

Chapter

4



Preschool Education

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Introduction

For many children in Québec, preschool education marks the start of learning to interact in a group, and for all children it is the beginning of school. They arrive in kindergarten at various stages of development, which are the result of both their personal and family history and their sociocultural background.

Kindergarten is a special place, where children continue their development, increasing their learnings, acquiring new learning strategies and forming relationships with other children and adults. This social experience allows them to discover themselves as individuals, to become aware of their potential, to structure their personality and gradually to increase their autonomy. Kindergarten is also a place of intellectual stimulation, where children discover the pleasure of learning and lay the foundation for future learning. The richness and variety of their experience allows them to increase their understanding of the world, to construct their knowledges and to become acquainted with the various subject areas of elementary school.

Preschool education has a threefold mandate: to serve as a rite of passage that gives children a liking for school; to foster children's overall development by motivating them to exploit their full potential; and to lay the social and cognitive groundwork that will prepare children for their future schooling and enable them to continue to learn throughout their lives.

The program enables 4- and 5-year-olds to develop psychomotor, emotional, social, language, cognitive and methodological competencies related to self-knowledge, life in society and communication. With the support of the teacher, children take part in learning situations drawn from their world of play and their life experiences and begin to play the role of students, active and capable of thinking.

The program also allows children to begin developing certain intellectual, methodological, personal and social, and communication-related competencies that are cross-curricular, and to explore topics that are of interest to them in the broad areas of learning.

CHILDREN AND PLAY

Through their play and spontaneous activities, children express themselves, experiment, construct their learnings, structure their thoughts and develop their worldview. They learn to be themselves, to interact with others and to solve problems. They develop their imagination and creativity. Spontaneous activity and play are their way of mastering reality; this justifies giving play a central place in preschool education and organizing the space and time accordingly.

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Activities related to children's concerns and interests are by nature cross-curricular. They are rooted in children's

everyday lives and their human, physical and cultural environment. They give children the opportunity to discover various means of expression and creation and to become aware of the different languages that support and construct learning. In addition, they foster the development of knowledges, behaviours and attitudes that help children do things methodically and exercise elementary forms of critical judgment of people and things.

CLASS ORGANIZATION

The preschool class is organized to encourage children's active participation. The classroom, the gym and the school yard are places where children may observe, explore, manipulate things, reflect, imagine, exercise memory, plan projects, test their abilities and develop their motor skills. Learning centres stimulate their curiosity and allow them to explore various areas of learning: languages, the arts, mathematics, the social sciences, and science and technology.

PEDAGOGICAL EVALUATION

In preschool education, evaluation involves the individual children, their peers, teachers and parents. Observation is the favoured means of evaluation: it fosters and respects the learning process and focuses on the children's attitudes, behaviours, processes, strategies and productions. Observation makes it possible to follow the children's progress in the development of their competencies.

Children whose first language is not French and who are enrolled in a French-speaking class for the first time may experience difficulties in mastering a second language. Teachers should take this into account both in providing learning support and in evaluating their competencies. In French immersion classes, it is helpful to make connections between French and English in order to facilitate communication and encourage children to apply their learnings.

