



First 1000 Days

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ECEY4005

my target audience is Educators

First 1000 days is the time of conception up until the child's second birthday. The first 1000 days are critical as the life events in this period can have long term implications for a child's growth, health and development (Department of Health, 2025). There are three stages within the first 1000 days these being pregnancy, infancy and toddlerhood also nutrition is also vital within the first 1000 days.

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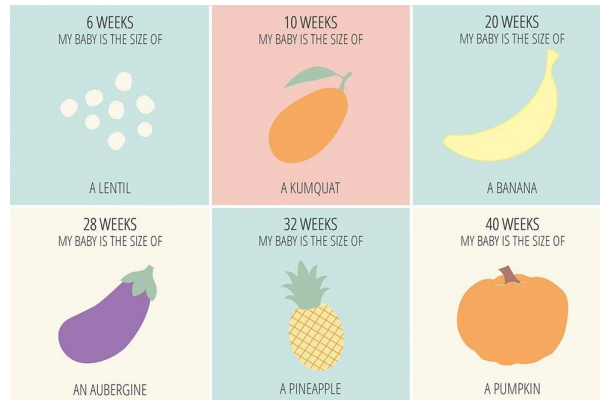
(UNICEF Philippines,2015)

Pregnancy



Pregnancy is the period when a foetus grows within an individual's womb, the process lasts about 40 weeks (Cleveland Clinic, 2024). During the time of pregnancy, the brain develops rapidly and grows very early within the pregnancy as 16 days after conception the neural tube forms (Thousand Days, ND).





Infancy



According to Corley (2026) the term infant may be used post-natal and up to around one year of age although according to London Waiting Room (2024) infancy spans from birth up to the age of two. From the ages of 0 to 3 months infants learn a variety of new things cognitively from 3 to 6 months, they would learn how to make noises and babble. This is an important skill as this will be used later language development (BBC, ND).

Toddler



Corley (2026) states that the toddler age range is around 1 years old to around 3 years old. According to the Welsh government (ND) during this period, Toddlers will develop a variety of skills such as walking, talking and roleplay such as playing with a toy telephone. Nutrition is important during this duration as it plays a critical role in eyesight, brain development and the growth of the child (Royal Hospital Melbourne, 2025)





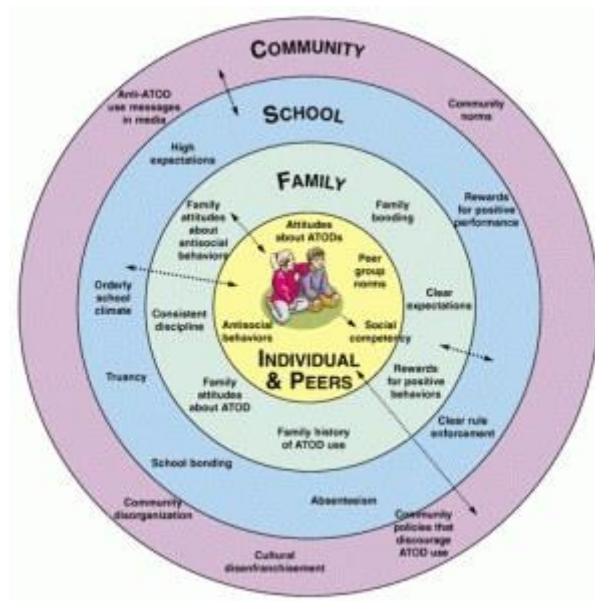
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Exceptional care



Exceptional care in the first 1000 days is providing a child centred approach, a stimulating environment, routine and structure, inclusivity, having good and relevant sources, safe environment, trust, quiet spaces and helping them holistically (Gordan, 2025). Having a child centred approach is important as it centralises the wishes and needs of the children (Gordan, 2025). The benefits of having a child centred approach are that it allows for better engagement as children would be more likely to engage with activities if learning is tailored to their needs (Care learning, 2025).

Bronfenbrenner



Evans (2025) referring to Bronfenbrenner suggests that the environment around a child is crucial as their development is formed by interconnected environmental systems. According to Cherry (2025) Bronfenbrenner theory states that there are 5 systems. The Microsystem, The Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem and Chronosystem. These systems work together or rather as one system each shaping and interacting the other.

