EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE
English Curriculum Framework for New Brunswick

“The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all that we do.”
United Nations Convention of Children’s Rights, Article 3, Section 1

Presented to
The Department of Family and Community Services

By
Early Childhood Research and Development Team
Early Childhood Centre
University of New Brunswick
Fredericton, New Brunswick

5/16/2007
EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE:
English Curriculum Framework for New Brunswick

Published by:
Family and Community Services
PO Box 5001
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1
Canada

5/16/2007
Printed in New Brunswick
Acknowledgements

Many people have contributed towards the making of this document. They have done so through a consultative process that has included visitations, public forums, symposia, and multiple committee meetings. In particular, we thank the members of the following committees for their contribution:

UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Pam Whitty, Project Director, University of New Brunswick
Pam Nason, Project Director, University of New Brunswick
Tina Peabody, University of New Brunswick
Anne Hunt, University of New Brunswick
Sherry Rose, University of New Brunswick
Leigh White, University of New Brunswick
Kilby Adams, University of New Brunswick

CURRICULUM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Cindy Dickie, Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport
Gerald Ingersoll, Department of Post-Secondary Education and Training
Claudette Landry, Department of Health
Pam Nason, University of New Brunswick
Patricia Seely, Department of Family and Community Services
Darlene Whitehouse-Sheenan, Department of Education
Pam Whitty, University of New Brunswick

JOINT CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Leona Bernard, University of Moncton
Rose-Marie Duguay, University of Moncton
Nicole Gervais, Department of Family and Community Services
Diane Lutes, Department of Family and Community Services
Pam Nason, University of New Brunswick
Patricia Seely, Department of Family and Community Services
Pam Whitty, University of New Brunswick

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT TEAM AND WORKING GROUPS

Leslie Allan, Early Intervention Saint John Inc.
Robyn Baxter, Hampton Alliance for Lifelong Learning
Valerie Blythe, Chipman Family Resource Centre
Rachel Brown, Department of Family and Community Services
Peggy Clement, Headstart, Big Cove First Nation
Beth Corey, Military Family Resource Centre
Jody Dallaire, Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada
Cynthia Dempsey, Kids Korner Children’s Centre/Rural Voices
Maureen Dignard, Little Angels Daycare/ECCENB
Cindy Dickie, Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport
Anna Fanjoy, University of New Brunswick
Dallas Guenther, University of New Brunswick
Shirley Ann Howe, The Children’s Place Daycare
Anne Hunt, University of New Brunswick
Tammy Jones, RN, Moncton Hospital
Angela Legresley, MD, South-East Regional Health Authority
Katherine MacIntyre, Unicorn Children’s Centre Inc.
Dixie Mitchell, New Brunswick Association for Community Living
Pam Nason, University of New Brunswick
Sherry Rose, University of New Brunswick
Marjolaine St-Pierre, Early Childhood Care and Education New Brunswick (ECCENB)
Patricia Seely, Department of Family and Community Services
Janice Slaney, Department of Family and Community Services
Janet Towers, YMCA Saint John
Leigh White, University of New Brunswick
Darlene Whitehouse-Sheenan, Department of Education
Pam Whitty, University of New Brunswick

The curriculum framework is informed by national and international scholarship. In particular, the following have influenced us:


Thanks are due to the adults and children who were generous with their time, knowledge, and spirit when we visited their early learning and childcare programs.

We are inspired in our work by the commitment of early childhood educators throughout the province and by
the children in their educational care.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Introduction**  1  

**Section One**  3  
In the Best Interests of the Child  6  
Purpose  7  
Structure  7  
Cultural Context  8  
Values  9  
Image of the Child  12  
Environments  13  
Relationships  16  

**Section Two**  18  
Goals for Early Learning and Care  20  
Well-Being  21  
Play and Playfulness  25  
Communication and Literacies  29  
Diversity and Social Responsibility  33  

**Section Three**  37  
Learning Principles & Implications  39  
Record Keeping, Assessment & Evaluation  43  
Continuities & Transitions  46  
Connections with School  48  

**Section Four**  51  
Exemplary Curricula  53  
Bibliography (Updated May 12th 2006)  60
INTRODUCTION

Throughout Canada and the world there is a growing recognition of the need to value and support the learning and child care of our youngest children. New Brunswick’s Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care addresses this need by providing the foundation for an appropriate and stimulating curriculum for children from birth to five, one that will encourage optimum development in an atmosphere of trust, security, and respect.

Designed not merely to accommodate, but also to actively honour the diversity of New Brunswick’s children, the curriculum framework is firmly committed to a vision of all children developing to their fullest potential. The uniqueness of each child is implicitly integrated into the philosophy of early learning and child care that underlines the framework. Furthermore, a spectrum of approaches is outlined, addressing the diversity of needs as well as abilities by building on personal strengths while developing cultural and linguistic identities.

In recognition and celebration of the rich linguistic and cultural diversity in New Brunswick, two distinct frameworks, linked by a common vision, have been developed concurrently with English and French communities.

Vision

Our vision is that all children will grow to their fullest potential with dignity, a sense of self-worth, and a zest for living and learning. It is a holistic vision that seeks to provide the environment and resources needed to support dynamic development in young children who are:

- curious, courageous, and confident in their pursuit of knowledge and skills;
- secure in their linguistic and cultural identities;
- respectful of diversity, and
- contributing to the development of a just and democratic society that nurtures connection and care for life on the earth.
In keeping with contemporary research and theory, the framework emphasizes the image of the child, relationships, and rich, stimulating environments. It views children as confident, active learners whose learning, growth, and development are profoundly influenced by the quality of their relationships with people and their interactions with places and things.

Play is acknowledged in the framework as integral to children’s learning and richly formative in their capacity for relationships. Early years educators in New Brunswick echo the views of their colleagues around the world in their belief that play must be accorded a key place in the lives of young children. Research and theory support the long-held contention that play is essential to quality of life in childhood and a primary means of understanding the world. Consequently, this curriculum framework articulates ways in which educators can maximize the potential of play for children’s care and learning.

The *Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework for New Brunswick* values and promotes children’s experience of:

- safe and caring environments where their health, well being, and sense of belonging are protected and nurtured;
- open and flexible environments where exploration, problem solving, imagination, and creativity through play are encouraged and purposefully planned;
- intellectually, socially, and culturally engaging environments where wide-ranging communicative practices and literacies are valued and practised;
- socially inclusive and culturally and linguistically sensitive environments in which consideration for others and social responsibility are enacted.

The values, principles, and broad goals, while presented separately in the curriculum framework, are interdependent and not intended for use in isolation. In practice they are in constant interplay, brought to life by communities of adults and children to constitute the curriculum as an organic whole in which early learning and care are inextricably connected.

Children benefit when parents, families, early childhood educators, and communities work together. This curriculum framework for early learning and child care is designed to enhance those connections. Suited for home-based and centre-based care, the framework can be used as a source of information for parents and early childhood educators alike, and is intended to facilitate continuity of learning and care by complementing the curriculum in kindergarten and elementary school.

The development of the framework has proceeded in an informed and consultative fashion. However, by design, the framework is partial and provisional, inviting further
elaboration, questioning, and change. It is intended to support diverse communities of adults and children in the construction of active growth environments, enabling them to bring their various social and cultural experiences and local knowledge to curriculum making. Thus an organic, living curriculum is nurtured, one that has the potential to reflect diversity and respond to change.
SECTION ONE

In the Best Interests of the Child

Purpose

Structure

Cultural Context

Values

Image of the Child

Environments

Relationships
IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD

“The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all that we do.”
— United Nations Convention of Children’s Rights, Article 3, Section 1

The curriculum advanced in this document recognizes early learning and care as an integrated whole in the experience of the child. By placing the child at the centre, her or his best interests form a primary consideration in all that we do.

Determining what is in children’s best interests requires ongoing conversation, communication, and negotiation. Diverse families and communities differ in what they believe to be best for their children, and the children themselves are entitled to a voice. As well, the interests of individual children always exist in fragile balance with the interests of the various groups to which they belong. Consequently, children’s best interests must be understood in the context of their dynamic relationships with families, communities, and cultures.

As children’s first and most influential teachers, the families’ own values, goals, and aspirations are integral to the curriculum for early leaning and care. Educators and other professionals must work together with families in mutually respectful and harmonious ways to assure the child’s well being, while also honouring diverse family circumstances, languages, and cultures.

Including all children

Throughout this document we have used the term children to refer to all children, regardless of race, religion, social or economic status, gender, or ability. The use of this inclusive term, without qualifiers, is deliberate. It resists the implication that particular ways of being in the world are ‘normal’ while other ways are not.