Learnings Specific to Early Childhood Development

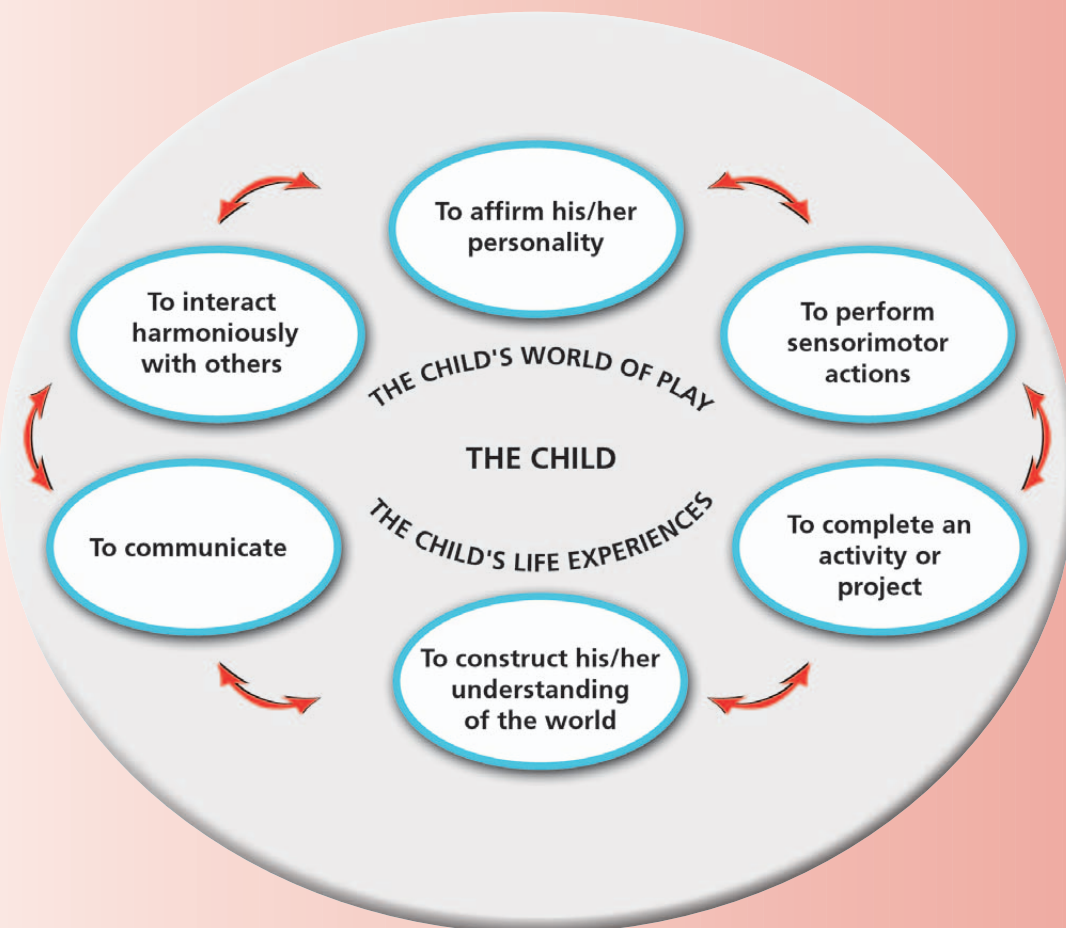
CONNECTIONS AMONG THE COMPETENCIES

The Preschool Education program fosters children's overall development by developing six closely linked competencies.

Each learning situation draws on learnings, attitudes and abilities associated with different competencies; for example, in playing with blocks, children develop their motor skills, interact with others and apply strategies to create their constructions.

For children, learning and doing are inextricably linked: learning and the development of competencies are the result of their interaction with others and with their environment. The teacher's actions allow them to carry out increasingly complex activities, stimulate their desire to surpass themselves and help them become aware of new realities.

Figure 4
Preschool Education



COMPETENCY 1 • TO PERFORM SENSORIMOTOR ACTIONS EFFECTIVELY IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

Focus of the Competency



MEANING OF THE COMPETENCY

This competency contributes to **psychomotor development**. Through active play and daily physical exercise, children develop their senses and their gross and fine motor skills. They move about, explore their space and manipulate various objects. They discover the reactions and capacities of their bodies and become aware of the importance of taking care of them and adopting safe behaviour.

DEVELOPMENTAL PROFILE

In preschool education, children become increasingly aware of their bodies and senses, and discover their capacities through a variety of motor and sensory activities in different situations. They make increasingly precise movements, learn to use the tools and equipment available and acquire a sense of physical ease. They are made aware of the importance of taking care of their bodies, finding methods of relaxing and adopting good posture and healthy living habits.

