Preschool Cycle Program

Québec 🌸🌸

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MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As a government, our goal is to give all children the means to develop their full potential and to experience success throughout their lives. However, many children are now starting school with significant gaps in certain areas of development—physical health and well-being, social, emotional, cognitive and language—as well as in their communication skills and general knowledge. With this new Preschool Cycle Program, we are taking a giant step forward to help children overcome these various difficulties.

This cycle program, developed in collaboration with partners in the education network and the scientific community, will contribute to the global development of all children and the implementation of preventive actions to meet their needs. It will also give children equal opportunities for development, thereby fostering their educational success. In doing so, we are fulfilling our desire to provide the best possible education for Québec's children, to help them reach their full potential and to ensure that they are prepared when they start first grade.

I would like to thank all the partners who contributed to the development of this cycle program as well as all those involved in preschool education who work with professionalism, passion and dedication on a daily basis for the benefit of our children. I am confident that the guidelines presented here will help you continue to provide the best possible support to children and their families.

With the Preschool Cycle Program, we are contributing to reaching the objectives set out in the *Agir tôt* strategy, in addition to ensuring the consistency of preschool education for 4- and 5-year-olds and enhancing the quality of education. It is therefore with great enthusiasm and pride that I invite you to discover it!

Jean-François Roberge
Minister of Education

PRESCHOOL CYCLE PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

The Preschool Cycle Program is intended for children who attend kindergarten for 4-year-olds and 5-year-olds. It aims to foster the global development of all children by taking preventive action to meet their needs. The program provides everyone with equal opportunities to develop in different areas so that they are able to learn and be successful throughout their lives. Preschool education gives children a chance to learn, understand and become familiar with the school environment, to believe in their own abilities and to develop the competencies they will need to facilitate their transition to first grade. Children arrive at school with experiences that vary according to their personal characteristics, family background and sociocultural background. It is therefore important to take each child's specific situation into account and build on the strengths encountered in each area of development.

This program is a prescribed pedagogical reference designed to help ensure quality educational services. It provides avenues through which to observe the children to offer challenges adapted to their interests, needs and abilities, enriching their experiences and providing an environment and activities that will help them develop their full potential.

With the intention of promoting school success, the mandate of preschool education is as follows:

› To foster the global development of all children:
  – Provide a reassuring, welcoming and inclusive environment
  – Cultivate enjoyment through exploration, discovery and learning
  – Lay the foundations for future schooling

› To take preventive action:
  – Provide universal prevention activities
  – Provide targeted prevention activities

FOSTERING THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT OF ALL CHILDREN

Fostering the global development of all children refers to allowing them to grow in every area: physical, motor, emotional, social, language and cognitive development. It is vital that all areas of development be accorded equal importance and be dealt with in synergy. In the educational contexts presented to children, the various areas of development influence and reinforce one another.

Children are given daily activities that are tailored to their ability to understand, their needs, their interests and their culture. Through these activities, they acquire skills and learning within their zone of proximal development, i.e. between their current level of development (what they are able to accomplish alone) and their potential level of development (what they can accomplish with help from more skilled classmates or from an adult). This will help prevent potential problems and enable children to experience success.

Provide a reassuring, welcoming and inclusive environment

Providing a welcoming environment means focusing on the well-being, safety and health of each child. It means being attentive to the children's needs, believing in them and in their ability to learn, and not being judgmental. In an inclusive environment, all children and their families[1] will feel accepted and respected. It recognizes the cultural repertoire (experiences, skills and knowledge) they develop before they start school. The school team[2] will adopt practices that encourage collaboration among all stakeholders, especially to ensure that the essential two-way communication between the school and family takes place, thereby recognizing the diversity of the children and their families.

A welcoming and inclusive environment allows children to undertake challenges based on their interests and needs. Their growth is fostered through supportive and quality environments, along with appropriate expectations for their level of development. The children's well-being should be a responsibility shared by all stakeholders, allowing for collaboration and partnerships to develop. In other words, it is important to take the children's diversity and individuality (first language, migratory journey, disabilities, family culture) into account in order to provide inclusive education for all children.

Cultivate the pleasure of exploring, discovering and learning

Cultivating enjoyment through exploration, discovery and learning involves encouraging the children to be active, express their natural curiosity, make choices and be creative in a safe and stimulating environment. Children need to be heard, to feel that others are interested in what they are doing and to evolve in an environment where they will be allowed to ask questions, try things and make mistakes, explore and make discoveries.

Children enjoy being active and playing alone or with others. They need time to imagine, to learn and to feel appreciated, proud, capable and confident in their growing abilities. Children who learn through play and who feel comfortable in kindergarten will see school in a more positive light and will be more confident, motivated and capable of succeeding. In this sense, preschool education plays an essential role in inspiring children to be enthusiastic about school.

Lay the foundations for future schooling

Laying the foundations for future schooling means providing contexts and activities that foster the development of attitudes and behaviours (soft skills) as well as processes and strategies that will allow the children to learn, to acquire knowledge and to succeed throughout their schooling. In other words, it means providing them with the tools for lifelong learning.

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1. In this program, the term "family" is used inclusively to cover foster families, grandparents and extended families whose members have ties with the school community.
2. In this program, the term "school team" refers to all school staff who work on behalf of the children.

It means allowing children to develop attitudes and behaviours related to self-knowledge, self-regulation, social and environmental awareness, and interpersonal relationships with their peers and with adults. Examples include feeling comfortable with and positive about activities and tasks, feeling safe and confident with adults and other children, integrating into group life, taking part in games or activities and actively engaging in them, listening, waiting their turn, raising their hand, asking for help, offering help, and overcoming obstacles.

It means allowing children to develop processes and strategies. Examples include daily classroom routines; making plans; trying things and making mistakes; gathering pointers through guidance from adults or by imitating their peers, for their play, tasks, activities or projects; and learning to recognize how they proceeded to attain a goal.

It means allowing children to acquire knowledge related to certain determinants of school success in the different areas of development and in the subject areas that are part of the Québec curriculum (languages, mathematics, arts education, social sciences, science and technology, personal development).

TAKING PREVENTIVE ACTION

Taking preventive action means taking a careful look at each child to support their global development in terms of their maturity, their pace and their needs. It means acting in collaboration with families, educational childcare services, complementary services and social services to provide consistent and continuous interventions. In concrete terms, it means providing specific, regular activities for all the children in order to foster learning related to certain determinants of school success, particularly with oral language, reading and writing, mathematics, social skills and self-regulation. It means taking early action and providing proactive support to give the children the proper tools and to prevent adaptation or learning difficulties, by working together as a team. There are two levels of prevention: universal prevention and targeted prevention.
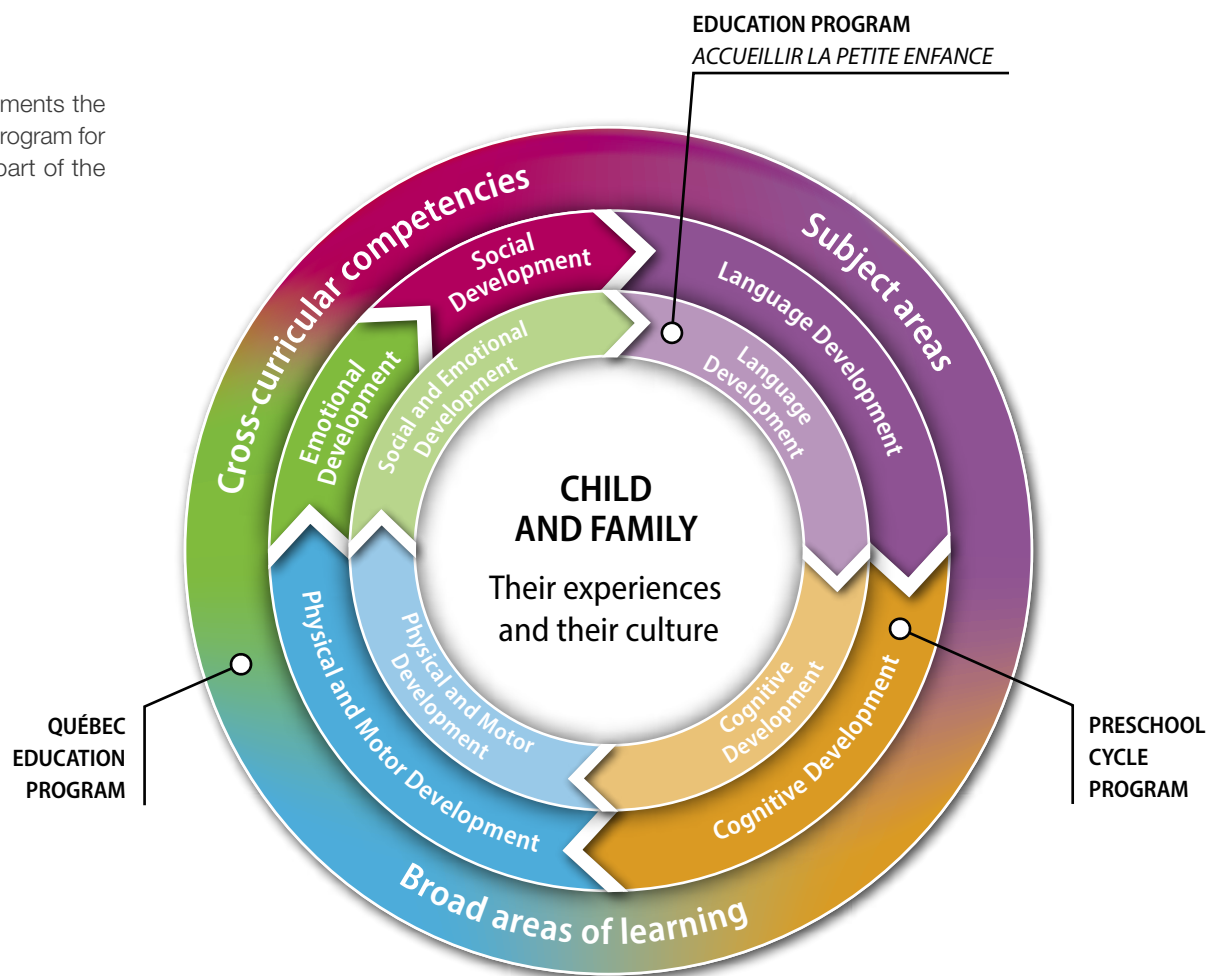
Provide universal prevention activities

Taking universal preventive action involves offering specific, continuous activities for all children to foster the development and consolidation of protective factors and the acquisition of the personal and social competencies required for harmonious development. Universal prevention also aims to spark children's interest in learning related to certain determinants of school success, such as oral language, reading and writing, mathematics, social skills and self-regulation. These actions allow for early intervention with all children in order to foster their well-being and to prevent learning and behavioural difficulties. These universal prevention activities are offered by teachers as well as by other education stakeholders or external partners, in different contexts.

Provide targeted prevention activities

Taking targeted preventive action involves offering specific, differentiated and intensified activities in response to the needs of children who have been identified as more vulnerable or who present certain difficulties, such as psychosocial or cognitive challenges. Targeted prevention activities are designed to supplement universal prevention by means of a strategy developed before difficulties appear or increase. These targeted prevention activities can be offered by teachers or by professional and support staff, according to the children's needs.

HOW THE PROGRAMS ARE CONNECTED

The Preschool Cycle Program follows and complements the *Accueillir la petite enfance* (available in French only) program for educational childcare services and is an integral part of the Québec Education Program.

