

Culture and Language Elements within
Nine State Early Learning Standards Documents

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Foreword: The Need for a Multicultural Approach
to Early Learning Standards

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Prepared for the Build Initiative
Diversity and School Readiness Summit
December 2007

Foreword

Thoughts on Culture and Early Learning Standards: The Need for a Multi-Cultural Approach

States are developing early learning standards that seek to define expectations for children's growth and development in the pre-school years (birth to school age), with a goal that these be aligned with learning standards in the K-12 years. The development of such standards is based upon increasing recognition of the importance of the early years to lifelong learning, and a resulting movement to a broader societal role in young children's growth and development.

These early learning standards also are beginning to define societal expectations for a time in a person's life that previously had been regarded largely as the domain of family and, therefore, in the context of the family's culture and language.

The purpose of this foreword and the content analysis of some state early learning standards that follows is to challenge and encourage those developing early learning standards and early childhood programs to think beyond a dominant culture paradigm and from a multi-cultural perspective.

There are some universals about early childhood growth and development. All children, regardless of culture, are learning in their pre-school years in the following areas:

- Regulation and discipline
- Identity
- Communication
- Coordination and physical development
- Acquisition and synthesis of information.

Some of this learning is universal in nature, but there also are differences, by culture, on the manner and even the direction in which that learning that occurs in these areas. These categories clearly are similar to and can be mapped onto the five domains of school readiness (physical development, social and emotional development, language and literacy, approaches to learning, and general cognition).

Some of these differences represent alternatives that should be recognized, valued, and incorporated into any early learning standards and expectations that are developed. Other differences, however, may clash with dominant culture values (such as egalitarianism and child rights) and may not be considered acceptable as practice in the United States, at least in public policy and societal practice.

The following is a beginning effort to outline some of these cultural differences in early childhood learning and development. These differences are not fixed; cultural beliefs and practices change, over time. US culture of the nineteenth century regarding children's learning and development was very different than it is today. The concept of childhood itself as a separate stage of development is relatively new in society.

Regulation and Discipline. In the earliest years, children move from being totally dependent upon their caregivers to beginning to regulate themselves, in eating, dressing, and hygiene. They also develop their ideas of time and sense of order. While US culture places significant emphasis on time and division of activities into segments, that is not true of all cultures. Some cultures place much less emphasis upon keeping track of time or organizing life into segments, and young children are not moved from activity period to activity period.

In addition, young children learn very early about discipline and authority in the form of boundaries on their behavior. Cultural practices can vary to a great extent both within and across cultures on what constitutes authority and appropriate discipline.

Identity. The United States is a very individualistic society, with a premium placed upon individual achievement and advancement, often through competition with others. As young children develop, they learn to be separate beings, including through such common practices as having infants learn to sleep separately from their mothers and spend substantial amounts of time alone. This extends throughout early childhood, when fostering individual identity and self-reliance is part of a young child's care and development. Other cultures place much more value upon the family and the clan, with individualism not regarded as a developmental virtue, favoring recognition of the individual only as part of a larger family or community. Separation of the infant or young child is not part of cultural practice in the manner it is in the dominant US culture. The US economic system is based upon this culture and tends to reflect these individualistic and competitive traits. The country's social and political system also embodies these cultural traits, including a belief in individuals being in control of their own destiny.

The definition of family and family roles also develops early. Again, in the United States there is a dominant culture orientation to the foundation of a child's world as a nuclear family, with parental roles of authority that provide discipline as well as nurturing and guidance to young children. In some other cultures, grandparents and elders serve in the authority role. The way an individual views family is acquired at a very early age by children.

In addition to this identity, young children also establish their gender identity and any gender-specific roles they are expected to play in society. Again, the United States is a largely egalitarian society (although with its individualism not necessarily connected to equity), with expectations for cognitive and career development generally similar for males and females. In some cultures, however, child development practices serve to reinforce strictly limited social, educational, and career roles for women. While the norm in some cultures, these are practices that are not tolerated within American society and its public institutions.

Children also establish their racial and cultural identity early, as white, African American, Native American, Hispanic, Asian American, or many other more specific designations (e.g. Ecuadorian or Cuban Hispanic). They learn how that race or culture is viewed in larger society, and they may have to learn two or more ways of responding and behaving – one within their own racial or cultural grouping and one within the dominant culture. Again, US culture is egalitarian in the sense that its formal rules and procedures do not confer preferences on the basis of race, provided individuals act according to dominant culture rules, norms, and customs. At the same time, US child development practices often do not support dual culture learning for those from minority cultures or preparation for living in a multi-cultural world for those from the dominant culture.

At its extreme, during slavery African American child development practices required that young children learn subservience to their masters, as the consequences of being assertive or challenging whites were dire.

Communication. US dominant culture stresses language – both through speech and printed word – as fundamental to communication. Sometimes called a “context poor” culture, there is an emphasis upon what is said, rather than the manner and nature of other nonverbal cues.

Some other cultures place a much greater emphasis upon nonverbal communications, which again starts with learning in the very early years. While success in the United States requires strong verbal, reading, and writing skills, success in international business often requires understanding and responding to nonverbal communications, as well. Learning different cultures' nonverbal communications patterns is certainly an asset for individuals, and is most imbedded if it occurs early in life. Failure to understand nonverbal cues that young children are acquiring in their home cultures can be detrimental to providing a strong learning environment for those children, even when that learning environment is designed to teach dominant culture skills. In addition, US dominant culture stresses verbal communication that is largely linear and logical, while other cultures have more circular communications patterns. Story telling in different cultures can be very different, although all are designed to convey meaning and usually to reinforce cultural values and norms.

Coordination and physical development. While all children must learn both small and large motor skills, the emphasis upon such skills may differ significantly by culture. In some cultures, there is a strong emphasis upon stillness and discipline in body movement, in others there is an emphasis upon high levels of kinetic activity. In fact, one critique of US education is that it places too great an emphasis upon controlled, physically-limited learning environments (desk-restricted learning) rather than ones that enable active, physical activity – with gender implications.

Acquisition and synthesis of information. Currently, the dominant cultural early childhood development paradigm (relatively recent) for young children, e.g. preschool, is for substantial child-directed learning, where the teacher or caregiver helps guide the child's exploration but does not engage in teacher-focused instruction. Other cultures place a much greater premium on teacher-focused preschool instruction, regarding child-directed learning even as a form of misbehavior. While all individuals learn through experience, all individuals also learn through acquisition and synthesis of information from sources they do not directly experience.¹

This discussion suggests that there is no universal curriculum or teaching practices for early learning and development that can simply be applied for all children – that early learning and development must be viewed within a cultural context. Further, culture is transmitted through early learning and development experiences.

Dominant culture children are likely to experience early learning experiences that largely transmit their own culture and may not even expose them to other culture learning experiences. Minority culture children in dominant cultural learning environments may be left to themselves (with their families) in understanding and reconciling differences in learning approaches.

Early learning environments, however, can move from a dominant culture approach towards a more multi-cultural one – both for children from the dominant culture and those from minority cultures. To do so, however, requires being explicit about these differences and intentionally incorporated them into curriculum, teaching practices, and early learning standards.

While recognizing many of these differences needs to be very culture specific (e.g. a teacher in an early childhood setting with three refugee children from Senegal in an otherwise all-white

¹ An extensive literature exists in the field of cultural anthropology on early learning and childhood development that deserves to be reviewed and experts in that field should be consulted. This essay represents one person's personal thinking about the issue, including the categorization of early learning into regulation and discipline, communication, coordination and physical development, and acquisition and synthesis of information. Ultimately, there may be far better categories (including the five domains), but the term "communications," for instance, was used as broader than "language and literacy" to incorporate cultural approaches that rely much less heavily on language and literacy to communicate. "Identity" seems so fundamental, yet was hard to place within the domains.

classroom needs very different knowledge than a teacher in an early childhood setting with an equal mixture of all low-income African American, Mexican-American Hispanic, and white, non-Hispanic children or a teacher in an all Puerto Rican classroom or an all-white classroom), early learning standards can provide more generic descriptions of the types of differences described above (regulation and discipline, identity, communication, coordination and physical development, and acquisition and synthesis of information).

Further, an approach that at least exposes children to different cultures and learning practices is likely to be beneficial to all children. Research is clear, for instance, on the benefits of learning two or more languages at an early age – both for learning those languages and their syntaxes and for executive brain function. When children’s home language is other than English, early childhood programs that promote dual language learning are more effective than those that stress learning in English, alone. Research also is clear that young children whose home language is English benefit from learning another language at an early age.

The same may well hold for young children’s being exposed to an acquiring different cultural approaches to learning. Children from minority cultures certainly need to learn some of the customs and learning approaches of the dominant culture if they are to be able to succeed within dominant culture institutions and its economic system. On the other hand, children from dominant cultures can be enriched from exposure to and appreciation for other cultures’ learning patterns. Early childhood sets a foundation for all later learning, including being able to understand different cultures and their influences on one’s own, as well as others’, beliefs and behaviors.

Currently, many state early learning standards give only minimal attention to issues of diversity. These are reflected in introductory statements about the importance of recognizing culture and embracing diversity, but they do not provide any guidance on how these can be incorporated into the standards, themselves. Washington’s early learning standards, however, go into a good deal of depth about where different cultural elements need to be incorporated into early learning standards, across the five domains of schools readiness. Alaska’s early learning standards have built upon Washington’s early learning standards and provided additional references to how the native Alaskan culture, in particular, can be incorporated into the early learning standards. Louisiana’s early learning standards provide some very specific guidance on incorporating dual language learning into both standards and practices.

As the “state of the art” of early learning standards develops, it will be important that the standards developed adequately reflect culture and language in their general statements. It also will be important that specific applications and examples for different cultural groups exist, so that early childhood educators not only provide general educational experiences that prepare children living and learning in a multi-cultural as well as a dominant culture world but that also give specific guidance to working with children from specific ethnic, cultural, and language backgrounds.

Content Analysis Culture and Language Elements within Nine State Early Learning Standards Documents

The following represents an initial content analysis of the early learning standards of nine states and their recognition of culture and language within those standards.² The specific language from those early learning standards that addresses culture or language is excerpted from the much larger guidelines and provided on the following pages. These also are summarized below:

New Hampshire Early Learning Guidelines and Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards include statements in their overall guidelines or principles that developmental appropriateness reflects cultural and linguistic factors and variations. There is no further mention of cultural or linguistic factors in the body of the guidelines.

Illinois Early Learning Standards have several discrete goals that involve culture or language, including comparing characteristics of cultures for understanding social systems and maintaining the home language to build upon and develop transferable language and literacy skills.

New York's Preschool Planning Guide includes some brief elements and strategies for four-year-old classrooms that include ideas of cultural or language diversity. Staff, curriculum and instruction, family involvement, implications for teaching all carried some mention in at least a general way.

Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood includes a short mention of culture and diversity within the guiding principles and includes specific references in the body of the guidelines involving: exposure to different cultures, learning some common signs from American Sign Language, and conducting assessments that are sensitive to the child's cultural and language background. Pennsylvania also has in place the Early Childhood Learning Continuum Indicators that identify a continuum of skills for children Pre-K through Third grade in which issues of linguistic diversity are mentioned once.

Iowa Early Learning Standards include some mention of culture and diversity in several areas of their standards including social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and creative arts. The Iowa standards cover infant/toddler as well as preschool benchmarks. Some areas have some very specific examples for inclusion of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Louisiana Early Learning Guidelines and Program Standards³ recognize culture under a number of different program standards, with particular reference to family culture and with extensive guidance regarding children whose home language is not English that supports dual language learning.

Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks have extensive reference to language and culture within the introduction and throughout the discussion of learning standards within each of the five domains (physical well-being, health and motor development; social and emotional development; approaches toward learning; cognition and general learning; and communication and literacy). In general, the introductions provide a

² Links to the standards can be found at <http://www.nccic.org/pubs/goodstart/elgwebsites.html>

³ Only the birth-3 standards were reviewed for Louisiana. Four-year-old standards also exist, but have not yet been reviewed.

description of differences that may exist by culture and language and the rationale for recognizing them in addressing child development.

Alaska Early Learning Guidelines used the Washington benchmarks as a starting point but adapt and expand upon them, in particular developing specific references to the different cultures of native Alaskans and providing explicit attention to reinvigorating indigenous languages.

New Hampshire Early Learning Guidelines

Early Learning Guidelines Task Force

Child Development Bureau, Division for Children, Youth and Families, NH Department of Health and Human Services

The Development of the Early Learning Guidelines

Appropriateness for All Children – We also recognize that children’s genetic predispositions, socio-economic status, and the cultural and linguistic practices of their families affect their learning. For example, children whose home language is other than English, often experience an early childhood learning environment that is not reflective of their home culture and language. Adults who are responsible for implementing the Guidelines must consider cultural and linguistic factors as they support children’s learning, and therefore adjust practices and expectations.

***Nothing specific related to how children should behave (indicators) or what caregivers can do to promote learning for children from diverse cultures.*

Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards
The Early Learning Standards Steering Committee
Published by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Guiding Principles

5. Children are members of cultural groups that share developmental patterns. The Early Learning Standards acknowledge that children’s development and learning opportunities reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of children, families and environments.

***Nothing specific related to how children should behave (indicators) or what caregivers can do to promote learning for children from diverse cultures.*

Illinois Early Learning Standards

Illinois State Board of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education

Social Studies

State Goal 18: Understand social systems, with an emphasis on the United States.

- Learning Standard A: Compare characteristics of culture as reflected in language, literature, the arts, traditions and institutions.
 - Benchmark 18.A.EC: Recognize similarities and differences in people.

Foreign Language

State Goal 28: Use the target language to communicate within and beyond the classroom setting.

- Benchmark 28.A.EC: Maintain the native language for use in a variety of purposes.

State Goal 30: Use the target language to make connections and reinforce knowledge and skills across academic, vocational and technical disciplines.

- Benchmark 30.A.EC: Use and maintain the native language in order to build upon and develop transferable language and literacy skills.
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New York Preschool Planning Guide: Building a Foundation for Development of Language and Literacy in the Early Years

The University of the State of New York
The State Education Department

Foreword/Statement of Purpose

The Regents policy on early childhood, defined as the prenatal period to age nine, reaffirms the belief that every child can learn and should have access to an environment which:

- Provides equity for all children and opportunity to eliminate the effects of poverty, racism and other conditions and forms of discrimination that place children at risk.

Essential Elements of a Quality Preschool Program

Specific standards of quality are articulated by a program's funding source, accreditations requirements, or regulations, including those governing programs for children who have handicapping conditions or who speak a language other than English.

- Staff
 - In many areas of the State, proficiency in a language other than English is desirable
- Curriculum and Instruction
 - Curriculum and instruction during the preschool years are informed by an understanding of general developmental patterns; knowledge of children's individual characteristics; awareness of the cultural, linguistic, and social contexts which shape the child's experience; learning standards which outline expectations for what children should know and be able to do; and the scope and sequence of each content area. Curriculum content may evolve from the learning standards, observations of children's interests, questions children ask, or shared experiences within the natural environment. Learning experiences for preschool children include a variety of concrete activities presented in meaningful contexts. These experiences are integrated across content and developmental areas and augmented with a variety of multicultural and nonsexist activities and materials that may be adapted to meet the special needs of individual children.
- Family Involvement
 - All efforts are made to communicate with parents in their primary language.

Principles of Child Development

These principals reflect what is known about the strengths, interests, and linguistic and cultural backgrounds of young children.

- Child Development Principles
 - Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts.
- Implications for Teaching
 - Invite family members, including those whose native language is other than English, to participate in multicultural and cooperative learning activities such as preparing and cooking ethnic foods.
 - Development advances when children have opportunities to practice newly acquired skills as well as when they experience a challenge just beyond the level of their present mastery.
 - Provide the supportive environment children need to transfer existing knowledge (including the use of primary languages), practice new skills, and try out more

complex experiences. Include a variety of books: wordless picture books, repetitive stories, and predictable texts.

Play is Active Learning

Some children will show characteristics of different stages, depending on the context of their play and their cultural background.

- What Teachers of Young Learners Do
 - Encourage the development of the children's native language and culture; facilitates the transition to English.

The Learner-Centered Environment

How might adults assess the extent to which the environment supports children's language and literacy, including the use of primary languages other than English and the transfer to English?

- Messages Children Receive from the Environment
 - Positive Messages
 - I belong here and I am valued.
 - Pictures and materials in the room reflect the children's families, languages, cultures and communities and are at children's eye/hand level.

Assessing a Classroom Environment

- Awareness of Print
 - Does the displayed print represent words familiar to children from daily contact in the environment including words related to special experiences and words from languages other than English?
 - Materials
 - Do books include a mixture of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry; wordless books and those with varying amounts of print; and books in the native languages spoken by children and their families?
 - Are tapes in languages other than English included?
 - Enriching Dramatic Play to Support Language and Literacy
 - "Signs reflecting different cultures" was listed in the ideas for props for teachers to pull together to support dramatic play in areas such as post office, blocks-construction company, office, pizza restaurant, library and bookstore.
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Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood

Pennsylvania Department of Education & Department of Public Welfare – Office of Child Development and Early Learning

Guiding Principles

- 3. All infants and toddlers can learn and deserve suitably high expectations that are age, individually, and culturally appropriate.
- 8. Early childhood care and education programs must address the individual needs of all infants and toddlers (e.g., with special needs, from diverse cultural backgrounds, from all socio-economic groups, etc.) and respect their families.

Age 9-18 months

- Expressive Communication
 - Standard EC 1.6a: Engage in non-verbal communication.
 - Supportive Practices: Learn and use some common signs from American Sign Language.
- Creative Expression
 - Standard CE 9.2: Express self through music and movement.
 - Supportive Practices: Expose young toddlers to a variety of types of music (e.g., lullabies, classical children’s songs, classical, jazz, folk music, etc.) from a variety of cultures, languages, and backgrounds.
 - Standard CE 9.3: Participate in a variety of dramatic play experiences.
 - Supportive Practices: Provide materials representing various cultures (pictures, food, dolls, books, clothes, music, toys, etc.)

Age 24-36 months

- Expressive Communication
 - Standards EC 1.6a: Engage in non-verbal communication.
 - Supportive Practices: Learn and use some common signs from American Sign Language.

Family, Early Learning Settings and Community Partnerships

- Standard PS 1: Help families advance infant/toddler learning.
 - Supportive Practices: Share information on parenting in unique situations, e.g., foster children, stepchildren, trauma, death, special needs.
- Standard PS 2: Use screenings and assessments to advance infant/toddler development and learning.
 - Indicator: The recommended practice is to administer an assessment three times per year that are sensitive to the child’s cultural and language background and aligned with the PA Learning Standards for Early Childhood.

Early Childhood Learning Continuum Indicators: The Continuum of Skills that an Early Childhood Learner Needs in order to Achieve the Pennsylvania Academic Standards by Grade Three

Early Childhood Learning Continuum Indicators for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening

- 1.7 Characteristics and Functions of the English Language
 - Through Pre-K
 - Recognize that there are languages other than English.
 - Pre-K to K
 - Recognize words from other languages as encountered

Iowa Early Learning Standards—Infant/Toddler and Preschool

Iowa Department of Education
Iowa Department of Human Services

Introduction

Guiding Principles

Learning is embedded in a culture. Children learn best when their learning activities are rooted in a familiar cultural context.

Diversity

Young children—infants, toddlers, and preschoolers—need programs that are individually, developmentally, and culturally appropriate. Respecting the diversity of children, including each child’s uniqueness is the heart of individualizing care. Caregivers and teachers show respect, understanding, and empathy for the diverse cultural traditions and values of the children and families they serve. For example, some cultures (and some families) value interdependence over independence. Caregivers and teachers respect the values of each culture by providing opportunities that support both interdependence (in helping others), as well as independence (in learning to help oneself). Teachers and caregivers implement curricula that respect cultural differences and avoid stereotypes. Through activities, materials, foods, books, dances, songs, art traditions, and celebrations, children develop pride in the traditions of their own family, as well as respect for the traditions of others.

With infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, non-parental caregivers need to:

- Arrange the room and provide materials/toys so that two or more children can play alongside each other or interact with play;
- Provide opportunities for children to join in activities such as finger-plays or
- Singing from each child’s home language or culture;
- Include staff or volunteers from the child’s home culture.

With families, directors, teachers, and family members, child care providers need to:

- Create an environment that welcomes all families and encourages them to participate in program activities and daily routines;
- Give policies and procedures in the form of a handbook in the family’s first language;
- Review the information in the handbook verbally with each family, with an interpreter if appropriate;
- Acknowledge that young children may be raised in many kinds of families.

Respecting diversity means not only respecting cultural differences and developmental differences of children. Respecting diversity also requires accommodating the individual differences of children of all ability levels and their families.

Area 3 Social and Emotional Development

3.5 Sense of Community

- Standard
 - Infants and toddlers demonstrate a sense of community within their family, program, community and culture
- Rationale
 - Infants and toddlers who have warm, nurturant relationships with their parents and caregivers usually develop better social skills than those with poor relationships (Belsky and Cassidy, 1995; Howes and Hamilton, 1993). Infants and toddlers typically engage in cooperative, pretend play with peers around familiar activities and routines, such as housekeeping. However, infants and toddlers show little evidence

of awareness of membership in a group. Caregivers can help children develop a sense of community by providing repeated opportunities to interact with other children and caregivers in familiar settings. Building a sense of community involves respecting and reflecting each child's home culture.

