

Primary Programs Framework for Teaching and Learning (Kindergarten to Grade 3)

Guiding Principles

Key Learning Skills

Curriculum Integration

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Primary Programs Framework for Teaching and Learning

(Kindergarten to Grade 3)

Key Learning Skills

Introduction

Curriculum philosophy and rationale in Alberta programs of study state that learning, although organized into disciplinary and skill-based areas, must be connected and coherent to be effective. The learning process must incorporate the individual differences in experiences, contexts, backgrounds and abilities that students bring to any learning situation. The elementary curriculum builds on children's needs, experiences and interests in an environment that fosters personal growth and well-being.

Curriculum outcomes provide students with opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding, skills, thinking processes, values and attitudes that will prepare them to be lifelong learners and active citizens. In the primary grades, the foundation for learning is established through formalized instructional contexts that emphasize the cognitive, emotional and social development of students. This foundation assists students in understanding and participating in the world around them.

What Are Key Learning Skills?

Key learning skills involve understanding, skills and learning processes. These are applied in multiple contexts that range from the family unit, to the classroom, to everyday life. The understandings and learning processes that are a part of student growth and development are not exclusive to subject-area disciplines nor to any one specific grade. They transcend subject-area boundaries and are part of a multitude of life experiences that involve family, community and work.

Each grade level provides learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate, meet the diverse learning needs of students and build a positive attitude toward lifelong learning. Key learning skills are woven throughout every program of studies to:

- establish an essential foundation for students to successfully meet learning expectations at and between grade levels
- assist students in developing abilities that enable them to grow and progress throughout their formal years of schooling

- allow students to build on their ongoing learning experiences and development as they progress through the program of studies
- establish a basis for students' continued success throughout their formal years of schooling.

Developing Key Learning Skills in the Classroom

Key learning skills are the responsibility of all Kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers, regardless of their subject-area focus and grade-level responsibilities. These skills are developed deliberately and purposefully, with the goal that students learn to apply them in deliberate and purposeful manners. These skills also work to increase students' self-confidence in their ability to work in increasingly independent contexts and to reflect on their own learning, growth and development. Students learn to:

- apply metacognitive skills as they begin to look for and identify ways they can grow through different learning contexts
- apply thinking and learning processes to enhance their own achievement and performance.

The development of key learning skills:

- becomes part of students' learning framework
- occurs over time
- occurs in increasingly diverse settings and contexts
- supports an increase in their complexity and application to new and different learning contexts.

Advantages of Teaching Key Learning Skills

Key learning skills are an essential element of instruction across all grade levels and subjects. As students progress through the program of studies, they experience learning that builds on their abilities and strengths and that encourages them to develop and extend their skills in new contexts and unfamiliar learning situations.

Applying key learning skills in the classroom:

- promotes the transfer of skill-based knowledge among and beyond classroom learning experiences to encourage interconnections and the transfer of learning from one context to another
- promotes connected, coherent and integrated learning experiences that recognize and honour students' backgrounds and life experiences
- emphasizes a student-centred approach to assessment that encourages students to use self-reflection, assessment and evaluation strategies to provide constructive reinforcement of their own learning and growth

- promotes students' confidence in their learning abilities that encourages them to:
 - anticipate and look for learning opportunities
 - become conscious of, and ask questions about, their own learning
- establishes the classroom as a learning community and emphasizes a collaborative learning environment in which students are encouraged to cooperate with and respect others.

Types of Key Learning Skills

Key Learning Skills can be divided into two main types:

1. Thinking and communication skills include:

- selecting and using information
- using language to communicate and learn
- solving problems
- using critical thinking
- using creative thinking
- using information and communication technologies.

2. Personal and social skills include:

- developing a positive sense of identity
- developing positive personal responsibility
- cooperating with others
- valuing the diversity of experiences and perspectives
- developing motor skills and movement abilities.