CONNECTIONS TO CROSS-CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

This competency does not have a direct connection to the cross-curricular competencies. However, depending on the nature of their sensory and motor experiences, the children will be encouraged to use creativity, to solve situational problems or to form teams.

CONTEXT FOR LEARNING

This competency is developed in motor and sensory play, art activities and activities outside the classroom or school (gym, park, school yard).

Key Features of the Competency

To broaden his/her repertoire of actions. To experiment with gross and fine motor movements. To pay attention to his/her sensory and bodily reactions.

To adjust his/her actions to the demands of the environment. To situate himself/herself in the physical environment and experiment with sequences of actions. To use tools and materials for an explicit purpose.

**TO PERFORM SENSORIMOTOR
ACTIONS EFFECTIVELY
IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS**

To recognize ways to ensure his/her well-being. To adopt good posture and practise relaxation. To identify healthy living habits and respect safety rules.

Evaluation Criteria

- Execution of various gross motor movements
- Execution of various fine motor movements
- Adjustment of actions to the environment
- Recognition of factors that favour well-being (health and safety)

Outcomes at the End of Preschool Education

The children, having been placed in a variety of classroom situations that hold real challenges, have broadened their repertoire of actions. They adjust their actions to their physical and human environment and follow safety rules, performing in accordance with the task and their level of development. The ease of movement they have acquired prepares them for learning requiring greater coordination and dexterity.

COMPETENCY 2 • TO AFFIRM HIS/HER PERSONALITY

Focus of the Competency



MEANING OF THE COMPETENCY

This competency contributes to children's **emotional development** by building self-esteem. It is manifested in the acquisition of learnings and abilities related to self-knowledge. Through a variety of experiences, children learn to see themselves as unique individuals with their own tastes, interests and needs. They acquire self-confidence, become more receptive to relating to others, show a desire for knowledge, take pleasure in activity and take part autonomously in learning activities.

CONNECTIONS TO CROSS-CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

This competency is closely related to the personal and social competencies, in particular "To structure his/her identity."

CONTEXT FOR LEARNING

This competency is developed through the children's everyday experience in play, projects, creative activities and relations with others.

DEVELOPMENTAL PROFILE

In preschool education, children continue constructing their personal identity. Self-confidence for 4- and 5-year-olds consists in recognizing that they have strengths and limits while knowing they are accepted by adults and other children. They establish harmonious relationships with others and make judgments on their own actions and behaviours. They acquire assurance by discovering ways of meeting their needs, striving to meet challenges, making choices, expressing their creativity and becoming involved in projects. They are increasingly autonomous and they take initiatives, set goals for themselves and choose activities that give them pleasure in learning and draw on their potential.

Key Features of the Competency

To increasingly meet his/her physical, cognitive, emotional and social needs. To express his/her needs and find ways to meet them.

To develop self-confidence. To become aware of his/her strengths and limits. To put forward his/her ideas. To present personal impressions with confidence.

**TO AFFIRM
HIS/HER PERSONALITY**

To share his/her tastes, interests, feelings and emotions. To express in a variety of ways his/her tastes, interests, feelings and emotions.

To show autonomy. To select his/her materials. To make choices on the basis of himself/herself and the environment. To set goals for himself/herself. To take initiative and responsibility.

Evaluation Criteria

- Use of appropriate means to meet his/her needs
- Appropriate expression of his/her tastes, interests, ideas, feelings and emotions
- Demonstration of autonomy in games, activities, projects and everyday life in the class
- Various manifestations of emotional security (setting challenges for himself/herself, speaking up)

Outcomes at the End of Preschool Education

The children have a better appreciation of their strengths and begin to deal with their limits. They know themselves better and they are able to present themselves as individuals and identify what distinguishes them from others. They are able to put forward their ideas and explain them and to act autonomously and responsibly.