- Benchmarks
 - The infant or toddler:
 - Chooses and participates in familiar activities, including songs and stories from home culture
 - Examples of Benchmarks
 - A caregiver is playing a circle game with the children. José, whose family speaks primarily Spanish at home, sings along. Brittany signs the verses.
 - The caregiver alternates singing the verses in English and Spanish while encouraging the children to make the gestures that go with the words.
 - Bobby is playing with the blocks. Mark goes over and sits beside Bobby. Each plays with a set of blocks.
 - Chi's father, who is from Vietnam, visits the classroom during snack. He shows the toddlers how he uses chopsticks to eat his food and lets them explore using child-sized chopsticks with their food. Chi beams.
- Caregiving Supports
 - With infant and toddlers caregivers
 - Provide opportunities for *each* child to join in activities such as fingerplays or singing songs from the child's home language or culture.
 - Include staff or volunteers from *each* child's home culture.
 - With families, caregivers
 - Create an environment that welcomes *each* family and encourages them to participate in program activities and daily routines.
 - Give policies and procedures in the form of a handbook in the first language of each family. The director or caregiver reviews the information in the handbook verbally with *each* family, with an interpreter, if appropriate.
 - The words used to refer to families acknowledge that young children may be raised in many kinds of families.
 - Use qualified interpreters when necessary to fully communicate with *each* family.

Area 4 Communication, Language and Literacy

4.1 Language Understanding and Use

- Caregiving Supports
 - With infants and toddlers, caregivers
 - Take turns exchanging vocalizations with *each* child using his/her home language.
 - Make eye contact with *each* child while speaking or listening, whenever possible, and with respect for cultural needs, hearing impairment, or developmental delay.

4.2 Early Literacy

- Caregiving Supports
 - With infants and toddlers, caregivers
 - Provide opportunities each day for each child to participate in finger-plays, rhymes, and songs, including those in sign language, the home language or representing home culture

Area 6: Creative Arts

6.2 Music, Rhythm and Movement

- Caregiving Supports
 - With infants and toddlers caregivers

- Provide each child with opportunities to experience musical activities and traditions reflecting the home cultures of the families served

Area 9: Social and Emotional Development--Preschool

9.1 Self

- Caregiving Supports
 - With preschools, caregivers
 - Model respect for diversity

9.5 Awareness of Community

- Standard

Children have an increasing awareness of belonging to a family, community, culture and program.

 - The child:
 - 4. shows acceptance of persons from different cultures and ethnic groups
 - Caregiving Supports
 - With preschoolers, caregivers
 - Provide materials such as photographs , books, posters, games, puzzles, foods, dolls, etc., that reflect each child's family, community, and world

Area 10: Communication, Language, and Literacy

10.1 Language Understanding and Use

- Caregiving Supports
 - With preschoolers, caregivers
 - Use materials and works in children's home language (in music, games, stories etc.)

10.2 Early Literacy

- Caregiving Supports
 - With preschooler, caregivers
 - Incorporates sounds and words from each child's home language in daily conversations and activities

Louisiana's Early Learning Guidelines and Program Standards: Birth through Three

Department of Social Services/Office of Family Support, Louisiana Head Start Collaboration Office, & the Louisiana Team of the National Infant Toddler Project

Program Standard 1: Close, caring relationships exist between child and caregiver.

- The program will establish guidelines that will recognize and respect individual temperament, culture, preferences, stage of development and differences of each child.
- The caregiver will be knowledgeable about the individual temperaments, cultures, preferences, and differences of each child.

Program Standard 3: Connections with families are valued.

- The program will establish guidelines and respect a family's culture, including values, attitudes, and beliefs.
- The caregiver will gain knowledge about each individual family's culture, including values, attitudes, and beliefs.
- The caregiver will include materials in the classroom that reflect the cultures of the children served in the program, such as photographs of each child's family, books, toys, etc. displayed at the child's eye level.

Program Standard 4: Knowledgeable responsible caregivers.

- The program will encourage the acceptance of diversity and cultural awareness.
- The caregiver will provide music and ethnic foods that reflect the cultures of infant and toddlers in the group.
- The caregiver will recognize that children differ in temperament, preferences, culture, development and interaction styles and consider these when guiding their behavior.

Early Learning Guidelines

Goal 1. To learn about others.

- 18-24 months –
 - Caregiver strategies: Support children's attachment to family while they are in your care. Greet both child and family members as they arrive. Become familiar with members of each child's family: their work, their hobbies and interests, their culture. Include this information in conversations with toddlers and in the daily program of activities.

Goal 4. To learn about communicating.

- Birth to 8 months –
 - Objective 4.2. To identify with a home language.
 - Indicators: recognize and being imitating sounds of home language; understand names of familiar people and objects in home language
 - Caregiver strategies: Determine the home language of each child in your care. If the home language is non-English or limited English, the following strategies and activities apply to your work setting.

- Respect the language of the family. Do not insist that the family speak English to their infant at home. Families should speak the language they know best. Young children who hear two languages spoken well from birth can learn them both.
 - Ask families to help you learn, in their language, the names of some objects that are part of the care giving setting. For example, bottle, diaper, food items, and body parts such as eyes, nose, and mouth. Use these words with the infant. Connect the words to the objects.
 - Make sure you correctly pronounce the child's name as well as the names of other family members.
 - Reassure families that as you care for their infants you will make every effort to understand what the child is trying to communicate to you.
- Objective 4.3. To respond to verbal and non-verbal communication.
 - Caregiver strategies: Learn and use sign language as a means of communicating with infants.
- 8-18 months
 - Objective 4.2. To identify with a home language.
 - Indicators: look at a bottle on hearing the word “bottle” in the home language; use same sounds and intonations as parents do; say several words in home language clearly
 - Caregiver strategies:
 - Encourage family members to speak in their home language when they visit.
 - Use tapes with songs and stories in the child’s home language.
 - Invited parents to share records or tapes in their home language.
 - Ask parents to teach you some commonly used words (such as Mom, bottle, eat, spoon). Use the words when speaking with the child.
- 18-24 months
 - Objective 4.2. To identify with a home language.
 - Indicators: speak in home language with family members and others; recognize tapes of stories and songs from home culture; see that home language does not enable them to communicate and stop speaking; continue to use non verbal communication like pointing; use key words in social situations (please, hi)
 - Caregiver strategies:
 - Ask parents what words their toddler uses so that you can learn what their child is saying when speaking in a home language you do not understand. As about words for food items, family members, clothing, toys, etc.
 - Become familiar with those words or expressions and use them in communicating with the toddler.
 - Be aware of child’s attempts to communicate and support any efforts even if the child is not talking.

- Ask families to make tapes of stories and music their children know from home. Incorporate them into your plan of activities. Invite families to tell a story or read a book in their home language.
- 24-36 months
 - Objective 4.2. To identify with a home language.
 - Indicators: Respond when spoken to in home language; increasing use of both home language and English (code mixing: using both languages in one sentence)
 - Caregiver strategies:
 - Take pictures of things in the classroom and make a book using both English and the child's home language. Learn the name of common objects in both languages.
 - Use music to help them learn the second language. ("Where is Thumbkin?")
 - Be accepting of the child's attempts with language.
 - Provide a classroom that is accepting and values other cultures.
- 3 Year Old Guidelines
 - Social Emotional Development:
 - Family: The programs will provide experiences for 3-year-old children to develop a knowledge and understanding of family.
 - The caregiver will assure that 3-year-old children have opportunities to:
 - Identify family composition and describe roles of family members.
 - Begin to discuss family traditions, practices, and cultural roots of family members.
 - Diversity: The programs will provide experiences for 3-year-old children to develop a respect for differences in people.
 - The caregiver will assure that 3-year-old children have opportunities to:
 - Recognize themselves as unique individuals and become aware of the uniqueness of others.
 - Demonstrate emerging awareness and respect for differences (culture, ethnicity, abilities and disabilities)
 - Begin to demonstrate an understanding of social justice and social action issues.

Washington State: Early Learning and Development Benchmarks

Developed in Partnership with the Office of the Governor and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Introduction

Background

- Grounded in Multiple Perspectives
 - Beyond varying academic theoretical perspectives, families' communities and cultures hold different perspectives and beliefs about how young children should experience and interact with the world around them

Guiding Principles

- Principles Related to the Content of the Benchmarks
 - A universal set of benchmarks should be developed for all children regardless of cultural and economic differences, presenting disabilities and physical and learning challenges. The benchmarks should take into consideration this diversity and make accommodations for the unique nature of each child's learning and development.
 - The content of the Benchmarks should acknowledge and respect children's cultural and linguistic differences. The importance of children's diverse and rich backgrounds and heritages, including immigrant families, indigenous and tribal populations and multigenerational families, should be incorporated into the Benchmarks.
- Valuing Diversity
 - Every child has unique characteristics, developing and learning in the context of their family, culture, and community. In this light, the Benchmarks acknowledge and embrace the tremendous diversity and variation that exists between young children. In building a resource to develop a common understanding, the Benchmarks have used a broad definition of diversity that includes – but is not limited to – socio-economic, cultural, racial, linguistic, ethnic, gender, abilities, and regional variations. The Benchmarks attempt to build upon and attempt to represent the rich cultural heritage and knowledge of children and families in Washington State. In addition, efforts have been made to include the unique learning needs of children with disabilities and children whose home language is not English.
 - The role of caring adults and communities is also reflected in the Benchmarks. The document provides some simple play, learning strategies and activities that adults can use to enhance children's development. It is critical to use the Benchmarks so that no child experiences any sense of failure. It is also essential to use the Benchmarks to accommodate different approaches toward learning. The intention is for parents and other caregivers to focus on the function of the goal, as opposed to the specific indicators. For example, while it is important for young children to use their own name as an indicator of self-concept, some children may demonstrate this by speaking their name aloud while other children may use sign language or other gestures to identify themselves.
 - Although a worthy goal, this document does not – and, indeed, cannot – fully account for the multiple ways in which children in Washington State communicate, learn, play, and interact with adults and peers. It is hoped, however, that every adult sees a little bit of his or her own unique life experience in the Benchmarks and uses the document as a basis for extending dialogue about the many contexts in which children grow and learn. On-going collective discussions among parents, caregivers, early learning professionals, teachers, and others will ensure that the Benchmarks are used in ways that represent the values, aspirations, and effective practices of all cultures and communities in Washington State.

