed skills<br>▪ utilize the natural environment to highlight patterns and practical applications<br>▪ role model literacy and numeracy skills by reading books, writing notes, and noticing patterns out loud<br>▪ recognize and verbalize children's natural engagement in numeracy and literacy to reinforce these skills<br>▪ Provide hands-on and collaborative learning activities that support specific literacy and numeracy skills and learning outcomes. | |

Reference: McIsaac, J.-L., McLean, C., Cummings, R., LeBlanc, L. A., Briscombe, A., & Pimentel, M. (2022). Supporting numeracy and literacy in play-based early learning programs. Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre. Retrieved from https://www.msvu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/English-NL-Full-Report_Reduced.pdf