Thinking and Communication Skills

The development of thinking and communication skills is an active process that begins at birth and continues throughout life. Students develop and communicate their thoughts, ideas, feelings, experiences, questions and conclusions. Thinking and communication skills encourage students to establish positive and respectful relationships with family and friends and within communities and society. These skills support students in all facets of their learning as they strive to make sense and order of their world.

Thinking and communication skills develop students' abilities to:

- select and use information
- use language to communicate and learn
- solve problems
- use critical thinking
- use creative thinking
- use information and communication technologies.

Thinking and Communication Skills: Selecting and using information

What does it involve?

- identifying diverse sources
- consulting different sources
- locating purpose-specific sources
- retrieving information from sources
- organizing information
- transferring information from and among multiple contexts

Why is it important?

- to participate in a multimedia world
- to assess and select from the volume and variety of information available
- to use diverse sources of information that represent multiple perspectives

The ability to select and use information in multiple contexts, e.g., home, school, community and society, is a critical learning skill for students in today's multimedia society. Students develop this skill across curriculum, classroom and school contexts.

As students' learning progresses throughout the primary grades, they develop the ability to consult more than one source of information, locate sources that are related to purpose and use different types of media. They also develop the skills necessary to organize and compare information and make connections between what they already know and the information they have selected.

Information and sources are contextualized over time, place and cultures. Students learn to understand the diversity of sources and that sources are not always subject- or discipline-specific. Each subject area provides different contexts in which students develop increasingly more independent skills in selecting and using information.

Thinking and Communication Skills: Using language to communicate and learn

What does it involve?

- understanding and using language and symbols in purposeful and meaningful ways
- considering purpose and context
- developing skills in the conventions, codes and processes of language
- exploring thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences
- comprehending and responding personally and critically
- managing ideas and information
- enhancing the clarity and artistry of communication
- respecting, supporting and collaborating with others

Why is it important?

- to understand the relationship of language to personal identity; e.g., the formation of interpersonal relationships and the extension of experiences
- to reflect on thoughts, actions and contributions to society
- to communicate in multiple contexts
- to recognize the importance of communication as the basis for further learning
- to understand communication as both content and the context for development of conceptual understandings, knowledge, skills, values and attitudes

Language is the basis of all communication and the primary instrument of thought. It is a social and uniquely human means of exploring and communicating meaning. Language learning is an active process that begins at birth and continues throughout life. Children learn language as they use it to:

- communicate their thoughts, feelings and experiences
- establish relationships with family members and friends
- strive to make sense and order of their world.

Responsibility for language learning is shared by children, parents, teachers and the community.

Language and communication skills help students explore and experiment by reading, writing, viewing, listening, speaking, representing and creating. The making of meaning is both an integral process and a product of these skills. Early language is intuitive and constructivist in nature and develops as children experience the world around them.

Language is used to express identity, belonging, culture and self. The primary grades are of critical importance in that they provide students with opportunities to connect their natural learning with the conventions, codes and processes of language. Students are supported through various learning experiences that encourage them to:

- clarify the purpose of their communication
- construct and structure messages
- listen to and respect the points of view of others
- improve their communication strategies.

Language is used by students to develop and explore ideas and express their learning. It is connected to other key learning skills; e.g., inquiry and problem solving. Communication skills enable students to comprehend, interpret and express information and ideas clearly and purposefully. The development of language and communication skills involves:

- using and applying visual strategies; e.g., diagrams, oral and written words, symbols
- identifying, accessing, interpreting and evaluating media texts
- using texts to identify key messages and multiple points of view, detect bias and assess relevance.

As children use language to relate their experiences and ideas to others, they naturally make new connections that are not fully realized until they are put into words. When students express and communicate their thoughts, feelings, experiences, information, opinions and perspectives, they learn to understand themselves and respect and value others. Language and communication skills enable students to extend their thinking and knowledge and to develop the means to access the ideas and experiences of others. Students explore, organize and clarify their thoughts and communicate these thoughts to others in a variety of contexts.