Domain One: Physical Well-Being, Health and Motor Development

Introduction

- Supporting Individual Differences and Diversity
 - Physical and motor development include aspects of biological maturation that reflect genetics, nutrition, health, and the environment. Even though the development of physical skills and abilities follows a more or less predictable progression, individual rates of physical and motor development vary for a variety of reasons. Because motor development varies widely among individuals, cultures, and contexts, inappropriate and premature labeling of children must be avoided. Differences should not be understood to be deficits.
 - Movement styles, physical activity levels, and motor abilities vary across cultures, too. For example, parents of some cultures are more active and physical in their interactions with young children; parents of other cultures are less so. Similarly, in some cultural groups quietness and stillness are valued while exuberant and animated interaction is valued in other cultures. Recognition, understanding, respect, and support of these variations will support the physical health, well-being, and motor development of all young children.
 - To this end, the goal statements are intended for all children, but the indicators and strategies attempt to incorporate modifications to reflect children's diversity. In addition, the ages indicated for achieving each of the indicators are broad guidelines: given the nature of children's diversity, we expect and treasure differences in when and in how children will achieve the indicators. Not all children will achieve all indicators in the time frame specified. Some children may achieve some of the indicators earlier than the age specified while other children may achieve them at a different rate, in a different order, or not at all. In all cases, the timelines offered are guidelines to inform, not to constrain, children's natural course of development.

Global Strategies

- Ensure that parents and other caregivers have discussed family expectations for children's learning of personal care skills and are in consensus on the goals for children's physical development and health that reflect cultural beliefs and traditions
- Ensure that the environment is safe from cultural or other forms of bias;
- Be open to discussions of physical characteristics, as well as individual preferences, as these are important aspects of self-identity and they inform children about others

Sub-Domain: Health and Personal Care

- Daily Living Skills
 - Goal: Children practice personal care routines
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Are aware of culturally based personal care strategies used by families to promote interdependence
- Nutrition
 - Goal: Children eat a variety of nutritious foods
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide child with nutritious foods and snacks, including foods from various cultures

- 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Prepare and provide a variety of nutritious snacks and meals from child’s own cultural background and other cultures
- 36 to 60 months—Some indicators for children
 - Passes food at the table and takes appropriate sized portions, or other culturally-specific family serving style
- 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Talk with child about food choices in relation to allergies, religion, culture, family choices and overall health

Domain Two: Social and Emotional Development

Introduction

- Supporting Individual Differences and Diversity
 - All children develop within and are influenced by their social and cultural experiences. Because diversity is the norm in the United States, children must learn to function in and appreciate a diverse society. Young children need to develop a positive sense of their own identity as well as a respect for others’ identities. One’s identity is shaped by many factors including gender, race, cultural and family background, language, religion, abilities, life experiences, and circumstances. Children need to develop respect and appreciation for people with ideas and experiences that are both similar to and different from their own. Differences should not be understood to be deficits.
 - Caregivers must appreciate and respect children’s unique characteristics and the diverse contexts in which children develop. The values and practices of each child’s family, community, and culture shape the feelings, knowledge, and expectations that influence social and emotional development. As a consequence, children’s social interactions, communication patterns, and play interests vary. Social and emotional development are contingent upon the match between children’s feelings/expressive behaviors and the expectations of the social situation in which they find themselves. Therefore, environments for young children should provide diverse, non-stereotyping atmospheres in which cultural, ethnic, racial, linguistic, age, gender, and ability differences are embraced and respected.
- Global Strategies
 - Offer an assortment of culturally appropriate activities, experiences, and materials that represent diversity
 - Encourage acceptance and appreciation of family culture
 - Strive for an environment that respects all people and is free of bias

Sub-Domain: Social Development

- Interactions with Adults
 - Goal: Children trust and interact comfortably with familiar adults
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some indicators for children
 - Demonstrates knowledge of culturally specific communication styles and their appropriate uses
 - Goal: Children seek assistance from adults when needed
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers

- Share stories about how bias is addressed in community
 - 60 months to Kindergarten entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Model cross-cultural communication and provide strategies for child to address bias
- Interaction with Peers
 - Goal: Children demonstrate positive negotiation skills
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Teach child to avoid aggressive behaviors (e.g., biting, hitting, racial name calling)
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide activities that allow child to negotiate social conflicts (e.g., dramatic play, blocks, multi-cultural dress up clothes)
 - Goal: Children develop friendships with peers
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Facilitate cross-cultural skill development (e.g., support interdependence in group activities, provide children with play words in language other than home language)
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Balance opportunities for culturally consistent and cross-cultural skill development
 - Support the English language learner by giving him/her key words for play in English (e.g., doll, block)
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide opportunities for child to be part of group activities (e.g., games, cultural events)
 - Goal: Children cooperate with peers
 - 18 to 36 months: Some strategies for caregivers
 - Facilitate play and communication between children of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds
 - 36 to 60 months: Some strategies for caregivers
 - Demonstrate and explain how to be inclusive based on gender, culture, language and abilities
 - 60 months to Kindergarten: Some strategies for caregivers
 - Promote linguistic, cultural and other forms of respect
- Adaptive Social Behavior
 - Goal: Children participate positively in group activities
 - 18 to 36 months: Some strategies for caregivers
 - Identify with child the groups of which he/she is a member (e.g., family, school, community, cultural communities)
 - 36 to 60 months: Some indicators for children
 - Identifies self as member of a group (e.g., refers to our family, our school, our team, our culture)

- Goal: Children adapt to diverse settings
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Be sure to speak with child about a new setting in his/her home language
 - 18 to 36 months-- Some strategies for caregivers
 - Create a care giving environment that reflects child's home culture, to create consistent settings
 - 36 to 60 months-- Some strategies for caregivers
 - Demonstrate and explain to child how to stand up for self and others in the face of bias
 - 60 months to Kindergarten entry-- Some strategies for caregivers
 - Encourage child to think about and be prepared for diverse cultural settings
 - Ask child to describe or draw pictures of different places, including places from his/her cultural background
- Goal: Children demonstrate empathy for others and the natural world
 - Birth to 18 months-- Some strategies for caregivers
 - Be aware and respectful of cultural differences in expression of emotions
 - 18 to 36 months-- Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide opportunities for dramatic play with simple themes and props from own and different cultures
 - 36 to 60 months-- Some strategies for caregivers
 - Read stories with child and elicit responses to characters, including stories from diverse cultures and family structures (e.g., single parent, same sex parents)
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some indicators for children
 - Expresses excitement about special events and accomplishments of others within cultural context and expectations
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Discuss why a character reacts as he/she did in a story, taking cultural differences into consideration
- Appreciating Diversity
 - Goal: Children recognize, appreciate, and respect similarities and differences in people
 - Birth to 18 months--Some indicators for children
 - Interacts with others who are of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, of a similar gender, who speak other languages, or have special needs
 - Notices others physical characteristics (e.g., pats others' hair)
 - Birth to 18 months-- Some strategies for caregivers
 - Share and explore own culture with child (e.g. cultural events)
 - Model appreciation for diversity with other adults and children
 - Read books to child that explore people with diverse abilities and cultures
 - Introduce child to a second language if you are bilingual
 - Learn and practice care giving strategies that match those at home for child

- Learn phrases in and use child's home language, including sign language
- 18 to 36 months-- Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide opportunities for child to interact with children of diverse abilities, cultures and ethnicities
 - Provide child with a variety of dramatic play materials reflecting cultures of families in community
 - Introduce child to people, experiences, interactions and social settings that are diverse through books, songs and people
 - Infuse child's environment with multicultural objects, music, art and language
 - Model appreciation and interest in diversity
 - Actively support the ongoing use of home language as the English language learner acquires English
 - Encourage child to develop a sense of fairness for self and others
- 36 to 60 months—Some indicators for children
 - Develops awareness, knowledge and appreciation of own gender and cultural identity
 - Compares similarities or differences of others (e.g., height, hair color) in his/her circle of contact
 - Includes other children in his/her activities who are of a different gender, ethnic background, who speak other languages, or who have special needs with guidance
 - Demonstrates understanding that different individuals have different abilities and information
 - Asks questions about others' families, ethnicity, language, cultural heritage and difference in physical characteristics
- 36 to 60 months-- Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide opportunities for child to describe own cultural and physical characteristics
 - Provide experiences to teach respect and appreciation for self and others
 - Celebrate cultural, linguistic, and physical similarities and differences of all children and families
- 60 months to Kindergarten Entry-- Some indicators for children
 - Notices that other children might use different words for the same object (e.g., "mother" is different in different languages)
 - Recognizes stereotypes and culturally or linguistically unfair or biased behavior
- 60 months to Kindergarten Entry-- Some strategies for caregivers
 - Demonstrate and explain physical characteristics and preferences as aspects of identity
 - Invite families to share their unique traditions
 - Demonstrate and explain why it is positive to celebrate and learn about others' lives and experiences
 - Provide opportunities for child to explore similarities and differences of other children
 - Actively address bias behavior and teach anti-bias responses (e.g., correctly pronounce and use children's names)

Sub-Domain: Emotional Development

- Self-Concept
 - Goal: Children perceive themselves as unique individuals
 - Birth to 18 months-- Some strategies for caregivers
 - Recognize that many families value interdependence and some children will show varying level of independence and stronger bonds with family and community
 - 18 to 36 months-- Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide opportunities for child to talk about self and others, including cultural and linguistic characteristics
 - Be aware and respectful of cultural differences in valuing independence
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Talk with child about the characteristics he/she has that represent his/her cultural background
 - Goal: Children demonstrate awareness of their abilities, characteristics and preferences
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Involve child in family traditions, rituals and activities
 - 18 to 36 months-- Some strategies for caregivers
 - Invite others to share their culture and traditions with child
 - Explain family traditions, rituals and activities
 - 36 to 60 months—Some indicators for children
 - Develops awareness, knowledge and appreciation of own gender and cultural identity
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Support child's developing understanding of own characteristics and culture (e.g., "You have freckles just like your Grandma.")
 - Provide dress up and pretend materials from child's daily life and cultural backgrounds
 - Compare, contrast, and celebrate physical similarities and differences in children (e.g., hair, skin, eye color, size of hands)
- Self Efficacy
 - Goal: Children demonstrate belief in their abilities
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Ensure that environment is safe from cultural or other forms of bias (e.g., review materials to ensure there are no stereotypical or racist images in books, dolls or other objects in the environment)
- Self Control
 - Goal: Children understand and follow rules and routines
 - 36 to 60 months-- Some strategies for caregivers

- Keep list of rules positive and short; include rules addressing bias and prejudice that are understood by child
- Emotional Expression
 - Goal: Children express appropriately a range of emotions
 - 18 to 36 months-- Some strategies for caregivers
 - Consider the values of families and cultural groups regarding emotional expression (e.g., do not force or deny child's emotional expression)
 - 36 to 60 months-- Some strategies for caregivers
 - Be aware of cultural and gender differences in expressing feelings
 - Avoid stereotyping children's expression of emotion (e.g., validate boys when they cry, girls when they get angry)
 - Incorporate book on feelings reflective of language and cultural background of child