EDUCATION PROGRAM
ACCUEILLIR LA PETITE ENFANCE

Cross-curricular competencies

Social Development

Emotional Development

Social and Emotional Development

Subject areas

Language Development

Language Development

CHILD AND FAMILY

Their experiences and their culture

QUÉBEC EDUCATION PROGRAM

Physical and Motor Development

Physical and Motor Development

Cognitive Development

Cognitive Development

PRESCHOOL CYCLE PROGRAM

Broad areas of learning

WORKING TOGETHER ON BEHALF OF THE CHILD

School-family-community collaboration

The school team, the family and the community share the responsibility of working together on behalf of the child. In other words, preschool accommodates not only children, but their families too. This requires an inclusive stance that is sensitive to the families' needs. All parents want their children to develop their full potential and succeed. Research has shown that a close relationship between the family and the school is important in ensuring that children develop a positive image of school, so that they are able to settle in and feel confident learning. Families must therefore be recognized as indispensable allies in their children's educational success.

The school team should be familiar with local community and educational childcare resources. School-community collaboration refers to partnerships that can be established with community resources that work together (e.g. during transition activities) and ensure that they address the needs of children and families. It is important for this collaboration to continue throughout the child's journey at school.

Recognition of the cultural dimension

Each family has their own culture. The school team recognizes and values each child's culture while encouraging an openness to Québec culture, as well. Culture provides an ideal context for contact with others. It is through contact with others that children expand and enrich their understanding of themselves and the world around them. Mutual understanding and discovery of others both play a role in bringing cultures closer together. It is important to highlight the richness of cultures, especially those of the First Nations and Inuit, in order to appreciate their contribution to society.

The school team should pay particular attention to each child's mother tongue to ensure that diversity is welcomed and respected in the classroom. As vital communication tools for human activities, languages are a means of expression and an important element of cultural heritage. Where possible, connections should be made between the language of instruction and the child's mother tongue in order to facilitate communication and a sense of belonging.

At school, the children's cultural understanding can be fuelled through dialogue, experiences, play, stories, fairy tales, rhymes, literature, music, songs and the different subject areas (languages, mathematics, arts education, social sciences, science and technology, personal development). Children are introduced to practices from their own and other cultures through their social environment. Visits to cultural venues can also provide multiple opportunities to bring children into contact with authors, museum scientists and artists.

Recognition of the teacher's expertise

Teachers have extensive knowledge of child development and of the pedagogical approaches specific to preschool education. Their observations of children, their professional judgment, their culture and their expertise enable them to seize opportunities for authentic classroom situations. This allows teachers to plan rich, meaningful, diversified learning situations, particularly in the context of play. Teachers offer activities that are tailored to the children's level of development and learning styles, help the children expand their repertoire of actions, deepen their understanding of various concepts and improve their knowledge in accordance with their interests, needs and abilities. Teacher support helps the children experience success by developing their intrinsic motivation and enjoyment of learning.

Planning smooth transitions

A transition is a period during which children and their families must gradually adjust to a new physical, social and human environment. Transition periods bring about important changes and present not only opportunities for growth, but also challenges. The start of school marks the beginning of the children's formal education and the construction of new relationships between them, their families and the school. The transition to school begins with the children's experiences during the year preceding the start of school and can last up to two years.

The school team plays a key role in smooth, successful transitions as well as in educational continuity across the children's various life environments. The stakeholders who work directly with children and their families must coordinate their efforts for a personalized, warm welcome and partnership. If parents are treated with care and respect, they are more likely to adhere to the educational project.

PROGRAM ORIENTATIONS

Three orientations are being used to pursue the two main objectives of the mandate for the Preschool Cycle Program, which are to foster the global development of all children and to take preventive action to meet their needs. These three orientations are: play, observation of the child's progress and classroom organization.

Learning through play

Children have different strategies they can apply in order to learn, including imitating, observing, experimenting and questioning. However, play is the ideal way for children to learn and develop their full potential. A rich environment where children initiate play, especially symbolic play, with support from an adult, will allow them to explore, create, improvise, portray a role, manipulate and so on. Through play, children activate a sensorimotor and affective memory, acquire knowledge and concepts, structure their thoughts and expand their understanding of the world around them. When playing, they learn to develop their autonomy and their relationships with others. They make choices, decisions and discoveries, have ideas, develop scenarios and learn to concentrate and not get distracted. They make themselves understood, often act as conciliators or mediators, and find solutions to problems. Play is also a means of communication, expression and action, and it encourages children to be open to the world.

Sufficient time and space should be set aside for each child to be actively engaged in play. When children know they have enough time to play, they are more likely to become fully invested. On the other hand, when they are not given enough time, the activity will remain superficial. Therefore, children should have two periods of between 45 and 60 minutes of free play every day and should be permitted to choose with whom and what they will play. In addition, they should have daily access to a range of quality outdoor play structures and materials that are age appropriate.

The enjoyment and satisfaction that children derive from self-initiated play will motivate them to become fully engaged and to persevere. Play also helps with the development of mathematics, oral and written language, self-regulation, concentration and executive functions. With support from the adults, children are able to engage in learning situations based on a combination of play and real-life experiences, and hence begin to assume their role as active students. The importance of play is recognized as a key contributing factor in the global development of all preschoolers, whatever their needs and characteristics may be.

Observation of the child's progress

Observing children's progress requires paying attention to what is happening and what the children's words and actions reveal. Observation helps teachers identify the children's skills, knowledge, learning, interests, questions, attitudes, behaviours, processes, strategies and needs. Free play provides favourable opportunities to observe children and their interactions in a natural context. Observations made while children are carrying out activities in their zone of proximal development can help adults determine whether a child needs additional support and to provide the tools to foster development. From the perspective of taking early action, observing the child is important and presents opportunities to better target the interventions to be put in place.

Teachers interpret their observations using their knowledge of global child development,[3] the program and their professional judgment. They may also talk to others who work with the children to obtain additional information on progress outside the classroom. They can then use this information to make the children aware of what they have learned, adapt their interventions to the children's strengths and needs, and help them to progress.

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3. The characteristics and needs of children in each area of development are developmental benchmarks that guide intervention.

In addition, the parents should be given information that showcases their children's efforts and that draws attention to the process and content. This may include concrete examples such as photographs showing the children involved in activities, digital or paper portfolios, comments made by the children and the teacher, and transcripts of discussions held with the children. This helps parents to better understand how their children learn through the activities that take place in the classroom.

Classroom organization

The classroom must be physically adapted to the needs of 4- to 6-year-old children and be both safe and easily accessible. It should be organized in such a way as to foster the children's participation and encourage them to explore different types of play (e.g. games that involve motor skills, manipulation of objects; symbolic play; construction games; board games). The materials and technological devices (e.g. puppets, books, musical instruments, digital games) made available to the children are tools for learning. Children should find a wide range of stimulating, diversified and adaptable materials, available in sufficient quantities, which they can use alone, in pairs, in small groups or as a class. The classroom, the gym, the schoolyard and the outdoor environment are all places where children can observe, explore, manipulate objects, reflect, use their imagination, exercise their memory, plan projects, test their abilities and develop their motor, emotional, social, language and cognitive skills.

In order to provide a positive climate where children feel confident and safe, instructions should be clear, precise, consistent and coherent. Conflicts often arise between preschool-age children and provide authentic opportunities for learning. Children need to be guided through the process of conflict resolution so that they can gradually become able to resolve conflicts on their own. They should always feel that a respectful attitude is both encouraged and supported.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Areas of development

The Preschool Cycle Program covers five areas of development (physical and motor development, emotional development, social development, language development and cognitive development) which must be considered together. Each area of development is linked to a competency with two focuses of development, which are broken down into key features.

For each key feature, observable behaviours are provided as examples and can be referred to when selecting interventions. Children's characteristics and needs are presented for each area of development to show where 4- to 6-year-olds might be in terms of their development. The following diagram illustrates the interaction between the different areas of development.

AREAS OF GLOBAL CHILD DEVELOPMENT, COMPETENCIES AND FOCUSES OF DEVELOPMENT
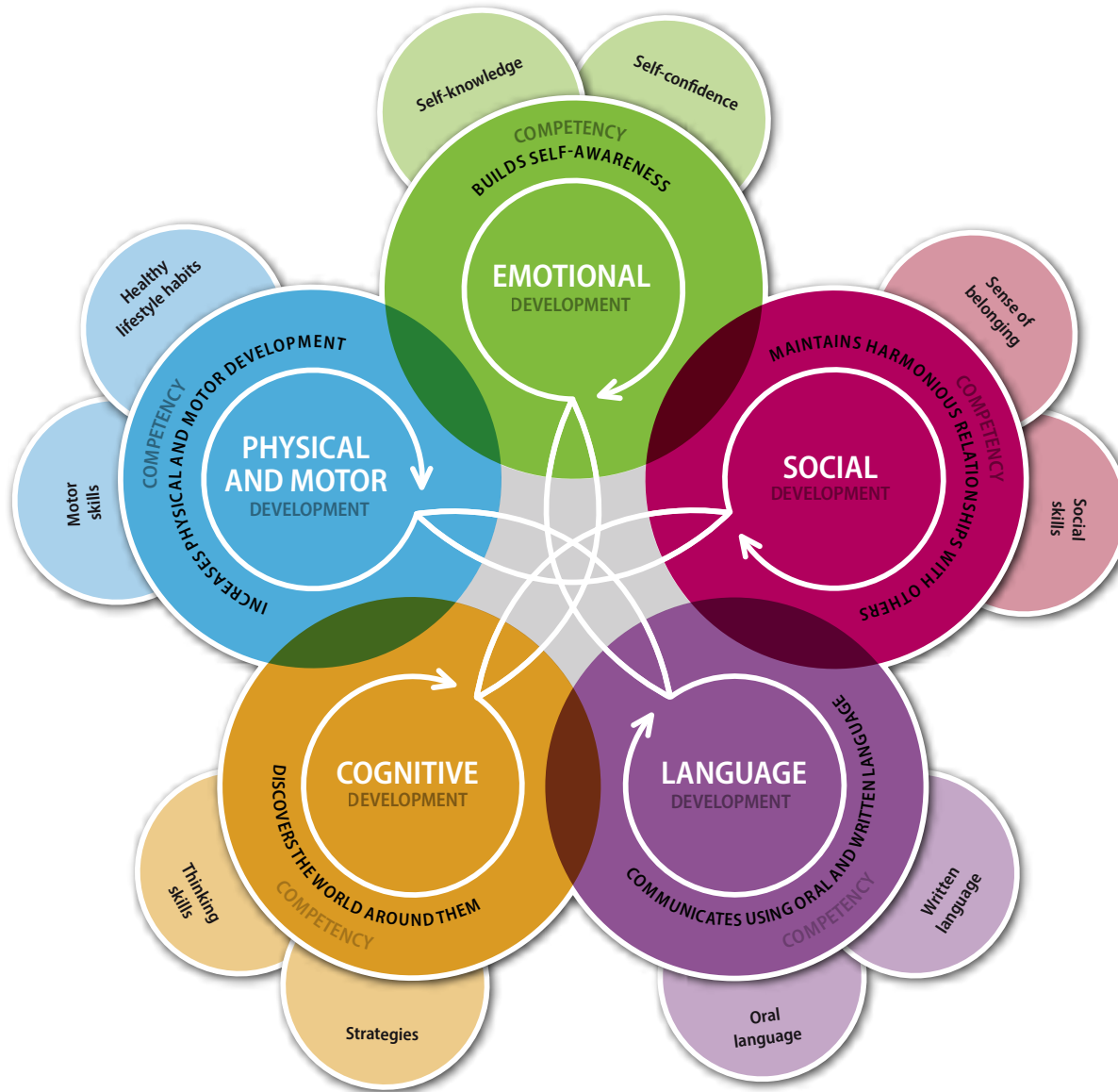
Competencies, focuses of development and key features

The five competencies in preschool education are as follows: *Increases physical and motor development*; *Builds self-awareness*; *Maintains harmonious relationships with others*; *Communicates using oral and written language*; *Discovers the world around them*. Each competency has two focuses of development, which are broken down into a number of key features formulated from the child's point of view.