Recognizing that each child embodies race, religion, culture, social and economic status, gender, and ability in unique and dynamic ways, we also acknowledge that paying close attention to the sites of difference is requisite to ensuring equitable opportunities for all children. In so doing, we emphasize the need for a curriculum that is responsive to differences, with the capacity to provide additional support as required to ensure each child’s right to full participation.¹

¹ See recently released report on inclusion by Wayne Mackay (2005) A View from the Front Line.
PURPOSE

This curriculum framework is the first step in the development of a common curriculum for children from birth to five in New Brunswick. It will serve as the foundation for an expanded curriculum framework and support documents. As such it seeks to:

- Articulate common values, goals, and principles for early learning and child care that are open to ongoing input and change;
- Affirm exemplary practices while encouraging the ongoing dynamic development of diverse practice in the field;
- Develop a shared professional language for discussion of early learning and child care policy and practice;
- Identify essential areas of early learning and care and holistic pedagogies for young children;
- Contribute to ongoing questioning, discussions, and critical reflection about early learning and care in New Brunswick;
- Provide a supportive structure for educators as they co-construct curriculum with children, families, and communities at the local level;
- Prompt change by directing attention to questions about our agenda for children and the ways in which we respect children’s capacities ideas and potentials.

STRUCTURE

This document is divided into four sections. Section One provides a context, and the requisite conditions for early learning and care. Section Two articulates four goals for early learning and care, illustrative narratives and sample provisions and practices. Section Three addresses pedagogical issues, including learning principles, assessment, continuities, and transitions. Section Four outlines the conditions for elaborating the framework and includes a literature review and [bibliography] to ground the work in contemporary theory and practice.
CULTURAL CONTEXT

New Brunswick is home to Mi’kmaq, Maliseet and Passamoquoddy Nations, as well as established and recent immigrants from around the world. It is the only officially French-English bilingual province in Canada. This vibrant cultural mix dictates an early learning curriculum that capitalizes on the exciting possibilities for cultivating intercultural sensitivities and expansive world views, while ensuring the preservation of individual linguistic and cultural identities.

The diversity of cultures in New Brunswick is rendered more complex by its socio-demographic diversity. With an almost equal split between rural and urban populations, a curriculum designed specifically for New Brunswick must embrace rural and urban life ways by creating spaces for the inclusion of local knowledge, a sense of place, and the discussion of differences.

Diverse family configurations add another layer of complexity to the cultural mix in New Brunswick. In addition, families may experience particular social and economic challenges as a consequence of factors such as recent immigration, low income, lone parenting, and social or geographic isolation.

We recognize that innovative approaches to the delivery of a curriculum for early learning and child care are required to ensure its responsiveness to varying family circumstances. For example, to meet the needs of children living in socially and economically depressed areas, a comprehensive approach has been employed in many European and North American jurisdictions. Britain’s Sure Start Program and Toronto’s First Duty are prime examples, embedding a curriculum for early learning and child care in a spectrum of education and social services. The capacity of ‘joined-up’ services, to significantly enhance the life chances of children, is compelling evidence for locating the delivery of a curriculum for early learning and care within the larger spectrum of social services.

---

2 http://www.ccsd.ca/factsheets/demographics.htm
3 http://www.surestart.gov.uk/research/evaluations/earlyexcellencecentres/
VALUES

The values articulated in any curriculum constitute inviolable premises for its articulation. In keeping with recommendations that curricula for early learning and child care should be values-based, the values upon which this curriculum rests are made explicit. They were arrived at through an extensive review of the literature on curriculum for early learning and care, and a process of broad consultation in New Brunswick. In these consultations it was agreed that no single value should be privileged over another.

The curriculum for early learning and child care intends to contribute to a caring, just, and democratic society by subscribing equally to the following:

The Distinctiveness of Childhood

We value childhood as an age in its own right, not simply as a preparation for the future, characterized by ‘todayness,’ rapid growth, plasticity, vulnerability, and resilience. Curiosity propels exploration and play as the child’s primary ways of knowing about the world. Consequently, the need for protection and belonging is counterbalanced by the need for new experiences and openness to risk-taking.

Children’s Rights

We value the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, ratified by Canada in 1991, which recognizes children as citizens, with rights for opportunities to reach their fullest potential, the right to be treated with dignity and respect, to be protected from harm, to exercise a voice, to engage in play and recreational activities, and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.


7 See Section Four of this document


10 www.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm
**Inclusiveness and Equity**

We value diversity, and honour all individual, social, and cultural differences. We uphold the right of every child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life — regardless of race, religion, social economic status, gender, or ability — and encourage the provision of appropriate and equitable opportunities for participation.

**Compassion and Caring**

We value compassion and an ethic of care as essential to nurturing the growth, development, and learning of young children, ensuring the rights of the most vulnerable members of our society and preserving the earth for future generations.

**Living Democratically**

We value the everyday enactment of democracy that gives children a voice in matters that concern them and provides opportunities to participate in making and questioning collective decisions.

**Individuality and Independence**

We value the unique personalities, talents, and abilities of every person. We value the capacity for independent action, individual accomplishment, and personal responsibility.

**Social Responsibility**

We value respect for fellow human beings and the responsibility of each, according to their ability, to contribute to the enhancement of interdependent communities, cultures, and sustainable futures. We value collective responsibility, solidarity, and collective action.

**Communication**

We value communication in all its forms, for its capacity to transmit feelings, language, and other cultural knowledge, advance human thought, develop human relations, and enhance the distinctly human ability to reflect critically on the past and plan purposefully for the future.
VALUES

*Imagination, Creativity, and Play*
We value imagination, creativity, and play for their capacity to produce a dynamic and innovative society. We value play and the arts as particularly fruitful ways for children to imagine new possibilities, explore novel ways of doing things, create unique ideas and products, and re-invent culture.

*Aesthetics*
We value beauty, pleasure, and desire in the growth of knowledge, understanding, judgment, and expression.

*Spirituality*
We value the child’s right to a restorative spiritual space for enhancement of moral and ethical development.

*Zest for Living and Learning*
We value the zest for living and learning that embodies curiosity, playfulness, determination, persistence, pleasure in accomplishment, resilience, and the sheer joy of being alive.
IMAGE OF THE CHILD

How we view children and their capacity to learn is embedded in our collective understandings about childhood. Beliefs about children and childhood are constructed and interpreted through social, economic, and cultural lenses. As such, expectations for children differ from one culture to another, from one place to another, from one time to another.

In this framework, we acknowledge children as curious and communicative individuals in their own right, young citizens actively constructing, co-constructing and reconstructing their understanding of the world within various communities of learning. This image accentuates the child as a subject of life, a being that produces change from birth, a producer of culture, values, and rights.

Children begin learning at birth, and their experiences during the early years have critical consequences both in the present and for their own futures. To thrive as curious, confident, communicative people, they are entitled to nurturing relationships. They also are entitled to stimulating and inclusive environments in which well-being is secured, exploration and play supported, language and literacies advanced, and respect for diversity promoted and practised.

---

ENvironments

Environments for early learning and care are comprised of social, physical, and psychological elements. People, places, and things all have a profound influence on health and well-being, particularly in the early years when children are most vulnerable to environmental influences. Environments that are beautiful, joyful and rich in opportunities for sensory stimulation, social interaction, language, exploration, manipulation, and representation enhance healthy development and learning, and increase children’s potential.13

Quality environments for early learning and care are carefully organized to reflect the fundamental values and goals of the curriculum to produce optimal learning and development. Recognized as an essential component of early learning, the physical environment is often referred to as ‘the third teacher.’14

This emphasis on the environment casts educators in the role of purposeful design-planners, who must take into account the strengths, interests, and desires of the particular children they serve. With the support of thoughtful educators, even very young children can claim ownership to, and take responsibility for, maintaining, modifying, and renewing their immediate environments.

**Purposeful Environmental Design**

Educators constantly mediate between the child and the multiple environments in which the child dwells by stepping in, or deliberately stepping back, to ensure that curiosity is sustained, friendships promoted, spirits uplifted, rights protected, safety ensured, language developed, and the learning potential of every child is maximized.

---


It is therefore the responsibility of the educator to support every child’s active engagement within environments that are:

- Equipped with materials that promote joy and pleasure in learning and challenge children to think — sand, earth and water, blocks, modeling materials, paints and ‘beautiful stuff’ for construction, collage, drawing and writing materials, toys and games, picture books and other print materials, scientific, mathematical and household tools;  
- Developmentally and culturally appropriate; 
- Aesthetically inviting and engaging; 
- Conducive to playful exploration; 
- Supportive of physical activity both indoors and out; 
- Responsive to children’s changing, interests, abilities, and desires, and capitalizing on their strengths.


16 These materials are understood as essential to early learning, in early childhood curriculum documents, professional and academic literature.