Domain Three: Approaches Toward Learning

Introduction

- Supporting Individual Differences and Diversity
 - A discussion about approaches toward learning acknowledges that children learn and express themselves in different ways. These differences are not, and should not be understood to be, deficits. For the most part, many early care and education environments have focused on mainstream, Eurocentric, or “middle-class” approaches toward learning, rather than embracing broad variation. It is important to emphasize that a uniform approach to early care and education in which all children are thought about in precisely the same way is undesirable. Parents and caregivers should create non-critical environments in which all children are allowed to take risks and in which creative processes are nurtured and valued, with less emphasis on finished products.
 - Children are exposed to varying cultural patterns and values in their immediate context of family as well as in the neighborhood, community, and environment at large. At the family level, differences in child-rearing practices – including parental behaviors of instruction, modeling, and responses to children's initiatives – influence children's learning approaches. Culture may influence children's work styles, the way they approach and interpret experiences, and their orientation to action or reflection. Some cultures encourage children to be obedient and respectful of adult opinions while other cultures encourage children to question and dialogue with adults. Cultural patterns may also influence the way children learn. For example, some cultural settings promote learning through hands-on manipulation of materials, while others focus on visual representation, and still others focus on linguistic or more structured interactions. Whatever the cultural influence on children's predispositions, all learning styles should be embraced as equivalent, valued, and respected approaches toward learning.
- Global Strategies
 - Ensure that the environment is safe from cultural or other forms of bias
 - Use vocabulary and phrases in children's home language when introducing new ideas or concepts

- Provide continued acknowledgements, in ways that reflect children's cultural beliefs and traditions, so all children feel valued

Sub-domain: Learning Approaches

- Curiosity and Interest
 - Goal: Children are curious and interested in learning new things and having new experiences
 - 18 to 36 months—Strategies for caregivers
 - Read diverse books that introduce child to many people, places and cultures
 - 36 to 60 months-- Strategies for caregivers
 - Provide opportunities and time for child to explore a variety of activities and materials, including those in the larger community and those from diverse cultures
- Creativity and Inventiveness
 - Goal: Children approach daily activities with creativity and inventiveness
 - 18 to 36 months-- Strategies for caregivers
 - Ensure child has props from own culture to support pretend play
 - 36 to 60 months-- Strategies for caregivers
 - Provide child with access to artists and artwork from own and other cultures
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry-- Strategies for caregivers
 - Play make-believe games with child, including games that introduce the child to diverse people, places and cultures

Domain Four: Cognition and General Language

General Definition

- Family, Community and Culture
 - Developing knowledge of one's own family, community, and culture enables children to make sense of the various relationship structures they interact with in their daily activities. This aspect of cognitive development involves understanding human interdependence at multiple levels – family functions, community roles, and cultural appreciation.
- Creative Arts
 - Children's ability to express and represent themselves through dance, music, theater, and visual arts is a central aspect of cognition. Related to the ability to express and represent oneself through the arts is an understanding and appreciation of the arts. For some children, this includes learning the cultural arts traditions of their community or cultural group
- Supporting Individual Differences and Diversity
 - Children not only differ in their rates of acquiring general knowledge, but also in the ways, in which they learn, remember, and understand. Indeed, research recognizes and labels "multiple intelligences," highlighting that individual's use and combine different kinds of intelligences to complete tasks and solve

problems. For example, some children might favor logical reasoning to tackle a certain learning task while other children might take a more creative or movement-based approach. Differences in children's cognitive development are not, and should not be viewed as, deficits.

- Knowledge and cognitive skills are complex and intertwined with children's socio-cultural context. Culture influences not only the knowledge that is valued and transmitted to children, but also how children perceive events and actions. For example, family and parental attitudes, beliefs, and caregiving practices impact children's cognitive development by determining children's exposure to certain tasks, contexts, and knowledge. Given that children's cognitive abilities and understanding are context-dependent, it is imperative to provide learning opportunities that are culturally sensitive and adapt to children's varying patterns in learning, reasoning, and problem-solving abilities.
- Global Strategies
 - Incorporate teaching and learning strategies from children's cultural background
 - Ensure that the environment is safe from cultural or other forms of bias
 - Take time to learn about each child's everyday experiences at home and his/her own community

Sub-domain: Logic and Reasoning

- Critical and Analytical Thinking
 - Goal: Children compare, contrast, examine, and evaluate experiences, tasks and events
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide child with different toys and objects from a variety of cultures to examine, compare and contrast
 - Goal: Children use past knowledge to build new knowledge
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Use child's home language, experience, and culture to make connections to new experiences
- Representational Thought
 - Goal: Children use symbols to represent objects
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Ensure that pictures and books in child's environment have children that look like child as well as children from other cultural groups
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry
 - Provide opportunities for child to participate in culturally specific representational activities (e.g., storytelling, oral history, dance or oral interpretation)

Sub-Domain: Mathematics and Numeracy

- Number Sense and Operations
 - Goal: Children demonstrate knowledge of numbers and counting
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers

- Provide child and math-related toys and objects from own and other cultural backgrounds
- Measurement
 - Goal: Children demonstrate knowledge of size, volume, height, weight, and length
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for children
 - Provide child with toys that have incremental sizes (e.g., nesting cups, stackable rings) from own and other cultural backgrounds
- Properties of Ordering
 - Goal: Children identify and label shapes
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Demonstrate, explain, and engage child in activities that identify culturally specific patterning in artwork or objects used in the environment
 - Goal: Children sort, classify, and organize objects
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Play matching games with child, incorporating familiar patterns from child’s cultural background, neighborhood, and community (e.g., artwork, murals, clothing and utensils)
- Scientific Knowledge
 - Goal: Children observe and describe characteristics of living things
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Sing songs and read books from a variety of cultural backgrounds with child that describe plants and animals and how they grow and change
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Read or act out stories and legends about plants and animals from child’s cultural background
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Explain and engage child in activities that explore plants and animals, including those found in diverse cultures
- History
 - Goal: Children differentiate between events that happen in the past, present and future
 - Birth to 18 months—Strategies for caregivers
 - Look at photo album or family videos with child
 - 36 to 60 months—Strategies for caregivers
 - Provide opportunities for child to interact with family members about family and community history
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some indicators for children
 - Recognizes that other children have different past experiences from own
- Geography

- Goal: Children demonstrate knowledge of the relationship between people, places, and regions
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some indicators for children
 - Understands that there are different places that people live
- 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide opportunities for child to explore other places that people live (e.g., books magazines, documentary films)
- Economics
 - Goal: Children demonstrate awareness of economic concepts
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Read aloud to child books about jobs in different parts of the world
- Ecology
 - Goal: Children demonstrate awareness of the relationship between humans and the environment
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Read or tell ecology-related stories set in various cultural communities

Sub-Domain: Social Studies

- Technology
 - Goal: Children use technology appropriately
 - 18-36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide opportunities for child to listen to story tapes and music from own and other cultural backgrounds
 - Ensure that all technology-based resources child is exposed to reflect and affirm diverse cultures, languages and ethnic heritages

Sub-Domain: Family, Community and Culture

- Family
 - Goal: Children demonstrate awareness of family characteristics and functions
 - Birth to 18 months—Strategies for caregivers
 - Involve child in family traditions, rituals and activities
 - 18 months to 36 months—Strategies for caregivers
 - Provide opportunities for family members to talk with child about family history and culture
 - 36 months to 60 months—Some indicators for children
 - Identifies self as a member of a specific family and cultural group
 - 36 months to 60 months—Strategies for caregivers
 - Read stories and families and talk about child's own and others' families
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some indicators for children

- Talks about how other children have different family compositions than own
 - 60 months to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide opportunities for child to make friends with children who have different family compositions (e.g., children whose grandparents live with them)
- Community
 - Goal: Children demonstrate awareness of their community, human interdependence and social roles
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Read aloud books about families in other communities, cultures or countries
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Display pictures and read aloud books that portray a variety of workers and community helpers reflective of women and people from child's own and other cultural backgrounds
 - Goal: Children demonstrate civic responsibility
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Promote linguistic, cultural and other forms of respect
 - Goal: Children demonstrate awareness and appreciation of their own and others' cultures
 - Birth to 18 months—Some indicators for children
 - Recognizes simple differences between people (e.g., shows curiosity about someone who wears glasses or has skin color other than own)
 - Interacts with other children who are of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, of a different gender, who speak other language, or have special needs
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Clarify with child's family what is the child's cultural membership
 - Immerse child in his/her own culture
 - Share stories, songs and poems about child's own and other cultures
 - Model caring and kindness for all people and treat others with respect and fairness
 - Provide opportunities for child to interact with many children
 - Establish family traditions, rituals and activities
 - 18 to 36 months—Some indicators for children
 - Enjoys poems, stories and songs about a variety of people and cultures
 - Displays knowledge of basic concepts of own heritage and background (e.g., shows pictures or objects from home)

- Asks simple questions about other children and adults
- 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide food, music, art materials, books, photos, and dramatic play props that reflect child’s own family and culture
 - Provide opportunities for child to interact with children from other cultures
 - Display images reflective of child’s own cultural heritage and physical appearance
 - Talk about child’s unique qualities and those qualities that are similar to other children
 - Provide accurate and compassionate answers to help child develop a sense of appreciation for the differences of others
- 36 to 60 months—Some indicators for children
 - Asks questions about other children’s appearance and behavior
 - Asks questions about similarities and differences in other people
 - Shows respect for similarities and differences (e.g., does not laugh at somebody who is different)
 - Begins to build awareness, knowledge and appreciation of own culture
 - Recognizes and celebrates similarities and differences between people of different cultures in his/her circle of contact
- 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Create charts and pictures, with child’s help, showing names of objects in child’s home language and in home language of other children in child’s circle of contact
 - Introduce and talk with child about other cultures within his/her community (e.g., visit ethnic restaurants or grocery stores, cultural festivals)
 - Teach child words in other languages (e.g., “hello” in Spanish is “hola”, in Chinese is it “ni hao”)
 - Choose books, music, activities, and children’s shows that celebrate diverse cultures
 - Demonstrate, explain and provide opportunities for child to develop cross cultural skills
- 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some indicators for children
 - Talks about, compares and explores similarities and differences in daily practices across cultures
 - Enjoys learning about other children’s cultures through conversations, dramatic play, interactions and items from home
 - Develops an understanding of familiar cultural or religious holidays
 - Recognizes stereotypes and culturally or linguistically unfair or biased behavior
- 60 months to Kindergarten entry—Some strategies for caregivers

- Demonstrate and explain characteristics child has that represent his/her cultural background
- Broaden child's knowledge about children and families in other places and cultures through real-life experiences, books, stories, pictures and videos
- Listen to music from other parts of the world and discuss its characteristics
- Reinforce the value of the child's home language and culture
- Identify and discuss with child culturally or linguistically unfair or biased behaviors; demonstrate and explain anti-bias responses