Presentation of the areas of development

A diagram illustrates the interactions between the area of development being presented and the other areas. A description of the area of development follows, along with the context for learning, connections with other areas of development, connections with the executive functions, end-of-preschool outcomes, characteristics and needs of children, and observable behaviours.

Description of the area of development

This section describes and explains the essential aspects of the area of development.

Context for learning

The context for learning provides useful references for providing the activities in which children can play, manipulate objects, interact and learn.

Connections with other areas of development

Children develop globally in all areas, and what happens in one area will influence their overall development. As such, any interventions focused on one area will have repercussions on the others. The connections between them help to better understand the importance of the interaction between the areas of development when providing the contexts for learning, materials and guidance required for the children's development.

Connections with executive functions

Executive functions are a set of cognitive skills that allow children to have intentional control over their thoughts, emotions, behaviours and actions in their everyday activities. Children can use skills associated with the executive functions, for example, when they receive support in all classroom situations such as play, story time, interactions with other children and adults, or artistic activities. Executive functions are complex cognitive processes, not learning content to be taught.

The skills associated with executive functions that are commonly evoked in early childhood research are inhibition, working memory, flexible thinking and planning.

Inhibition is a skill that allows children to control their actions and resist distractions from outside stimuli. It also allows them to regulate their own emotions and behaviours. Children need this skill to accept delays and wait their turn, for example, before climbing up to use the slide.

Working memory refers to the child's ability to temporarily store information for later reference and use it. This skill is essential to understanding events that occur over time, when it is important to remember what has already happened and make connections with what will happen next. For example, working memory allows children to memorize information, instructions and strategies for subsequent use. It is through this skill that they can plan actions, roles and scenarios during symbolic play. Children apply their experience while interacting with others. Working memory improves gradually throughout childhood and adolescence.

Flexible thinking refers to a child's ability to change their point of view or switch their attention from one thing to another with relative ease. It is developed using a combination of working memory and inhibition skills. To be able to change their viewpoint or alter what they are doing, children must first be able to memorize new information and suppress previously used information. Flexible thinking is very useful in problem-solving processes. For example, a child may encounter problems with a jigsaw puzzle, but may then, with the help of a friend, try a new strategy, such as grouping all the pieces of the same colour together.

Lastly, **planning**, which is mastered later in the child development process, refers to the ability to plan the steps required to complete a task and structure the actions needed to move on to the next step. Planning is especially useful when learning sequences are integrated into class routines; for example, when it is time to play outside, the children must remember the steps required to put on their outdoor clothing.

Executive functions are developed throughout life. The period between 3 and 6 years of age is considered to be a critical period of development. The skills associated with executive functions are tightly intertwined and impact one another. Executive functions allow children to develop new skills, knowledge, strategies and attitudes that they will need not only in kindergarten, but throughout their lives as well. They also affect school success, since they allow the children to adjust to environmental requirements, engage in different situations, learn and develop their full potential.

End-of-preschool outcomes

The outcomes refer to the major steps in the development process for each area of development. They provide benchmarks for what is expected of children at the end of preschool education.

Characteristics and needs of children

Children start school with varying background experience. All children go through the same stages of development, but they do so at their own pace. There can be wide ranges in children's level of development since they may be several months apart in age, they may have had different opportunities for learning at home and they may not be fluent in the language of instruction.

Characteristics and needs are developmental benchmarks provided as indicators only. Children who have not reached one or another of these benchmarks are not necessarily experiencing developmental delays. These characteristics and needs can be used as a reference when providing support for each child.

In any case, regardless of each child's specific characteristics, the strategies that teachers use can have a significant impact on the equal opportunities provided to preschoolers.

Observable behaviours

Observable behaviours are based on manifestations or everyday experiences in the classroom that allow children to develop attitudes and behaviours (soft skills) as well as processes and strategies or to learn and acquire knowledge. These manifestations help to better identify the children's progress along the developmental continuum and to notice how they respond, on their own or with help. These behaviours can guide pedagogical differentiation and the implementation of targeted interventions, where appropriate.

Observable behaviours that may or may not require adult support have been selected for each key feature and are provided as examples to guide intervention regarding the different areas of development. These lists are partial, provided as indicators only, and may be supplemented by the teacher.

AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT, COMPETENCIES, FOCUSES OF DEVELOPMENT AND KEY FEATURES[4]

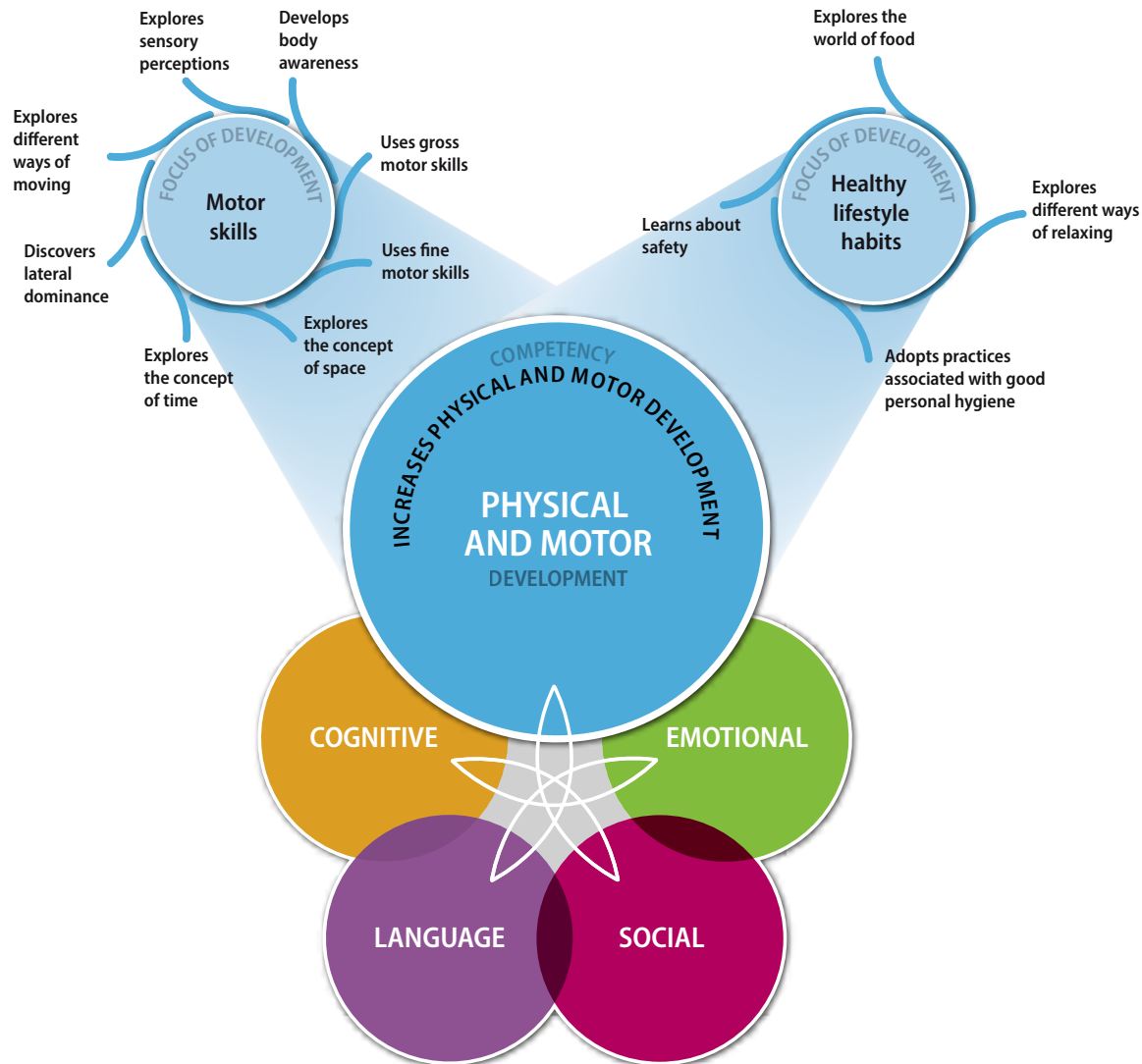| Areas of development and competencies	Focuses of development	Key features
Physical and Motor Development **Increases physical and motor development**	**Motor skills**	› Explores sensory perceptions › Develops body awareness › Uses gross motor skills › Uses fine motor skills › Explores the concept of space › Explores the concept of time › Discovers lateral dominance › Explores different ways of moving
	Healthy lifestyle habits	› Explores the world of food › Explores different ways of relaxing › Adopts practices associated with good personal hygiene › Learns about safety
Emotional Development **Builds self-awareness**	**Self-knowledge**	› Recognizes own needs › Recognizes own characteristics › Expresses own emotions › Regulates own emotions
	Self-confidence	› Explores own autonomy › Responds with confidence

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4. For quick reference, this table is available for download in 11 x 17 inch (432 x 279 mm) PDF format at: http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/education/jeunes/pfeq/Prescolaire-tableau-domaines-competences-AN.pdf

Areas of development and competencies	Focuses of development	Key features
Social Development **Maintains harmonious relationships with others**	**Sense of belonging**	› Shows openness to others › Participates in group activities › Collaborates with others
	Social skills	› Gradually complies with rules of conduct › Creates connections with others › Regulates own behaviour › Resolves conflicts
Language Development **Communicates using oral and written language**	**Oral language**	› Interacts verbally and non-verbally › Demonstrates understanding › Expands own vocabulary › Explores different kinds of statements › Develops phonological awareness
	Written language	› Interacts with written language › Recognizes some reading and writing conventions › Discovers some functions of writing › Knows the letters of the alphabet[5]
Cognitive Development **Discovers the world around them**	**Thinking skills**	› Acquires new knowledge relating to the subject areas (mathematics, arts education, social sciences, science and technology) › Uses reasoning skills › Uses imagination
	Strategies	› Takes action › Explores different actions › Explains the actions taken

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5. End-of-preschool outcome: The child knows the names and sounds of most of the letters of the alphabet (upper and lower case).

Physical and Motor Development

Increases physical and motor development

Explores sensory perceptions

Develops body awareness

Explores different ways of moving

Uses gross motor skills

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT

Motor skills

Uses fine motor skills

Discovers lateral dominance

Explores the concept of space

Explores the concept of time

Explores the world of food

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT

Healthy lifestyle habits

Explores different ways of relaxing

Learns about safety

Adopts practices associated with good personal hygiene

COMPETENCY

INCREASES PHYSICAL AND MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

PHYSICAL AND MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

COGNITIVE

EMOTIONAL

LANGUAGE

SOCIAL

Description of the area of development

This area includes the development of motor skills and healthy lifestyle habits. Physical and motor development is essential to every aspect of child development, but especially to gross motor skills. It refers to the development of physical abilities or motor and perceptual skills, and is influenced by a child's personal characteristics such as growth, maturity, physical health and living environment. When exposed to different opportunities to be active, children gradually become aware of the positive effects of movement and the influence of lifestyle on health. Healthy lifestyle habits include openness to, curiosity about and willingness to try different foods, as well as awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and aspects of prevention and safety.