Microsystem

Microsystem which comprises of the child's immediate environment. Those in the microsystem individuals that interact with the child such as family members, teachers, friends and classmates. The people in the microsystem are said to have the most immediate impact on the child (Evans, 2025)

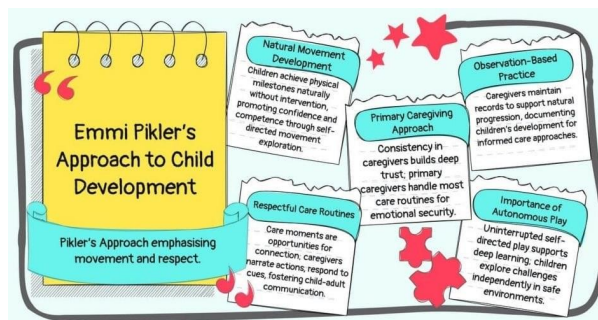


Mesosystem

Mesosystem is comprised of the interactions and relationships between the mesosystem and the microsystem. This would be in the first 1000 days as it consists of the interactions between the family and the Early years settings or between family and the child's friends. (Cherry, 2025) this would relate to exceptional care as communication between the early years setting and the family are important.

Pikler

Lewis (2017) refers through Pikler theory to avoid multitasking and to turn all the attention to the infant when engaging in an activity as it allows the baby to interpret that attention as love furthermore by giving the baby a nurturing environment by giving time and space this allows opportunity for the baby to be able to explore and entertain by themselves. Marlen (2024) suggests that the Pikler approach has 2 main principles, which are important for exceptional care. These being that it is important to have a respectful, caring and kind relationship between the adult and the infants through moments of care and the importance of naturally paced motor development, free movement and uninterrupted play. These 2 main principles are crucial for the infant's development.





Professional Partnerships



Effective professional Early Years Practitioners are crucial in the early years setting as they specialise in taking care of the mental, educational, social and emotional development of young children and babies (twinkle, ND). Early year practitioners promote inclusivity and celebrate diversity in early year settings by creating an environment where children can feel respected and provide a sense of belonging regardless of their abilities and background (University of Greater Manchester, 2023). Early Year settings would do this by providing a variety of resources and materials that support the diversity of the individuals and the families that they offer a service to, they also provide appropriate training for staff, celebrating different cultural festivals or tradition and use inclusive teaching strategies (Prospero Teaching, 2023).

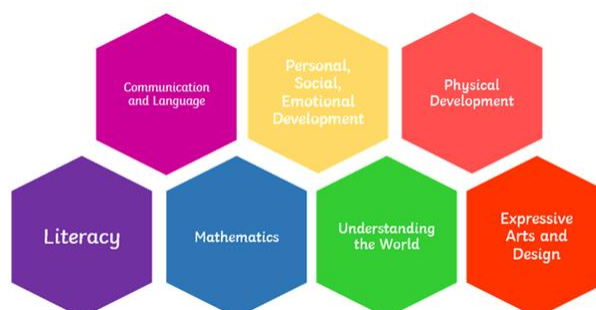
Why is Professional Partnerships important?

It is important for practitioners to have effective partnerships as these are beneficial for children as they would benefit from consistent expectations and messages, this allows the individual to feel supported and secure which then allows for an environment to be conducive to development and learning. Furthermore, it provides a consistent model for managing behaviour which both the setting and the caregiver values (Preidyte, 2025). Having a good professional relationship with carers and parents helps break down any potential barriers between the setting and the home, furthermore it enables the carer of the individual to find out what goes on in the setting and improves the self-confidence of the child and their carer (Preidyte, 2025)



EYFS 4 principles

The EYFS (The Early Years Foundation Stage) has 4 principles that settings must abide by. These are, that every child is unique and that they are constantly learning, the importance of positive relationships, enabling environment and learning and development (Lyngford Park Primary school and Nursery, 2021). These are crucial because if Early Years settings are not providing this then they are not providing safety and security regarding Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Egersdorff and Mundy, 2017). Multi-agency working includes, for example, collaborating with police and social services for the protection and care of a child.



Charities that support parents



Families First assists families who may need assistance with assessing the needs of those who need assistance and help putting together the relevant support to help. Families first are important for professional partnerships as it helps coordinate support from various agencies to help arrange and advise on specific projects that helps fix families' specific problems. Families first are available for all families and is administered by the local authority that the service users are based in (Welsh government, ND). Families first relate to the first 1000 days as it helps provide parental support which can help support the babies in having the support that they need.