Sub-Domain: Creative Arts

□ Expression and Representation

- Goal: Children use creative arts to express and represent what they know, think, believe and feel
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Display local and classic art forms from child's cultural backgrounds
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Involve child in diverse musical activities (e.g., song, dance, rhythm, playing musical instruments) from his/her own and other cultural backgrounds
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Introduce child to more complex musical instruments and instruments from diverse cultures
- Goal: Children demonstrate understanding and appreciation of creative arts
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Expose child to music from variety of cultures and styles (e.g., jazz, rock, ethnic, classical)
 - 18 to 36 months—Some indicators for children
 - Observes and responds to artwork produced by other individuals and/or cultures
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Display the work of artists through prints, posters, paintings, and books from child's own and other cultural backgrounds
 - Provide multiple opportunities for child to listen to music of all cultures and style
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Involve child in musical experiences that reflect diverse cultures (e.g., singing, dancing, listening and acting)
 - Arrange for long-term art projects (e.g., mural, music, tile) with guest artists from child's own and other cultural backgrounds
 - 60 to Kindergarten Entry—Some strategies for caregivers

- Provide opportunities for child to experience art forms and performing groups from own and other cultural backgrounds

Domain Five: Language, Communication and Literacy

□ Introduction

- Children do not acquire language skills out of context. No matter which language is being learned (e.g., English, American Sign Language, Cantonese), the vital role of children’s environment cannot be neglected. Language is fundamentally embedded in children’s everyday relationships and experiences. Parents, primary caregivers, and teachers play a critical role in facilitating young children’s language and literacy development by providing exposure to language and print-rich environments, interactions, and opportunities. External input from the environment, teaching of specific skills, and the rich cultural ways of life promote the acquisition of language and literacy skills.

□ Supporting Individual Differences and Diversity

- Children learn words and forms of language not simply to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas; they also learn language to meet personal and social objectives as determined by the community and culture within which they are socialized. It is not surprising then that language, communication, and literacy are closely linked to social and cultural contexts. Because of this, the manner in which children use language to communicate varies widely.
- Several million young children in the United States speak a language other than English in their homes. Children benefit cognitively from learning two or more languages. The ability to communicate in more than one language supports children’s cognitive flexibility and meta-cognitive awareness. Children learn second languages in two ways – either by acquiring two or more languages at the same time, or by learning a second language after mastering the “home language” (i.e., first language learned and primary language used at home). Children who follow the former path to dual language learning (i.e., simultaneous learning of more than one language) are said to be “bilingual” as a first language. Children who learn two languages from birth operate with two separate language systems and it is typical that they may mix words from the two languages in the same sentence. For children who follow the latter path to dual language learning (i.e., sequential learning of more than one language), it is important that their competence in the home language is supported while they are learning a second language. If their home language is actively supported and valued, children will learn English faster.
- The home language of children largely governs how children progress from simple to more complex speech. Because language patterns vary so much and because they greatly affect learning, it is vitally important to take into account children’s home language when considering their language and literacy processes and achievements. Given the large number of young children in the state of Washington whose home language is not English, the Benchmarks provide indicators and strategies to support the development of children’s home language while helping children acquire beginning proficiency in English.

▪ Global Strategies

- Provide culturally and linguistically diverse models of communication, which include voice, touch, gesture and facial expressions
- Encourage communication and/or participation by using culturally appropriate objects and activities from children’s home environments

- Ensure that the environment is safe from cultural or other forms of bias
- Actively support and value children’s home language by encouraging children to use it at home and across early learning settings
- Consistently and regularly encourage development in communication, language, and literacy while being sensitive to the cultural integrity of language and spoken communication

Sub-Domain: Language

- Vocabulary

- Goal: Children use expressive vocabulary
 - 18 to 36 months—Some indicators for children
 - Demonstrates use of an expressive vocabulary of more than one hundred words, in home language
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Engage in rich and meaningful conversations about child’s real life in child’s home language
 - For an English Language Learner, learn and use key words in child’s home language
 - Provide opportunities for child to distinguish between real and nonsense words in home language
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Support ELL (or any second language learner) for acquiring a second language by avoiding translating everything for child and by using props, gestures, role-plays, physical movements, and demonstrations
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Describe and explain the benefits of learning two or more languages and compare words and concepts between languages with child

- Grammar and Syntax

- Goal: Children demonstrate progression in grammar and syntax
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Use finger plays, lullabies and songs from child’s home and other languages
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Read books from child’s home language and in other languages, if possible
 - Recognize that English language learners may mix words from different languages in the same sentence; repeat what child said using all the words in the same language
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Set aside a regular time during daily routine to engage child in meaningful conversation (if child is bilingual, in both languages separately at different times of the day)

- Let child know that you recognize all languages as valid means of communication
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some indicators for children
 - Uses sentences, in home language, that show an emergence of grammatical correctness with subject/verb agreement
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Show value for regional variations of language, compare similarities and differences between languages, including academic school English
- Comprehension
 - Goal: Children demonstrate comprehension and meaning in language
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide opportunities for ELL to ask questions in his/her home language first as that might be more closely linked to the development of understanding
 - Read a story often, including stories from diverse, and then engage child in conversation about it
- Expressive/Oral Language
 - Goal: Children use language for a variety of purposes
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Tell child stories about his/her family, community and culture
 - Discuss and explain the importance of child’s home language
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Tell child stories from diverse cultures
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some indicators for children
 - Enjoys listening to stories from diverse cultures
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - When telling stories from different cultures, respond when child indicates interest

Sub-Domain: Communication

- Listening
 - Goal: Children demonstrate an understanding of language by listening
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Tell child stories, sing songs and repeat rhymes from child’s own culture and language
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Include songs and stories from child’s home language in group activities
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide ELL (or any second language learners) with many opportunities to participate in and understand a second language

without translation (e.g., use gestures, props, demonstrations so he/she can understand without translation)

- Oral and Written Communication
 - Goal: Children communicate effectively
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Reduce complicated story to seven or eight action sentences and act out movements with child (especially in support of English language learner)
- Conventions of Social Communication
 - Goal: Children understand and use the conventions of social communication
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Value and celebrate child's home language
 - Demonstrate, explain, and provide opportunities for child to practice culturally and socially appropriate courtesies
 - 36 to 60 months—Some indicators for children
 - Bilingual child adjusts his/her language and communication form according to person with whom she/she is speaking
 - Provides opportunities for interactions within child's own social conventions and also other languages and cultural groups

Sub-Domain: Literacy

- Reading
 - Goal: Children demonstrate awareness of print concepts
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some indicators for children
 - Recognizes when something is written in his/her home language
 - Goal: Children demonstration comprehension of printed materials
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Introduce books from diverse cultures
 - Make books with pictures from child's life, cultural background and home language
 - Label environment in two or more languages differentiated by color (e.g., Labels in Spanish are in blue and in English are red)
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Read books with child from child's own and other cultural backgrounds
 - Goal: Children demonstrate awareness that written materials can be used for a variety of purposes
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide opportunities for child to help put something together based upon printed directions (for bilingual children, in both languages)
 - 60 months for Kindergarten Entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Identify and talk about different cultures and traditions represented in stories and books from different regions of the world

- Promote family participation in literacy-related activities in both English and child’s home language (e.g., ask parents to read their favorite book to read)
 - Goal: Children demonstrate appreciation and enjoyment of reading
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide a variety of multicultural books in child’s environment
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Read books that reflect diversity and child’s own and other cultural backgrounds
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Make attractive books available that represent child’s lived experiences, cultural backgrounds and home language
 - For English language learner (or other second language learners), facilitate child’s ability to understand the book without translation by acting out the book, re-telling the story in action sentences with movements and using props
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide opportunities for child to listen to books on tape (for bilingual children in both languages)
- Writing
 - Goal: Children demonstrate alphabet knowledge
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Read alphabet books with child, including books from different cultures
 - 36 to 60 months—Some indicators for children
 - Shows awareness of two different writing systems (especially appropriate for ELL)
 - Goal: Children use writing skills and demonstrate knowledge of writing conventions
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Write down child’s dictations and read back exactly what he/she said (English language learner, in both languages)
 - Provide opportunities to talk about what child notices about two different writing systems (especially appropriate for English language learner)
 - Goal: Children use writing for a variety of purposes
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some indicators for children
 - Writes simple expressions in greeting cards and letters (e.g. Hi; Hola)

Sub-Domain: English Language Learners

- Dual Language Acquisition
 - Goal: Children demonstrate competency in home language while acquiring beginning proficiency in English

- Birth to 18 months—Some indicators for children
 - Responds to familiar words in home language and attends to sounds in English
 - Uses eight to ten understandable words in home language and may not possess any words in the English language
 - Communicate needs through single-word speech in home language and through facial expression or actions (e.g., points to object desired) if attempting to communicate in English
- Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Support child’s use of home language by talking to, reading and singing in the home language
 - When presenting child with words in English, present them in groups (e.g., animal names) and within a context
 - Help child link English vocabulary to real-life experiences by using pictures, objects and events
 - Provide opportunities for parents to continue to use home language with child to build a strong home language base
- 18 to 36 months—Some indicators for children
 - Follows simple verbal direction in home language and attempts to make sense of a direction given in English when accompanied by non-verbal gesture (e.g., signal for come here)
 - Often uses sounds from home language when speaking in English (e.g., Spanish “v” may be pronounced like “b” so Spanish speaking child may say “bery” for “very”)
 - Has a larger vocabulary in home language and is beginning to acquire an English vocabulary
 - Recalls word from simple songs in home language and recognizes words from songs in English
 - Asks simple questions in home languages; uses gestures or simple words to ask questions in English
 - Inserts words from home language while speaking in English, sometimes
- 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Read books with child in home language with supplemental reading in English
 - Create a supportive environment for learning the home language while also exposing child to English
 - Speak English in ways that help ELL understand (e.g., simple sentences, repetition, use of gestures)
 - Provide an environment of acceptance that supports and respects the home language by bringing the home language to settings (other than home) where child may spend part of the day
 - Have print materials available in both the home language and English
- 36 to 60 months—Some indicators for children
 - Demonstrates understanding that there are languages other than the home language (e.g., identifies sentence spoken in home language in comparison to one spoken in English)

- Relies on non-verbal cues to communicate in English, but does not rely on non-verbal cues to communicate in home language
- Focuses on the meaning of words rather than grammar in acquiring spoken English language competency
- Uses sentences in home language and begins to use simple words or telegraphic speech in English to communicate
- Bilingual children adjust language and communication form used according to person with whom he/she is speaking
- 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Help child develop reasoning skills through use of home language
 - Devise strategies that build home-school collaboration to reinforce home language competence and promote learning English
 - Sing songs that incorporate words from two languages (e.g., Pollito-Chicken, Galina-Hen)
 - Identify and explain patterns in errors of spoken English to help child acquire language competency (Note: do not correct child but guide by example)
 - Model positive vocabulary learning strategies (e.g., reading cues from the context)
- 60 months to Kindergarten entry—Some indicators for children
 - Follows multi-step directions in home language and single-step directions in English
 - Demonstrates understanding of words used in home language that are different in English
 - Makes consistent grammatical errors in English (e.g., mans for men)
 - Re-tells a simple story told in the home language but may only be able to re-tell a few words from a story told in English
 - Begins to understand that non-family adults and peers may not understand home language
 - Chooses the language (home or English) and/or non-verbal gestures to communicate according to audience, purpose and setting
- 60 months to Kindergarten entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide opportunities for child to acquire competency in home language and English
 - Provide opportunities for child to practice communicating in English through natural and meaningful conversation
 - Provide opportunities for child to share words from home language with other children
 - Be supportive in situations of stress, exhaustion, or emotional strain when child uses “interlanguage” (i.e., neither the home language nor English by 3rd language system based on both languages)
 - Develop a plan for child’s continued use of the home language and acquisition of English

Alaska's Early Learning Guidelines

Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

Alaska utilized Washington State's Early Learning and Development Benchmarks as a starting point including most of Washington's indicators and caregiver strategies related to cultural and linguistic diversity. They also added some of their own. Listed here are just the additions.