Context for learning

Physical and motor development takes place in all contexts. In everyday life, children have opportunities to climb, jump, slide, and so on. Outdoor environments (e.g. park, schoolyard), natural environments (e.g. wooded areas, snowbanks) and use of a variety of equipment (e.g. balls, hoops, scooter boards) can also provide high-intensity motor experiences. In addition, and where the environment is conducive to risk-taking, children develop the self-protective behaviours they need to maintain their own health and safety. Everyday activities also foster the development of healthy lifestyle habits (e.g. snacks and outings).

Connections with other areas of development

The more children can be active, the more they become aware of and learn about their body and develop basic motor skills. In doing so, they gain self-assurance and confidence and learn to situate themselves spatially, to perceive reality, to self-regulate, to interact with others, to use the correct terms when referring to their bodies and their movements, to solve problems and to take increasingly responsible and autonomous actions.

Connections with the executive functions

Sensitive interactions between adults and children will help the children to control certain spontaneous reactions (e.g. refrain from pushing another child in order to sit on the same bench), use their working memory (e.g. remember the steps to follow to dress for winter), be flexible in their thinking (e.g. stop playing to go to the bathroom, and then return to play) and plan (e.g. gather the materials they need to create a painting). A context conducive to the development of executive functions can be created by offering children different opportunities to test their physical and motor limits (e.g. obstacle courses or games that encourage complex movements). Motor games involving signals that require the children to stop moving, slow down, exaggerate their movements or move more quickly will also encourage the development of executive functions, as will situations in which the children are invited to wind down and concentrate.

End-of-preschool outcomes

The children demonstrate ease of movement and, with maturity and experience, they are also able to increasingly refine their movements. They become more aware of their physical and motor potential and skills. They adapt their actions to their physical and social environment and can apply health and safety rules.

CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF CHILDREN

In general, 4- to 6-year-olds:

› experience rapid physical changes (related to growth), with significant differences from one child to another because children grow at different rates

› show a strong interest in motor activities that involve manipulation, exploration and discovery

› explore the things their bodies can or may be able to do

› develop enough coordination, dissociation, control and balance to synchronize their movements

› are naturally drawn to short, high-intensity activities

› can distinguish movements associated with different parts of the body

› show increasing dexterity needed to grasp and manipulate small objects (e.g. knead modelling clay, build castles out of blocks)

› can learn different spatial concepts (e.g. near and far) and can compare two objects to determine which is bigger

› develop their tastes and food preferences as they discover new foods

› discover different ways to relax

› become aware of their abilities and limitations by taking risks and accepting challenges

In preschool education, 4- to 6-year-olds need to:

› be encouraged to take care of some of their own needs

› be active

› have a variety of sensory and motor experiences daily

› strengthen their muscle tone and adopt good posture

› use different motor skills (e.g. catching, throwing, kicking, striking)

› overcome their fears and gain confidence when performing challenging movements

› handle materials of different weights, textures or sizes, and use a variety of tools

› engage in moderate- to high-intensity activities

› learn how to relax and to take part in relaxation activities

› find reference points so that they can orient themselves in space; refocus on gross motor skills activities if they are experiencing difficulties

Physical and Motor Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: MOTOR SKILLS

Observable behaviours that may or may not require adult support[6]

Key feature: *Explores sensory perceptions*

Children may, for example:

› handle various materials (e.g. water, sand, rice, modelling clay, rocks, sticks)

› identify things using their senses (sight, smell, hearing, touch, taste)

› touch a variety of textures, smell different odours, discover new flavours

› discover how different parts of the body work and react (e.g. breathing, locomotion)

› become aware of the difference between a heavy object and a light object

› assemble, align, stack, pile up and fit objects together during play

› pay attention to different physical sensations (e.g. recognize that something is warm, hold an object tightly)

› be in contact with nature by handling and discovering different raw materials

Key feature: *Develops body awareness*

Children may, for example:

› discover their bodies and what they can do

› point out and name the main parts of their bodies

› identify the characteristics of different parts of their bodies

› explore different directions using their whole body (forward, backward, to the right, to the left) or parts of it (e.g. tilt head forward and backward)

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6. These lists are by no means exhaustive and are provided for information purposes only. Teachers may add to them as they wish.

Physical and Motor Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: MOTOR SKILLS (CONT.)

Key feature: *Uses gross motor skills*

Children may, for example:

› explore a range of motor skills (e.g. running, jumping; catching, throwing, kicking or hitting a ball)

› explore different movements involving every part of the body

› move around in different ways (e.g. imitate the movements of an animal, follow a rhythm)

› practise keeping their balance and react when they lose it

› play hopscotch, skip rope, bounce or start to dribble a ball

› go up and down stairs, first by placing both feet on each step, and then by alternating feet

› catch an object with both hands, moving their bodies to adapt to the object's trajectory

› slow down and control their movements (e.g. playing tag)

› hold a pose

› walk in a straight line, along a beam or on unstable ground

› coordinate their movements

Key feature: *Uses fine motor skills*

Children may, for example:

› manipulate various modelling materials (e.g. roll modelling clay, make coils or balls of different sizes)

› perform actions such as lacing, buttoning, twisting, cutting, tearing or folding

› handle small objects (e.g. small blocks, buttons, pompoms, paper clips, clothespins)

› use a variety of tools to paint, draw or make crafts

› manipulate different materials (e.g. paper, tissue paper, finger paint, modelling clay)

› explore different aspects of motor skills involving the face (e.g. making a face), the mouth (e.g. blowing), the eyes (e.g. winking)

› hold a computer mouse to point, click, select different elements

› make proper use of the tools or materials placed at their disposal (e.g. scissors, glue, crayons, stylus for drawing on an interactive whiteboard)

Physical and Motor Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: MOTOR SKILLS (CONT.)

Key feature: *Explores the concept of space*

Children may, for example:

› move around while avoiding obstacles

› move around in the available space

› find their place in a group, find their cubby or the bathroom

› be aware of others when moving around

› move around in a defined space (e.g. jump through a hoop, move around an obstacle, go under a table or branch, go through a tunnel, climb onto a chair)

› organize their things to have the space they need

› position themselves in space in relation to an object or a person (e.g. behind, facing, in front of, under, between, to the left, to the right)

Key feature: *Explores the concept of time*

Children may, for example:

› refer to a calendar or pictograms representing the day's schedule to obtain a sense of the daily routine

› move at different paces (slow or fast)

› reproduce sequences of movements

› reproduce a rhythmic sequence

› apply time-related concepts (first, last, before, after, at the same time)

› explore various ways to develop a sense of time (e.g. using an hourglass)

Physical and Motor Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: MOTOR SKILLS (CONT.)

Key feature: *Discovers lateral dominance*

Children may, for example:

› use both sides of their bodies to perform gross motor actions (e.g. jump, dance, throw, catch, hammer, fit building blocks together)

› use both sides of their bodies to perform fine motor actions (e.g. cut, screw, unscrew, button, unbutton, cut modelling clay)

› begin to exhibit lateral dominance

Key feature: *Explores different ways of moving*

Children may, for example:

› explore active play indoors and outdoors (e.g. dancing, swinging, running)

› play on the structures in the park or the schoolyard

› spontaneously use materials designed for active play

› repeat a newly learned action to reinforce it

› enjoy an active game and want to repeat it

› use all the available space, along with natural elements such as trees, rocks and puddles, to move around with different levels of intensity

› engage in increasingly intense physical activity

› undertake challenges, in outdoor play areas, in their own way

Physical and Motor Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: HEALTHY LIFESTYLE HABITS

Observable behaviours that may or may not require adult support[7]

Key feature: *Explores the world of food*

Children may, for example:

› observe, feel, touch and taste foods

› name foods

› be willing to taste new foods

› identify their food preferences and tastes

› identify some healthy snacks and foods

Key feature: *Explores different ways of relaxing*

Children may, for example:

› choose a comfortable position

› identify activities (e.g. doing a jigsaw puzzle, receiving a massage, listening to music, taking time out, closing their eyes) and objects (e.g. a blanket or plush toy) that help them relax

› take advantage of quiet time and immediately feel better

› select their favourite place from a list of choices

› try new ways of calming down (e.g. breathing, running, jumping, using a stress ball)

› explore activities through which they can expend energy

› move, engage in free play, find a quiet corner, take a break

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7.   These lists are by no means exhaustive and are provided for information purposes only. Teachers may add to them as they wish.

Physical and Motor Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: HEALTHY LIFESTYLE HABITS (CONT.)

Key feature: *Adopts practices associated with good personal hygiene*

Children may, for example:

› go to the bathroom alone

› learn to use a tissue

› wash their hands (e.g. before and after snack time, after going to the bathroom, after making crafts, before using a touch screen)

› wipe their mouth after eating

› sneeze or cough into the crook of their arm

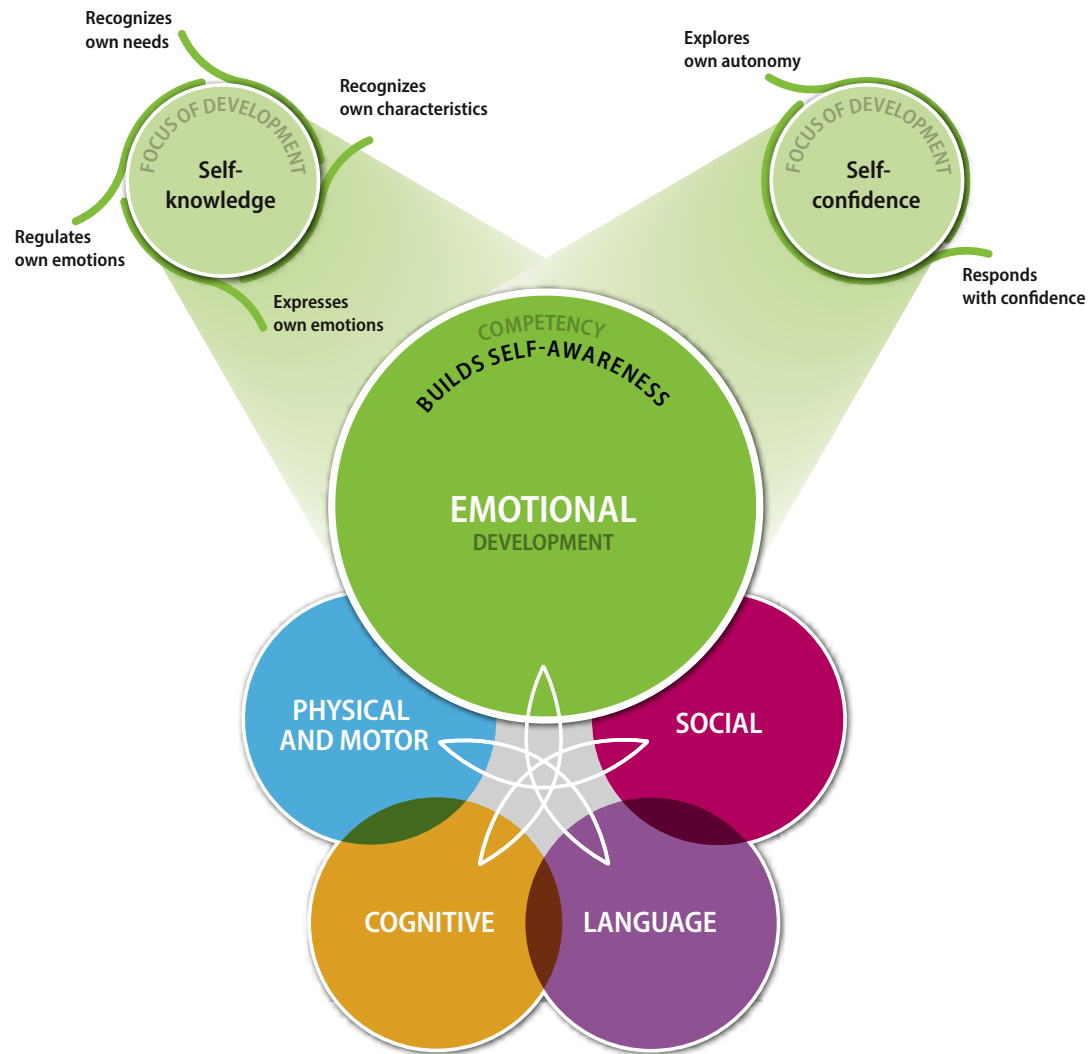› put waste in the garbage can, recycling bin or compost bin