COMPETENCY 3 • To INTERACT HARMONIOUSLY WITH OTHERS

Focus of the Competency



MEANING OF THE COMPETENCY

This competency is associated with **social development**. Through interaction, children compare their understanding of the world, their interests and their tastes with those of others. They gradually accommodate their interests and needs to those of others, and learn to resolve conflicts in a spirit of mutual respect and justice. They identify with their cultural environment, take interest in others and are open to new things.

CONNECTIONS TO CROSS-CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

This competency is directly related to the personal and social competency "To work with others."

CONTEXT FOR LEARNING

This competency is developed in everyday classroom life through play and projects.

DEVELOPMENTAL PROFILE

In preschool education, children have the opportunity to discover the satisfactions and constraints of community life and develop social skills. They discover their community and other ways of life. They learn to respect others and to pay attention to what they say. They become open to individual differences. They learn the rules of conduct that are necessary for groups to run smoothly. In conflicts, they take actions that promote conflict resolution. They increasingly take their place in the group and recognize that they have rights and responsibilities.

Key Features of the Competency

To show interest in others. To become acquainted with different people. To recognize their physical, social and cultural characteristics. To recognize his/her differences from and similarities to others.

To cooperate with others. To share play, materials, ideas and strategies. To offer help and encourage others. To identify factors that help or hinder cooperation. To cooperate in activities and projects.

**TO INTERACT
HARMONIOUSLY
WITH OTHERS**

To participate in the group. To express his/her ideas. To listen to others. To take part in formulating rules of social conduct. To take part in decision making and take responsibility.

To apply a conflict-resolution process. To recognize situations of conflict. To state the facts. To seek a solution and apply the solution chosen. To test the solution.

Evaluation Criteria

- Demonstration of openness to others
- Participation in the group
- Observance of the group's rules of conduct
- Application of a conflict-resolution process, with help
- Personal involvement with others

Outcomes at the End of Preschool Education

The children are able to live harmoniously with others. They communicate with various people and are able to share, offer help and encourage others. They appreciate individual differences and take part in group activities.

COMPETENCY 4 • TO COMMUNICATE USING THE RESOURCES OF LANGUAGE

Focus of the Competency

MEANING OF THE COMPETENCY

This competency involves **language development**. Language is an important tool in children's cognitive development, a necessary means of social development and learning about the world. Placed in a rich, stimulating environment, children develop oral and written communication skills that allow them to affirm their personality, relate to others, construct their understanding of the world and complete activities and projects. They organize the contents of their messages through action. They pay attention to others and show interest in what they say and do. With guidance, they gradually become aware of the effects of their actions, drawings, words and messages.

CONNECTIONS TO CROSS-CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

This competency is directly connected to the communication-related competency "To communicate appropriately."

CONTEXT FOR LEARNING

Communication is developed in real, meaningful, complex everyday situations, through the regular use of a variety of sound, visual or digital productions (documents, films, sketches, poems, songs, etc.) and children's literature. Symbolic games stimulate children's verbal expression.

DEVELOPMENTAL PROFILE

In preschool education, children learn to pay attention to messages addressed to them, to better express their thoughts and to follow the rules of communication. They discover the pleasure of playing with the words and sounds of language; they create wordplay, poems, stories or nursery rhymes. Through continual exposure to children's literature and other material, they take pleasure in reading behaviour, become receptive to culture and gradually make connections between oral and written language. They discover that the written word is an object of pleasure, research, communication and learning. To satisfy their need to communicate, they explore various forms of spontaneous writing behaviour.



Key Features of the Competency

To show interest in communication. To start and maintain a conversation. To adhere to the subject of a conversation. To imitate reading and writing behaviours. To show interest in information and communications technologies.

To produce a message. To organize his/her ideas. To use appropriate vocabulary. To explore the sound aspect of language through wordplay. To explore different forms of spontaneous writing. To use information and communications technologies.

TO COMMUNICATE USING THE RESOURCES OF LANGUAGE

To understand a message. To pay attention to the message. To take into account concepts related to time, space and quantity. To express his/her understanding of information received. To make connections between speech and writing, and recognize the value of writing. To explore the concepts, conventions and symbols of written language and the computer environment.

