

CAPABLE. CONFIDENT. CURIOS.

January 2026

From Principles to Practice: Real Ideas. Real Stories. Real Learning.

From the Framework

In *Capable, Confident, and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework*, the Discovery and Invention learning goal highlights how children build numeracy through exploration and inquiry. They investigate patterns, shapes, and relationships, compare quantities, and use tools and strategies to solve problems. These experiences grow naturally through play, whether they are stacking blocks, creating patterns with loose parts, or measuring sticks outdoors.

Educators support this learning by offering open-ended materials, asking questions that spark curiosity, and using language like “more,” “less,” “longer,” and “shorter” in context. When children experiment, predict, and test ideas, they see themselves as capable problem-solvers and creative thinkers, building confidence and joy in numeracy.

Supporting Numeracy Through Play

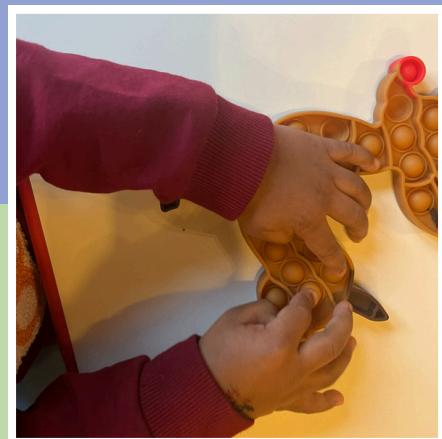
We asked early learning and child care programs how they support numeracy through play. Here are some of their stories and strategies to inspire your practice.

Our educators support numeracy by exploring the outdoors with children—counting the many items they see on a walk (buses, animals, cars). They also make time for play-based activities such as sorting, pretend play (playing store and counting pretend money), and playdough making, where children help measure ingredients.

Submitted by: Amanda Fraser | Regional Manager – YWCA Play Learn Grow

About this Issue

This issue highlights how numeracy comes to life through play: whether children are noticing patterns in nature, comparing sizes, or solving problems in everyday routines. Joyful experiences connected to their interests build confidence and curiosity that lasts a lifetime.





For toddlers, learning about numbers happens through play, repetition, and interaction.

Photo submitted by: Surbhi Sandhir | Regional Manager – Dartmouth YWCA Early Learning and Child Care

Our consultants do a lot of felt board games with their playgroups that encourage exploring ideas like "bigger-smaller," organizing by size, matching the number of dots with the numbers, etc. They also include songs that are about counting items.

Submitted by: Monique Walsh | Manager – YWCA Family Home Child Care

Our younger children enjoy "counting songs," stacking blocks, and counting their favourite toys as part of their everyday play. Throughout the day, educators look for everyday opportunities to include numeracy in play and routines—whether it's counting steps, counting the letters in their names, talking about quantities (baking), or playing fun movement games—helping children build confidence with numbers in a relaxed and supportive environment.

Submitted by: Krista Dearman Maynard | Regional Manager – YWCA Spryfield / Beaver Bank Early Learning and Child Care

At our centre, we support numeracy in meaningful and joyful ways through play. Children use loose-part materials to sort, arrange, and compare shapes, recognising patterns and exploring size and shape. They count gems, group materials, and make comparisons such as "more," "less," "bigger," and "smaller." Educators observe, listen, and extend learning through thoughtful questions, helping children deepen their understanding during play.

Submitted by: Yuna Lee | Regional Manager YWCA Elmsdale Early Learning Centre

Try This!

Here are more ideas to take numeracy outside this winter:

- Creating Patterns:** Use sticks, pinecones, or footprints to create repeating patterns in the snow.
- Meteorologist in Training:** Use sticks or rulers to measure snow depth in different spots. Compare measurements and talk about which areas have more or less snow.
- Snow-obstacle Course:** Build a snowy obstacle course. Count steps, jumps and spins, sequence the order of obstacles, etc.

We'd love to feature your story from an early learning and child care program in the next issue of Capable. Confident. Curious.

If you'd like to include photos, please email us to request an Image Consent Form.

Story topic: Puppets, Felt Boards—How Do You Make Stories Interactive?
Submit by: **February 22, 2026** to be considered for the March issue.

Submit your story to: ELCCprofessional.learning@novascotia.ca

**DO YOU
HAVE A
STORY TO
SHARE?**