Guiding Principles

- Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts.

Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1989, 1993) provides an ecological model for understanding human development. He explains that children's development is best understood within the sociocultural context of the family, educational setting, community, and broader society. These various contexts are interrelated, and all have an impact on the developing child. For example, even a child in a loving, supportive family within a strong, healthy community is affected by the biases of the larger society, such as racism or sexism, and may show the effects of negative stereotyping and discrimination

- Definition of Culture
 - Culture is defined as the customary beliefs and patterns of and for behavior, both explicit and implicit, which are passed on to future generations by the society they live in and/or by a social, religious, or ethnic group within it. Because culture is often discussed in the context of diversity or multiculturalism, people fail to recognize the powerful role that culture plays in influencing the development of all children. Every culture structures and interprets children's behavior and development (Edwards & Gandini 1989; Tobin, Wu, & Davidson 1989; Rogoff et al. 1993). As Bowman states, "Rules of development are the same for all children, but social contexts shape children's development into different configurations" (1994, 220). Early childhood teachers need to understand the influence of sociocultural contexts on learning, recognize children's developing competence, and accept a variety of ways for children to express their developmental achievements (Vygotsky 1978; Wertsch 1985; Forman, Minick, & Stone 1993; New 1993, 1994; Bowman & Stott 1994; Mallory & New 1994a; Phillips 1994; Bruner 1996; Wardle 1996). Teachers should learn about the different cultures of the children they serve, especially those cultures that differ from their own. Recognizing that development and learning are influenced by social and cultural contexts sensitizes teachers to the need to acknowledge how their own cultural experience shapes their perspective and to realize that multiple perspectives, in addition to their own, must be considered in decisions about children's development and learning. The more teachers learn about and incorporate the culture of the children into the curriculum, the more academically successful the children can be. In addition, when the children's language and culture is incorporated into the classroom, the children can develop greater self esteem and sense of identity.
 - Children are capable of learning to function in more than one cultural context simultaneously. If teachers set low expectations for children based on their home culture and language, children cannot develop and learn optimally. Education should be an additive process and build on students' strengths. For example, children whose primary language is not English should be able to learn English without being forced to give up their home language (NAEYC 1996a). Likewise,

children who speak only English benefit from learning another language. The goal is that all children learn to function well in the society as a whole and move comfortably among groups of people who come from both similar and dissimilar backgrounds. We should think of education not only as preparing children to be members of their local communities, but also to be global citizens in an increasingly interconnected world.

- Children are active learners, drawing on direct physical and social experience as well as culturally transmitted knowledge to construct their own understandings of the world around them.
 - From birth, children are actively engaged in constructing their own understandings from their experiences, and these understandings are mediated by and clearly linked to the sociocultural context. Young children actively learn from observing and participating with other children and adults, including parents and teachers. Children need to form their own hypotheses and keep trying them out through social interaction, physical manipulation, and their own thought processes -- observing what happens, reflecting on their findings, asking questions, and formulating answers. When objects, events, and other people challenge the working model that the child has mentally constructed, the child is forced to adjust the model or alter the mental structures to account for the new information. Throughout early childhood, the child processes new experiences, which continually reshapes, expands, and reorganizes their mental structures (Piaget 1952; Vygotsky 1978; Case & Okamoto 1996). When teachers and other adults use various strategies to encourage children to reflect on their experiences by planning beforehand and "revisiting" afterward, the knowledge and understanding gained from the experience is deepened (Copple, Sigel, & Saunders 1984; Edwards, Gandini, & Forman 1993; Stremmel & Fu 1993; Hohmann & Weikart 1995).
 - In the statement of this principle, the term "physical and social experience" is used in the broadest sense to include children's exposure to physical knowledge, learned through firsthand experience of using objects. For example, a child learns directly from experience when he or she observes that a ball thrown in the air will fall down. Children also learn social knowledge, which includes the vast body of culturally acquired and transmitted knowledge that children need to function in the world. In this way, children progressively construct their own understanding of various symbols, but the symbols they use (such as the alphabet or numerical system) are specific to their culture and transmitted to them by adults.
- 15. Children learn best when communication and support for families is culturally appropriate and respectful.
 - Many studies have shown that the more that children's culture is brought into their learning environment, the more success they will have in learning. Learning activities should be based on what children already know. Despite the relationship between prior knowledge and comprehension, educational researchers note the disparity between the experience of children, especially Native and minority children and the literature often used in the classroom. "Obviously, the commercial reading materials traditionally used in schools do not reflect many students' experience of the world" (McEachern, 1990). Culturally relevant oral literature can form a bridge between prior knowledge and

comprehension of the text. “In order for Native students to succeed in their mastery of literacy activities, culturally relevant materials are essential” (Reyner, 1988).

- Costantino and St. Charles (2000) note that teachers need to immerse themselves in the culture of their students in order to learn more about their linguistic and cultural background as well as their strengths in learning styles. Instructional approaches need to be geared to the particular culture of the students. This is especially important when incorporating storytelling into the curriculum. Research conducted by Cleary and Peacock (1998) shows that schools that acknowledge, accept, and teach, a child’s cultural heritage, have significantly better success in educating students from diverse cultures. Much research has been done regarding Native American students and their preferred learning styles. Yet, even among students from the same Native American community, the range of learning styles varies greatly. Costantino and St. Charles have conducted studies in learning styles that indicate “variations among individual [Native American] are as great as their commonalities” (p. 25). Therefore, they suggest that teachers of all students, especially Native students, should adapt their instructional methods to include strategies that encompass a broad range of students’ learning styles.

Valuing Diversity

- Every child has unique characteristics, developing and learning in the context of their family, culture, and community. In this light, the Early Learning Guidelines acknowledge and embrace the tremendous diversity and variation that exists between young children. In building a resource to develop a common understanding, the Guidelines have used a broad definition of diversity that includes – but is not limited to – socioeconomic, cultural, racial, linguistic, ethnic, gender, abilities, and regional variations. The Guidelines attempt to build upon and represent the rich cultural heritage and knowledge of children and families in Alaska. In addition, efforts have been made to include the unique learning needs of children with disabilities and children who have a home language other than English while recognizing the importance of community decisions to foster the home language while acquiring English as a second language.
- To this end, the goal statements are intended for all children, but the indicators and strategies attempt to incorporate modifications to reflect children’s diversity. In addition, the ages indicated for achieving each of the indicators are broad guidelines: given the nature of children’s diversity, we expect and treasure differences in when, and in how children will achieve the indicators. Not all children will achieve all indicators in the time frame specified. Some children may achieve some of the indicators earlier than the age specified while other children may achieve them at a different rate, in a different order, or not at all. In all cases, the timelines offered are guidelines to inform, not to constrain, children’s natural course of development.
- The role of caring adults and communities is also reflected in the Guidelines. The document provides some simple play ideas, learning strategies, and interactive activities that adults can use to enhance children’s development. It is critical to use the Early Learning Guidelines to accommodate different approaches toward learning. The intention is for parents and other caregivers to focus on the function of the goal, as opposed to the specific indicators. For example, while it is important for young children to use their own name as an indicator of self concept, some children may demonstrate this by speaking their name aloud while other children may use sign language or other

gestures to identify themselves.

- Although a worthy goal, this document does not and cannot fully account for the multiple ways in which children in Alaska communicate, learn, play, and interact with adults and peers. It is hoped, however, that every adult sees a little bit of his or her own unique life experience in the Early Learning Guidelines and uses the document as a basis for extending dialogue about the many contexts in which children grow and learn. Likewise, it is hoped that each child in Alaska is reflected in some way in these guidelines, and can be nurtured and cared for more effectively and respectfully. With the implementation of these Guidelines, there should be ongoing collective discussions among parents, caregivers, early learning professionals, teachers, and others. This will ensure that the Guidelines are used in ways that represent the values, aspirations, and effective practices of all cultures and communities in Alaska.

Domain 1: Physical Well-Being, Health and Motor Development

General Definitions

- Safety
 - In Alaska's unique geographical region, which has extremes in temperature and remoteness, it is essential that caregivers pay attention to both traditional indigenous knowledge of survival as well as to modern science and technology. For example, in many parts of the states, parents carry their baby or toddler inside their parkas to keep them warm during intensely cold winters. Fur parkas and mukluks provide protection from cold injuries, while polar fleece can also provide added warmth to a child and has the benefit of drying quickly. Before traveling in the winter, traditional knowledge of the ice is important to heed as well as the weather forecast from the radio or Internet.
- Supporting Individual Differences, Languages and Diversity
 - Native cultures throughout Alaska place a high value on physical health and endurance. Community events such as dances and sports, such as Native Youth Olympics, provide an opportunity for both Native and non-Native people to gather and participate in activities that promote physical health as well as social development. In many villages and cities, people come together at these events to participate in games, dances, and to renew a sense of community.

Domain 2: Social and Emotional Development

General Definition

- Social Development
 - It is important to bring children to events in the community so they can learn about social interactions in the crucial early years of development. Many communities throughout Alaska hold annual social events that celebrate community and culture. These events provide opportunities for social and emotional development, as well as opportunities for children to develop their identity as young members of their communities and culture. These events may include Fourth of July celebrations across the state, the State Fair, Camai in Bethel, Celebration in Juneau, Nulakataq and Kivgiq in Barrow, AFN in Anchorage or Fairbanks, Crab Festival in Kodiak, pow-wows or potlatches in various locations, as well as numerous other gatherings throughout the state. Larger urban areas of the state offer a variety of cultural and social activities for young children and their families. Many communities in the rural

areas hold local events for dances and potlucks as well. Social events and gatherings promote and reflect the values of community and sharing, which help children form positive connections with others and strengthen their identity.

