



3.1.3

Communication and Literacies



Children experience intellectually, socially, and culturally engaging environments where their communicative practices, languages, literacies, and literate identities are valued and supported.

- Communicative Practices
- Multimodal Literacies
- Literate Identities With/In Communities



3.1.3

Communication and Literacies

Children communicate right from birth. Sounds, silences, pauses, gestures, movement, eye contact, and body language—our first modes of communication—stay with us throughout our lifetimes. Children interpret and re-invent their worlds using multiple forms of communication and representation.

Children learn to express, represent, and interpret their feelings, ideas, and questions through speaking, listening, reading, writing, dancing, singing, drawing, moving, and constructing. They learn these wide-ranging literate practices through their interactions with others and within particular social and cultural contexts.

What it means to be literate changes over time and place, and within and across cultures. In the twenty-first century, technological innovations are shifting the meaning of being literate from a dominant focus on language and print to a multimodal literacies approach. Multimodal literacies involve the simultaneous use of the modes of image, print, gaze, gesture, movement, speech, and/or sound effects.

Reading picture books, fiction and nonfiction, is one of the most accessible and popular multimodal forms of literacy engagement. Other forms include, singing, painting, dramatic play, blockbuilding, photography, television, and computers.

Through their participation in various communities, children contribute to changes in what it means to be literate. This is because they are active rather than passive learners in the process of making sense of their worlds. They both influence and are influenced by language and literacy practices in their homes, neighbourhoods, and wider communities. Children's personal, social, and literate identities are co-constructed in their

interactions with others, and by the expectations held by others for example, gendered expectations. Children's creations and productions tell us who they think they are and who they might like to be.

This goal has three facets:

- Communicative Practices
- Multimodal Literacies
- Literate Identities With/In Communities



Communicative Practices

Multiple ways of communicating begin at birth. Infants, toddlers, and young children use a variety of ways—or modes—such as gaze, touch, gesture, mark making, movement, speech, image, and sound effects to communicate. These multiple modes help children to form relationships, to grow in their understanding of the conventions of language, and to extend ideas and take action. Learning requires numerous ongoing and varied opportunities for children to engage with others in responsive and reciprocal relationships, immersed in an environment that is rich in language, joy, and playfulness.

Children form relationships through communicative practices

- Recognizing and responding to human presence and touch
- Becoming attuned to rhyme, rhythm, pitch, tone, and vibrations
- Practising and playing with sounds
- Initiating and responding to gestural and visual languages

Children learn conventions of their languages

- Growing in their implicit understanding of the conventions of language
- Growing in their understanding of vocabulary
- Developing confidence in using language(s)
- Growing in their understanding of how others use language(s)
- Experiencing and developing diverse linguistic repertoires

Children extend ideas and take actions using language

- Using language to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas

- Using language to make friends, share materials, structure, negotiate, and create imaginary worlds
- Using language to ask for help or information, argue, persuade, clarify, celebrate, or instruct

For Reflection

Consider the different spaces needed to communicate with infants, toddlers, and young children at their physical level. Think about soft spaces with blankets where adults and infants can interact with materials and each other using all their senses.

Are adults engaged in playful conversations with children during routines such as eating or clean-up times? Think about the use of humour, tone, and tact in everyday conversations, and the ways in which children learn, through modelling and imitation of these aspects of non-verbal language. Think about extending children's understandings of conventions through modelling rather than correcting. Think about the range of vocabulary you model for children through conversations, books, songs, poems, and chants.

When children use formal modes of communication, such as Braille, Sign Language, or pictograph, how are they included in the classroom community and what opportunities exist for their peers to engage in reciprocal communication? Think about incorporating symbols from a child's pictorial communication board into the classroom routines for all children.

How do adults value and incorporate the languages of the children's families within your centre and the larger community? For example, think about how the home languages of your children's families are incorporated in the centre through speakers, books, images, songs, visitors, and field trips. Think about the range of languages valued and spoken by your families—how are these valued and made verbal and visible in your centre? Recognize that bilingual and multilingual children switch languages and express ideas differently in different languages.