The development of language and communication skills facilitates students' development of metacognitive awareness and enables them to reflect on and control their own thinking and learning processes. Students develop an awareness of the skills and strategies they use to complete learning tasks successfully and to communicate about themselves as learners.

Thinking and Communication Skills: Solving problems

What does it involve?

- identifying elements of problems, issues and challenges
- formulating possibilities and predictions
- recognizing different contexts and making connections among problems, issues, challenges and prior experiences
- identifying, using and applying varied and effective problem-solving strategies
- reviewing, assessing and evaluating tried and applied processes

Why is it important?

- to participate in a world of rapidly expanding knowledge and technology in which new challenges and opportunities continually arise
- to address complex questions and issues
- to identify and apply patterns and processes that arise from questions involved with daily life experiences

Problem solving is part of all human activity. Children's curiosity provides a natural starting point for learning as they are natural inquirers and problem solvers. Students question, explore, investigate, assess, evaluate and synthesize their learning.

Students in the primary grades learn to ask relevant questions, seek answers, define problems and find solutions. Learning is stimulated by a sense of wonderment and students develop skills and confidence when they investigate their surroundings. They build a foundation of experience and understanding on which later learning can be based.

Problem-solving skills and strategies assist students in their learning and in the processes they apply to their learning. Students reflect on the information they access and on the processes they use to develop solutions, opinions and perspectives. They realize there can be multiple approaches to solving problems and multiple opportunities to assess the validity and potential of their solutions.

Problem solving is not linear and may involve repeated cycles of reflecting on the process, developing new ideas and trying new approaches. Challenging problems require persistence and opportunities to explore resources and manipulatives in an unstructured way. Students learn to apply and assess processes and solutions, explore challenges and problems through trial and error, in which initial ideas are discarded and new ideas and processes are developed, and relate and compare new contexts and situations to those previously learned and experienced.

Problem-solving processes provide a natural point of integration to connect learning in different subjects and disciplines. Children learn to inquire and solve problems in a variety of contexts. Each subject area within the elementary curriculum is a rich source of topics for developing questions, problems and issues that provide starting points for inquiry and problem solving. By engaging in a search for answers, solutions and decisions, students have a purpose for learning and opportunities to develop conceptual understandings and skills in a meaningful context.

Thinking and Communication Skills: Using critical thinking

What does it involve?

- identifying choices, dilemmas and decisions
- weighing actions and consequences
- considering existing, possible and diverse points of view
- assessing the reliability, accuracy and perspectives of information
- expressing and communicating positions and points of view
- supporting judgements with reasoned arguments
- assessing and evaluating influences, preconceptions, biases and assumptions

Why is it important?

- to acquire and develop thinking strategies that assist in making connections to prior knowledge, assimilating new information and applying learning to new contexts
- to value diversity and multiple perspectives
- to develop strategies to apply reasoned judgements in decision making

Students learn to develop confidence in their ability to reason and to justify their thinking within and outside of subject areas. Reasoning helps students to make sense of what they are learning, be logical in their thinking and convince others. This ability is developed through critical thinking skills that encourage students to:

- weigh and assess information
- consider multiple contexts, perspectives, emotion and bias
- allow for diversity and ambiguity
- seek clarity in a variety of choices and options.

Critical thinking involves processes of inquiry, analysis and evaluation that result in a reasoned judgement. Critical thinking promotes the development of identity and citizenship and active participation in families, communities, work environments and society. Using this skill, students learn to reserve judgements until advantages, disadvantages and consequences are weighed and assessed. Students use critical thinking to:

- understand the views and perspectives of others
- recognize patterns and differences
- predict, reason and make sense of learning

- distinguish fact from opinion
- consider the reliability and accuracy of sources
- determine diverse points of view, perspective and bias
- consider the ethics of decisions and actions.

Critical thinking encourages students in the primary grades to develop metacognitive skills. These skills involve critical self-awareness, conscious reflection, analysis, monitoring and reinvention. Students learn to assess the value of the learning strategies they have used, modify them or select new strategies and monitor the use of reinvented or new strategies in future learning situations. In this respect, students become knowledge creators and contribute to shared understanding of the world and their daily lives.