Evaluation Criteria

- Interest in communication
- Demonstration of understanding of the message
- Production of messages

Outcomes at the End of Preschool Education

The children are able to express and explain themselves so as to be understood by other children and adults. They are able to listen to questions or instructions and to respond appropriately. They react positively to activities involving their language skills, specifically in the areas of reading and writing. They have been introduced to the various forms and functions of language and they adapt them to different communication situations.

COMPETENCY 5 • TO CONSTRUCT HIS/HER UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Focus of the Competency

MEANING OF THE COMPETENCY

This competency is closely related to the children's **cognitive development**. Through their actions and interactions, they develop strategies and acquire learnings. They become familiar with the subject areas and discover, understand and adapt to the world around them. Through play and interaction with others, they observe, anticipate and experiment. They discover various ways of saying, doing and understanding things and solving problems. They share their discoveries and gradually become capable of autonomous, critical, creative thinking.

CONTEXT FOR LEARNING

Children develop this competency in everyday life, in both ordinary situations and those in which problems must be solved. They construct their understanding of the world as they discover the arts, the social sciences, mathematics, science and technology.

DEVELOPMENTAL PROFILE

During preschool education, children become members of a learning community; the classroom is a place of intellectual stimulation. They advance in their exploration of the world through manipulation and experimentation, production and creation, oral communication and reflection. Their experience in the classroom allows them to use creativity, to become familiar with various languages, to acquire learnings and to develop attitudes and abilities that will serve as a foundation for future learning. To answer their questions, they use various sources of information in their environment. They discover that there are differences between their reality and those of others.

CONNECTIONS TO CROSS-CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

This competency is related to the four intellectual competencies, "To use information," "To exercise critical judgment," "To use creativity" and "To solve problems."



Key Features of the Competency

To show interest and curiosity concerning the arts, history, geography, mathematics, science and technology. To experiment and use tools, materials and strategies in these subject areas. To make connections with his/her everyday life.

To describe his/her learnings. To describe his/her method. To define his/her learnings and strategies. To apply his/her learnings.

**TO CONSTRUCT
HIS/HER
UNDERSTANDING
OF THE WORLD**

To exercise thinking in a variety of contexts. To observe, explore and manipulate. To ask questions and make associations with ideas. To make and test predictions.

To organize information. To express what he/she knows. To seek, select and exchange information.

Evaluation Criteria


- Demonstration of interest, curiosity and a desire to learn
- Experimentation with various ways of exercising thinking
- Use of pertinent information to learn
- Description of the process and strategies used in learning

Outcomes at the End of Preschool Education

The children know the pleasure of learning. They are curious and are able to use their learnings and creativity in play and projects. They use some basic elements from various subject areas: the arts, social sciences, mathematics, science and technology. They share their discoveries.

COMPETENCY 6 • TO COMPLETE AN ACTIVITY OR PROJECT

Focus of the Competency



The children take part
in an individual, team or
class project.

MEANING OF THE COMPETENCY

This competency involves the **development of work methods**. Motivated by a desire to explore and understand the world, the children take part in an individual, team or class project. The project arises from the children's interests, games, experiences or imagination. It represents a real challenge, and allows them to proceed by trial and error, to use their creativity and to learn to complete a task. In this way the children acquire learnings and develop strategies that they apply in other contexts.

CONNECTIONS TO CROSS-CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

Depending on the stage of completion of their project, the children mobilize various intellectual, methodological and personal and social competencies, but it is primarily the competency "To use effective work methods" that is involved here.

CONTEXT FOR LEARNING

Children develop this competency by exploring their physical, human and cultural environment, and through work in the different subject areas.

DEVELOPMENTAL PROFILE

Throughout preschool education, children actively participate in their learning. They use their creativity and learnings and set themselves challenges in keeping with their interests. Through the scope and variety of their projects, they learn to mobilize their cognitive, motor, language, emotional and social skills in accordance with their goals. They learn to present their work, explaining the method, strategies and resources they used.