Crysis

Crysis is a charity that provides support to parents who have infants. They help with their free telephone helpline and help give tips for caregivers who have babies who suffer with lack of sleep and excessive crying. Crysis relates to the first 1000 days as it campaigns to provide support to parents with babies (Crysis, ND).



Family action is a charity that provides specialist mental health and wellbeing service for adults. They do not just work with the individual that is affected, but also with the service user's family. This charity would relate to the first 1000 days as it helps support the Caregivers mental health which can further help the parent provide better care towards the children (family action, 2024).

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(The Parent Infant Foundation, 2015)

The Parent Infant Foundation



The Parent Infant Foundation is a national charity that has specialised parent-infant relationship teams that work with families that struggle with forming a secure relationship with their baby (parent infant foundation, ND). They provide help by offering direct support by giving specialist therapeutic work with families experiencing complex, severe and enduring complications in their relationships with the infant where their development and emotional well-being is at risk (parent infant foundation, ND). This charity relates to the first 1000 days as it provides assistance for the parents to bond with their baby and furthermore it would also relate to Bowlby as his theory emphasizes the importance of the child and their caregiver and that continual disruption or separation from the caregiver can result in long term emotional, social and cognitive difficulties for the infant (McLeod, 2025)

Why are Parent Infant Teams so Important?

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The National Childbirth Trust

The National Childbirth Trust is a charity that supports individuals who are becoming parents. They provide assistance through pregnancy, birth and early parenthood. They host antenatal and postnatal courses and have peer support programmes for parents who are experiencing social isolation, mental health issues or other unmet needs. They also have free infant feeding support line that is open 365 days a year. This would relate to the first 1000 days as it helps provide parents of the children to make decisions that are right for them which would help the baby and campaign to make things better for the families (National childbirth trust, ND)



Lunch and Learn Lessons



Lunch and learn lessons are informal training, that fosters a collaborative work environment by bringing together different employees in the early years setting and encourages them to socialise among other individuals who don't or may not otherwise have the opportunity to talk with others. These gatherings provide team building, leadership training and team training (Culture Ally) this creates professional partnerships as different professionals partner to discuss about the early years setting.