Purposeful deliberation and critical reflection are essential for the formation of self-identity, promotion of active citizenship and development of problem-solving skills. A research process that emphasizes critical thinking develops learners who are independent, self-motivated problem solvers and co-creators of knowledge. Students use critical thinking to make connections and assess similarities, differences and the validity and authenticity of their preconceptions and judgements.

Thinking and Communication Skills: Using creative thinking

What does it involve?

- recognizing choices, challenges and dilemmas
- envisioning possibilities and outcomes
- making connections and envisioning new approaches
- accepting and valuing intellectual risk taking and perseverance
- developing flexibility and open-minded thinking
- applying, adapting and reapplying processes
- recognizing and seeking multiple perspectives

Why is it important?

- to understand the concepts of uncertainty, ambiguity, change and chance
- to manage risks and unknowns
- to develop skills in processing information, making connections and solving problems

Students are naturally curious, active learners who have individual interests, abilities and needs. They come to school with different knowledge, life experiences and backgrounds that generate a range of attitudes. Creative thinking occurs when students identify unique connections among ideas and suggest insightful approaches to questions and issues. Through creative thinking, students generate an inventory of possibilities, anticipate outcomes and combine logical, intuitive and divergent thought.

Students learn by attaching meaning to what they do and constructing their own meanings. Meaning is best developed when students encounter experiences that proceed from the simple to the complex and from the concrete to the abstract. Students learn to develop connections between ideas through strategies; e.g., concrete, pictorial and symbolic representations; viewing a learning situation or context as an integrated whole.

Students in the primary grades are naturally curious and interested in exploring new ideas and strategies and in creating and visually representing their understandings and conceptions. Students feel comfortable taking intellectual risks, asking questions and posing conjectures when their individual ways of thinking are valued and respected during learning experiences.

Students develop creative thinking skills when they:

- take part in open-ended learning experiences
- explore problems with multiple solutions and perspectives
- reorganize elements of a problem
- propose original approaches to activities
- apply and transfer processes among subject areas and disciplines
- visualize possibilities and options
- connect previous and new learning contexts
- perceive relationships and patterns
- build understanding of concepts.

Thinking and Communication Skills: Using information and communication technologies

What does it involve?

- accessing, using and communicating information from a variety of technologies
- assessing information and ideas, using critical thinking
- using organizational processes and tools
- investigating and solving problems
- constructing personal knowledge, meaning and understandings
- demonstrating moral and ethical approaches to using technology
- organizing and manipulating data
- communicating with others

Why is it important?

- to use information and communication technologies in everyday life and society
- to select, use and assess the volume and variety of information
- to recognize information and communication technologies as both tools and modes of communication
- to assess and judge, using critical thinking, appropriate applications and use of technology

Students use their technological literacy to explore problem-solving situations, accommodate changing conditions and actively create new knowledge. Students come to school with varying levels of technological literacy and competency. As technology has an increasingly significant and broad impact for everyone, e.g., individuals, groups and nations, students must be prepared to understand, use and apply information and communication technologies in effective, efficient and ethical ways.

Technology encompasses the processes, tools and techniques that alter human activity. Information and communication technologies provide vehicles for communicating, representing, inquiring, making decisions and solving problems. They involve processes, tools and techniques that students use to:

- gather and identify information
- represent ideas and information
- express and create

- classify, display and organize
- analyze and evaluate
- speculate and predict.

Improvements in technology and its increased availability in schools have changed the focus of many learning experiences. Technology introduces students to questions and challenges that support and develop higher levels of thinking and to increasingly complex, multifaceted problems and strategies that build independence in learning.

Information and communication technologies provide a variety of tools that students can use to:

- develop concepts
- explore relationships and patterns
- solve problems and build independence in thinking
- develop inquisitiveness and creativity
- experience simulations of real-life situations.