Multimodal Literacies

Children make use of various sign systems as they construct meaning through multiple modes of image, print, gaze, gesture, movement, and speech, often using these modes simultaneously. Language, art, mathematics, music, and drama are unique sign systems that each have primary symbols—for example, language uses the alphabet; art uses line, colour, shape, and pattern; mathematics uses numbers; music uses notational marks; and drama emphasizes gesture, posture, and speech. Learning requires that children are acknowledged as participants in literate communities that integrate a range of symbols from language, art, mathematics, music, and drama. Using talk, alphabet and numeric print, dance, gesture, action, music, image, sculpture, graphing, map-making, and construction block-building, they make meaning and communicate.

Children explore a variety of sign systems

- Becoming familiar with the sign systems of language, music, math, art, and drama
- Engaging in multiple forms of representation
- Transforming knowledge from one mode to another

Multimodal meaning making

- Engaging with the symbols and practices of language
- Engaging with the symbols and practices of music
- Engaging with the symbols and practices of math
- Engaging with the symbols and practices of art
- Engaging with the symbols and practices of drama

For Reflection

What accessible resources and sustained interactive time do children have on a daily basis to support their integrative symbol use within the five sign systems? Think about children's access to tools for mark-making in a range of areas in the room, props for shaping and extending dramatic play, a range of books, musical instruments, magazines, pictures, charts, labels, number games name tags, signs, notes, videos. How are materials cared for, displayed, changed for novelty, and transported from one area to another? How are home languages of all children valued in spoken and printed form?

How does the social experience gained from peer interaction contribute to multimodal literacy engagement and production? Think about how ideas, thoughts, and experiences, songs, dance, block building, poems, letters, lists, and jokes are shared with children. How are pleasure, curiosity, and persistence modelled and honoured?

Ensure that the methods your centre uses for documenting children's language and literacy growth within the five sign systems honours their knowledge, skills, and playful exploration. Think about how adults and children honour children's invention of stories, songs, games, poems, maps, 3-D structures, and drama. How does that documentation inform your responses to children's learning in individual and collective ways?

How do parents and adults share their collective knowledge about children's growth in language and literacies across the sign systems of language, art, mathematics, music, and drama?



Literate Identities With/In Communities

Using language and literacies, children figure out ways of holding on to, exploring, and transforming their experiences and identities. Children are systematic observers, imitators, listeners, speakers, readers, authors, illustrators, inventors, actors, performers, dancers, builders, music and art makers. Learning requires that educators listen for and learn the range of experiences children bring with them, to ensure that children have opportunities to use their knowledge as they access multiple texts from a range of sources. While creating and using texts with children, educators raise questions to explore multiple interpretations, assumptions, and biases.

Children co-construct a range of literate identities

- Creating texts reflective of family, local, and global literacies
- Learning various local literacy practices within a range of communities
- Learning the uniqueness and similarities of their family's literacies and those of others

Children engage critically in the literacy practices of popular culture

- Transporting and transforming the literacies of popular culture from home into the centre
- Exploring various identities and characters embedded in popular culture
- Growing in their capacity to ask critical questions

Children use the literacy tools of digital technologies

- Representing their experiences with technologies in everyday life
- Accessing and using digital technologies

For Reflection

Become knowledgeable about the artistic and cultural life of your children, their families, your community and beyond. Think about your own participation in events and communities—do you communicate your excitement and interest to the children and build upon theirs?

Explore media representation by asking questions that challenge representations, such as, “What toys do you think both boys and girls would like to play with?”

How do you record and honour children's thoughts, feelings, and inventiveness through multiple forms of documentation? Think about the use of camera and tape recorder in conjunction with writing down what children say. Think about putting their words into print, captioning their paintings, drawings, or three-dimensional constructions. Extend conversations by naming, using keywords, explaining and talking about objects and events, and discussing the recent past and near future.

What new technologies are available for use in your centre? How is this technology used to document children's learning as a way to communicate thinking, interests, and growth between home and centre? How do teachers, families and children use technologies in and beyond the centre?

Investigate with your families to find out their child's favourite characters from TV, books, oral storytelling, music, sports, place of worship, cultural holidays, and/or family members. Think about how taking on these different identities informs children's literate play.