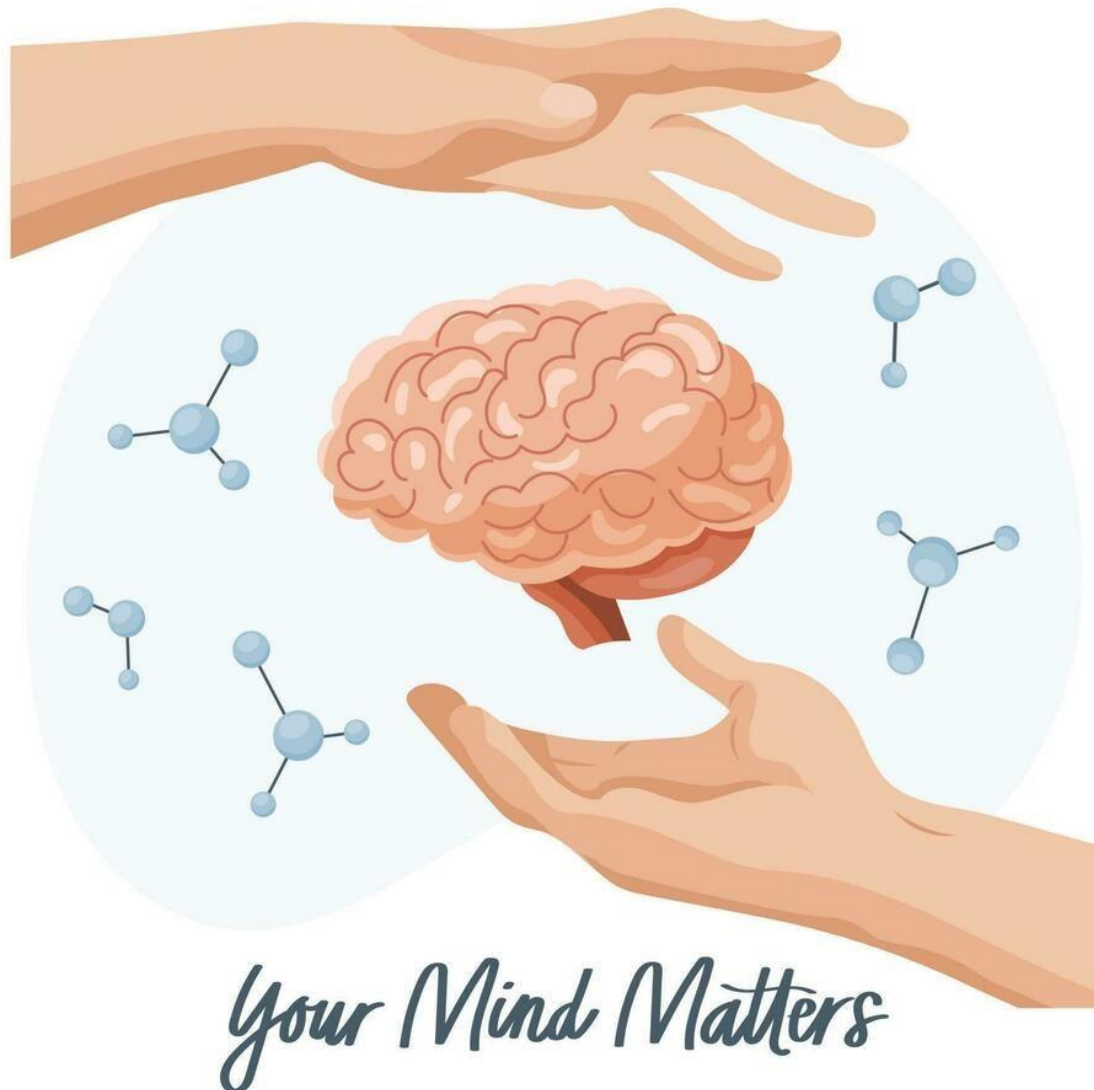
Challenges in Early Year Settings

Funding can be an issue in many early year settings as according to Marshall (2025) the National Day Nurseries Association states that rising costs in early years settings has increased and also a survey was conducted in 545 settings across Scotland, Wales and England and research suggested due to inflation 85% struggled to maintain pay gaps for more experienced staff. 82% of the settings agree that food inflation costs is rising along with the utilities needed for the setting and 51% are facing extra fees in administrative staffing costs. Furthermore, half of early year settings providers in the survey say that increasing rates from 2026 will worsen the already struggling situation (Marshall, 2025).

Impact of Covid 19 on Early Years Settings

The impact of Covid 19 had a detrimental effect on early years as reports conducted by the House of Commons Education Committee (2023) quote that "Early years providers are closing, unable to make ends meet against a background of rising costs and stagnant funding rates. Providers that remain face severe recruitment challenges and childminders have been leaving the profession at an alarming rate. Parents are struggling to meet rising childcare costs which make up an ever-increasing proportion of families' net income." Furthermore, due to early years settings being closed during the pandemic the children's absences created delays in routine health checks which meant that children's early speech and language problems were not discovered at the same rate as they had been before (Goddard, 2023).

Minds Matter Survey Statistics In Early Years



A Minds Matter survey was conducted throughout the UK in April 2018 regarding mental health in the early year's settings. 2000 individuals that are working in early years settings participated the findings concluded that

25% of the participants considered leaving due to mental health difficulties and stress

52% of the respondents had not discussed their mental health and stress issues with their coworkers

66% of participants said their personal relationships had been negatively impacted work-related mental health issues and stress

early years alliance mind matter survey, page 3 (2018)

56% of the individuals in the survey stated that financial resources have been a source of stress quite often or very often within the past month

early years alliance mind matter survey, page 7 (2018)

Support for Early Years Practitioners Struggling with Stress



Contacting hub of hope which is a mental health support directory that can give advice and support for those struggling with mental health issues (Department for Education, 2023)

Education support which offers free emotional support through their helpline and is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and includes delivering support to early years providers. It allows the service user to speak to a qualified counsellor (Department for Education, 2023)



Hub of Hope



What is Loose Parts Play

Loose parts play is a variety of loose and different materials which can be stacked, moved around, carried and redesigned in a variety of ways to help encourage children to be artistic and creative whilst they play (Manning, 2023).