Key Features of the Competency

To become involved in the project or activity, drawing on his/her resources. To show interest. To speak of what he/she knows and research information in order to carry out the activity or project.

To show satisfaction with the project or activity. To present his/her project. To describe his/her method. To explain the strategies and resources used.

**TO COMPLETE AN
ACTIVITY OR PROJECT**

To show tenacity in carrying out the project or activity. To use a variety of strategies. To take time and space into account. To use creativity. To finish the activity or project.

To transmit the results of the project. To state his/her assessment. To speak of the difficulties involved. To explain what he/she learned and how he/she will be able to use these new learnings.

Evaluation Criteria

- Involvement in the activity or project
- Use of his/her resources in carrying out the activity or project
- Perseverance in carrying out the activity or project
- Description of the strategies used in carrying out the activity or project
- Assessment of the learnings acquired and difficulties encountered
- Expression of satisfaction with the activity or project

Outcomes at the End of Preschool Education

The children complete individual, team or class projects appropriate to their level. When they become involved in an activity or project, they apply their previous learnings in planning it. They anticipate the main steps and are able to describe the method to be used. At the end of the activity or project, they can state the learnings acquired. In this way they develop abilities and skills that will serve as the basis for further learning.

Cultural References

- Cultural, social and physical differences and similarities
- His/her physical environment: characteristics (e.g. rural, urban); natural elements (e.g. mountains, trees, lakes); infrastructure (e.g. bridges, bicycle paths, bus shelters); services and facilities (e.g. medical clinics, supermarkets, fire stations)
- The human environment: social roles (e.g. in school, in the family, in the community); occupations and professions (e.g. electrician, nurse)
- The cultural environment (e.g. libraries, museums, theatres, art galleries)
- Children's literature (e.g. picture books, stories, fairy tales, history books)
- Songs, sketches, films, documents, advertising, newspapers, dictionaries
- Computer programs
- Special events, holidays, media messages, everyday objects, works of art; ways of thinking, values and practices that influence behaviour
- Resources in the immediate and more distant environment (e.g. visit to a farm or museum; theatre performance; nature class)
- Protection of the environment and recycling (e.g. rules, habits, attitudes, pollution)
- Safety: safe behaviour and safety rules for the physical environment (e.g. taking the bus, being careful with hazardous substances); rules for using tools and equipment (e.g. scissors, knives); situations involving safety risks and risks to well-being (e.g. unacceptable actions, invitation to follow a stranger); behaviour to adopt and ways to get help in emergencies (e.g. calling 911, going to an adult acquaintance)

Essential Knowledges

STRATEGIES

• Motor and Psychomotor Strategies

- Discovering his/her sensory potential
- Situating himself/herself in space and time and in relation to objects
- Performing activities to strengthen muscle tone, improve flexibility and increase endurance
- Using movement and rhythm to communicate
- Using relaxation to reduce stress
- Using objects, tools and materials properly

• Emotional and Social Strategies

- Controlling his/her impulses
- Paying attention
- Managing stress
- Maintaining concentration
- Speaking of himself/herself positively ("I can...")
- Finding ways to overcome difficulties and resolve conflicts

• Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies

- Observing
- Exploring
- Experimenting
- Organizing
- Planning
- Classifying

STRATEGIES (cont.)