Key feature: *Learns about safety*

Children may, for example:

› go up and down the stairs safely

› identify certain potentially dangerous situations or elements

› name certain safety rules

› be careful when moving around and when handling certain objects (e.g. scissors, touch screen)

› identify symbols warning of the dangers associated with certain substances (e.g. toxic products, flammable products)

› learn to evacuate the building efficiently

Emotional Development

Builds self-awareness

Recognizes
own needs

Recognizes
own characteristics

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT

Self-
knowledge

Explores
own autonomy

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT

Self-
confidence

Regulates
own emotions

Expresses
own emotions

Responds
with confidence

COMPETENCY
BUILDS SELF-AWARENESS

EMOTIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

**PHYSICAL
AND MOTOR**

SOCIAL

COGNITIVE

LANGUAGE

Description of the area of development

Emotional development refers to self-knowledge and self-confidence. Self-knowledge allows children to build a sense of self, or self-image, and to see themselves as unique and different from others. This allows them to know themselves and to understand and express their feelings. Self-confidence refers to the desire for autonomy and a sense of competence. Self-confidence develops through attachment, when a child's need for security is met, and through warm interactions with adults and other children. Self-confidence continues to develop as children learn to meet their own needs and live positive experiences and successes. Emotional development is also based on individual temperament, which leads them to understand their environment and past experiences in their own way.

Context for learning

Emotional development takes place in all contexts, but mainly through the children's everyday experiences and contacts with others during play, creative activities and projects. Children gradually develop their ability to express, understand and regulate their emotions. Children aged 4 to 6 need to discover and learn to complete tasks on their own under the watchful gaze of the adults around them.

Connections with other areas of development

As children develop emotionally, they begin to feel safe enough to move around, explore and take risks, especially during active play. They also learn to ask for help when necessary, to collaborate with others, to participate in group activities and to communicate. They discover different points of view and can persevere to find solutions to the problems they encounter while playing, experimenting and experiencing everyday life.

Connections with the executive functions

Children's ability to understand and acknowledge emotions, and then adjust to them, requires skills connected to the executive functions. Inhibition helps to regulate emotions, for example, when children express their anger and learn to channel it into something positive (e.g. give or receive a hug, hug a teddy bear). They must also be flexible in their thinking to adjust to everyday situations. Working memory, too, can play a role in emotional development by helping children to act alone and independently (e.g. remember the steps involved in putting on a snowsuit). Lastly, symbolic play requires skills derived from all the executive functions and allows children to explore their emotions (e.g. relive a situation) by inventing increasingly complex scenarios.

End-of-preschool outcomes

The children know themselves and their own needs better. They make choices based on their tastes and interests. They are aware of their strengths and can talk about their successes. They undertake a variety of tasks and are keen to accept challenges at their level. Guided by adults, children also demonstrate the ability to regulate their emotions.

CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF CHILDREN

In general, 4- to 6-year-olds:

› have different temperaments that affect how they interact with others and react to events that happen around them

› still need the support of their parents or the adults around them to confidently explore their environment

› are willing to interact with adults who make them feel safe enough to engage in learning

› understand that they are unique

› exhibit an increasingly realistic concept of self, allowing them to identify the characteristics that distinguish them from others

› are aware of their place within their family

› often overestimate their skills and explore the boundaries they should respect

› demonstrate a desire to develop their sense of initiative and competency (development of their own identity and self-esteem)

› are sensitive to how others perceive them, which plays an increasingly significant role in their definition of self

› feel proud when they contribute to the achievement of a common goal (e.g. doing a jigsaw puzzle with a classmate)

› are learning to express, recognize and name their emotions

› have some understanding of their emotions and those of others

In preschool education, 4- to 6-year-olds need:

› a suitable context (an adapted physical environment and emotional stability)

› to be surrounded by caring adults who provide structure, protect them and collaborate with each other

› constant and consistent supervision, a warm environment and reassurance

› consistent interventions by the adults with whom they interact (e.g. permission to bring a transitional object such as a blanket to class, to daycare or to the gym)

› to feel accepted as they are, without being judged

› help to manage their emotions, from adults who are attentive to their feelings (e.g. adults who can put their feelings into words)

› to experience success, however modest, so that they can identify their strengths and improve their self-esteem

› to feel proud of their accomplishments

› activities and tasks suited to their zone of proximal development

› to feel capable of learning

› to be supported, so that they can build a positive sense of self that will allow them to develop awareness of their potential and their sense of competency

Emotional Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Observable behaviours that may or may not require adult support[8]

Key feature: *Recognizes own needs*

Children may, for example:

› express their needs verbally or non-verbally (e.g. movements, facial expressions, drawings)

› accept help from an adult or other children

› ask for help from an adult or other children

› name some of their needs (e.g. being thirsty, needing to use the bathroom)

› find ways of meeting their own needs

Key feature: *Recognizes own characteristics*

Children may, for example:

› be able to say their first and last names and their age

› be able to name some of their personal characteristics (hair colour, birthday)

› recognize their place within the family

› discover their tastes and preferences

› express their tastes and preferences

› recognize similarities with or differences from other children in the class (e.g. "I wear glasses," "I'm taller than you") or when looking at a book or picture (e.g. "That looks just like me")

› become aware of their strengths and challenges

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8.   These lists are by no means exhaustive and are provided for information purposes only. Teachers may add to them as they wish.

Emotional Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: SELF-KNOWLEDGE (CONT.)

Key feature: *Expresses own emotions*

Children may, for example:

› react when interested in an event or situation (e.g. jump for joy)

› express their feelings and emotions in different ways (e.g. glare and make a fist to demonstrate anger)

› recognize emotions (e.g. joy, fear, sadness, anger)

› recognize signs of an emotion in themselves or others

Key feature: *Regulates own emotions*

Children may, for example:

› be able to wait a certain amount of time before having their needs addressed

› use strategies to calm down

› accept comments and suggestions from others

› accept suggestions for resolving a conflict

› adapt their emotions, behaviours and level of attention to the demands of a situation

Emotional Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: SELF-CONFIDENCE

Observable behaviours that may or may not require adult support[9]

Key feature: *Explores own autonomy*

Children may, for example:

› carry out activities or tasks without always having an adult nearby (e.g. get dressed on their own)

› explore the environment and the materials that are available

› use the references available to them (e.g. a pictogram showing the steps for getting dressed)

› proceed by trial and error

› select the activities that most appeal to them

› select their own materials and tools

› recognize what belongs to them

› be familiar with class routines and organize themselves accordingly

› find things to do during free time or between activities

› show initiative and assume responsibilities

› take risks, make attempts and dare to try new things

› set personal goals ("I want to build a castle out of blocks")

Key feature: *Responds with confidence*

Children may, for example:
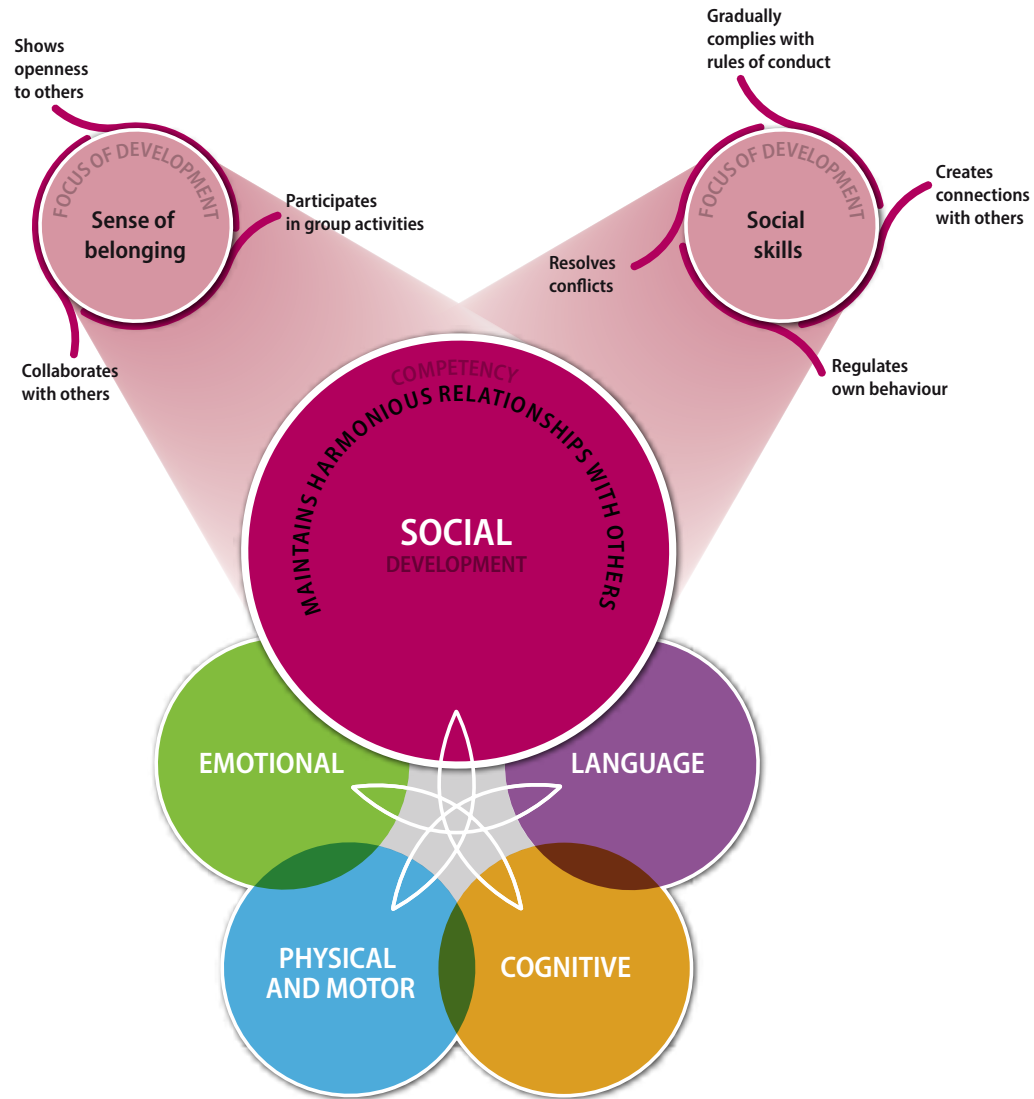
› proudly show the things they have done (e.g. "Look what I did!")

› talk about their successes (e.g. "Wow, I did it!")

› be aware of their skills (e.g. "Now I can . . . .")

› speak positively about themselves

› express their personal impressions

› defend their ideas

› adapt to new situations

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9. These lists are by no means exhaustive and are provided for information purposes only. Teachers may add to them as they wish.

Social Development

Maintains harmonious relationships with others

Shows openness to others

Gradually complies with rules of conduct

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT

Sense of belonging

Participates in group activities

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT

Social skills

Creates connections with others

Resolves conflicts

Collaborates with others

Regulates own behaviour

COMPETENCY

MAINTAINS HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

EMOTIONAL

LANGUAGE

PHYSICAL AND MOTOR

COGNITIVE

Description of the area of development

Social development refers to social skills and the ability to be part of a group, as well as to the relationships that the children build with others in the different areas of family life, at school and in their community. Social development encompasses all the attitudes, skills and strategies underlying behaviours that are considered socially acceptable and that enable children to establish positive interactions with their peers and to resolve conflicts. The children must therefore create a place for themselves in the group and be accepted by the other group members. Social development requires an open attitude to others that includes knowledge of and compliance with the applicable rules.