17 [www.naeyc.org/resources/cly/1998/05.htm](http://www.naeyc.org/resources/cly/1998/05.htm)


20 Canadian Sport for Life, [www.ltad.ca](http://www.ltad.ca); Cindy Dickie (2006) *Active Kids Toolkit* Sport Recreation & Active Living Branch, Culture and Sport Secretariat. DRAFT January 31, 2006; The March 2004 Issue of *Young Children* focused on health and safety.

21 See [www.naeyc.org/resources/cly/1998/05.htm](http://www.naeyc.org/resources/cly/1998/05.htm)
ENVIRONMENTS

- Responsive to children’s independent initiation of activity, and ideas, independence, transitions and routines; 22
- Considerate of children’s differences; ensuring equitable access to material and social worlds; 23
- Supportive of large and small group collaborations
- Reflective of seasonal and cultural events; 24
- Connected to the broader natural and constructed environments, the local community, cultural life and the arts. 25

---

22 Elinor Goldschmied and Sonia Jackson (2004) *People under three: Young children in day care*

23 See *Opening the Door to Quality Child Care and Development Project*, hosted by the New Brunswick Association for Community Living and funded by Family and Community Services, New Brunswick Government.


25 The July 2004 issue of *Young Children* focused on the arts. For Resources for Exploring the Creative Arts with Young Children, see p58-59
RELATIONSHIPS

Children’s early learning and care is profoundly influenced by the quality of the relationships they experience. Relationships with the people, materials, and events in children’s various communities are interconnected and reciprocal. Since their first relationships occur within a family setting, well-being in the broadest sense of the term will be intimately connected with the dynamic matrix of family relationships.26

Fostering Relationships between Home and Child Care Centres

When children enter child care, consistent and trusting relationships between families and educators are critical to the well-being of both children and families. In many instances, a designated educator takes an active role in helping the child and parents as they settle in to a new environment.

Families — historically, the mothers — carry intimate knowledge of their children, knowledge to be shared with the staff. As societal values shift, and with increasing support to parents of young children, many more fathers are becoming involved in the care of young children. Parents share their knowledge of the child, and adults at child care centres have a responsibility to ensure strong reciprocal relationships with the child and the family.

Fostering Friendships and Learning

When children enter a child care setting, they enter an environment rich in potential friendships. Friendships among infants begin as young as eight months, and from that time forward they are integral to children’s learning and development.27 Educators play a key role in helping children successfully negotiate a range of social relations that both constitute and convey learning.


RELATIONSHIPS

Fostering Professional Relationships

Educators working with young children need designated reflective time with each other to develop collegial relationships that encourage:

- An appreciation of each other’s learning and teaching approach;
- Engagement in thoughtful daily and long-term planning;
- Participation in professional growth and development activities;
- Opportunities to consult with other professionals and interested members of the community who also support the early learning and care of young children.
SECTION TWO

Goals for Early Learning and Care

Well-Being

Play and Playfulness

Communication and Literacies

Diversity and Social Responsibility
GOALS FOR EARLY LEARNING AND CARE

Well-Being

Children experience safe and caring environments where their health, well-being, and sense of belonging are nurtured and protected.

Play and Playfulness

Children experience open and flexible environment where exploration and play are encouraged and purposefully planned.

Communication and Literacies

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

Diversity and Social Responsibility

Children experience socially inclusive and culturally sensitive environments in which consideration for others and social responsibility is enacted.
WELL~BEING

Children experience safe and caring environments where their health, well-being, and sense of belonging are protected and nurtured.

Well-being is important to all human beings. For young children and their families a positive sense of well-being is nurtured through participation in an environment that is consistent and where reciprocal, responsive, and respectful relationship and community connections are valued.

Children have the right to feel safe. When provided with the space and freedom to take healthy risks, their willingness to do so reflects a sense of security, self-confidence, courage, and body strength. Over time, participation in healthy risk-taking builds the skills, knowledge, and resolve that will sustain them as they face new pleasures and challenges.

Children actively co-construct their identities in relation to the people, places, and things within the various communities to which they belong. Communities that support persistence, perseverance, and pleasure promote a zest for living and learning.

This goal has three facets:

- Emotional Health and Positive Self-Identities
- Belonging
- Physical Health
EMOTIONAL HEALTH & POSITIVE SELF-IDENTITIES

Children form multiple identities that are negotiated throughout their life-long journeys within personal, social, and cultural landscapes. Learning requires that adults treat children with kindness, gentleness, acceptance, affection, and predictability in emotionally stable, consistent, and trusting relationships that contribute to security, confidence, and a positive outlook on life.

Children develop a positive sense of self
- Developing recognition of self
- Actively participating in co-constructing their positive self-identities
- Experiencing a growing sense of self-confidence, self-respect and ability to take initiative
- Gaining self-control
- Growing in their capacity to express feelings, concerns and needs
- Learning who they can depend on for care

Children gain a sense of their interests, passions, and strengths
- Being curious and questioning
- Pursuing interests and passions
- Finding pleasure in perseverance and persistence

For Reflection:

How does your conception of childhood and what it means to be a child influence your responses to the different identities children take on? Think about verbal and non-verbal expressions of affection, anger, shyness, and frustration, risk-taking behaviour, independence and forthright expressions. Think about how children respond to people, places, and materials.

How do people and polices at your centre honour children’s initiatives through thoughtful planning, documentation and/or responses? Think about how your centre builds upon children’s interests.

How do you provide access to materials for children? Think about shelving, displays, containers, and open-ended materials. How often are materials changed or added too? Which materials are not used and why? Who uses the materials and what are the patterns of usage?

Reflect on your own learning and what fuels your energy as a learner. Think about the pleasure you take in persistence, perseverance and accomplishment, and how risk-taking is rewarded, or not, in your own life.
BELONGING

Children and their families have the right to experience social recognition and acceptance, and to see themselves reflected in their learning communities. Learning requires secure and consistent relationships that welcome all contributions to the group, affirm social and cultural practices, and provide opportunities to forge comfortable connections with new people and places.

For Reflection:

How do you support children in new situations? Think about children’s moments of anxiety and their responses to new situations. How do you plan for welcoming new children? How do you plan for room changes, field trips or walks?

In what ways are family contributions invited and honoured within the centre? Think about contributions of materials, interests, time, and cultural knowledge.

How does your centre build relationships of trust between people? Think about adult/adult, adult/child and child/child relationships. How does the centre’s space reflect the lives of the children, their families, and the educators?

Children develop a sense of place

- Learning to negotiate new spaces
- Identifying, creating and using personal landmarks
- Becoming familiar with the sights and sounds, rhythms and routines of new situations within and without the centre
- Generating a shared repertoire of narratives and memories
- Making connections between the centre, home and broader communities

Children build respectful, reciprocal, and responsive relationships

- Developing cherished as well as casual friendships
- Forming trusted connections with a range of adults
- Growing in their awareness that their actions contribute to the welfare of others
- Participating in group initiatives
Children experience protection from harm in a safe and nurturing environment where healthy eating, daily physical activity, and safety — indoors and out — are practised. Learning requires that children have time, space, and encouragement to: practise personal care skills; make choices between familiar and unfamiliar foods; develop food tastes and prepare food; move, play, develop and challenge their physical capacities.

For Reflection:

How does the environment encourage children to take initiative? Think about access to materials, furniture, and facilities for children to take responsibility for self care.

How do people and policies at your centre adapt DFCS food safety standards to include practices around food from a variety of homes? Think about Canada’s food guide in various languages or other models such as a vegetarian food guide.

What experiences are provided at your site to promote children’s active engagement both indoors and out? How do you plan for age and physical capacities? Think about access to play in the outdoors, what materials are rotated through outdoor areas, and activities available in the outdoors. Think about friendship patterns, gender, materials, and availability of space, communication styles, cultural practices, and private spaces.

Discuss the implications of using food for curricular activities – for example pasta or rice for collage materials. What messages might this convey about food? What non-food materials might be substituted?

Children learn to take responsibility for personal care
- Growing in their participation and independence in self-care routines
- Learning about individual differences in self-care routines
- Becoming responsible for self and others

Children learn about food and nutrition
- Understanding the relationship between food and their bodies
- Building confidence to try new foods and exploring a range of cultural practices of eating and sharing food
- Actively participating in and making decisions about food consumption, preparation, serving, and clean up routines

Children grow in their physical capacities
- Participating in a variety of physical activities, indoors and out
- Learning about their body in space
- Increasing bodily awareness, control, strength, agility and large motor coordination
- Increasing their fine motor capacities, including hand-eye coordination
- Knowing and stretching their physical limits
- Taking pleasure in releasing and restoring energy in outdoor places
PLAY AND PLAYFULNESS

Children experience open and flexible environments where exploration and play are encouraged and purposefully planned.