- Comparing
- Selecting
- Memorizing
- Producing new ideas
- Using the right words
- Questioning and self-questioning
- Anticipating
- Verifying
- Evaluating

LEARNINGS

• Learnings Related to Sensory and Motor Development

- The parts of the body (e.g. eyebrows, throat) and their characteristics (e.g. brown eyes, short hair), functions (e.g. breathing, walking) and reactions (e.g. skin becomes red when exposed to sun)
- The five senses—taste, touch, smell, sight, hearing—and characteristics associated with them (e.g. salty, rough), their functions (e.g. seeing, hearing)
- Gross motor movements (e.g. running, throwing, crawling, jumping, sliding, climbing)
- Fine motor movements (e.g. cutting, tracing, gluing, folding, shaping, tearing)
- Physical and sensory play (e.g. skipping rope, playing with a ball, texture discovery games)
- Assembly games (e.g. puzzles, blocks, erector set)
- Physical needs (e.g. food, rest, clothing)
- Positions of a person or object in space (e.g. in front of, behind, facing, beside, at the front, under, between, left, right)

- Various ways to relax (e.g. listening to soft music, taking time out, closing one's eyes)
- Living habits and their effects on health (e.g. hygiene, physical activity, diet)

• Learnings Related to Emotional Development

- Self-portrait (e.g. tastes, interests, good qualities)
- Personal data (e.g. date of birth, telephone number, address, family)
- Feelings (e.g. joy, rage, fear)
- Actions demonstrating autonomy (e.g. recognizing his/her things; dressing self; finding equipment, materials or tools for use in activities)
- Actions demonstrating responsibility (e.g. transmitting a message, putting away his/her toys, taking care of equipment)
- Means of self-expression (e.g. dance, music)

• Learnings Related to Social Development

- Social skills: politeness (e.g. greetings, please and thank you); attitudes expressed verbally and nonverbally (e.g. smiling, looking at people when they are speaking, congratulating); cooperative actions (e.g. encouraging others, offering help, sharing); participatory actions (e.g. distributing things, putting things away)
- Rules of conduct (e.g. individual rights and responsibilities)
- Conflict management (e.g. explanation of the problem, solutions, compromises, making amends)
- Games involving rules (e.g. lotto, dominoes, card games, parlour games)
- Cooperative games (e.g. games that have no winners or losers)

LEARNINGS (cont.)

• Learnings Related to Language Development

- Actions associated with emergent writing: imitation of reading behaviour (e.g. holding a book right side up, moving from left to right); imitation of writing behaviour (e.g. pretending to write)
- Concepts and conventions of written language (e.g. play with rhyme, sounds, letters, words or sentences)
- Conventions and symbols associated with computers (e.g. mouse, monitor, keyboard)
- Use of the appropriate pronouns and tenses in speech
- Concepts related to language and stories (e.g. beginning, middle, end)
- Recognition of writing in the environment
- Recognition of some letters of the alphabet
- Recognition of some words in writing (e.g. his/her name, names of friends, *mommy*, *daddy*)
- Writing of a few words he/she uses often (e.g. his/her family name or first name)
- Symbolic games (e.g. playing house, store, doctor)
- Communication games (e.g. broken telephone, a collective story)

• Learnings Related to Cognitive Development

- The arts: drama (e.g. puppets, symbolic games); music (e.g. songs and nursery rhymes, listening to music); dance (e.g. movement improvisation to various rhythms, folk dances from own and other cultures); visual arts (e.g. modelling, drawing, painting, sculpture)
- Mathematics: number games (e.g. lotto, calendar game); counting games (e.g. counting the number of friends); association games (e.g. associating an object with a geometric shape); comparison games (e.g. comparing the length of two objects); grouping and sorting games (e.g. sorting objects by colour or texture); pattern games (e.g. creating sequences of increasingly complex objects); estimation games (e.g. estimating length, quantity); measurement games (e.g. measuring objects using a string)
- Science and technology: experimentation games (e.g. using containers of water and sand, magnifying glass); observation and manipulation of objects (e.g. creation, assembly); attempting to find explanations and consequences in relation to various substances (e.g. wood, paper), natural elements (e.g. air, water) or natural phenomena (e.g. rust, sleet, germination, falling leaves)
- Concepts related to time (e.g. today, yesterday, the seasons, the days of the week, holidays)
- Concepts related to space (e.g. high, low, near, far, middle, big, wide)
- Concepts related to quantity (e.g. full, empty, as much as, more than)