Skills in information and communication technology are used in a variety of problem-solving, decision-making, inquiry and research contexts. Students have a strong desire to measure, code and order things. The use of technology to process numerical information is growing. Using technological tools, students develop the ability to assess, estimate and predict data. They also learn to evaluate whether this data provide a reasonable solution to a given problem.

Information and communication technologies influence methods and modes of communication. Students benefit when they use these technologies to share their experiences of many different places, cultures, backgrounds and achievements. Students also learn to identify, critically assess and make reasoned judgements about bias and misconceptions inherent in information resulting from this process.

Information and communication technologies are most effectively developed and relevant to students in contextualized situations. By providing access to sources and information that may not normally be accessed in classrooms or communities, technology benefits students by allowing them opportunities to expand and reinforce conceptual understandings, explore new information and experience different perspectives and ideas.

Personal and Social Skills

Early childhood is a time of rapid intellectual growth that is influenced by the development of personal, social and physical skills. From learning experiences in Kindergarten through Grade 3, students become more socially oriented and learn to share, cooperate and work together in groups while continuing to build and strengthen their senses of identity and self. These learning experiences help students recognize the diversity of backgrounds, experiences and perspectives that influence relationships and events.

Personal and social skills help students to:

- develop a positive sense of identity
- develop positive personal responsibility
- cooperate with others
- value the diversity of experiences and perspectives
- develop motor skills and movement abilities.

Personal and Social Skills:

Developing a positive sense of identity

What does it involve?

- exploring, expressing and strengthening sense of self
- developing and expressing curiosity and a sense of openness regarding self and others
- recognizing, expressing and exploring own values, attitudes and perspectives and those of others
- gaining confidence in, and strategies for, the assessment of learning opportunities and achievements
- assessing the use of, and choices about, personal resources
- articulating and assessing own growth and learning
- diversifying personal experiences, interests and learning opportunities

Why is it important?

- to enhance and enrich the process of identity formation
- to evaluate own sense of identity and relationships with others
- to appreciate the multiple social, physical, cultural and linguistic factors that contribute to a unique sense of identity and self

Confidence and self-reliance are important learning outcomes. Children develop confidence when their ideas and contributions are valued in a supportive learning climate. A supportive climate is developed by providing opportunities for students to explore ideas and materials, engage in open-ended activities, evaluate their own progress and take initiative in learning. When questions and problems are referred back to students, and their ideas and decisions are supported, they learn to become more self-reliant. Confidence is achieved as students recognize that the knowledge and skills they have gained enable them to increasingly take on independent action. The personal skills that students develop in school, e.g., the ability to make decisions and plan and evaluate their own progress, are skills that apply throughout life.

Effective learning experiences help students develop their sense of self and community and explore their sense of belonging and identity in society. Students learn to extend and explore their emerging sense of who they are, increase their understanding of the influences on their sense of personal identity and experience enjoyment and personal satisfaction with their

learning, growth and achievements. The development of personal identity is supported and facilitated in multiple contexts that encourage students to pursue personal inquiries, shape and clarify their thoughts and ideas and communicate those thoughts and ideas to others. When they can develop and articulate their sense of self, students approach learning experiences and opportunities with increasing confidence.

They also learn to develop skills that enable them to:

- select and rely on their own resources
- strengthen their resiliency and coping skills
- identify their strengths and weaknesses
- take on more independent roles and responsibilities
- affirm their decisions and choices
- explore and strengthen their values and attitudes
- be open to differences and diversity.

Skills related to the management of personal resources, e.g., time, energy and creativity, are elements that contribute to increasing personal capacity, future productivity and meaningful involvement in the community and society.

Personal and Social Skills: Developing personal responsibility

What does it involve?

- making responsible and informed choices for self and others
- demonstrating responsibility, respect, caring and contributions in interactions with others and environments
- understanding and articulating choices
- developing a commitment to, and responsibility for, the completion of tasks
- persevering in overcoming barriers and challenges when completing tasks
- setting learning and life goals
- identifying, describing and assessing opinions, risks and choices
- demonstrating increasing independence and autonomy in personal choices and decisions

Why is it important?