At play children are empowered to learn on their own terms, in their own ways and in their own time, and this freedom is what distinguishes play from other activities. Play allows children to take the initiative, to test their physical and mental limits, and to explore positions of power and questions about good and evil. In play children use words and symbols to transform the world around them, creating worlds where they can act ‘as if’ rather than ‘as is.’ Play is a pleasurable and highly motivating context in which children can explore possibilities and solve problems that are beyond their reach in ordinary life.

Early childhood communities that acknowledge the educative and developmental potential of play make provisions for a range of different kinds of play including: playful exploration and heuristic play for children to learn about the physical properties of materials and rules of thumb for problem solving; constructional play for them to invent new connections as they design and create with mud, sand, twigs, cardboard, and blocks; socio-dramatic play so that they can take up cultural roles and practices, play out their hopes fears and dreams, test relations of power, and imaginatively explore new possibilities; board games and word games, songs and rhymes that require deep concentration or just invite fooling around with language in order to take possession of it; games of courage and chance; outdoor play that exercises the muscles, lungs, heart, and mind — running, jumping, digging, swinging, rolling, and strolling; and shouting and squeaking and twirling and swirling — dizzy play done for the pure pleasure of being on the edge and sharing the joy of laughter and life with others.

This goal has three facets:

- Imagination and creativity
- Playful exploration and problem solving
- Dizzy Play
**IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY**

Through play children invent symbols to explore relations of power, truth, and beauty as they move between the world as it is and the worlds they create. In these possible worlds children have the liberty to push the boundaries and explore who they are as members of communities engaged with age-old issues such as good and evil. Learning to be imaginative and creative requires open and flexible environments, rich in materials and role models that reflect the cultural life of their communities — the songs, crafts, languages and artefacts, and opportunities for children to invent their own cultural forms and symbols and explore unique and innovative approaches to understanding their worlds.

For Reflection:

What open-ended materials are available in the spaces where children play? Think about materials that can be used in a number of ways: construction materials such as blocks, sand, cardboard, and wood, art materials such as crayons, paints, glue and ‘beautiful stuff’ and props for dramatic play.

How does your site’s scheduling promote or interfere with time to play and create? Think about flexible scheduling. Think about time allotted to play, routines and adult-directed activities.

How do you support and value the worlds and fantasies that children create? Think about ways in which fantasy and imagination can be extended for children and documented to illustrate their value.

How do you make use of and reflect the community around you to engage, model, and develop children’s creativity, imagination and play interests? Think about: musicians, local artists and artisans, families’ expertise and cultural contributions.

Children develop their dispositions for flexible and fluid thinking
- Seeing people, places and things in new ways
- Expressing unique and imaginative ideas

Children invent symbols and develop systems of representation
- Making up their own words, marks, and movements
- Negotiating the meaning of symbols with others
- Adopting/taking up and reshaping cultural experiences
- Developing meta-cognition as they move between the imagined and ordinary worlds

Children create imaginary scenarios in which they explore new possibilities and take possession of their worlds
- Creating social spaces and shared narratives
- Creating alternative systems of power
- Coping with emotional pressure
PLAYFUL EXPLORATION AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Using all their senses, children explore the physical and social worlds around them. In the process they refine their senses, test their personal capacities, and construct knowledge about people, places, and things. At play children learn to make their thinking visible, build theories about how the world works, and practise skills and dispositions for inquiry, negotiation, and problem solving. This learning requires support for involvement in various types of play — exploratory, heuristic, imaginative, language and literate, constructive and physical; access to a wide variety of materials and equipment; adventuresome, playful and persistent role models who actively engage children in processes of playful exploration, investigation, and problem solving.

For Reflection:

How do you provide ways for children to explore on their own, with peers, or with adults? Think about materials to act upon for cause and effect, open-ended materials for in-depth investigations, children’s own interests or questions?

Do children have access to a variety of games, both competitive and co-operative, that challenge thinking and encourage social relations? Think about Peek-a-boo games, aiming games, chasing, hiding, and guessing games.

How do adults model problem solving behaviours? Think about talking through situations such as dividing materials fairly, fixing a broken toy, working out turn-taking for special activities or favourite playthings.

Children learn about the properties of objects and construct relationships between them
  o Playfully exploring and investigating the properties of objects
  o Deliberatively experimenting with action and reaction/cause and effect
  o Creating patterns and relationships — sorting and matching, sizing and ordering, sequencing and grouping
  o Developing a vocabulary to describe patterns and relationships

Children test their limits
  o Testing their powers of observation and sensory discrimination
  o Testing strength, speed, agility, and control over movement

Children learn to negotiate the complexities of joint enterprises
  o Negotiating rules of time, space and roles
  o Making collective plans and decisions about the directions of their play
  o Developing a sense of fair play

Children learn to concentrate and employ creative approaches to identifying and working out practical problems
  o Developing sustained, shared thinking
  o Raising questions and making hypotheses about how and why things happen
  o Choosing from a range of materials, tools, and languages to investigate, experiment, and make their thinking visible
  o Constructing and inhabiting imagined worlds in which they can explore possibilities and create alternative solutions
DIZZY PLAY

Children’s play sometimes erupts suddenly in loud, boisterous, physical bursts. This kind of play is exhilarating and infectious, creating communities through shared laughter. Children love to twirl until they are too dizzy to stand up, laugh with others over nothing in particular, babble nonsense words in a riotous conversation, put their pants on their head or their jacket on their legs and perform for their friends. They revel in their power to turn the world upside down, playfully confident that they can restore it. Educators recognize and accept this kind of play, valuing it for what it provides for the children, a release of physical energy, a sense of power and often an expression of pure joy. It also requires tolerance, as this can be a noisy and seemingly senseless activity. Educators, aware of the resilience of children, must also assure that they are safe as they push their physical limits.

For Reflection:
How do you value and respond to rowdy, physical dizzy play? What is your comfort level and how does this affect the allowances you make for children’s rowdy, physical play? Think about times when children’s joy has been infectious, for example, sliding down hills, dancing barefoot, or singing at the top of your lungs.

Being on the edge
- Engaging in rough and tumble play
- Experiencing exhilarating physical release
- Playing at games of disrupting and restoring order

Sharing the joy of laughter
- Making nonsense
- Clowning to engage the positive attention of others
- Physical humour
COMMUNICATION AND LITERACIES

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

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 range of literate practices through their interactions with others and within particular social and cultural contexts. Being literate no longer simply means the ability to read and write. Being literate means negotiating a wide range of literate practices across various communities.

What it means to be literate changes over time, 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 more multimodal focus.

Multi-modal literacies involve the simultaneous use of the modes of image, print, gaze, gesture, movement, speech and/or sound effects. Reading picture books, fiction and non-fiction, is one of the most accessible and popular multi-modal forms of literacy engagement. Singing, painting, dramatic play, television and computers represent others.

Through their participation in various contexts 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 — for example, gendered expectations — held by others. 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 meaning making
- Literate identities with/in communities.
COMMUNICATIVE PRACTICES

Multiple modes of communication begin at birth. Infants, toddlers, and young children use a variety of modes such as gaze, 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.

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 in a visual, aural, and tactile way with materials, each other and with adults.

Are adults engaged in playful conversations with children during routines such as feeding 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.

When children use formal modes of communication, such as Braille 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 heritage languages of the children’s families within your centre and the larger community? Think about how the languages of New Brunswick’s indigenous people are incorporated in the centre through books, images, song, visitors, and field trips. Think about the other languages spoken by your families — how are their languages and communicative practices valued and made visible in your centre? Recognize that bilingual and multilingual children switch languages and express ideas in different languages differently.

Children form relationships through communicative practices
- Recognizing and responding to human presence and touch
- Becoming attuned to rhyme, rhythm, pitch, and tone
- Practicing and playing with sounds
- Becoming attuned to gestural and visual languages

Children learn the conventions of language
- Growing in their implicit understanding of the conventions of language
- Growing in their understanding of vocabulary
- Developing confidence in using vocabulary
- Growing in their understanding the multiple ways that others use language
- Experiencing and developing diverse linguistic repertoires

Children extend ideas and take actions using language
- Using language(s) to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas
- Using language(s) to make friends, share materials, structure, negotiate, and create imaginary worlds
- Using talk language to ask for help or information, argue, persuade, clarify, celebrate or instruct
MULTIMODAL MEANING MAKING

Children use symbols of various sign systems as they construct meaning through multiple modes of image, print, gaze, gesture, movement, and speech. Language, art, mathematics, music, and drama are unique sign systems that each have primary symbols: 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 have opportunities to integrate a range of symbol systems 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.

For Reflection:

What resources and sustained time do children have on a daily basis to support their growth in 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 play name tags, signs, notes, videos. How are materials cared for, displayed, changed for novelty and transported from one area to another?

How does the social experience gained from peer interaction contribute to multi-modal 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?

What methods does your centre have for documenting children’s language and literacy growth within the five sign systems? How does that documentation inform your responses to children’s learning in individual and collective ways? Think about how adults and children honour children’s invention of stories, songs, poems, maps, 3D structures, and drama.