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The Benefits of Loose Parts Play

Encourages creativity, helps imagination and encourages curiosity furthermore loose play has not got any set instructions or rules as the children are the experimenters that explore with different arrangements and combinations, this type of play of play develops skills such as critical thinking, problem solving skills and promotes emotional and develops social skills as when individuals engage in this play, they sometimes work in a team to create variety of designs and different structures which helps promote the children's cooperation skills, team building and communication (The Curiosity Approach, 2023). According to Busy Bees (2022) Loose parts play supports children's journey to independence and helps develop fine and gross motor skills whilst improving hand eye coordination. Environmentally as well it encourages reusing, repurposing and recycling a variety of materials such as fabric scraps containers, building blocks and buttons which teaches children about the environment (Busy Bees (2022))

Cloth Books and their benefits



Reading and using cloth books for babies can have excellent benefits as it allows for a variety of skills to be developed such as stimulating the senses and helps in the development of sensory skills as the book incorporates various colours and textures which provides a stimulating and engaging experience furthermore enhancing motor skills (Baby care, 2024).

A study published in early childhood education shown that babies who interacted by using cloth books showed fewer signs of frustration and higher engagement than those who have interacted with paper books (Baby care, 2024) Reading with a cloth book also often contain simple rhymes and stories which develop the infants vocabulary and language skills further more they are more durable and are designed to withstand from ripping and can be washed. According to the Trautner (2017) reading to your baby and communicating with them will feed the babies brain 10 million words each year in the first 3 years of their life.



Sensory bins





Sensory Bins are containers that are filled with materials to stimulate children's senses. These boxes contain a variety of materials such as beans, shredded paper, dry porridge oats, crushed cereal, rice and toys that encourage exploration skills as it encourages children to pour, grasp and manipulate the objects in the container (CST Academy, 2018)

Benefits to Sensory Bins



Benefits to sensory bins is that it helps develop the child's brain development, problem solving skills and enhancing memory furthermore helps develop the child's fine motor skills, encourages independent and creative thinking as it is a sensory activity and provides emotional regulation by providing a calming effect on the individuals feelings (Action for Children, ND). According to CST Academy (2018) Sensory Bins supports sensory integration as it helps children with sensory processing challenges incorporate with different sensory inputs. Furthermore, over time this can help develop the child's ability to process sensory information in different everyday surroundings (CST Academy,2018). This creates meaningful learning experience as helps with their holistic development through hands on play (International Nanny, 2023)

SENSORY BIN

BENEFITS

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Multisensory Engagement | 6. Improved Language Skills |
| 2. Self-Regulation | 7. Cognitive Development |
| 3. Fine Motor Skill Development | 8. Emotional and Creative Expression |
| 4. Cooperative Play Practice | 9. Increased Sensory Awareness |
| 5. Math Proficiency | 10. Enhanced Time Management & Focus |

MOTHERCOULD

5 KEY BENEFITS OF SENSORY BIN PLAY

Research studies have shown that children exposed to various sensory training methods, including sensory bins, exhibit considerable improvement in their learning abilities and cognitive function. By letting children explore materials on their own, you are helping them to develop and refine their fine motor, socio-emotional, creative and linguistic skills. These children typically do better in school, have better social interaction, and are generally more prepared for the future.

by Wunderbox (<http://getwunderbox.com>)

1 COGNITION AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Observation of cause and effect through sensory play builds early science skills. As children play they are constantly processing how materials look, smell, feel and sound. They experiment by manipulating the materials in different ways and then draw conclusions based on their own observations. In addition, shape and size recognition, counting and sorting activities aid in the development of early math skills.



2 LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Hands on learning through sensory play allows you to help your child understand and define parts of language as well as introduce new vocabulary by teaching them various descriptive terms about how the materials feel and move. For example, the sand is dusty, gritty, dry, it flows or trickles. Children also dive into creative story telling through sensory play as they immerse themselves in the small world provided.



3 SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

During cooperative play in a sensory bin, children have the opportunity to practice social interaction. They work out how to share space, negotiate the use of materials, build relationships and learn conflict resolution. Sensory play can also be a very calming activity for many children. It can help them focus and work through difficult emotions such as anxiety through the release of physical energy.



4 FINE MOTOR SKILLS

By scooping, grasping, pouring, molding and squeezing children are developing their dexterity and hand-eye coordination. These actions all support the development of large and small muscles necessary for dressing, writing and numerous other practical life skills. Sensory bin activities improve focus by allowing your child to be in charge of how to use the materials. There is no reason to get frustrated because there is no right or wrong when it comes to sensory play.