- to develop a commitment to learning and personal growth
- to take personal responsibility for actions, behaviours, thinking and choices
- to apply reasoned and appropriate decision-making strategies
- to set personal goals and make independent decisions

Personal responsibility emphasizes commitment to learning and personal growth. Students learn to make decisions and choices about their actions and behaviours that are appropriate and consistent with their own values and attitudes and respectful of those of other individuals and their communities.

Students learn best when they are personally involved with their learning and encouraged to make and articulate their own connections. Students learn to explore the:

- connections between actions and their consequences
- motivations that influence and shape their thinking, behaviours, actions and choices
- roles and responsibilities they have as citizens in schools, groups and their own communities.

Students also consider ways they can care for the natural environment and share concern and responsibility for relationships, groups and communities.

Personal responsibility is necessary for students' well-being, the prevention or reduction of risk and the expansion of personal coping strategies. It involves the development of skills in goal setting and in prioritizing and balancing various roles and responsibilities. It allows students to realize the extent of their own influence and control over the many results of challenges, decisions and choices with which they are faced.

Students learn to take personal responsibility most effectively through learning experiences that encourage them to make their own decisions. These learning experiences encourage students to apply decision-making processes, choose their responses, anticipate consequences and accept responsibility for the results. As a result, a basis for proactive choices and behaviours is established. All learning experiences continuously allow students to:

- develop skills that encourage them to be self-reliant
- select appropriate strategies for attaining goals
- analyze the choices they made to use resources and sources
- evaluate the effectiveness of the learning processes they used.

Personal and Social Skills: Cooperating with others

What does it involve?

- developing cooperation skills
- contributing effectively in group settings
- developing effective listening skills
- participating in multiple group contexts and purposes
- recognizing and identifying group processes and options
- planning and carrying out group tasks
- accepting, willingly, individual responsibilities within group contexts
- recognizing when group efforts are effective and advantageous over individual efforts
- assessing and evaluating group processes
- reflecting on group and individual learning

Why is it important?

- to develop skills to contribute effectively to groups, communities and society
- to develop personal accountability and responsibility for others
- to apply collaborative strategies, values and attitudes in multiple contexts and environments

Cooperation skills provide critical links between personal and social learning. As students develop the ability to work together, they become responsible for one another's learning as well as their own. Students learn that it is important to develop and maintain relationships among family, peers and the community as they make decisions, practise and apply skills, complete tasks and manage challenges and opportunities.

Learning opportunities that encourage cooperation actively promote the exchange of ideas, thoughts and information among groups and reinforce the application of higher levels of thought and the retention of information. Students understand that shared learning promotes discussion, critical thinking and responsibility for their own role in the learning process. Shared learning experiences increase student motivation and allow them to access diverse interests and generate creative solutions and options.

Cooperation skills enable students to develop effective relationships with others to work toward common goals for the well-being of themselves, groups and communities. These skills focus on conflict resolution, consensus building, collaborative decision making, the importance of responsibility and the acceptance of differences. Students learn cooperation skills as they engage in group discussions, build on the ideas of others and plan and work together. Students develop a sense of community in the classroom when they:

- use language to support each other
- develop and negotiate shared understandings
- participate in learning experiences.

As a result, students share ideas and perspectives and learn to respect diversity. Cooperative learning skills provide students with a range of opportunities to:

- engage in teamwork
- brainstorm and discuss ideas, make predictions and explore possibilities
- plan and carry out group actions
- develop and work toward common goals
- engage in research and inquiries
- recognize the contributions of others
- develop strategies to organize and share
- present their ideas and learning
- reflect on group effectiveness and results
- celebrate their achievements and classroom and community events.

Personal and Social Skills:

Valuing the diversity of experiences and perspectives

What does it involve?

- interacting with others in open-minded contexts
- embracing and respecting differences and diversity
- exchanging, accepting and respecting the ideas, perspectives, opinions and points of view of others
- listening effectively
- recognizing own interests and needs and those of others

Why is it important?