How are children supported in their multi-modal literacy learning? Think about vocabulary growth, mark-making, constructions, performances and reading practices are documented and extended. How do parents and adults share their collective knowledge about children’s growth in language and literacies across the five sign systems?

Children explore a variety of sign systems
- Becoming familiar with the sign systems of language, music, math, art, and drama.
- Learning which forms best fit particular thoughts, feeling, events, and experiences
- Transforming knowledge from one mode to another

Multi-modal meaning making
- Foregrounding the symbols and practices of language
- Foregrounding the symbols and practices of music
- Foregrounding the symbols and practices of math
- Foregrounding the symbols and practices of art
- Foregrounding the symbols and practices of drama
LITERATE IDENTITIES WITH/IN COMMUNITIES

Using 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 consuming texts with children educators raise questions exploring multiple interpretations, assumptions, and biases.

For Reflection:
Become knowledgeable about the artistic and cultural life of your children and their families, your community and beyond. Think about your own participation in events and communities — do you convey 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 thing both boys and girls would like to play with? Do you think girls/boys would like to play with that toy too?"

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?

Children co-construct a range of literate identities with different people across a range of communities
- 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 literacies and those of others

Children grow in their capacities as critical consumers and producers of popular culture
- Transporting and transforming the literacies of popular culture from home into the centre
- Exploring various identities and characters embedded in popular cultures
- Growing in their knowledge of linguistic, artistic, dramatic, musical and mathematical practices of their local communities
- Growing in their capacity to ask critical questions

Children engage in literacy practices of new technologies
- Deepening their understandings of digital literacy practices through continued exploration of their passions and interests
- Expanding their ethical use and production of digital technologies
DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Children experience socially inclusive and culturally sensitive environments in which consideration for others and social responsibility are promoted.

Membership in communities involves interdependency. It is as simple and as complicated as this: we need to take care of each other, and we need to take care of the natural and constructed world around us. When children engage in respectful, responsive, and reciprocal relationships guided by sensitive and knowledgeable adults, they grow in their understanding of interdependency.

We live in a democratic country. Ideally, early childhood communities reflect the democratic values of inclusiveness and equity. All children and families have equal rights to a voice in decision making; differences and dissent make valued contributions to the group. With the full inclusion of diverse heritages, histories, and customs, democratic principles are honoured, opportunities to learn from each other are enriched, and possibilities for living peacefully together are enhanced.

As children practise living with heart and spirit as well as with mind, they require caring adults who listen responsively to what they have to say. They learn to find their voices, to speak freely, and to hear the voices of others as they engage in matters that concern them.

Cultivating an understanding of interdependency and the practice of compassionate care moves beyond the boundaries of local contexts and extends to appreciating biodiversity and environmental responsibility. This involves learning in and about the natural world and learning how to act in environmentally responsible ways to become good stewards of the earth.

This goal has three facets:

- Inclusiveness and Equity
- Democratic Practices
- Sustainable futures
INCLUSIVENESS AND EQUITY

All children, regardless of race, religion, age, linguistic heritage, social and economic status, gender and/or abilities are entitled to inclusion in everyday activities and routines. When inclusiveness and equity are practised children come to appreciate their physical characteristics and their gendered, racialized, and cultural identities. They learn to understand and challenge the impact of poverty, locally and globally. Learning requires inclusive and equitable environments where children have access to work and play within diverse groups and engage in meaningful, respectful interactions with people, materials, and content that embody diversity.

For Reflection:

How do children respond to people who are different from them — culturally, racially, developmentally, socially and economically? Think about the reasons children give for excluding peers? (language, colour, or possessions). Think about how children react to unfamiliar foods, clothing, behaviours and languages.

How do you find out about sites and opportunities for learning outside the centre — locally and globally? Think about local museums, places of worship, soup kitchens, shelters, small businesses, farms, small factories. Think about global projects that could have local connections.

How do you challenge negative stereotypical language and exclusive practices amongst children? Think about how children talk with each other in describing differences? How do they invite or prevent access to different play areas? Think about how adults notice, record, and involve children in discussions about access. Think about when and how help is provided if particular children monopolize particular areas, or if particular children are regularly excluded.

Children appreciate their own distinctiveness and that of others

- Feeling that their families and family backgrounds are respected and engaged
- Learning about their cultural heritage and that of other families within the centre and the broader society
- Becoming knowledgeable and confident in their various identities, including: cultural, racial, spiritual, developmental, gender, and socio-economic.

Children engage in practices that respect diversity

- Forming positive, inclusive relationships with all children
- Learning about differences, including cultural, racial, religious, developmental, gender, and socio-economic
- Learning about and engaging with communities representative of New Brunswick society
- Learning about and participating in helping projects — locally and globally

Children raise questions and act to change inequitable practices that exclude or discriminate

- Recognizing and challenging inequitable practices and situations
- Negotiating equitable solutions to problems arising from differences
- Standing up for themselves and others in a fair manner
DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES

Children grow in the understanding of their roles as responsible citizens as they participate daily in communities where their voices are heard and their contributions valued, and where they learn to value the contributions of others. Learning requires that educators assure children equitable opportunities, fair procedures and processes while participating in the making, following, questioning and re-working of rules, rituals, and procedures in their everyday world.

For Reflection:

Are children supported as they initiate and maintain relationships with each other and the adults in their everyday world? Think about ways to facilitate friendships and collaborations.

Do practitioners encourage and support children who act with empathy and sympathy? Think about children who reach out to victims, practise kindness, inclusiveness, and show concern for the well-being of others.

Are the contributions of each child valued and is appreciation shown for many views? Think about "how" you listen and respond to all children.

How do adults model empathy, sympathy, a sense of fair play and curiosity about difference? Think about opportunities that exist during dramatic play or outdoor play or during conversations or storybook reading time.

In what ways are families and the local community involved in decisions regarding the programs, procedures, and policies? Think about community cultural practices, local livelihoods and history.

How are children engaged in decision making in matters that concern them, such as the establishment of rules, rituals routines and processes? Think about the day-to-day opportunities for children to "have a say" in such things as eating, napping, sharing.

Does the setting ensure equitable access to materials and social worlds for children? Think about race, class, gender, age, and family background. Do educators challenge behaviours that exclude or discriminate?

Think about ways that you help children to work through problems and return as a contributing member to the community.

Children learn to be responsible and responsive members of the early years community

- Showing sympathy and empathy for others
- Asking for and giving help, comfort, and encouragement.
- Respecting the materials, equipment and spaces shared with others

Children practise democratic decision-making in matters that affect them

- Beginning to understand their rights and the rights of others
- Practising listening to what others have to say
- Developing an awareness of other points of view
- Questioning, co-constructing and reworking rules and procedures

Children practise fairness and social justice

- Voicing and negotiating their understanding of fairness and unfairness
- Identifying issues and becoming socially active in their local communities
SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

Children’s affinity to nature, of which they are part, provides a basis for understanding and questioning the place of humankind in nature and developing the knowledge, skills and dispositions to contribute to the development of sustainable futures. This learning requires children’s involvement with caring, compassionate, and courageous role models who actively support their first-hand engagement with the natural and constructed world and their participation in environmentally and socially responsible communities.

For Reflection:

How are children supported in exploring natural and wild spaces? Think about how to ensure access, celebrate the joy of being outdoors, and help children focus all their senses.

In what ways do your policies and practices contribute to sustainable futures? Think about energy and waste reduction, recycling, composting, and environmentally safe cleaning products.

How can you support children in the creation of their own sustainable futures? Think about their influence and control; for example, taking care of animals and plants, planting vegetable and flower gardens in their own playgrounds and communities or exploring possible solutions to environmental problems in their imaginations — in literature or at play.

Children learn to recognize and articulate patterns and relationships in nature
- Noticing regularity, repetition and change in nature
- Learning to systematically observe, name and record natural phenomena
- Raising questions about changes, connections and causes, and undertaking first-hand investigations in nature.

Children develop a sense of appreciation for human creativity and innovation
- Bringing all their senses to exploring the constructed world
- Learning to appreciate beauty, creativity and innovation in art, architecture and technologies

Children learn about natural resource development and manufacture
- Making connections between raw materials and finished products.
- Developing respect for the process and products of others’ labour
- Learning that different approaches to resource development and production have different impacts.