5 CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATIVE PLAY

Sensory play provides open ended opportunities how your child uses the materials is more important than the end product. Children of all ages and stages of development can use their imaginations to create play scenarios for their people and animal figurines. When your child thinks creatively in order to engage in make-believe, it helps them build self-esteem.



Learn more about sensory play and all-in-one bins on <http://getwunderbox.com>



Reggio Emilia



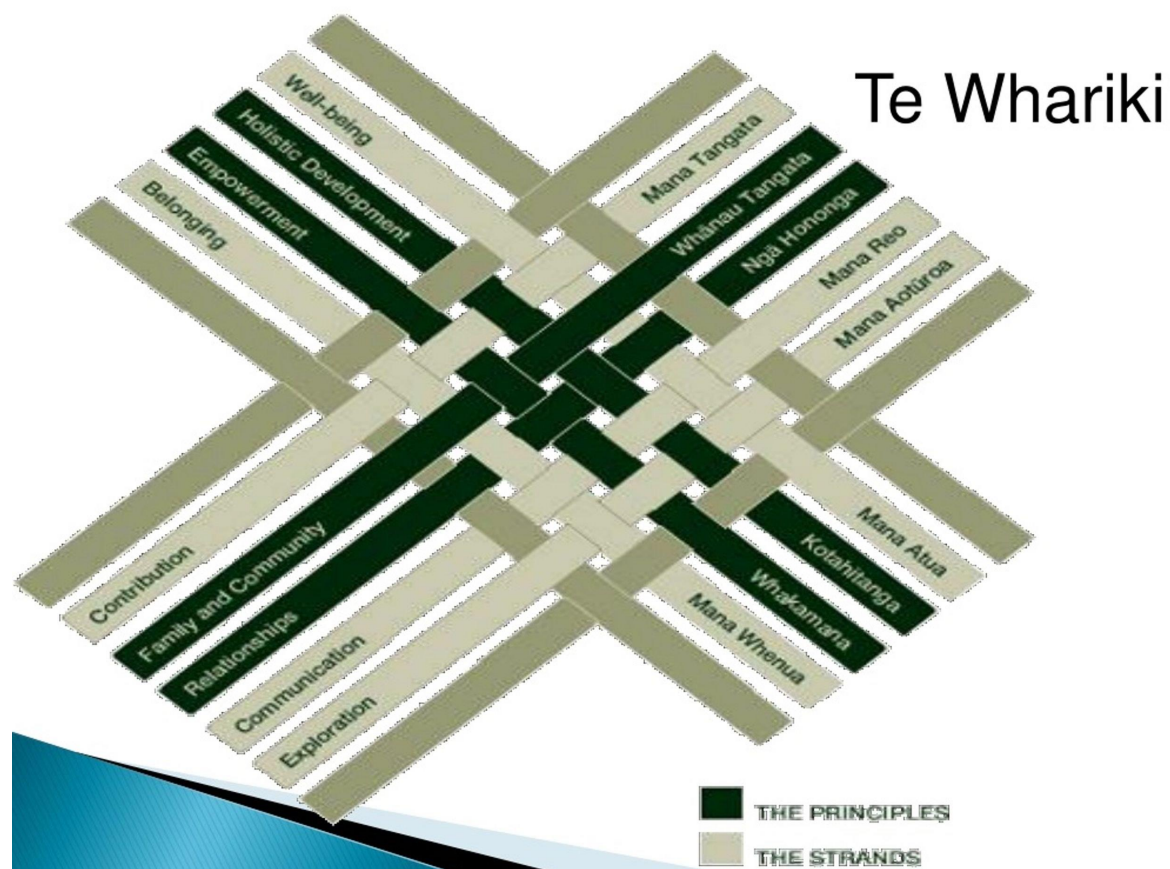
Reggio Emilia is an approach based on children's rights and that children have the ability for self-development. The key principles of the Reggio Emilia approach are that

children are a member of the community rather than a sole individual and that children learn through different interactions with adults and other children.