- to explore the diverse experiences, backgrounds, perspectives, ideas and opinions of a pluralistic society
- to understand social cohesion and the effective functioning of society
- to value and respect diversity and differences

As students develop personal and social skills, they:

- recognize and take an interest in the world around them
- understand the diverse perspectives and experiences of others
- understand how they can contribute to their own well-being and of others.

Learning experiences that help students to respect and value the diversity of experiences and perspectives enable them to develop effective relationships with others. Students develop interpersonal skills that focus on seeking out and exploring different opinions, points of view and perspectives. Students appreciate and value the contributions of others and respect their differences. They learn to enhance their understanding and respect of the diverse needs of others.

Active and responsible citizenship skills promote students' capacity to inquire, make reasoned and informed judgements and arrive at decisions that include and consider diverse points of view. Using these skills, students benefit from multiple perspectives, backgrounds and experiences. An issues-focused approach that incorporates multiple perspectives helps students apply problem-solving and decision-making skills to real-life and controversial issues.

Personal and Social Skills:

Developing motor skills and movement abilities

What does it involve?

- developing a positive sense of self
- interpreting and processing sensory information
- applying spatial awareness when recognizing and responding to people and events
- expressing feelings and ideas through movement
- identifying body parts and their relationships to each other
- developing auditory awareness
- experiencing, developing and applying a range of motor skills; e.g., locomotor, nonlocomotor, manipulative

Why is it important?

- to explore body awareness, image and a sense of self
- to develop abilities to recognize and respond to objects in three dimensional spaces
- to monitor, interpret and respond to sensory experiences
- to value physical well-being

As children develop, they gain a better awareness of what their bodies can do. They understand how to move effectively and how to use movement to express and communicate feelings and responses. They also become more aware of the ways their physical actions and activities can contribute to their sense of personal identity, well-being and intellectual, social and physical health.

Physical activity is vital to all aspects of normal growth and development. Motor skills develop when the brain, nervous system and muscles work together. Students in the primary grades typically have better control of their large muscles than of their small muscles and easily run, hop, climb, balance and jump. They gradually increase their ability to control and coordinate movements and learn to use all their senses. As students continue to grow, balanced and developmentally appropriate tasks both challenge and support them as they develop motor skills and movement abilities. Engaging in both familiar and new tasks also encourages students to transfer their growing abilities to new situations.

Through movement, students develop abilities to explore and express their thoughts and feelings. They become aware of their own and others' imagination and creativity as they interact physically with different environments and respond to various forms of expression; e.g., play, games, music, dance, drama and other physical activities. Through movement and physical forms of creative expression, students grow in self-awareness and self-confidence and learn to be comfortable with their bodies and their physical abilities.

Conclusion

Key learning skills are essential to function successfully and productively as part of a community. These skills transcend subject-area boundaries and are part of the many life experiences that involve family, community and work. During Kindergarten to Grade 3, teachers play an important role in their students' development of these skills and, by focusing on these skills in the classroom, promote:

- the transfer of skill-based knowledge among and beyond classroom learning experiences
- connected, coherent and integrated learning experiences
- a student-centred approach to assessment
- students' confidence in their learning abilities
- the classroom as a collaborative learning community.

The development of key learning skills gives students tools to use throughout their lives when dealing with the various tasks and challenges they face.

The development of thinking and communication skills empowers students to:

- assess and select information from a variety of sources
- understand the important role of communication in society
- address challenges and issues that arise in daily life
- make good decisions based on all available information
- think in a flexible way
- use information and communication technologies effectively and responsibly.

The development of personal and social skills empowers students to:

- understand themselves and their relationships with others
- take personal responsibility for their learning and behaviour
- work collaboratively with others
- understand and respect the diverse nature of society
- understand their bodies and express themselves through their physical relationship with the world around them.

These key learning skills are woven throughout every Alberta program of studies. They are considered crucial in preparing students to be successful, lifelong learners.