Context for learning

Social development takes place in all contexts, but especially in everyday life in the classroom and at school. These different contexts allow children to interact socially with others during play (e.g. spontaneous, symbolic, construction, outdoor or co-operative games and games with rules), during activities and projects, and during transitions (e.g. moving around in the school). Children also develop social skills by becoming involved in formulating group rules of conduct and making certain decisions.

Connections with other areas of development

By developing social skills, children can perform tasks that require increasingly complex motor skills (e.g. playing with others on playground equipment). They also develop appropriate attitudes with their peers, playmates and the adults around them. If an environment fosters interactions, children have many opportunities to express their needs and interests, negotiate, learn new words and use those words in context. In addition, they can name their own emotions and the emotions they observe in other people. They have opportunities to compare their ideas, share strategies and projects, etc.

Connections with the executive functions

Social development fosters support for the executive functions. Inhibition helps to regulate behaviours, and children who are flexible in their thinking can adopt solutions to their conflicts and other interpersonal problems. Working memory is used to apply or comply with group rules of conduct. The ability to observe and adjust to signs of emotion in other children requires similar skills to those used in planning.

End-of-preschool outcomes

The children participate in and contribute to group life. They adapt their reactions and behaviours to the situation. They can share, offer help and encourage others. Guided by an adult, they use different strategies to try to resolve conflicts.

CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF CHILDREN

In general, 4- to 6-year-olds:

› realize that their social environment is growing ever wider

› create emotional bonds with their classmates

› seek to maintain relationships in which they feel safe, with the classmates they know best

› have increased interactions with their peers that extend over time

› begin to acknowledge the presence of others by adopting socially acceptable behaviours (e.g. lending, borrowing, giving, helping, accepting, exchanging, waiting)

› want to become part of the group

› try to collaborate and co-operate with others to achieve their goals

› gradually become aware of what is appropriate or inappropriate, depending on the context

› manage, with help, to control their reactions and behaviours in certain situations

In preschool education, 4- to 6-year-olds need to:

› experience a stable and safe environment where the rules of conduct are clear and adapted to them

› receive support as they build positive relationships with other children and adults

› feel accepted and acknowledged by the other children

› receive help in using words to express their needs, requests, frustrations and preferences

› receive guidance to recognize signs of emotions, and to be supported as they learn to regulate their behaviours

› participate frequently in activities in small or large groups

› be supported as they learn and comply with the rules of conduct in the school and in the classroom

› be involved in certain decisions concerning group life

Social Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: SENSE OF BELONGING

Observable behaviours that may or may not require adult support[10]

Key feature: *Shows openness to others*

Children may, for example:

› take interest in the other children

› allow other children or an adult to approach

› approach another child to play

› initiate interactions with other children or the adult

› take time to listen to others' requests

› be sensitive to and respectful of others' emotions, ideas and wishes

› accept that another child may be different from them physically or culturally

› accept another child's particular needs

Key feature: *Participates in group activities*

Children may, for example:

› play with other children

› participate in group activities

› agree to interact with other children (e.g. play, dance in pairs, hold hands to form a circle)

› recognize that they are part of a group

› express ideas and make suggestions

› suggest games to play with another child, a small group or the group as a whole

› take care of their surroundings and the available materials

› take on responsibilities they can manage within the group

› be involved in making decisions

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10. These lists are by no means exhaustive and are provided for information purposes only. Teachers may add to them as they wish.

Social Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: SENSE OF BELONGING (CONT.)

Key feature: *Collaborates with others*

Children may, for example:

› share materials and space

› wait their turn (e.g. during activities in pairs, when sharing a touch screen or robotics materials with another child)

› express ideas

› make suggestions for attaining a common goal

› plan and negotiate games and actions with others

› follow the rules agreed upon by the players

› offer help

› encourage others

› take part in an activity or project

› seek consensus

› explain their strategies

Social Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: SOCIAL SKILLS

Observable behaviours that may or may not require adult support[11]

Key feature: *Gradually complies with rules of conduct*

Children may, for example:

› be involved in establishing the class rules of conduct

› refer to tools or other concrete means to remember the class rules of conduct (e.g. pictograms, posters)

› know the class rules of conduct

› follow the class rules of conduct

› follow the school rules where applicable

Key feature: *Creates connections with others*

Children may, for example:

› seek the company of other children

› approach another person gently, smile at them, touch them, hold their hand

› be polite (e.g. say thank you)

› join in a game that is already under way

› invite someone to play with them

› show interest in other people

› show pleasure at being in the company of a friend

› congratulate another child

› ask another child questions

› be sensitive to and respectful of others' emotions, ideas and wishes

› offer help

› comfort a crying or injured child

---

11. These lists are by no means exhaustive and are provided for information purposes only. Teachers may add to them as they wish.

Social Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: SOCIAL SKILLS (CONT.)

Key feature: *Regulates own behaviour*

Children may, for example:

› wait their turn

› tolerate delays

› step away to calm down

› pay attention during games and activities

› understand the behaviours that are expected in different contexts

› behave in accordance with expectations

› experience everyday transitions without losing track

› gradually adopt self-regulation strategies
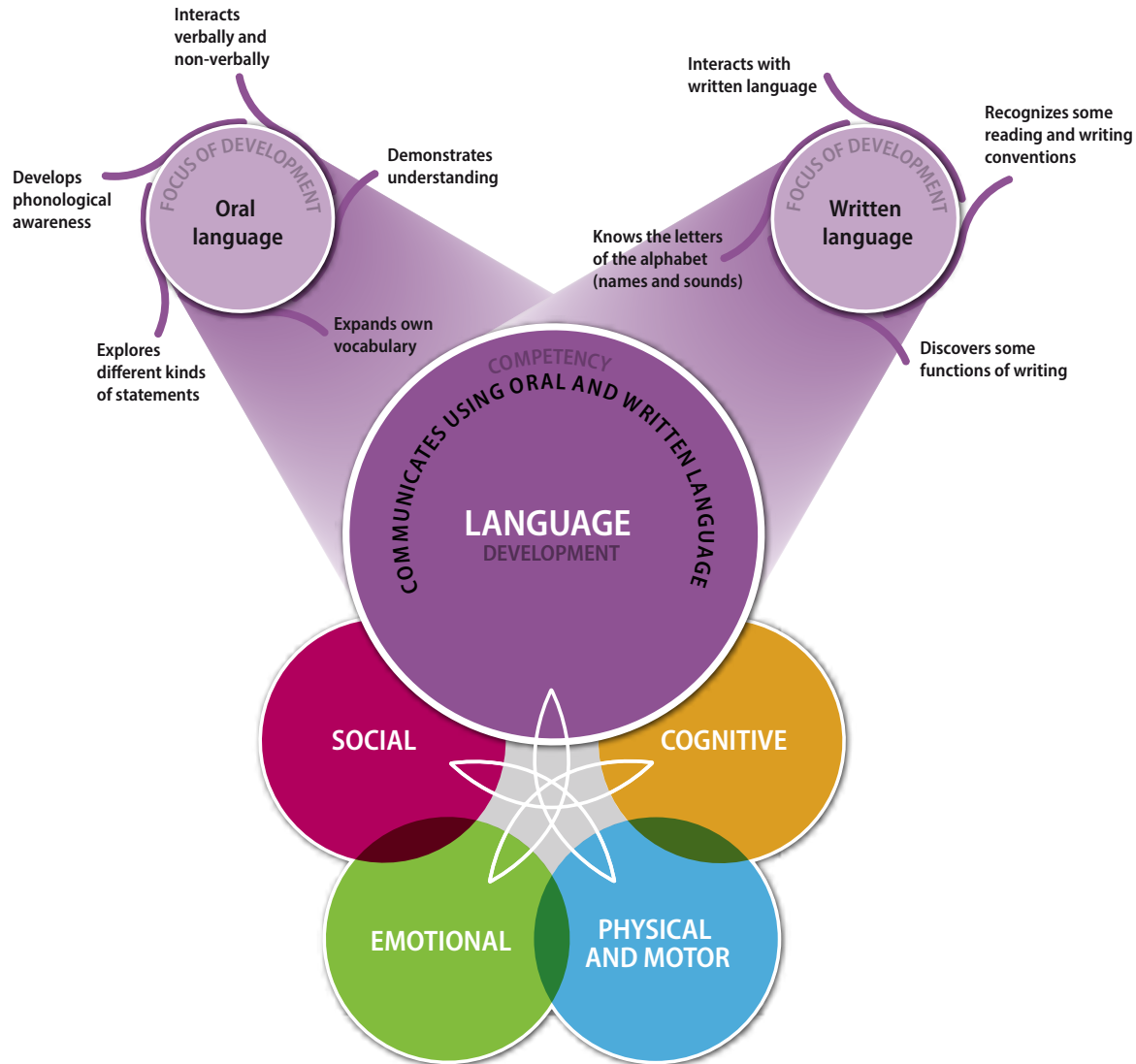
Key feature: *Resolves conflicts*

Children may, for example:

› recognize the elements of a conflict situation

› speak using "I" statements (e.g. "I want you to stop pushing me")

› listen to another child's version of a conflict

› make concessions or compromises

› use the strategy suggested in class for resolving conflicts

› ask an adult for help to resolve a conflict where necessary

› describe a conflict in their own words

› propose potential solutions

› apply the solution that has been agreed upon

› be willing to make amends for any wrong they may have caused other children

› accept the amends or apologies of other children

Language Development

Communicates using oral and written language

Interacts verbally and non-verbally

Demonstrates understanding

Develops phonological awareness

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT

Oral language

Explores different kinds of statements

Expands own vocabulary

Interacts with written language

Recognizes some reading and writing conventions

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT

Written language

Knows the letters of the alphabet (names and sounds)

Discovers some functions of writing

COMPETENCY

COMMUNICATES USING ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

SOCIAL

COGNITIVE

EMOTIONAL

PHYSICAL AND MOTOR

Description of the area of development

Language development covers two focuses of development: oral language and written language. It refers to the children's ability to make themselves understood, express their ideas, understand the ideas of others and gradually develop reading and writing skills and knowledge. Oral language develops from birth onward and is used mainly, but not exclusively, to support social interactions and to share social conventions and codes specific to the children's culture; gradually the children will also become familiar with the social codes and conventions specific to school. Oral language is useful for everyday classroom activities and is essential for cognitive development. As children explore written language, they discover a form of communication through which they can keep a record, reflect, anticipate and address someone. Oral language therefore serves as the foundation for written language, and it is important for children to understand the relationship between the two. Gaining phonological awareness and understanding the alphabetic principle are part of language development and, as such, they allow children to acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes, even before they formally start to learn to read and write in the first grade.

Context for learning

Children's communication skills are developed through their interactions with others in a variety of situations that allow them to take on their role as active learners. This development takes place during activities initiated daily by the children or the teacher in the classroom or during activities involving play, problem-solving and memorization (e.g. songs, nursery rhymes), through contact with cultural works (e.g. documentaries, films, skits, fables, legends), and through frequent exposure to children's literature and printed materials throughout the classroom. Oral and written communication skills are developed in a quality linguistic environment that is open to linguistic diversity and is especially characterized by the care and interest shown by adults for the oral and written language around the children. Children can express themselves in writing in a variety of ways (e.g. using paint, chalk, crayons, modelling clay, sand, digital media).