Children learn environmentally and socially responsible practices
- Reducing consumption
- Reusing and recycling
- Participating in care of plants and domestic animals, stewardship of local plant, insect and animal life
- Participating in local restoration and regeneration projects

Children develop a sense of wonder and appreciation for natural world
- Bringing all their senses to exploring nature
- Taking pleasure in natural beauty
- Connecting to and respecting the natural world

Children develop a sense of appreciation for natural world
- Bringing all their senses to exploring nature
- Taking pleasure in natural beauty
- Connecting to and respecting the natural world
SECTION THREE

Learning Principles and Implications

Record Keeping, Assessment, and Evaluation

Continuities and Transitions

Connections with School
LEARNING PRINCIPLES AND IMPLICATIONS

Beliefs about learning have particular implications for the teaching, caring, and assessment practices of educators. The following principles are pedagogically sound for young children, and though this is not an exhaustive list, these principles about learning and their implications for teaching are commonly understood as being central to promoting the healthy development and joyful learning of young children.

Children thrive when they are nurtured in close, caring, and consistent relationships. 28

- Designated educators interact daily with the child and the family to provide for continuity of caring.
- Physical contact and affection are part of every child’s day.
- Educators show a sincere interest in what children are doing and thinking, and in making their thinking visible.
- Guidance is consistent; flexible routines mark the rhythm of the day.
- Educators adopt a positive, tactful, and sensitive tone for verbal and physical interactions.
- Self-regulation and self-discipline are encouraged.

Children are unique individuals who learn and develop at different rates and in different ways. 29

- Curriculum is shaped to each individual child’s interests, abilities and vulnerabilities, and capitalizes on their strengths.
- A rich variety of materials, strategies, and teaching approaches is employed.
- Environments are designed to meet a wide range of abilities, interests, and enthusiasms.
- Environments and interactions are adapted to ensure equal inclusion of all children.


29 [www.naeyc.org/resources/cyly](http://www.naeyc.org/resources/cyly)
LEARNING PRINCIPLES AND IMPLICATIONS

All aspects of children’s development and learning are interrelated and interdependent.30

- Holistic learning, such as a project approach or structured play, is used to simultaneously engage the child as a complete person with physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and ethical aspects in dynamic interplay.
- Authentic everyday experiences are used as the basis for learning to foster the integration of knowledge.
- While focusing their teaching on one particular area, educators are conscious of how other areas of development are implicated.

Children are agents in their own learning, actively building their knowledge, skills, dispositions, and feelings through first-hand experiences and reciprocal relationships with the people and things in their environment.31

- Careful preparation of the physical environment ensures that children have access to a wide range of materials, and the flexibility to use them in ways that are personally significant.
- Children are encouraged to initiate their own learning.
- Educators take their lead from children and build on their prior knowledge in order to ensure personally engaging and socially significant learning experiences.
- Educators encourage children to build theories about the way things work. They refrain from imposing their own understanding of the world on children, recognizing that refinement of understanding is a process requiring time and the active engagement of the learner.
- Educators are aware that similar experiences do not necessarily result in similar learning. Consequently, they observe and document what individuals and groups of children do, to determine what they are learning and how that learning can be fruitfully extended.

Children belong to multiple learning communities, and their learning is profoundly influenced by the relationships within and among these communities.32

- The inherently social nature of learning is recognized when educators purposefully plan for and support children’s interactions with other children in large and small groups and with adults.
- Educators help children make their thinking visible so that ideas and feelings can be shared and thus extended.
- Communities of children within the centre interact regularly with children from other age groups.
- Educators are conscious of the way in which their teaching and care relates to the other learning communities to which children belong.
- People from various learning communities are invited to bring local knowledge into the centre, and children are regularly taken out into the community.

Learning and development are nested within particular social and cultural contexts.33

- Educators respect different social and cultural values and practices as they plan the learning environment and interact with parents and children.
- Educators are aware of their own social and cultural biases, and take steps to ensure that these do not result in marginalizing any children or their families.
- All ideas and beliefs are open to question.
- Multiple perspectives are solicited and social and cultural diversity are honoured.

---


LEARNING PRINCIPLES AND IMPLICATIONS

Multiple languages play a central role in mediating thought and learning.\textsuperscript{34}

- Oral language, signs, symbols, and written language are deliberately embedded into every aspect of the physical and social environment.
- Children are encouraged to experiment with their mother tongue and other languages.
- Language play, including songs, rhymes, jingles, and chants, is part of the daily routine.
- Educators are responsive to each child’s language level, and act as language providers and role models to stimulate and extend children’s language.
- Educators make provisions for children to express themselves and make their ideas visible with a wide variety of materials and languages, such as music, dance, and the visual arts.
- Educators provide alternative or augmentative communication when it is needed.

RECORD KEEPING, ASSESSMENT, AND EVALUATION

The primary purpose of record keeping, assessment, and evaluation is to celebrate relationships and enhance children’s well-being and learning. These activities may take a variety of forms, depending on the particular educational setting, and they are most effective when documentation and evaluation:

- Relate clearly to the values, goals, and principles of the curriculum;
- Focus the educators’, children’s, and parents’ attention on what individuals and groups of children are doing and learning within a particular setting;
- Enable the careful monitoring of children’s well-being;
- Provide information that can be used in planning learning experiences for individual children and groups;
- Provide information for reflective conversations among children, parents and professionals;
- Involve the respectful coordination of multiple viewpoints, including children’s perspectives on their experiences and learning.

Focusing on Children

Record keeping
The Province of New Brunswick prescribes the protocol for monitoring the health and safety of individual children and communicating this information to parents. Provincial guidelines for menu and program also elicit indicators of the experiences to which each group of children (but not necessarily each individual) has been exposed.

Documentation
The following forms of documentation and assessment provide a focus on individuals or small groups of children in ways that are consistent with the goals and values of this curriculum; they emphasize a strengths-based approach and an assumption of competence on the part of the child:

- Child involvement that capture the intensity and duration of involvement as an indicator of learning. For example, the signals developed by Laevers in conjunction with the Flemish Curriculum; 35

---

o Narrative assessment that documents learning episodes holistically and links them directly to curricular goals and future planning. For example, documenting the learning of individual or groups of children through careful listening, photographs, observations, anecdotal records, and multi-modal learning stories, such as those developed in conjunction with Te Whariki – the New Zealand Curriculum; 36

o Normative assessment that locates the child's development in relation to age-group norms, but only with a judicious and non-judgmental use of norms to further the vision and provision of opportunities for individual children. 37 The referent groups for the norms must always be made explicit, to reveal any social and cultural bias.

**Focusing on the Physical Setting**

The Province of New Brunswick approves and monitors environments for early learning and child care through administration of The Family Services Act, Regulation 83-85 and Child Daycare Facility Operator Standards.

The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised (ECERS-R) 38 and its companion tools are also used to measure environmental quality. These environmental scans are implemented through the Opening the Door to Quality Child Care and Development Project, hosted by the New Brunswick Association for Community Living and funded by Family and Community Services, New Brunswick Government.

The critical importance of the environment as 'the third teacher' is described elsewhere in this document. Purposeful planning of children's spaces is a key component of both children's learning and the documentation and assessment of their learning. It requires thoughtful and ongoing assessment of space and materials in relation to the particular strengths, vulnerabilities, and interests of particular individuals and groups of children.

**Focusing on the Educator**

Educators bear serious responsibilities as environmental planners and mediators who must be vigilant to the quality of their constructed environments and the appropriate use of educational materials, and this includes mediating healthy relationships with children, colleagues, parents, professionals, and other adults., The creation of space for educators’ reflection is therefore vital to the overall improvement of early learning and care. Laevers’ *Ten Action Points for Teachers* and the ECERS – R are among a number of tools that have been developed to facilitate this


37 Catherine Scott – Little et al (2003) *Creating the conditions for Success with Early Learning Standards: Results from a National Study of State-Level Standards for Children's Learning Prior to Kindergarten*

38 See Thelma Harms (2003) *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised*
attentiveness to educators’ behaviour and assist with structured reflection leading back into planning.

Record keeping, assessment, and evaluation are intensive processes requiring considerable non-contact time in order to effectively and thoroughly serve their designated purposes.

**Focusing on the program and system**

Information is gathered or aggregated periodically to ensure that programs and systems are functioning as designed, and to generate input into new directions and designs. Participatory evaluation models ensure that evaluation is done with the participants, not imposed on them. The most ethically defensible and comprehensive picture is generated when multiple perspectives are included.
CONTINUITIES AND TRANSITIONS

Transitions are part of everyday life for young children and require adjustments to different environments and different people, often several times a day. These transitions, referred to as ‘horizontal transitions,’ act as a backdrop for larger ‘vertical transitions’ such as the move from pre-school to school.39 Both horizontal and vertical transitions have become the focus of recent research on how they affect children’s attachment and security, adjustment, resilience, coping, cognitive development, and capacity for learning transfer across environments. The innovative research of scholars such as Stig Bröstrom has integrated the views of young children into the conversation on transitions, and a growing body of evidence is prompting policies aimed at smoothing both vertical40 and horizontal transitions41 to provide for enhanced continuities in learning.42

Typically, transition policies and procedures attempt to offset the fragmentation of children’s lives by addressing the fractured landscape of institutions in which they participate. They strive for coherence and continuity of learning and care by:

- Acknowledging the diverse contributions the child and family bring from:
  - their social circumstances
  - cultural and linguistic heritage
  - physical environments

- Honouring these contributions and using them to:
  - establish routines
  - nourish a sense of belonging for the child and family
  - create responsive curricular experiences

---


40 For example, policies to facilitate the seamless or ‘wraparound day’.

41 For example, in the Swedish curriculum the formal designation of the principal to facilitate transitions between pre-school and school.