Sub-Domain: Social Development

- Interactions with Peers
 - Goal: Children cooperate with peers
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for educators
 - Engage children in looking at books about children in other cultures
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some strategies for educators
 - Read books about children in other cultures
- Adaptive Social Behavior
 - Goal: Children adapt to diverse settings
 - 60 months to Kindergarten Entry—Some strategies for educators
 - Discuss the significance of cultural activities in different settings (e.g., community dances, songs, feasts)
- Appreciating Diversity
 - Goal; Children recognize, appreciate, and respect similarities and differences in people
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for educators
 - Talk to child in home language, which will help build a strong cultural identity
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for educators
 - Invite parents and others from diverse cultures to tell stories and read books to children
 - 60 months to Kindergarten entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Engage children in songs, rhymes and counting games in a second language

Sub-Domain: Emotional Development

- Self-Concept
 - Goal: Children perceive themselves as unique individuals
 - Birth to 18 months---Some strategies for educators
 - Tell stories and sing songs from child's home language
 - 18 to 36 months— Some strategies for educators
 - Tell family stories and read books from child's home culture
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for educators
 - Encourage child to retell family stories and look at books from child's home culture
 - 60 months to Kindergarten entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide culturally relevant materials that allow child to see himself/herself in books, dolls, and dramatic play materials

- Self Efficacy
 - Goal: Children demonstrate belief in their abilities
 - 60 months to Kindergarten entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Point out negative stereotypes in books and media and identify them as such when negative stereotypes are encountered in society

Domain 3: Approaches to Learning

- Supporting Individual Differences, Languages and Diversity
 - Cultural diversity in Alaska contributes to the diverse approaches to learning. For example, many Native cultures have developed around subsistence activities, which involve more hands-on and kinesthetic learning. Subsistence cultures also value communal effort to accomplish a goal. Kinesthetic learning, building relationships, value of teamwork, and communal effort may characterize optimal learning environments for children from these cultures. Cultures based on oral traditions value story telling as a way of transmitting knowledge. For people who are raised in an oral tradition, skills in speaking, listening and understanding body language and gestures are important. The focus in storytelling is on the relationship between the teller and the listeners, as well as their shared knowledge of their own community and culture. It is important to keep diverse learning styles and values in mind when designing learning environments for young children whose cultures have a tradition of oral storytelling. Learning styles vary among individuals in cultural groups and caregivers should keep in mind to provide a variety of activities so that children with different learning styles can all be successful.

Domain 4: Cognition and General Knowledge

Sub-Domain: Creative Arts

- Understanding and Appreciation
 - Goal: Children demonstrate understanding and appreciation of creative arts
 - 36 to 60 months: Some strategies for caregivers
 - Engage the child in the observation and expression of what was seen when watching people from a variety of cultures creating art
 - 60 months to Kindergarten entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Take child on field trips to dance, musical and theater events and performance (e.g., community programs, school performances and traditional cultural presentations)

Domain 5: Communication, Language and Literacy

Introduction

- As with the other domains, *the Communication, Language, and Literacy Domain* is closely interrelated with other domains of early development, such as the cognitive, physical, and social and emotional domains. The complexity of this domain is amplified with the linguistic diversity found in Alaska where children come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. Over twenty Native languages and over eighty other world languages in addition to English are spoken in Alaska. There is also a great wealth of diversity in how people make and share meaning with others, such as story telling, dance, song, drama, carving, painting, and weaving. It is essential that children in Alaska be taught literacy in a way that honors their diverse heritage, language, and culture. In order to build on their strengths as literacy learners, parents and caregivers can create opportunities for children that build on their prior knowledge and so they can explore and

strengthen their sense of cultural identity.

- Supporting Individual Differences, Language and Cultural Diversity
 - Public education has made a dramatic change in its attitude toward inclusion of Alaska Native traditional knowledge and indigenous languages over the last 20 years. In the past, Alaska Native children were forced to speak English in schools. Today, however, education has progressed to include immersion and bilingual programs where the language of instruction is an Alaskan Native language.
 - It is essential that parents, educators, and other professionals value and support linguistic diversity in children. It is also crucial to understand the unique history that has influenced where we are today in education. Throughout Alaska, there is an ongoing need to increase efforts to reinvigorate the Indigenous languages of Alaska to promote healthy identities of Alaska Native peoples and increase the awareness of diversity of world languages. The Alaskan Native languages, as well as every language in the world, are of great value and educators should make efforts to preserve these languages so that each unique way of communicating meaning and looking at the world may be passed on to Alaskan children.
- Home Language
 - The home language is the first language learned and the primary language used at home. Research shows that children, who are strong in their home language, will be able to develop fluency in speaking and reading a second language such as English. Children benefit cognitively from learning two or more languages. Second language learners are more sophisticated learners in that they already have acquired some, if not most of the components of one language. The ability to communicate in more than one language supports children's cognitive flexibility and an awareness of their own cognitive processes.
- Bilingualism
 - Bilingualism is the ability to communicate in two or more languages and includes a command of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and the ability to communicate meaning. Mackey (1962) defines bilingualism as the alternate use of two languages by an individual. A bilingual child has almost equal competence in both languages. Baker (1996) explains that while the four basic language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing, are important in first language development, "a language taught without its attendant culture is like presenting a body without a heart. Language and culture are entwined in the healthy functioning of a body. Therefore, developing heritage cultural awareness and multiculturalism alongside first language teaching is an important element in language acquisition." There are many dimensions of being able to communicate in a language and to define them would go beyond the scope of this document. It is important, however, to understand the concept of bilingualism and the process of acquiring languages when considering the language development of young children.
 - Children learn multiple languages in diverse ways. Some learn by acquiring two or more languages at the same time, while others learn by learning a second language after mastering the home language. Children who learn two languages from birth operate with two separate language systems and it is typical that they may mix words from the two languages in the same sentence for a short time. For children who follow the latter path to dual language learning (i.e., sequential learning of more than one language), it is essential that children continue to receive instruction in their home language while they are learning a second

language. Some children go through a “silent period” when learning a second or third language. Parents, educators, and caregivers need to continue to talk to children and give them time to speak in the second language when they are ready. If their home language is actively supported and valued, children will learn a second language faster.

□ Bilingual Education

- In bilingual programs children receive instruction in their home language, as well as English. Dual language instruction benefits children in several ways. The instruction in the home language is important for children to understand the instruction in English. According to Freeman and Freeman (2004), in bilingual education, children receive some instruction in their home language to preview a lesson, followed by instruction in the second language. The review is once again in the child’s first language. This technique is called preview, view, review, and is used by many teachers in bilingual settings. In addition, the instruction in the child’s first language helps the child build the necessary background knowledge to gain proficiency in the second language.
- Approximately fifteen percent of young children in the state of Alaska speak a language other than English in the home. It is essential that parents and caregivers recognize that children need to be strong in their home language first, before learning a second language. The home language of children largely governs how children progress from simple to more complex speech. The guidelines for Communication, Language, and Literacy include indicators and strategies to support the development of children’s home language while helping children acquire beginning proficiency in English.

Global Strategies

- Build on children’s strengths as literacy learners by including the child’s family and culture in daily activities as much as possible.

Sub-Domain: Communication

□ Listening

- Goal: Children demonstrate the meaning of language by listening
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Read stories and nursery rhymes with child in the home language
 - 18 to 36 months—Some indicators for children
 - Listens to short and simple stories in the home language
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide tape-recorded stories from the children’s home culture and in the children’s home language
 - 60 months to Kindergarten entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Create times when children in groups come together to listen to information (e.g., elder tells story during circle time; carver explains significance of totem pole characters)

□ Oral Communication

- Goal: Children communicate effectively
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers

- Pair child with another child who speaks their home language
- 60 months to Kindergarten entry—Some indicators for children
 - With assistance makes a simple story book using pictures, personal experience or culture and some words
- 60 months to Kindergarten entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Have older child play and socialize in the home language with a younger child

Sub-Domain: Language

□ Vocabulary

- Goal: Children use receptive communication skills
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide child with language-rich and culturally-rich environment, through conversation, books, family stories, music and early inclusion in traditional community activities
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Continue to include child in family and community traditional activities and ceremonies: explain words, symbols and meanings
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide opportunities for child to view art from their culture (and other culture) and explain the related stories (e.g., totem poles and /or masks)
- Goal: Children use expressive communication skills
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Continue to involve family so that words representing child’s personal experience are acknowledged and encouraged
 - 60 months to Kindergarten entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Engage child in conversations that use culture-specific language in play and learning activities (e.g., “smoking fish”, “regailia”, umiak traditions from the home country, names etc.)

□ Grammar and Syntax

- Goal: Children demonstrate progression in grammar and syntax
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Recognize and validate conversation styles that may be different and rooted in child’s culture or personal experience
 - Speak with child in complete sentences using correct grammar in the home language

□ Comprehension

- Goal: Children demonstrate comprehension and meaning in language
 - 60 months to Kindergarten entry—Some indicators for children
 - Uses and understands complex sentences in the home language
 - Retells simple stories in sequence in the home language

□ Expressive/Oral Language

- Goal: Children use language for a variety of purposes
 - Birth to 18 months—Some indicators for children
 - Enjoys listening to oral stories in the home language
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Uses terms like auntie, grandpa or terms in the Native language when talking to or about family members

Sub-Domain: Literacy

□ Reading

- Goal: Children demonstrate awareness of letters and symbols
 - 36 to 60 months—Some indicators for children
 - Recites letters of the alphabet in home language
- Goal: Children demonstrate awareness of print concepts
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Provide children with a variety of books from the home culture and in the home language
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Assist child in creating books and other printed materials in home language
- Goal: Children demonstrate comprehension of printed materials and oral stories
 - 36 to 60 months—Some indicators for children
 - Matches pictures with spoken word in the home language
 - 36 to 60 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Read books by Alaska authors or that represent Alaskan culture, for example *Mama, Do you Love Me?*, *On Mother's Lap*, *Alaskan ABC's*, *Runaway Mittens*, etc.
 - 60 months to Kindergarten entry—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Read books that represent Alaska culture to children. A few possibilities are hungry *Giant of the Tundra*, *Kitaaq Goes Fishing*, *Kumak's House*, *Berry Magic*, *Dance on the Sealskin* etc.
- Goal: Children demonstrate knowledge of letters and symbols
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Display pictures and posters with word labels in home language

Sub-Domain: English Language Learners

□ Dual Language Acquisition

- Goal: Children demonstrate competency in home language while acquiring beginning proficiency in English
 - Birth to 18 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - Play music from the child's home culture and in the home language
 - 18 to 36 months—Some strategies for caregivers
 - When telling a story from a book or an oral story substitute a couple of the words into the child's home language