The importance of environment is greatly important as it is designed to help encourage communication with others, relationships and different encounters with peers. (Progressive Education, ND) the approach uses the environment as the third teacher that influences the child everyday as it provides them with variety of learning opportunities that encourages the

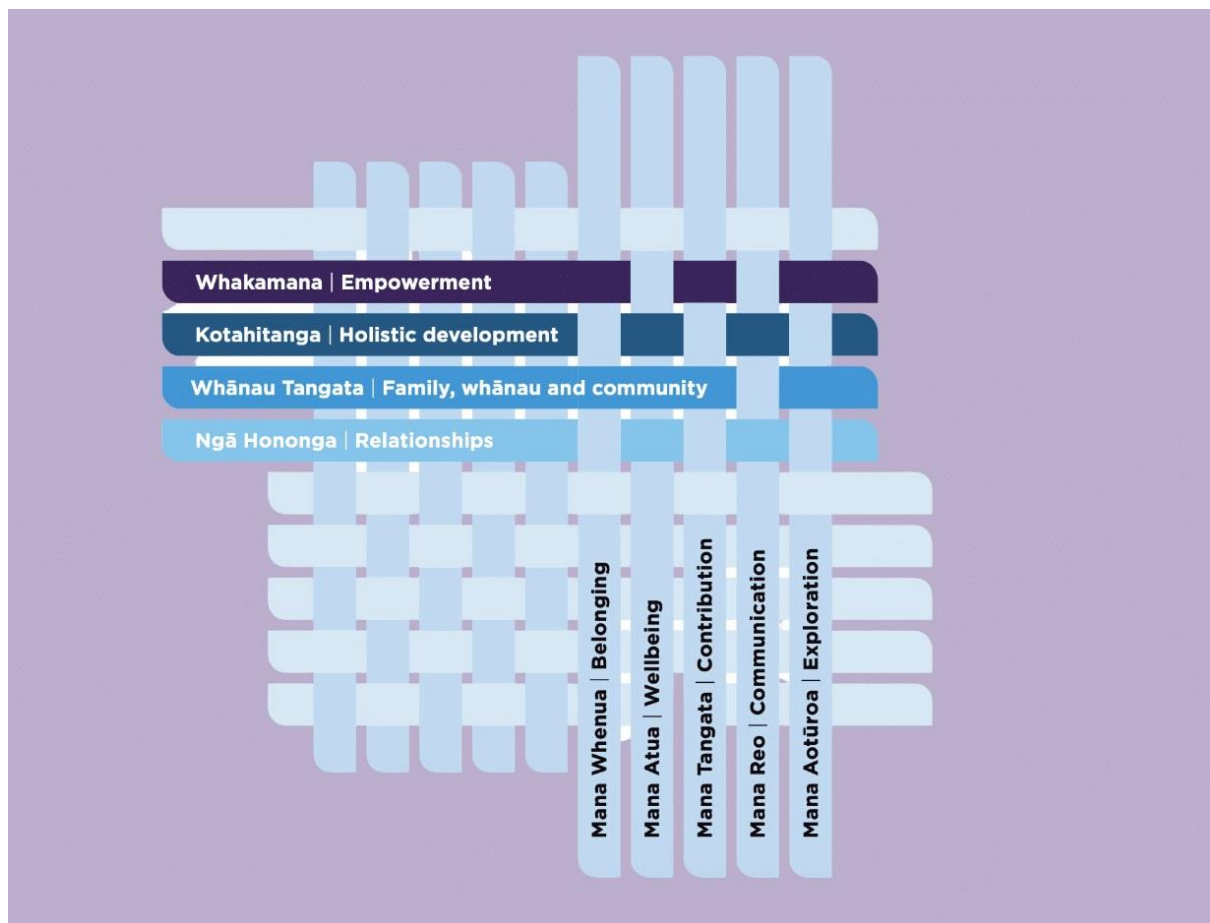
children to discover, problem solve and explore by themselves. (Berg, 2025) the benefits towards this approach is that the participation of the community and the caregiver is a distinctive feature within the approach as it develops good partnerships between the care setting and the parent furthermore it invites the caregiver of the child to play active role in their child's educational development to create a connection between the community and the individual (Berg,2025)

Te Whāriki



Te Whāriki is New Zealand's early childhood curriculum framework. According to Veazey (2020) Te Whāriki is Pedagogy and means woven mat in Māori Language. This approach has 5 strands of child development which creates cultural, developmental and learning goals these being and 4 main principles:

5 strands of Te Whāriki



Strand 1: Wellbeing

Focuses on the child's physical wellbeing and promoting a sense of belonging and security.

Strand 2: Belonging

This highlights the significance of different relationships such as culture, community and family.

Strand 3: Contribution

Encourages children to be actively participate in contributing and in their learning towards their communities.