42 First Duty programs in Toronto facilitate both vertical and horizontal transitions by offering a range of early childhood programs and services, child care, pre-school and early elementary school on the same site.
Enabling educators to share knowledge about rules, routines and expectations in their respective communities of practice through:

- designated administrative responsibility
- practitioner visits to each other’s sites
- job swapping and shadowing\(^{43}\)

Providing for supportive relationships in the new setting through:

- Open door policies for families and educators
- Joint teaching during transition periods

Creating new possibilities for coherence in learning and care through a series of open questions and ongoing discussions about curricular and pedagogical continuities.

---

\(^{43}\) Practiced in the Martenscroft Early Excellence Centre, Manchester, England to familiarize professionals with each others’ work, particularly when children and their families are being served by a number of different professionals
CONNECTIONS WITH SCHOOL

Starting school involves a major transition for children and their families, a transition which often inspires excitement and apprehension simultaneously. Children encounter major changes as they move from home- and centre-based settings to school; for instance, they may leave an environment with a small group of children and low child-adult ratios and move to a larger group with higher child-adult ratios and often same age groupings. Other changes entail larger facilities and a more closely prescribed schedule; additionally, the majority of children will travel to and from school by bus. Children must meet this new adventure with confidence, curiosity, an ability to communicate, respect for the contributions of others, and a desire to make their own contribution to the school community.

Children’s Success at School

Children’s success at school is influenced by a confluence of conditions that are created and sustained by the combination of federal and provincial policies, community resources, and family income. These factors shape the time parents have available to their children, the level of parental stress, and parenting practices. In addition, the quality of early learning and care that the children experienced prior to school entry will tangibly influence school achievement and readiness to engage in a spectrum of school activities with ease and pleasure.

School Readiness

Historically, school readiness has meant that a child could recite the alphabet, count to ten, name colours and recognize letters. However, we know that short-term gains, such as number and letter recognition will result in poorer academic functioning in later elementary years, and in higher rates of early school leaving when de-contextualized outside a broad and balanced curriculum. In recognition of the need for a more integrated view of school readiness, the concept of school readiness has been replaced by readiness to learn.

---


46 See Doherty (Above) and Kelly Maxwell and Susan Eller (1994) *Research in Review: Children’s Transition to Kindergarten*

47 Lilian Katz (1991) *Readiness: Children and Schools*
Readiness to Learn

One of the goals of the New Brunswick Quality Learning Agenda (QLA) specifically relates to young children’s readiness to enter school. Readiness to learn addresses two broad categories of learning — the social and the intellectual. Socially, in the years prior to school, children need to experience successful interactions with a group of peers, so that they acquire social skills including turn-taking, making compromises, and approaching unfamiliar children. Intellectually, children benefit from opportunities for conversations and cooperative play with peers who are likely to start school with them. There is ample evidence that children who have had opportunities to engage with peers prior to school entry, and can enter school together with these peers, will make a smoother transition to kindergarten.

Pedagogical Continuities

Research indicates that children in informal, socially interactive classrooms develop enhanced interaction skills and demonstrate fewer stress behaviours than children in more formal settings. Implementation of developmentally and culturally appropriate practices in both prior-to-school and early-school settings create continuities in programming that ease their transition to school entry. Initiatives to connect home, school, and community based programs, and collaborations between child care and school educators also are critical to smoothing transitions and ensuring continuities of experience for young children.

Curricular Continuities

The New Brunswick curriculum framework for students from kindergarten through grade twelve defines six areas of learning:

- Aesthetic expression
- Citizenship
- Communication
- Personal development
- Problem solving, and
- Technical competence

49 Lilian Katz, p2.
These areas of learning are addressed at each grade level with outcomes that are age-specific. In order to develop curricular continuities for young children, the links between the New Brunswick School Curriculum and the goals of the New Brunswick Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum are articulated.
SECTION FOUR

Exemplary Curricula

Bibliography (Updated May 12 2006)
Defining Exemplary Curricula

Current Context for Early Learning and Care

One of the working goals of the Department of the New Brunswick Family and Community Services is to develop an exemplary curriculum framework for infants, toddlers, and young children aged three and four. Ideally, the framework would be suited for use in home and centre-based child care, and also serve as a source of information about children’s learning and care for parents and staff in other programs and services designed for young children and their families.

Given the current emphasis, worldwide, on early childhood policies, programs, and practices, there is an extensive body of literature and considerable debate about what constitutes exemplary curricula for infants, toddlers, and young children (see Bibliography). Numerous researchers and curriculum developers recommend focusing upon broad developmental goals and the child’s cultural and social context as the means to exemplary practices.

Contemporary Research and Theory

John Bennett has reviewed practices, policies, and curriculum from more than twenty countries for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and he specifically contrasts a broad developmental approach or social pedagogical approach, with a pre-primary approach (2003). A social pedagogical approach recognizes the context of the child’s learning and the importance of attending to what one Norwegian study calls the “todayness” (Rayna 2001) of children’s lives. The pre-primary approach, as the language suggests, focuses on preparing a child for school at the expense of the quality of the child’s authentic daily learning experiences and social interactions. A curriculum grounded in a social pedagogical approach, that attends to the todayness of young children’s lives and their diverse personal, social, and cultural needs, has the simultaneous effect of bringing children to school, ready to learn, and promoting their overall healthy development and capacity for future learning.

Recent Canadian discussions about appropriate curricula for early learning and care have taken place in the Interaction journal (Winter 2005) published by the Canadian Child Care Federation, and at sessions presented at the Plan-It Quality Child Care Conference held in Regina in early June 2005. Interaction, a highly accessible Canadian Early Learning and Care publication, presented several exemplary curriculum frameworks including Te Whariki developed in New Zealand; Reggio Emilia emerging out of Italy; High Scope from the United States; Experiential Education (EXE) from Flanders, and the Swedish preschool curriculum. Not surprisingly, these curricula have also been commended and researched in numerous publications in the academic literature (Starting Strong Curricula and Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education: Five Curriculum Outlines www.oecd.org/dataoecd/23/36/31672150.pdf.) In addition, other exemplary curricula include the New South Wales curriculum, The Practice of Relationships (2002); the Tasmanian curriculum referred to as Essential Connections: A Guide to Young Children’s Learning (2004); and the Finnish curriculum, National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood
Education in Finland (2004). All of them recognize the diverse personal, social, and cultural contexts of children’s lives, and the importance of warm, caring relationships for each individual child’s healthy development and early learning.

Finnish researcher Eva Hujala (2002) proposes a curriculum model based on a contextual orientation of the child’s learning. Within this model, there are three overarching components to address when developing curricula for infants, toddlers, and young children. These include a conception of the child as an active participant in his or her own learning, the quality of the child’s interactions with self and others, and the role of the teacher as the designer of an active growth environment for children. These components can be found in many contemporary curricula recognized as exemplary.

Conception of the Child as an Active Participant:

- The Swedish curriculum is conceived as a values and norms based curriculum. Democracy and opportunities for democratic actions on the part of the child, as well as opportunities for the child to have influence are an integral part of the learning process. The child’s learning is connected explicitly to the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the adults and the norms and values of the Swedish society. (See www.skolvert.se/23/36/31672150.pdf).

- All the exemplary curricula reviewed hold that the child is actively constructing his or her learning. Experiential Education (EXE), a model of education developed and researched in Flanders, found that effective learning for young children takes place by attending to the child’s well-being and involvement. “EXE theory and practice suggest that the most economic way to assess the quality of any educational setting is to focus on two dimensions; the degree of the child’s emotional well-being and the level of involvement.” (See OECD Country note on Belgium www.oecd.org/dataoecd 7/40/2479277.pdf).

Teacher-Child and Child-Child Interactions

- Through the practice of attentive listening to young children at play, the Reggio Emilia (Italy) teachers — one an early childhood educator and the other an art educator — co-construct curriculum with the young children in their educational care. This research and thinking indicate that young children communicate more easily through graphic representation and sustained dramatic play than through print. Dramatic play and the arts play a large role in contributing to the emerging literacy of the young child.