Connections with other areas of development

Children evolve and grow in contexts where oral interactions, reading and writing fuel physical, motor, emotional, social and cognitive development. They use words to express their actions (e.g. hop, gallop) and their basic needs (e.g. "May I go to the bathroom?"), and they learn safety-related vocabulary. Once they have the words to express themselves, children can reveal their personalities, their interests and their family culture. They can thus communicate with others to express themselves or to resolve conflicts. As their vocabulary develops, they can make connections between what they learn in different areas, and their understanding improves. As they become open to different languages and cultures, children can show interest in others while developing their own personal identity.

Connections with the executive functions

Language plays a major role in the development of the executive functions. Working memory is essential to language development, since children use it to remember what has already happened and make connections with what happens next. In addition, children use soliloquy (talking to themselves) to plan and regulate their actions in order to attain a goal. Language helps them to express their thoughts and describe their actions, to think and plan, and to remember their plans. Language skills also help them to understand and comply with increasingly complex rules governing their behaviours and their play, and to consider more than one potential solution to a problem.

End-of-preschool outcomes

The children show an interest in oral communication, reading and writing in a variety of contexts. They can express themselves to retell, explain, question and state their needs. They demonstrate their understanding in a variety of situations. They show an interest in books and make attempts to read and write. They demonstrate phonological awareness by discerning syllables, rhymes and phonemes. They know the names and sounds of most of the letters of the alphabet (upper and lower case).

CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF CHILDREN

In general, 4- to 6-year-olds:

› react appropriately to simple messages using imitation, gestures, sounds, words or actions, and usually make themselves understood

› produce combinations of words to form simple statements

› communicate spontaneously during play

› can have a fairly long conversation with another child or an adult when the subject interests them

› can describe what they have done, seen, discovered and completed successfully

› expand their vocabulary daily, allowing them to express their ideas more clearly and to picture themselves in the world around them

› provide more complex explanations and seek to elaborate the ideas they express using words (e.g. but, also, or, before, after, in, between, on, under)

› grasp the meaning of more complex questions with relative ease

› gradually begin to structure their discourse more coherently

› show interest in writing and pay attention to the symbols used to communicate in writing (illustrations, shapes, colours and graphic symbols)

› are keen to try to write in their own way

› explore the alphabetic system in different reading and writing contexts and in their own attempts to write

› play with letters and sounds in a variety of contexts

In preschool education, 4- to 6-year-olds need to:

› play to communicate spontaneously

› be in contact and interact with people who model good language practices (speaking, reading and writing)

› be placed in an environment that provides visual and gestural means that help to develop their functional communication skills (e.g. making requests, expressing needs, nodding in agreement)

› be encouraged to speak and to feel safe when doing so

› be accepted when they express themselves (e.g. non-verbal communication through silence, gestures, facial expressions)

› be supported by different means when formulating messages intended to express a need, request help, obtain an object or material, or ask to take part in an activity

› have numerous opportunities to speak throughout the day

› sing, recite nursery rhymes, play guessing games, etc.

› perceive acceptance and respect of their linguistic background as an asset and not as an obstacle to learning the language of instruction

› be exposed on a regular basis to children's literature and written words through song lyrics, nursery rhymes, word games, riddles, maps, pictograms, books, posters, etc.

› have rich and diversified cultural experiences using a wide variety of media

› to be placed in learning contexts in which reading and writing are pleasant experiences

Language Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: ORAL LANGUAGE

Observable behaviours that may or may not require adult support[12]

Key feature: *Interacts verbally and non-verbally*

Children may, for example:

› listen to other children when they express themselves

› use their mother tongue to communicate

› speak with other children while playing

› sing a song or recite a nursery rhyme

› make requests

› explore different ways to communicate (e.g. puppets, digital tablet, interactive white board)

› ask questions

› become aware of the effect produced by their actions, drawings or messages

› converse with others in different contexts throughout the day

› become aware of the similarities and differences between the language of instruction and other languages

› use conventions of communication (e.g. look at the person who is speaking, wait their turn to speak) and in regards to speech (make requests, ask questions)

Key feature: *Demonstrates understanding*

Children may, for example:

› perform the actions associated with words heard daily in the classroom

› carry out the steps of a procedure (e.g. crafts)

› show, through their actions, that they understood oral messages

› use gestures or words to answer questions

› use words and make connections with prior knowledge

› follow or participate in class discussions

› rephrase an instruction

› indicate, verbally or non-verbally, that they do not understand something

› react verbally or non-verbally to the reading of a book (e.g. mime, facial expression, exclamation)

› retell a story in their own words

› make a variety of attempts to remember a story that has been read (e.g. through imitation or expressive and verbal skits, through spontaneous written text)

› identify elements that are common to different books

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12. These lists are by no means exhaustive and are provided for information purposes only. Teachers may add to them as they wish.

Language Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: ORAL LANGUAGE (CONT.)

Key feature: *Expands own vocabulary*

Children may, for example:

› show curiosity and interest in words

› repeat words or expressions as they hear them, even if the full meaning is not understood

› use familiar or new words in different communication situations

› use words associated with information and communications technologies (ICT)

› discover new words through interactions and reading different texts

› identify words referring to numbers when they are spoken out loud

› group words that are linked (e.g. a network of ideas)

› use increasingly precise vocabulary to refer to objects, actions or emotions

› reuse vocabulary in symbolic play

Key feature: *Explores different kinds of statements*

Children may, for example:

› describe or comment on a drawing or photograph

› formulate questions

› express negation

› use statements found in books (e.g. "Once upon a time")

› describe an event, an action or an experience

› memorize the lyrics of a short song or nursery rhyme

› speak using simple sentences that become progressively more complex

Language Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: ORAL LANGUAGE (CONT.)

Key feature: *Develops phonological awareness*

Children may, for example:

› recognize and play with rhymes (e.g. nursery rhymes)

› recognize and manipulate the syllables in a word, and then recognize and manipulate the phonemes

› segment words into syllables and phonemes

› recognize that certain words begin or end with the same phoneme

› blend syllables, and then phonemes, to form words

Language Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: WRITTEN LANGUAGE

Observable behaviours that may or may not require adult support[13]

Key feature: *Interacts with written language*

Children may, for example:

› show interest in books and other written media

› recognize indications of writing (e.g. drawings, pictograms, numbers, letters of the alphabet, words, symbols used in a digital environment)

› imitate a reader by pretending to read (e.g. using illustrations from a book)

› show their understanding of stories read aloud to them

› imitate a writer by trying to write in their own way (e.g. scribbles, symbols, letters)

› recognize their first name, other first names or other written words

› distinguish numbers from letters of the alphabet

› make connections between oral and written language

› use different types of books (e.g. picture books, non-fiction books, comic books, concept books, alphabet books, non-fiction, pamphlets, reading apps)

› produce texts individually or in small groups by attempting to write or by dictating to an adult, and participate in writing stories as a class

› use writing during play (e.g. make a shopping list, take an order at a restaurant)

› know certain terms and symbols used in a digital environment

Key feature: *Recognizes some reading and writing conventions*

Children may, for example:

› hold a book right side up

› turn the pages of a book

› recognize that certain terms are associated with books (e.g. page, title, cover, author, illustrator)

› point to the title on the cover page

› observe that a book has numbered pages

› understand the spatial aspects of reading and writing

› point to the names of the author and illustrator on the cover page

› identify certain terms related to writing (e.g. letter, punctuation sign, word, phrase)

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13. These lists are by no means exhaustive and are provided for information purposes only. Teachers may add to them as they wish.

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: WRITTEN LANGUAGE (CONT.)

Key feature: *Discovers some functions of writing*

Children may, for example:

› recognize logos in their environment (e.g. at a restaurant, grocery store, gas station)

› look for written words in their environment

› distinguish text from illustrations

› recognize their first and last name

› recognize words or the first names of other children

› understand that written language conveys meaning (e.g. show interest in the morning message, in the calendar)

› discover that written words can be used as a reminder, to make someone laugh, to provide information, to communicate, etc.

› write their first and last names or words that have meaning for them

Key feature: *Knows the letters of the alphabet (names and sounds)*

Children may, for example:

› manipulate the letters of the alphabet in different ways (e.g. in sand, in modelling clay, using magnetic letters or letter stamps, using information and communications technologies)

› know the letters in their first and last name

› use strategies to demonstrate knowledge of letters (e.g. letters and words posted in the classroom)

› name letters of the alphabet (name and sound)

› notice upper case and lower case letters (e.g. other children's first names, words in a book)

› realize that letters represent sounds in oral language

› recognize letters when attempting to read

› use letters when attempting to write

Cognitive Development

Discovers the world around them

Acquires new knowledge relating to the subject areas (mathematics, arts education, social sciences, science and technology)

Takes action

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT

Thinking skills

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT

Strategies

Uses imagination

Uses reasoning skills

Explains the actions taken

Explores different actions

COMPETENCY

DISCOVERS THE WORLD AROUND THEM

COGNITIVE
DEVELOPMENT

LANGUAGE

PHYSICAL AND MOTOR

SOCIAL

EMOTIONAL
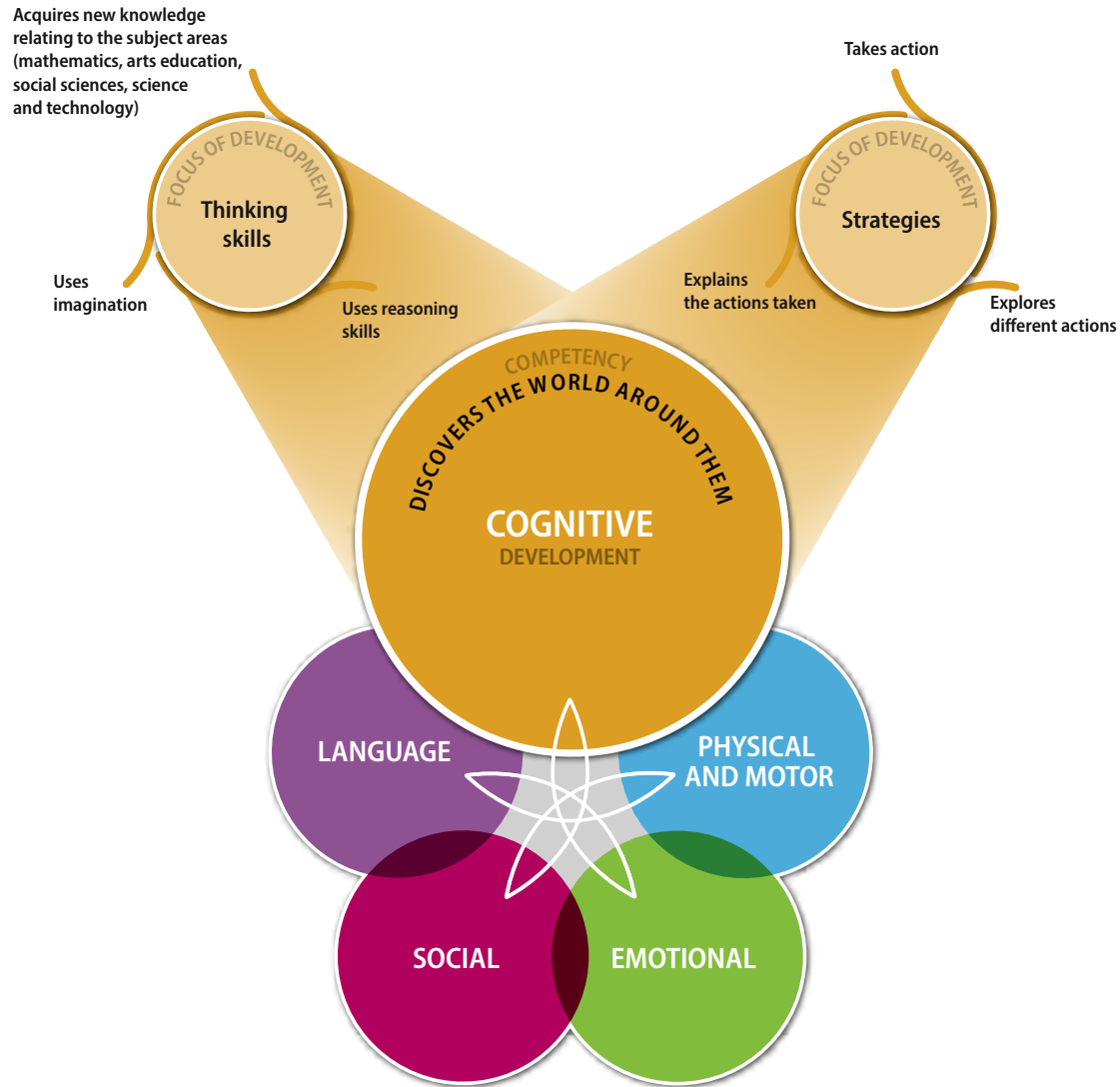
Description of the area of development

Cognitive development refers to the development of knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviours that allow children to think in a more complex way and acquire strategies. Children from age 4 to 6 begin to transition from perceptive reasoning to logical reasoning, which changes their view of the world. Children develop strategies that include the actions, tools and practices they need to feel engaged, motivated and confident in a given task or situation.