Strand 4: Communication

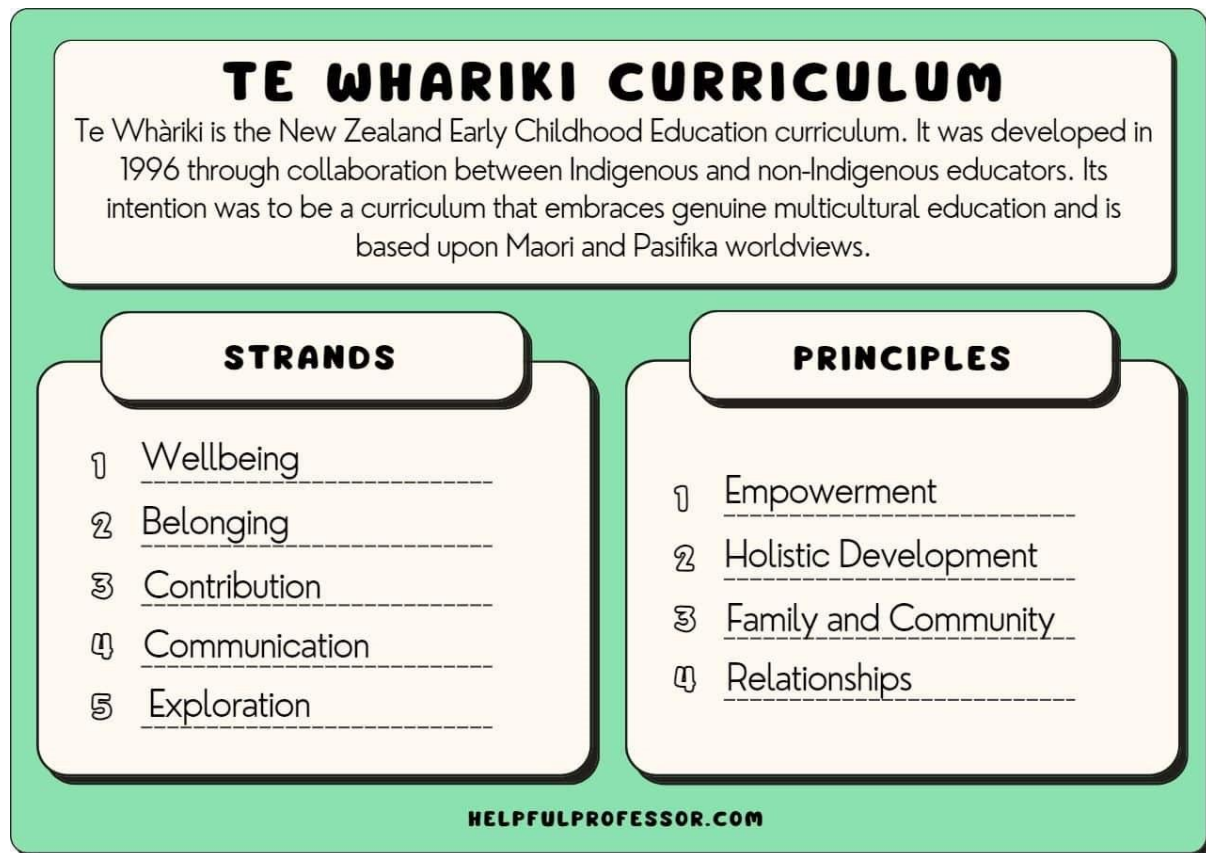
Helps effective language skills and supports language skills through different forms of expression

Strand 5: Exploration

Learns through exploration of the environment and engages in hands on learning experiences

(Preidyte, 2024)

4 Main Principles of the Te Whāriki



The 4 main principles of the Te Whāriki

Empowerment (Whakamana): empowers the child grow and learn

Holistic development (Kotahitanga): this curriculum reflects the child in a holistic way by how they learn and grow

Family and community (Whānau tangata): This principle signifies the importance of the role that communities and families have in the child's development and learning.

Relationships (Ngā Hononga): underscores the importance of nurturing relationships in the child's life

(Junior Junction, ND)

Compare and Contrast

Both Reggio Emilia and Te Whāriki are both child led learning and show the importance of family involvement and community. However, Te Whāriki is more rooted in biculturalism and

cultural context while Reggio Emilia focus more on the part of the environment as an educator and project-based learning (Preidyte, 2024).

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