- The Leuven Involvement Scale (associated with EXE) assesses the child’s level of involvement with his or her environment. Action strategies serve as a self-evaluation tool for teachers to assess how successfully they engage the child’s interests. This Flanders model, highly researched and extensively implemented in Belgium, also serves as the foundation for research, structure, and programming in the Early Education Excellence Centres in the United Kingdom (Bertram and Pascal 1997, 1992, 1993, 1999; Dupree, Bertram, and Pascal 2001). Laevers (1994) proposes that the quality of a child’s activity can be recognized by concentration and persistence and is characterized by motivation, fascination, and implication.

- In a recent study reported by Bengt Andersson (2005), the quality of the interactions of the staff with the children was found to be significantly improved when the staff had time to meet and discuss the goals of the curriculum in relation to the learning of the child. The Swedish
Curriculum goals in this case serve as a self-evaluation guide for actively involving children in developing collective attitudes.

- There is an emerging body of research on child-child interactions, conceived in the literature as pro-social behaviour, friendships, playful actions, and togetherness (Ledger, Smith and Rich 2000; Vigitidou 2001; Janson 2001). Children are believed to begin to form friendships as infants. Activity, not just proximity to other children, is a crucial condition for children to begin to develop friendships and the social-emotional learning that occurs when engaging with a range of playmates (Dunn 1988).

Teacher as Designer of the “Active Growth Environment”

- In the Reggio Emilia approach, the environment is imbued with significance. In her book Authentic Childhood, Canadian educator and researcher Sue Fraser writes: “Creating an environment that acts as a third teacher supports the perspective that knowledge is constructed not in isolation but within the social group” (2000, 55).

- Documentation of the children’s activities demonstrates and facilitates further co-construction of curricula and learning, and the concept of the environment as a third teacher. Parent and community involvement are key features of this approach. (Foot 2000 and 2002; Broker 2003; Keyes 2002; Robson and Hunt 1999).

- The American High Scope Curriculum, designed in the 1960s for children and families marginalized by mainstream society, requires that teachers systematically create ‘key experiences’ for children from a set of guiding principles and practices. These experiences include sustained activities in creative representation, language and literacy, creative and social relations, movement and music, and logical reasoning. (http://www.highscope.org/EducationalPrograms/EarlyChildhood/UPKFullReport.pdf).

- The Tasmanian curriculum for young children incorporates a values and purposes based approach with essential learnings and outcomes. Rather than being somewhat subject based as is High Scope, the Tasmanian curriculum proposes essential learning categories: communication, personal learning, social responsibility, and world futures. Thinking is considered to be the all-encompassing category (ww.education.tas.gov.au/ocll/currcons/overviewintro.pdf).

- The Te Whariki curriculum is based upon an integration of principles and learnings strands and examples of experiences for children. Outcomes and questions for teacher reflection are an integral part of the curriculum framework, the role of the teacher in the design of the social and physical environment is key. (isteww.minedu.govt.nz/web/downloadable/dl3567_v1/whariki.pdf).

- The work of Laevers and Moons, (in Laevers 1999) presents an inventory of ten types of initiatives by the educator that facilitates children’s well-being and involvement.

Curriculum Issues

John Bennett (2003) suggests that current conceptions of curriculum for young children include:

- Statement of principles and values to guide staff working with infants, toddlers, and young children.

- Short outline of content and outputs of the dispositions, values, knowledge, and skills that children can be expected to learn at different ages and across broad developmental goals.

- Pedagogical guidelines outlining the process through which children learn.
A summary of program standards, that is, how curriculum can be supported by structural quality features such as ratio and qualifications.

In common with other contemporary curriculum scholars, Bennett's conception assumes that the official curriculum be a curriculum framework enabling early childhood educators to structure daily learning experiences responsive to the unique individual, social, and cultural experiences and needs of the children in their educational care.

The importance of a carefully planned environment and the relationship between environment and quality of curriculum enactment is pervasive in all the literature reviewed. Perhaps the environmental scales most familiar to people in the field are the ECERS-R and ITERS-R scales developed by Harms, Cryer, and Clifford (2003, 2004). These scales have been utilized and adapted in Canada through the You Bet I Care study (Doherty 2000). The ECERS scales have also been adapted in Sweden by Mona Anderson (1999) to assess the environment and the quality of the interactions. These scales provide a key starting point for discussions on high quality physical and social environments for infants, toddlers, and young children.

Related Issues

The expansion of literacy practices
Concerns about the push for literacy, narrowly defined, have raised the issue of how we define literacy in the early years. In order to retain a broad and balanced curriculum, there is a call for the broadest possible definition of literacy that includes a range of embedded communication practices — multi-literacies and the 100 languages of children (Reggio Emilia), and the expressive arts.

Quality outdoor environments in home and centre based care
Concerns about physical health and obesity in childhood have lead to a serious examination of opportunities for exercise and the development of children’s attitudes towards outdoor recreation. There is a call for playground development and for more informed practitioner knowledge, skills, and attitudes with regard to outdoor play.

The need for inclusion/responses to diversity
Concerns about the marginalization of children with special needs, aboriginal children, children living in poverty, children of rural, immigrant, and refugee families have raised the issue of how we define inclusion. In order to develop truly inclusive curricula, there is a call for a critical re-thinking of the language and practices of inclusion.

Relative roles and responsibilities of parents and practitioners
Concerns about parents in the workforce, absentee parents, and the professionalization of child-rearing, raise questions about the relative roles and responsibilities of parents and caregivers. To honour diverse parental knowledge and circumstances, and the professional knowledge of
early childhood practitioners, there is a call for a range of practices to enable parent-professional collaboration.

Co-construction of professional development with early childhood educators

Concerns about poorly educated staff for children in their most vulnerable and malleable years have raised the issue of what constitutes appropriate staff qualities and qualifications. In order to give children their best possible start in early learning and development, there is a call for well-trained staff to be engaged in plans for their own professional development, and for an educated, attentive, and responsive workforce.

Integration of services

Concerns about fragmentation of children’s experiences have raised the issue of the need for integrated and seamless services for children and families. In order to provide a more coherent and continuous experience, there is a call for inter-sectoral collaboration and consultation.

In Closing

The development of a curriculum framework that is potentially usable for parents and all family and child organizations — including child care centres, family daycare, family resource centres, and early intervention — requires extensive, ongoing consultation at all levels and across all constituencies. The implications following from the literature suggest the need to contextualize curriculum work within the current child and family policy environment and to examine and reexamine exemplary curriculum models and frameworks. Given the complexity and long-term nature of the curriculum development process, there is a need to coordinate the development phase of the curriculum framework with a strategic plan for the long term.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

UPDATED MAY 12TH, 2006          UNB EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE RESEARCH GROUP

Websites


"Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development". Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development.
www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca/encyclopedia

www.childcarecanada.org/pubs/other/FF/FactandFantasy.pdf.

"National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education in Finland". Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland. 2004
www.stakes.fi/vartjua/english/e_vasu.pdf

"Framework 1 & 2 Overview, Essential Learning Framework". Department of Education, Tasmania. 2004
http://www.ltag.education.tas.gov.au/references.htm#ELresources

www.learningmedia.co.nz

www.stakes.fi/varttua/english/e_vasu.pdf


"Quality in Childcare Services, Paper 1”. European Commission Childcare Network.


www.oecd.org/dataoecd/44/16/1942365.pdf


Conferences


BIBLIOGRAPHY  UNB EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE RESEARCH GROUP

Conferences


**Canadian Documents**


Doherty, Dr. Gillian. (1999). *Partners in Quality: Communities.* A Project of the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF).


Doherty, Dr. Gillian. (2003). *Occupational Standards for Child Care Practitioners.* A Project of the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF).


BIBLIOGRAPHY  UNB EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE RESEARCH GROUP

Canadian Documents


Books and Reports


Browne, Gina; Byrne, Carolyn; Roberts, Jacqueline; Gafni, Amiram; Watt, Susan; Ewart, Bonnie; Schuster, Michael; Underwood, Jane; Kingston, Sheila Flynn; Rennick, Kathy; Thomas, Ida & Haldane, Scott. *When the Bough Breaks: Provider-Initiated Comprehensive Care is More Effective and Less Expensive for Sole Support Parents on Social Assistance*. System-Linked Research Unit McMaster University. Hamilton:Ontario. 1998.


Books and Reports


BIBLIOGRAPHY UNB EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE RESEARCH GROUP

Journal Articles


BIBLIOGRAPHY  UNB EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE RESEARCH GROUP

Journal Articles


BIBLIOGRAPHY   UNB EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE RESEARCH GROUP

Journal Articles


Pramling, Ingrid. Working with Children Before they Start School: Some Findings from Swedish Early Childhood Centres.


BIBLIOGRAPHY  UNB EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE RESEARCH GROUP

Special Issues

May 2003. Issue of Young Children, v. 89(3), (focused on play)

March 2004. Issue of Young Children, v. 59(2), (focused on health and safety)

July 2004. Issue of Young Children, v. 59(4), (focused on the arts)