Context for learning

Cognitive development takes place in all contexts of everyday life, in both ordinary situations and those involving problems to be solved. As children become involved in different types of play (e.g. motor play, dramatic and symbolic play, games involving construction, logic, mathematics and experimentation), they learn to analyze and gradually understand the world around them. For example, they begin to structure their thinking, develop strategies and become familiar with various subject areas (e.g. languages, mathematics, arts education, social sciences, science and technology, personal development). By providing a rich, stimulating environment conducive to exploration and success, children acquire knowledge, develop new concepts, adapt to their environment, and develop their reasoning skills and creativity.

Connections with other areas of development

Cognitive development has an impact on physical, motor, emotional, social and language development. The knowledge and strategies from each of these areas also play a role in children's cognitive development. In other words, the things they learn in these other areas of development fuel their cognitive development, and vice versa. By exploring their environment, children can improve their physical and motor skills. Children who engage in and complete a game or activity will be proud of their accomplishment. Similarly, the better their cognitive skills, the more they can interact with other children and find solutions to conflicts. As they discover new concepts, they are better able to ask questions and use an increasingly varied vocabulary.

Connections with the executive functions

Inhibition skills allow children to progressively adjust to the demands of their environment (e.g. delays, routines, transitions) and to suppress spontaneous gestures that are not appropriate to the situation. In addition, working memory skills allow them to make connections between what they know, what they discover and what they learn, and to reinvest their learning in different contexts. By being flexible in their thinking, they gradually learn to change their opinions, consider the opinions of others and propose different ideas or solutions to problems. Children also use their planning skills to predict and take the steps required to achieve a predetermined goal.

End-of-preschool outcomes

The children show interest, curiosity and a desire to learn. They apply their knowledge and use their reasoning to ask questions, explain, make connections and attempt to understand the world around them. They use their imagination when they play. They are able to set an intention, to work toward it and adjust it to achieve a goal. They can discuss their processes, strategies, learning and accomplishments.

CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF CHILDREN

In general, 4- to 6-year-olds:

› are naturally curious

› often jump from one activity to another because they are interested in everything that captures their immediate attention

› are at the symbolic and intuitive thinking stage and are beginning to construct their first concepts

› have their own perceptual view of the world, which may differ from the adult view

› will attempt to do things that are beneficial for their development and learning

› can compare quantities of objects and use words like more and less, put together, take away, add and share

› begin to count larger quantities of objects

› explore shapes and measurements

› increasingly attempt to represent something precise in their drawings, such as a house, a human figure or a sun

› are increasingly able to plan simple, intentional actions

› are increasingly able to take initiative

› display a certain type of egocentrism that may limit their access to others' opinions and sometimes prevent them from grasping different aspects of a situation at the same time

In preschool education, 4- to 6-year-olds need to:

› explore, feel and touch to discover the world around them

› have time to explore their environment

› be given opportunities to move from one activity to another, based on their interests and needs

› manipulate a variety of objects that foster the exploration and construction of concepts related to the various subject areas

› engage in and play an active role in meaningful activities based on their interests, needs and experience

› regularly converse with other children and adults about what they are doing

› interact with others (children and adults) to structure their thinking by considering different points of view

› be exposed to a range of cultural experiences that require skills and knowledge in different subject areas

› have opportunities to develop strategies (e.g. ask questions, make hypotheses, attempt to do things)

› apply what they know with the support of adults who engage in dialogue with them and ask them questions about their strategies while providing prompts and feedback on their learning

› explore situations in which they must think on their feet (e.g. planning their play, organizing materials)

› explore and imagine different ways of performing an action or solving a problem

› experience situations in which they are free to be creative and flexible

Cognitive Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: THINKING SKILLS

Observable behaviours that may or may not require adult support[14]

Key feature: *Acquires new knowledge relating to the subject areas*
(mathematics, arts education, social sciences, science and technology)

MATHEMATICS

Children may, for example:

› make predictions (e.g. "it's possible," "it's impossible")

› use the names of numbers to count or enumerate, but not necessarily in the right order (e.g. one, two, four, ten)

› recite the counting rhyme (one, two, three, four, etc.) without necessarily making the connection with actual numbers

› explore games involving counting, matching, classifying and logic

› recognize small quantities (e.g. three black dots on a die)

› explore, manipulate, compare, recognize and describe geometric shapes

› combine figures to create new ones

› recognize different quantities and sizes (e.g. a lot, a little, as much as, more than, less than)

› use objects to solve simple problems by taking specific actions (e.g. take away [one less], add [one more], divide)

› sort, put away, classify and compare objects (e.g. according to their size, colour or shape)

› form and compare real collections (e.g. group red cars together)

› count collections by combining a gesture with the corresponding number

› manipulate different objects, materials and instruments or use ICTs to compare, classify and count them

› use different objects to take measurements (e.g. block, metre stick, string)

› identify objects according to their position in space (e.g. behind, in front of, above, below, under)

› move a board game piece forward after rolling the die

› continue or create logical sequences and regular patterns

› explore numbers (e.g. discover that the number 4 represents their age)

› use numbers (e.g. count how many blocks they used to build a tower)

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14. These lists are by no means exhaustive and are provided for information purposes only. Teachers may add to them as they wish.

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: THINKING SKILLS (CONT.)

Key feature: *Acquires new knowledge relating to the subject areas* (cont.)

ARTS EDUCATION (visual arts, drama, music and dance)

Children may, for example:

› show interest when presented with new material or activities

› explore different gestures, techniques, materials and tools

› explore elements of artistic language: shape, line and colour

› use elements observed in books for their creations

› discover, explore and recognize a few simple percussion instruments

› follow a beat and explore different rhythms

› discover, listen to and react to different types of music

› create or sing songs; invent or recite nursery rhymes

› invent and interpret sequences of movements and simple dances

› make up a short fable or story with a beginning and an end (drama)

› explore an attitude, gesture, expression or movement related to a character

› imagine a voice for a character

› use part of a costume or an accessory from a fable or a story

› think and reproduce a sound connected to an action

› discover and explore puppets

› observe a work of art or excerpt from a theatre production and express how it makes them feel

› make connections between their production and an element of the artistic repertoire presented to them

Cognitive Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: THINKING SKILLS (CONT.)

Key feature: *Acquires new knowledge relating to the subject areas* (cont.)

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Children may, for example:

› show interest when presented with new material or activities

› talk about their family and life experience

› demonstrate an openness to and interest in other people's cultures

› ask questions about a variety of subjects or topics

› discover and observe their physical environment: characteristics (e.g. rural, urban), natural elements (e.g. mountain, tree, lake), infrastructures or objects (e.g. bridge, bicycle path), facilities or service centres (e.g. medical clinic, fire station)

› observe their human environment (e.g. social roles at school), as well as occupations and trades

› discover and recognize elements that form part of their immediate geographical environment (e.g. vegetation, family home, animal, street, park) and any natural phenomena (e.g. thunderstorm, snowstorm, flood)

› learn about and use time-related concepts (e.g. days on the calendar)

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Children may, for example:

› show interest when presented with new material or activities

› discover and use their senses (sight, smell, hearing, touch, taste) in a safe manner to observe their environment

› show curiosity when observing natural phenomena (e.g. presence of the moon during the day, changes in the weather)

› show curiosity in the way certain objects work and are used (e.g. bounce a ball, attract objects using a magnet, create shadows with light)

› show curiosity about technological and digital tools

› discover and explore various natural materials (e.g. water, sand, soil) or manufactured materials (e.g. modelling clay, kinetic sand, soap)

› explore and use simple tools and procedures in everyday situations (transfer, mix, knead, transport, sculpt, cut, assemble, transform)

› explore and use tools or instruments to manipulate, observe and compare substances, objects and living creatures (e.g. magnifying glass, medicine dropper, tweezers)

› observe and interact, over short, medium and long periods of time (e.g. sow and grow vegetables)

› explore objects and make collections (e.g. pebbles, insects, leaves)

Cognitive Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: THINKING SKILLS (CONT.)

Key feature: *Uses reasoning skills*

Children may, for example:

› proceed by trial and error (e.g. observe, touch, explore)

› ask questions

› explain in their own words the reasons for an event, phenomenon or observation (e.g. when trying to understand why clouds move)

› establish connections between ideas (e.g. connection between their own experience and a classroom context)

› compare ideas, events, concepts, etc.

› reflect on what they are going to do, are doing or have done

› make hypotheses and predictions

› test their hypotheses and predictions

› draw conclusions

Key feature: *Uses imagination*

Children may, for example:

› create imaginary characters and scenarios during symbolic play

› re-imagine an ordinary object as something different from what it normally is

› create something based on their own ideas

› propose a solution to a problem

› vary their actions based on the environment and personal goals

› act out their experiences or imaginary situations

› take part in symbolic play, acting out different roles and adapting as play progresses

› transform a real situation into make-believe

› generate new ideas

Cognitive Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: STRATEGIES

Observable behaviours that may or may not require adult support[15]

Key feature: *Takes action*

Children may, for example:

› choose an activity, game or project according to their interests and preferences

› show interest in the situations being proposed

› carefully watch what another child is doing

› ask for help to start a game, activity or project

› select the materials they need, depending on the goals set

› set a precise intention, based on their interests

› make hypotheses and predictions

› look for information

› use reference tools or procedures

› show interest in new challenges

Key feature: *Explores different actions*

Children may, for example:

› try new activities

› consult the planned steps

› adjust and change their actions according to the goals set

› persevere despite any difficulties encountered

› proceed by trial and error

› compare to better understand (e.g. compare two collections to identify a difference)

› complete what they start, to achieve a realistic objective

› consult available resources and strategies

› adjust their actions based on feedback (e.g. questions asked by an adult, suggestions made by a friend)

› test their hypotheses and predictions

› reinvest their knowledge in different contexts

› find a solution to a problem or to perform a task

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15. These lists are by no means exhaustive and are provided for information purposes only. Teachers may add to them as they wish.

Cognitive Development

FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT: STRATEGIES (CONT.)

Key feature: *Explains the actions taken*

Children may, for example:

› say what they liked or disliked

› explain what makes them proud

› describe some of the steps involved in what they did

› make connections with their life experience

› present their play to others

› talk about what they have discovered

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